

RACE IN CUBA ■ ANNE BRADEN ■ CAPTIVENATION

ColorLines

RACE CULTURE ACTION

SPRING 2001

US \$3.95

CANADA \$4.95



La Peña's "Song of Unity" mural.

Racial Conflict Racial Unity

Hold until April 15, 2001



www.colorlines.com

Alliances Across Colors

This issue of *ColorLines* features a special section devoted to discussion of racial conflicts—among and between peoples of color as well as between peoples of color and whites—that arise in the course of building multiracial campaigns, alliances, and organizations.

From 17th century revolts by black slaves, Native tribes, and white indentured servants to today, the social movements of this country have prospered or busted up, ebbed and flowed—and lived and died—according to how they have handled racial contradictions within them. Racial conflict not only pervades the society and its principal institutions, but also the oppositional movements of workers, communities, women, lesbians and gays—even peoples of color themselves.

Historically, alliance building has centered on issues between whites and people of color, especially blacks. In recent years, new conflicts have come to the fore. As the demography of the country has changed, building alliances among different peoples of color has become more crucial than ever in the fight for social justice.

In addition, each community of color now faces divisions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and/or ethnicity within itself. American-born versus foreign-born, light-skinned versus dark-skinned, middle-class versus poor, inter-tribal issues, citizens versus non-citizens—the list goes on.

This issue of *ColorLines* barely scratches the surface of this vast, complex, and absolutely crucial topic.

Shannah Kurland reports that Latinos displaced African American progressives in the recent elections in Providence. This issue has broken out in cities throughout the country, usually to the detriment of both groups. What can be done to create unity and promote racial justice?

Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt inform us about the incredible transformation of violent treaty conflict over spearfishing between Natives and whites into a powerful multiracial coalition. They argue that the assertion of sovereignty rights, not the submersion of racial issues, as many argue, was key to this success.

Tram Nguyen, *ColorLines*' new associate editor, reports on the work of the Korean Immigrant Workers' Advocates (KIWA) in Los Angeles to draw a class line in Koreatown, and to build a multiracial workers movement with Latinos. Called traitors and spat upon by other Koreans, KIWA is breaking new ground.

This issue also features a memorable interview by June Rostan of Anne Braden, one of my personal all-time heroes. Anne minces no words in summing up her 50 years' experience, stating why she will never again spend one minute of her time on building all or mostly white organizations.

Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez' provocative article about her recent trip to Spain concludes the special section. Contrary to the claims of Chicano nationalists and conservative Hispanics, she shows that Spain is a mestizo country with strong Arab roots.

—Bob Wing

ColorLines

RACE CULTURE ACTION

Spring 2001

Publishers

Applied Research Center and Center for Third World Organizing

Executive Editor

Bob Wing

Editorial Board

Gary Delgado, Julie Quiroz, Esmeralda Simmons, Mark Toney

Associate Editor

Tram Nguyen

Business Manager

Mónica Hernández

Editorial Staff

Nicole Davis, Melia Franklin, David Leonard, Patrisia Macías Rojas, José Palafox, Ryan Pintado-Vertner, Oliver Wang

Contributing Writers

Lamis Andoni, Vanessa Daniel, Shannah Kurland, Arnoldo García, Zoltan Grossman, Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez, Debra McNutt, Michael Omi, June Rostan, Andrea Smith, Healani Sonoda, Christina Wilson

Copy Editors

Melia Franklin, Margo Sercarz, Jean Taylor

Photography and Art

Kirk Condyles, Vanessa Daniel, Maria Dumlaio, Cate Gilles, Zoltan Grossman, Michael Jacobson-Hardy, Ruth Picón, Bud Schultz, Rana Sidahmed, Devra Weber

Cover Photo

Anne Blackshaw

Design and Production

Chris Martin

Print Management

Denise Granger

Organizing listserve, and soliciting greater coverage of racial justice organizing campaigns in progressive and mainstream media. *ColorLines*, the Center for Third World Organizing, and the Applied Research Center look forward to a long and fruitful partnership to advance political analysis, grassroots organizing, and vision building in the struggle for racial justice. Sincerely, Mark Toney for CTWO and Gary Delgado for ARC

contents

Special Report: Racial Conflict/Racial Unity

18 Brown Power vs. Black Power

Is expanding Latino representation undermining black political power? Shannah Kurland gives the lowdown on Providence's lively local politics.

22 From Enemies to Allies

Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt share the lessons of Native Americans and whites in Wisconsin who turned violent treaty conflict into a powerful grassroots environmental movement.

26 Showdown in K-town

Tram Nguyen hits the picket line with Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates in Los Angeles as they take on the Korean business establishment with Korean and Latino workers.

30 Inside-Out and Upside-Down: An Interview With Anne Braden

The indomitable Anne Braden tells June Rostan about her 50 years fighting racism and building multiracial alliances.

34 A Chicana in Spain: Remembering Our Arab Roots

Contrary to the claims of Chicano nationalists and conservatives, Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez argues that Spain is a mestizo country.

To the Point

6 White Power in Election 2000

Bob Wing explains how institutionalized electoral racism strangles the political power of people of color.

9 A Nation Incarcerated

Healani Sonoda breaks down how Hawai'i's unique colonial power criminalizes and imprisons Native Hawaiians.

12 Counting in the Dark

Michael Omi shows how political struggles shape racial classification in the census.

15 Betting on Sovereignty

Is Indian gaming the path to economic self-sufficiency or to social ills? In either case, Andrea Smith argues that the decision to pursue gaming is up to each tribe.

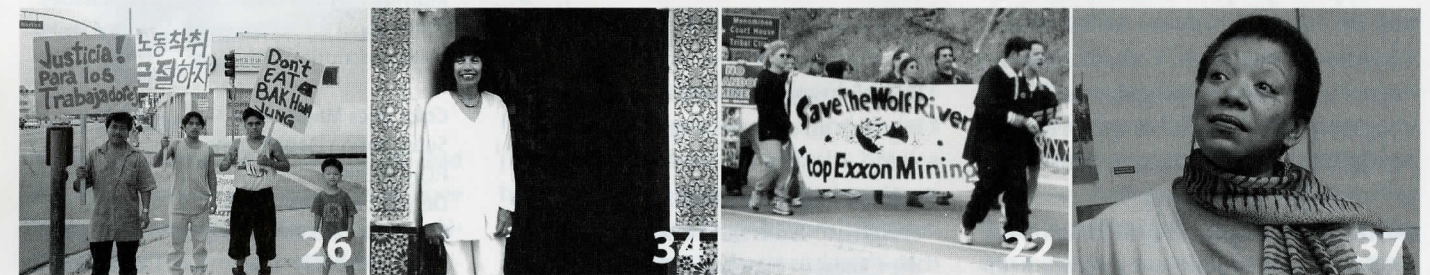
Culture

37 Race and the Revolution

Vanessa Daniel and Arnoldo García talk to Cuban cultural leaders Nancy Morejón and Nisia Agüero about race in Cuba.

40 Where Art Means Politics: La Peña's 25th Anniversary

Christina Wilson visits the Bay Area's unique institution of political arts and international solidarity.



Departments

2 About the Contributors

3 Letters to the Editor

4 RaceFile by Nicole Davis

43 Big Ideas by Lamis Andoni

43 Race Records by ColorLines staff

44 La Cucaracha by Lalo Alcaraz

44 (Th)ink by Keith Knight

About the Cover

The Song of Unity mural, which graces the front of La Peña Cultural Center, depicts the people of the Americas joining in a cultural bond against oppression. Photograph by Anne Blackshaw.

Lamis Andoni, "Big Ideas." Lamis is a Jordanian journalist of Palestinian origin who covers the Arab world for the *Jordan Times*, the *Financial Times of London*, and the *Washington Post*. In 1994, Israel banned her for reporting in the Palestinian territories.

Vanessa Daniel, "Race and the Revolution." Vanessa is a research associate with the Applied Research Center. She has worked as a journalist for college radio and has written and edited for various publications including *Sojourner* and the *Women's Forum*.

Shannah Kurland, "Brown Power vs. Black Power." Shannah is the outgoing executive director of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), where she organized with prisoners, home daycare providers, and others for 11 years. She is currently working with local leaders to launch NEW ERA (Neighborhood Empowerment Workshop for Education, Research and Action)—a project to develop racial justice electoral strategies.

Arnoldo García, "Race and the Revolution." Arnoldo is a cultural worker and activist rooted in the Mexicano-Chicano community, with *purepecha* traditions. He works for the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Oakland, heading up its organizing campaign for the United Nations' World Conference against Racism, to be held in South Africa in 2001.

Zoltan Grossman, "From Enemies to Allies." Zoltan is a co-founder of the Midwest Treaty Network and the Wolf Watershed Educational Project. He is a doctoral candidate in geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and a professional cartographer. He has been active in indigenous support work from South Dakota to the Philippines, and is a Witness for Non-violence trainer.

Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez, "A Chicana in Spain." Betita is a longtime Chicana activist, author, and educator who serves

as co-chair of the Institute for MultiRacial Justice. She has published six books on social movements in the Americas, most recently *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century*.

Debra McNutt, "From Enemies to Allies." Debra is a co-founder of the Midwest Treaty Network, a Witness for Nonviolence trainer, and a speaker on hate groups. She is also a longtime activist for women's rights, reproductive rights, and international solidarity, and is currently an organizer in Wisconsin's rural environmental movement.

Michael Omi, "Counting in the Dark." Michael is co-author, with Howard Winant, of *Racial Formations in the United States*. He is a professor of ethnic studies and acting director of the Institute of Social Change at the University of California at Berkeley.

June Rostan, "Inside-Out and Upside-Down: An Interview with Anne Braden." June, a native of North Carolina, has worked for racial and economic justice in the South since 1966. She has done organizing and education work with unions, women coal miners, and community organizations. She is the director of the Southern Empowerment Project, a group that conducts organizing and fundraising training with an anti-racist approach.

Andrea Smith (Cherokee), "Betting on Sovereignty." Andrea was a co-founder of the Chicago chapter of Women of All Red Nations and the newly formed Incite, a national organization of radical feminists of color against violence. She is working on her doctorate in history of consciousness at U.C. Santa Cruz.

Healani Sonoda, "A Nation Incarcerated." Healani is a Native Hawaiian nationalist who lectures at the University of Hawai'i and in Hawai'i's prisons. She is co-founder of Protect Our Native Ohana (PONO).

Christina Wilson, "Where Art Means Politics: La Peña's 25th Anniversary." Christina is development associate at the Center for Third World Organizing. She also works with the Oakland branch of the Uhuru Movement and the Campaign to Free Fred Hampton, Jr.

ColorLines

RACE CULTURE ACTION

Spring 2001

4096 Piedmont Avenue, PMB 319
Oakland, CA 94611-5221
510-653-3415 / 510-653-3427 fax
colorlines@arc.org
www.colorlines.com

ColorLines Magazine (ISSN 1098-3503) is published quarterly. Call or e-mail for bulk orders or reprint rights.

Subscriptions

Individual subscriptions are \$16 for 4 issues. Institutional subscriptions are \$32 for 4 issues. Mail subscription orders to:

ColorLines Magazine
Subscription Department
P.O. Box 3000
Denville, NJ 07834-9206
For credit card orders only call:
1-888-458-8588

Canada & Mexico Subscription Rates:
US \$20 for 4 issues.

International Subscription Rates:
US \$24 for 4 issues.

Media Inquiries:

We Interrupt This Message. 415-537-9437

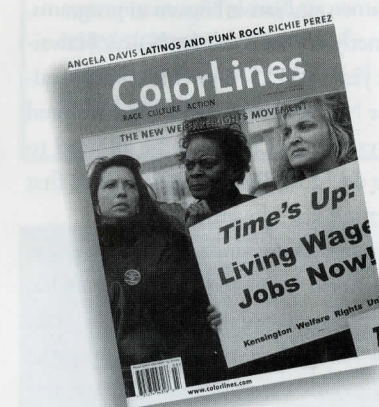
LETTERS AND SUBMISSIONS

We welcome letters to the editor and unsolicited submissions. Please write us for guidelines. However, we cannot promise publication or the return of submitted materials. Submissions by e-mail are preferred. Please include your address, phone, fax, and email address.

Dear Editor:

I was moved after reading the keynote address Angela Davis gave at the Color of Violence conference (*ColorLines*, Fall 2000). The points she hit were right on. As a male police officer, I see the injustice in law enforcement when it comes to crimes against women. In most agencies, the sex crimes units are understaffed, but the macho crimes like carjacking, breaking and entering units, homicide, and gang squads are staffed well. I have worked as a sex crimes investigator and have found the numbers of reported rape of women and boys staggering. The assaults transcend all borders of race and color and geographic location. Abuse of women is a large problem with little attention given in law enforcement. If I can help get the message out let me know.

Walt Clement, Detroit, MI



Dear Editor:

As a former Vietnamese refugee myself, I read with strong interest Eric Tang's article "Refugee Reality: Clinton's Vietnam Fiction" (www.colorlines.com). The problem with Tang's analysis is his argument that refugees' poverty results from welfare cuts and from the government's negligence of the Southeast Asian refugee community now that the Cold War was over. I would argue that welfare as we know it weakens the refugee community; encourages dependency; makes them into easy targets for hostile conservatives on the one hand, and condescending radicals on the other; and finally and cumulatively, slows their full integration into the political system to acquire political power.

The persistent poverty among Vietnamese refugees results less from government wel-

fare cuts than from their lack of marketable skills that would have discriminated against them in any country. This problem draws attention to the failure of previous programs to help them acquire skills. Tang, however, did not address this issue and only attacked welfare cuts. Refugees certainly need time to adapt to their new society. Yet the amount of time needed should be subject to con-

Failure to use the election platform to advance the issues of racial discrimination fails not only people of color, but equally fails the whole movement.

sideration on a case-by-case basis and not be given across the board and automatically as an entitlement.

The sooner refugees become economically independent, the better for their communities. They would shrug off their temporary "refugee" status to accept their new home. They would be poised to demand for the place they deserve to be: at the center of mainstream society. Whether the mainstream society is ready for them is another story; yet their independent economic status and their active participation are the only vehicles that can take them there.

Tuong Vu, Berkeley, CA

Dear Editor:

Vanessa Daniel's article on Nader and race issues (www.colorlines.com), and Nader's reply on the ColorLines web site break a highly questionable silence about these issues among progressive organizations. I received a fund request from Nader three times—each time the letter listed 15 to 20 important issues facing people in the U.S. Not once was any issue having to do with racial discrimination or oppression mentioned. I wrote the Nader campaign headquarters asking why this was so, and got no answer.

ColorLines' article was temperate and recognized Nader's many contributions. This was good and no one is proposing that Nader be ridden out of the movement. But Nader's response does not answer in any way why he leaves out this issue in so much of his campaign material or why he refused to publicly oppose the anti-affirmative action initia-

tive on the California 1998 ballot.

It seems to me that the essential question in an election is whether or not the campaign and election results place us in a stronger position to organize effective radical independent action, both electoral and otherwise, in the struggles that follow. Do we come out with stronger relationships with all those who constitute a base of such struggles? In

this context, failure to use the election platform to advance the issues of racial discrimination fails not only people of color, but equally fails the whole movement.

Attacking people of color first is the cutting edge of all reactionary attempts to lower wages, downsize, cut social services, further degrade health care, housing, and education. If the white left had recognized black leadership and had helped to organize and lead a real mass struggle in the white community against degradation and isolation of the inner cities in earlier stages, we would now be in a far stronger position on the issues of housing, living wage, transportation, health care, and education which in various ways now directly hurt working class and many middle-class people of all colors. The slowness (or in some cases failure) of predominantly white left groups to put up a real fight on issues like criminalization of the poor is a key factor in the present-day disunity within the left and within the working class as a whole.

Nader seems not to recognize the interrelationships of the fight of people of color to the fight of all working class people. White people and white leaders need to recognize that when they fight for people of color they are fighting for themselves. The most disturbing question about Nader's weakness on the race issue is why those parts of the progressive movement which have accepted him as their spokesperson in the election have been so passive and so slow to win him to a position which better serves the whole movement.

Billie Wachter, San Jose, CA

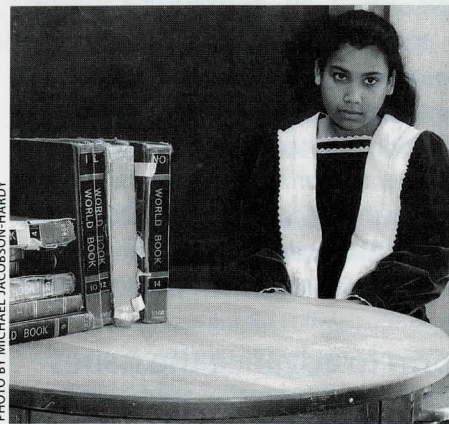


PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACOBSON-HARDY

The ACLU's lawsuit against California charges the state with failing to provide basic necessities like adequate textbooks for students.

Anti-Miscegenation

In the November election, Alabama became the last state in the union to formally lift its ban on interracial marriage, a law that has been unenforceable since 1967. There are an estimated 1,600 interracial couples in Alabama, and the state is 26 percent black. Amendment 2, as the proposal to lift the ban was known, passed by a 60-40 percent vote, indicating that many Alabama residents, perhaps a majority of whites, favor keeping the ban. The only organized opposition to removing the ban came from the Southern Party of Alabama, a new political party founded in 1999 to establish the South as an independent nation, separate from the United States. Alabama was close behind South Carolina, who removed anti-miscegenation language from their state constitution in 1998.

Race of Education

In May of 2000 the American Civil Liberties Union and a coalition of civil rights law groups filed a law suit against the state of California for violating its constitutional obligation to provide the bare essentials necessary for educating students of color in the public school system. The class-action law suit charges the state with such offenses as lack of or outdated textbooks, vermin infested schools, unaccredited teachers, no nurses or guidance counselors, lack of heating and cooling systems in the schools, and massive overcrowding, among others. The law suit targets 18 school districts across the

RACEFILE

BY NICOLE DAVIS, COLORLINES STAFF

state, alleging that these offenses occur overwhelmingly in districts where the majority of students are of color, limited or non-English speaking, and poor.

In an unprecedented move, this December the state decided to sue the 18 school districts named in the ACLU's case. Civil rights attorneys see the state's suit as a case of passing the buck. The ACLU argues that a judge has already ruled that the districts are agents of the state, and it is the state that has the ultimate responsibility to educate students. In February 2001, the ACLU will ask the judge to expand the scope of its suit to cover the state's 1,100 school districts and their 5.8 million students.

Driving While Black or Brown

After several years of data collection and hundreds of people of color being stopped, harassed or shot by the police, the state of New Jersey finally admitted they systematically practiced racial profiling. Current estimates indicate that as many as 180 pending cases will be reviewed by the state Attorney General to determine if racial profiling was integral to the initial search or arrest.

Although the current focus is on New Jersey, many state officials say the federal government wrote the book on racial profiling as part of its phony "war on drugs." The recent release of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) training materials indicates that the federal agency taught local law enforcement to look for specific racial and ethnic groups as the most common example of drug traffickers. A recent DEA report says to look out for, "Colombians, Dominicans, Chinese, West Africans/Nigerians, Pakistanis, Hispanics and Indians, Puerto Ricans, and African-Americans."

North Carolina became the first state to pass Driving While Black legislation in 1999. In addition to the race and ethnicity of persons stopped for traffic violations, the legislation also calls for tracking the age and gender of the person, whether or not a search took place, and if the officer engaged in

the use of force. Attempts by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to pass similar legislation elsewhere across the country have met with resistance both from law enforcement and state officials. As it stands, it might not be a crime to drive while black, but neither is pulling someone over for it.

Office of Hawaiian Affairs Gutted

November elections in Hawaii resulted in the state's Democratic Party taking firm control of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) for the first time, further eroding Native Hawaiians' political power.

Trustees of OHA, a state office responsible for numerous Native Hawaiian programs, were formerly elected solely by Native Hawaiians. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the Natives-only election and required that all residents of the state be allowed to vote. The decision, *Rice v. Cayetano*, was first implemented last November.

All nine trustee positions were up for grabs. Only one non-Hawaiian won, Charles Ota, a prominent Japanese American real estate developer from Maui. More important, the state Democratic Party machine threw major resources into the campaign and almost all of its favored candidates emerged victorious.

The Democrats, led by Gov. Ben Cayetano, have been trying to force Native Hawaiians to give up their right to the so-called ceded lands which was illegally taken from Hawaiians and is now administered by the state. Act 304 requires the state to pay OHA 20 percent of the revenues from the ceded lands, to be used to benefit Native Hawaiians. Since 1959, the state and its agencies have refused to abide by this Act. Recently, the governor tried three times to get the pre-*Rice* OHA trustees to give up the ceded lands in exchange for \$200 million in past-due rent, but the trustees refused.

The result of *Rice* and of this election is further political disempowerment of Native Hawaiians and the endangerment of the ceded lands. ♦

Themba describes successful grassroots campaigns to shape and construct public policy, offering lessons for other social justice struggles. "This book has big concepts, insightful analysis, tested strategies, and tactics..."
—Lawrence Wallack Professor of Public Health, UC Berkeley

"A terrific collection of stories, describing the innovative ways 'common' individuals and groups have mobilized to challenge racial inequalities in different eras and in different settings. These stories rouse the collective memory, deepen our historical consciousness, and inspire a new wave of activism."
—Michael Omi, Co-Author of *Racial Formations*

Essential Organizing Tools

ask us for a free catalog!

To order, call us toll-free at
888.458.8588

Or visit our web site at
www.chardonpress.com

Chardon Press
3781 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94611

Your mainstream news source not all it's quacked up to be?

Mainstream media will never tell you what *Sojourner* does:

- about the scandals and profit-mongering in breast cancer research.
- about the leadership of women of color around the world on cutting edge environmental justice and health activism.
- about the Philip Morris tobacco campaign that systematically targets women overseas and women of color in the U.S.

Show your support for independent news coverage—subscribe to *Sojourner* today!
1 year \$26 • 2 years \$46 • 3 years \$64

sojourner • po box 3000 • denville, nj 07834-9705 or call 1-888-475-5996

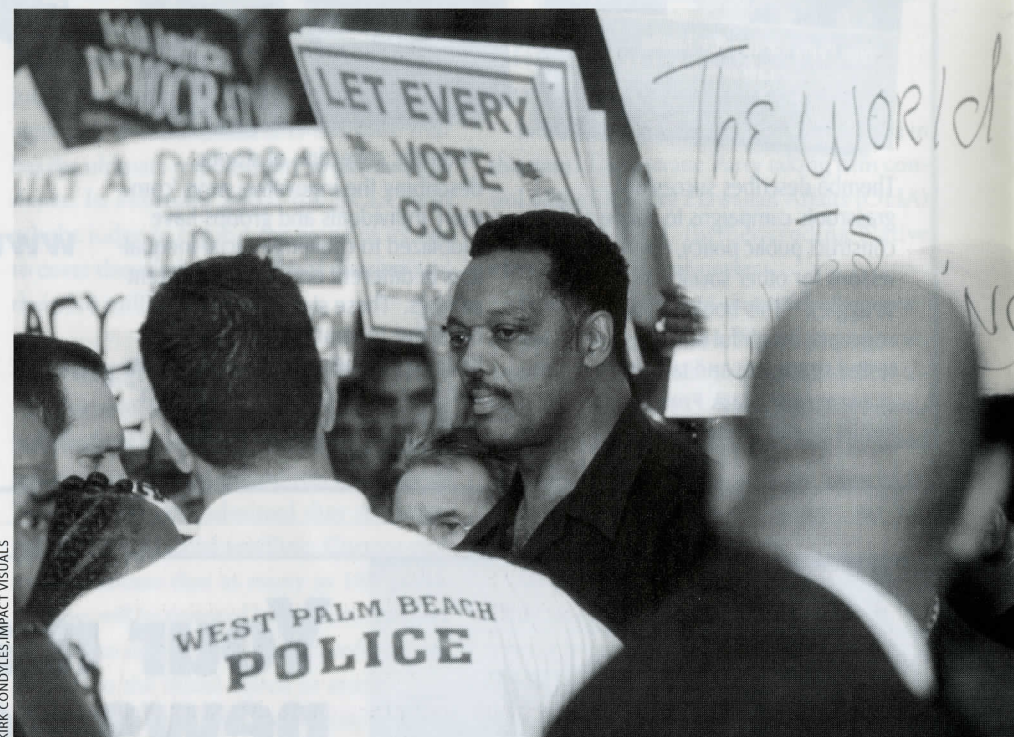
White Power in Election 2000

ColorLines editor **Bob Wing** argues that fighting electoral racism should be at the top of the racial justice agenda.

What if there was an election, and nobody won?

Thank you, Florida, for exposing as fraud the much-vaunted sanctity of the vote in this country and placing electoral reform back on the country's agenda. Reports indicate that black and Haitian voters were harassed by police, their names removed from the rolls, and their ballots left uncounted by outdated machines. Thirty-five years after passage of the Voting Rights Act, racist violations of election law are rampant and should be pursued to justice in Florida and elsewhere.

But beyond these immediate issues, this election reveals again just how central race is to U.S. politics and how racism is institutionally structured into the electoral system. The election reaffirms that people of color are the most consistent liberal/progressive voters in the country and that their clout is increasing—but that electoral racism effectively nullifies almost half of their votes. The Civil Rights movement destroyed the monopoly over power by whites, but the tyranny of the white majority is still insti-



Jesse Jackson leads a protest in Florida for black and Haitian voters who had been harassed at the polls.

tutionalized in the winner-take-all, two-party, Electoral College system.

Unless we place fighting electoral racism at the top of the racial justice agenda, we cannot challenge the political stranglehold of conservative white voters or maximize the growing power of people of color.

The Color of Politics

The idea that race and racism are central to American politics is not just a theory that harkens back to the days of slavery. It's a current-day lived reality that is particularly evident in this country's biggest and most sacred political event: the presidential pageant.

According to the Voter News Service exit polls for Election 2000, 90 percent of

African Americans voted for Gore, as did 63 percent of Latinos, and 55 percent of Asians. (No exit poll data on the Native American vote is available, but most have historically voted Democratic.) Combined, people of color accounted for almost 30 percent of Gore's total vote, although they were only 19 percent of voters.

Latinos, the country's fastest growing voters, went heavily Democratic—even in Texas—despite extensive efforts by the Republicans to sway them. Most Asians followed suit. People of color are becoming a larger

Bob Wing is executive editor of *ColorLines* and a longtime fighter for racial and economic justice. Vanessa Daniel of the Applied Research Center provided invaluable research assistance.

portion both of the U.S. population and of the electorate, and voting largely in concert with each other in presidential elections.

On the other hand, whites constituted almost 95 percent of Bush's total vote.

Conventional electoral wisdom discounts race as a political factor, focusing instead on class, the gender gap, union membership, etc. But, the only demographic groups that had a fairly unified vote—defined as 60 percent or more for one of the candidates—were: blacks, Latinos, Jews (81 percent for Gore), lesbians and gays (70 percent for Gore), union members (62 percent for Gore), residents of large cities (71 percent for Gore), and white males (60 percent for Bush). Race is at the core of these results.

What was the "Gap"?

The large numbers of people of color in unions (about 25 percent) and big cities largely account for the heavy Democratic vote of those demographic groups. White union members and city dwellers vote to the left of whites who live more racially isolated lives, but they barely tilt Democratic. Similarly, women voted 54-43 for Gore, but white women actually favored Bush by one point. Women of color create the gender gap.

The same can be said of the poor: although 57 percent of voters with incomes under \$15,000 voted for Gore, poor whites—who make up just under half of eligible voters in this category—broke slightly for Bush. The income gap in presidential politics is thoroughly racialized. As the sociologist William Form pointed out long ago, if only a bare majority of white working-class people voted consistently Democratic, we could have some kind of social democracy that would provide much more social justice than the conservative regimes we are used to.

Despite the pronounced color of politics, Ralph Nader (and his multi-hued progressive pundits) blithely dismiss the fact that he received only one percent of the votes of people of color.

Electoral College: Pillar of Racism

The good news is that the influence of liberal and progressive voters of color is

increasingly being felt in certain states. They have become decisive in the most populous states, all of which went to Gore except Ohio, Texas, and (maybe?) Florida. In California an optimist might even envision a rebirth of Democratic liberalism a couple of elections down the road, based largely on votes of people of color.

The bad news is that the two-party, winner-take-all, Electoral College system of this country ensures, even requires, that voters of color be marginalized or totally ignored.

The Electoral College negates the votes of almost half of all people of color. For example, 53 percent of all blacks live in the Southern states, where this year, as usual, they voted over 90 percent Democratic. However, white Republicans out-voted them in every Southern state (and every border state except Mary-

If we had a system of proportional representation, a social justice party could be very powerful.

land). As a result, every single Southern Electoral College vote was awarded to Bush. While nationally, whites voted 54-42 for Bush, Southern whites, as usual, gave over 70 percent of their votes to him. They thus completely erased the massive Southern black (and Latino and Native American) vote for Gore in that region.

Since Electoral College votes go entirely to whichever candidate wins the plurality in each state, whether that plurality be by one vote or one million votes, the result was the same as if blacks and other people of color in the South had not voted at all. Similarly negated were the votes of the millions of Native Americans and Latino voters who live in overwhelmingly white Republican states like Arizona, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah, the Dakotas, Montana—and Texas. The tyranny of the white majority prevails.

Further, the impact of the mostly black voters of Washington, D.C., unfairly denied statehood, is undermined by its arbitrary allocation of only three electoral votes. And the peoples of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and

Guam—which are colonies ruled by the U.S. and have greater populations than more than a quarter of the U.S. states—get no Electoral College votes at all.

Slave Power

In his *New York Times* op-ed, Yale law professor Akhil Amar reveals that the hitherto obscure Electoral College system was consciously set up by the Founding Fathers to be the mechanism by which slaveholders would dominate American politics.

The Constitution provided that slaves be counted as three-fifths of a person (but given no citizenship rights) for purposes of determining how many members each state would be granted in the House of Representatives. This provision vastly increased the representation of the slave states in Congress.

At the demand of James Madison and other Virginia slaveholders, this pro-slavery allocation of Congresspersons also became the basis for allocation of votes in the Electoral College. It is a dirty little secret that the Electoral College was rigged up for the express purpose of translating the disproportionate Congressional power of the slaveholders into undue influence over the election of the presidency. Virginia slaveholders proceeded to hold the presidency for 32 of the Constitution's first 36 years.

Since slavery was abolished, the new justification for the Electoral College is that it allows smaller states to retain some impact on elections. And so it does—to the benefit of conservative white Republican states. As Harvard law professor Lani Guinier reports, in Wyoming, one Electoral College vote corresponds to 71,000 voters, while in large-population states (where the votes of people of color are more numerous) the ratio is one electoral vote to over 200,000 voters. So much for one person, one vote.

This year the Electoral College enabled the winner of the conservative white states



A confrontation in West Palm Beach during voting protests.

to prevail over the winner of the national popular vote—a tyranny of the minority.

Two-Party Racism

The two-party system also structurally marginalizes voters of color.

First of all, to win, both parties must take their most loyal voters for granted and focus their message and money to win over the so-called undecided voters who will actually decide which party wins each election. The most loyal Democrats are strong liberals and progressives, the largest bloc of whom are people of color. The most loyal Republicans are conservative whites, especially those in rural areas and small towns. The undecideds are mostly white, affluent suburbanites; and both parties try to position their politics, rhetoric, and policies to woo them. The interests of people of color are ignored or even attacked by both parties as they pander to the “center.”

Another consequence is that a disproportionate number of people of color see no reason to vote at all. The U.S. has by far the lowest voter participation rate of any democracy in the world. The two-party system so demobilizes voters that only about 65 percent of the eligible electorate is regis-

tered, and only 49 to 50 percent usually vote (far less in non-presidential elections).

Not surprisingly, the color and income of those who actually vote is skewed to higher income, older, and more conservative white people. In the 1996 presidential election, 57 percent of eligible whites voted compared to 50 percent of blacks and 44 percent of Latinos. Seventy-three percent of people with family incomes over \$75,000 voted compared to 36 percent of those with incomes below \$15,000.

In addition, current electoral law disenfranchises millions of mainly Latino and Asian immigrants because they are not citizens. And, according to Reuters, some 4.2 million Americans, including 1.8 million black men (13 percent of all black men in America), are denied the right to vote because of incarceration or past felony convictions.

Proportional Representation

To remedy these racist, undemocratic electoral structures, Lani Guinier and many others propose an electoral system based on proportional representation. New Zealand, Australia, all of the European countries except Great Britain, and many Third World countries have proportional electoral systems.

In such systems, all parties that win a certain minimum of the popular vote (usually five percent) win representation in the Congress (or Parliament) equal to their vote. To win the presidency, a party must either win an outright majority or form a governing coalition with other parties.

Thus, for example, the German Green Party, which gets about seven percent of the vote, is part of the ruling coalition in that country. If we had such a system, a racial and economic justice party could be quite powerful. Instead, in our current system, voting for a third-party candidate like Nader takes votes from Gore and helps Bush. And someone like Jesse Jackson, who won 30 percent of the Democratic popular vote in 1988, is not a viable candidate, and his supporters have little clout in national politics.

If we fail to place fighting electoral racism at the very top of a racial justice agenda, people of color will continue to be effectively disenfranchised, and white people, especially conservative white Republicans, will enjoy electoral privileges that enable them to shape the policies and institutions of this country at our expense. We must also eliminate the role of big money in elections and make voting readily accessible to poor folk.

Until we win a proportional system—or unless there is some other major political shake-up—the vast majority of people of color will continue to participate in the Democratic Party. Therefore we must resist the racist, pro-corporate rightwing of the Democratic Party, led by people like Al Gore, and demand that the Democrats more strongly represent the interests of people of color. However, our ability to do this—or to build anti-racist third parties that include our peoples—depends upon our ability to form mass, independent racial justice organizations and to build alliances with other progressive forces both inside and outside the electoral realm.

Building electoral alliances—around issues, referenda, and candidates, both inside and outside the Democratic Party—is key to the maturation of a racial justice movement that functions on the scale necessary to impact national politics, social policy, or ideological struggle in this country. ♦

KIRK CONDYLES/IMPACT VISUALS

A Nation Incarcerated



Healani Sonoda reveals the criminalization of Native Hawaiians and their export for profit to mainland prisons.

Native Hawaiians are being imprisoned at alarming numbers in our own ancestral homeland, making Hawai'i's incarceration rate the third-fastest rising in the country. Combined with increasing deportation of Native inmates to mainland private prisons, criminalization is yet another tool of American colonial power to control Native lands and deny Hawaiian sovereignty.

Though we were an independent nation, Hawai'i was colonized because of American imperial, strategic interests in the Pacific and Asia. The United States overthrew our government and stole millions of acres of Native lands. Now a colonized people, we inhabit the islands' lowest socioeconomic strata. For Hawaiians, land is familial, the source of material, cultural, and spiritual existence and political power. One devastating outcome of land dispossession today is the disproportionate rates of incarceration of Native adults and children.

By the time the United States annexed the Hawaiian Kingdom, white and Asian settlers

Healani Sonoda is a Native Hawaiian nationalist who lectures at the University of Hawai'i and in Hawai'i's prisons. She is co-founder of Protect Our Native 'Ohana (PONO).

outnumbered the Native population by three to one, with Japanese laborers comprising the largest settler group. Today, the ratio is 80 percent settlers to 20 percent Natives. Local Japanese settlers have ascended to ruling-class status and direct the American colonial system, along with whites.

Settler laws criminalized traditional Hawaiian ways, including hula, surfing, and speaking the Native tongue. Hawaiians were charged with vagrancy, whereas for millennia, we had freely traveled to the mountains and ocean to gather food and fish. For these

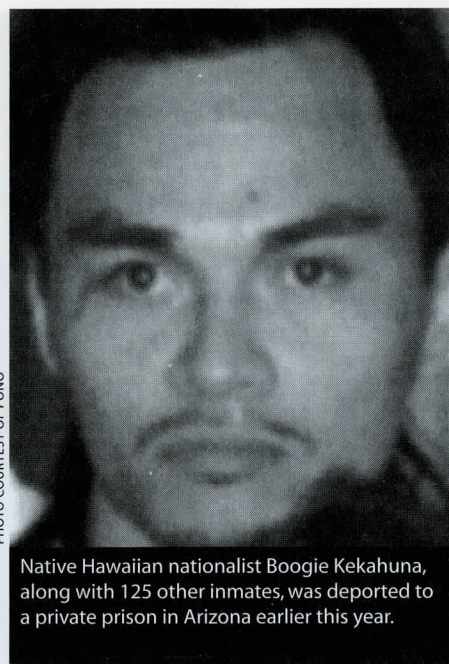
Settlers criminalized traditional Hawaiian ways, including hula, surfing, and speaking the Native tongue.

colonial crimes, Hawaiians were imprisoned and fined. After more than a century of violent colonial rule, poverty-stricken, landless Hawaiians have become a criminal stereotype in Hawai'i. Settlers institute laws and policies to maintain their control over Hawai'i's lands and resources, warehousing Native Hawaiians into correctional facilities.

Settler Racism

The U.S. is a racist, settler colonial country built upon Native peoples' lands. Colonizers imposed their education, health, housing, and criminal justice systems on Hawai'i (the colony), reflecting racist policies enforced in the continental United States (the metropole). Native Hawaiian professor Hau-nani-Kay Trask defines racism as a “historically created system of power in which one racial/ethnic group dominates another racial/ethnic group for the benefit of the dominating group.”

Prospering within this colonial system, local Japanese settlers today wield the institutional power to be racist against Hawaiians. Since the 1954 Democratic Party takeover, local Japanese have held a majority of legislative seats. A Japanese man heads the prison system. Another is president of the state House of Representatives, while the lieutenant gov-



Native Hawaiian nationalist Boogie Kekahuna, along with 125 other inmates, was deported to a private prison in Arizona earlier this year.

error is also Japanese. Although Japanese settlers once suffered under racist American laws, in a colony such as Hawai'i, all settlers benefit over indigenous Hawaiians.

American incarceration has always been conducted along racial and class lines. In continental America, for every white arrest, there are three black arrests. The main racial tension in Hawai'i, however, is not between whites and people of color, but between white and Asian settlers against Hawaiians. Hawaiians are incarcerated at a higher rate than these settlers. Hawaiians are 20 percent of Hawai'i's population, yet comprise 45 percent of the inmate population; Japanese settlers, 20 percent of the population, constitute less than four percent of Hawai'i's inmates. These statistics reflect who is in control. Whites hold political power in America, with average household earnings almost double those of black households. Japanese settlers in Hawai'i hold the same percentage of income advantage over Hawaiians.

While Asian settlers celebrate their "success" on Hawaiian ancestral lands, Hawaiians live in poverty. With settlers running banks, corporations, and policy boards, Hawaiians become excluded as a group from economic advancement. The local Japanese and white unemployment rates are 2.97 percent and 6.57 percent respectively, while the Hawaiian rate is 10.42 percent. Not sur-

prisingly, our second most common offense is "property crimes." National research repeatedly links low income and unemployment to incarceration rates. The percentage of Hawaiians below the poverty level is double Hawai'i's average.

Economic factors compound the problems of arrested Hawaiians. When considering a pretrial-supervised release, the judge rules based on middle-class standards: whether

While Asian settlers celebrate their "success" on Hawaiian ancestral lands, Hawaiians live in poverty.

the defendant has a job, the same residence for a year, and no substance abuse. Most poor people—including Hawaiians—are unemployed, under-educated, and have no stable home or are homeless. Many turn to drugs to escape the hardships of poverty. Thus, they have a greater chance of incarceration even before conviction.

Contrary to settlers' "violent" stereotype of Native criminals, the top offense in Hawaiian arrests is nonviolent technical crimes (like parole violations). These crimes often result from lack of money. Many Hawaiians remain in jail before trial because their families cannot afford the \$50 or \$100 bail.

While Hawaiians average 23 percent of Hawai'i's arrests, they are twice as likely to be incarcerated after going through the colonial legal process than any settler group. Recent statistics establish Hawai'i's indigenous inmate population at 45 percent, but many correctional facility workers estimate a Native inmate population at closer to 60 percent. The group with the state's highest unemployment rate, Hawaiians will experience rising arrest rates in a worsening economy. Hawai'i's incarceration rate rose 13.6 percent between 1997 and 1998. The disproportionate incarceration of Hawaiians contradicts Hawai'i's lovely "melting pot" image presented by Asian and white settlers, and testifies to the violence of institutionalized racism.

Privatization of Prisons

The over-incarceration of Hawaiians creates overcrowded prisons. From 1992, the

state's "solution" has been to deport inmates, 40 percent of whom are Hawaiian, to distant facilities on the continental U.S. This deportation policy recalls the U.S. Indian Removal Act of 1830 ("Trail of Tears"), which removed the Creeks, Seminoles, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws from their ancestral lands so white people could settle there. The removal of Native Hawaiian inmates from the island colony is an attack on the larger Hawaiian

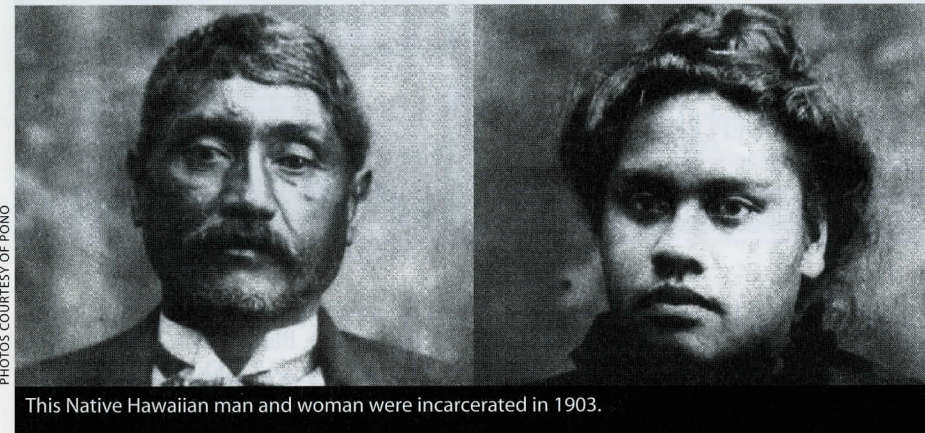
community, as we press forward with domestic and international claims for sovereignty and lands. The removal policy further disintegrates Hawaiian families.

Native inmates are sent to private prisons owned by multinational corporations like the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which runs correctional facilities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States. The state of Hawai'i claims to save \$50 per inmate daily by sending prisoners to continental private prisons. In addition, CCA offered the state financial incentives to house all Hawai'i inmates in CCA facilities at a discount. With annual profits exceeding \$26 million for inmate deportation, state and corporate interests overshadow the well-being of prisoners and their families. Prisons—the exporting and warehousing of humans—are becoming big money in a global economy.

Prison corporations like CCA profit by contracting cheap prison labor to private businesses. In Hawai'i's facilities, manufacturers and the state pay inmates to produce goods at rates outrageously below minimum wage (38 to 99 cents an hour). When Hawai'i inmates are deported to continental facilities, their pay plummets to 14 to 38 cents an hour.

Prison corporations handle lucrative contracts between prisons and phone service providers. MCI, AT&T, and Sprint charge exorbitant rates for calls; prison corporations reap up to 60 percent of generated revenues. In one year, the California and New York prison systems profited \$20.5 million each

from phone revenues. Hawai'i residents pay up to \$30 for a half-hour call to family members incarcerated on the continent. For some inmates, the excessive cost severs family ties. Through deportation, the state of Hawai'i, CCA, and other corporations profit off a colonized, poverty-stricken indigenous community. The prisoner-for-profit assault on Native people by the government and corporations is not new. This public-private institutional relationship among settlers also



This Native Hawaiian man and woman were incarcerated in 1903.

exists in Hawai'i's tourist industry, where state policy commodifies Hawaiian culture.

Alternative Solutions

Culturally-based, rehabilitative, and holistic programs are necessary alternatives to deportation. These programs restore the spiritual, cultural, and physical well-being of Hawaiian inmates while reintegrating them into their families and communities. Although some correctional facilities have established Hawaiian cultural classes, these are frequently canceled because of "security risks," despite the need for such programs. The Native American Prisoner Rights Advocacy Coalition challenges these "security risk" concerns, which often ban indigenous peoples' traditional religious practices in U.S. correctional facilities. Denying Hawaiian prisoners' cultural resources is denying them the opportunity to recover and rehabilitate.

Criminalizing drug abuse among Native Hawaiians, rather than treating it as a response to the hopelessness of colonialism, contributes to Hawai'i's overcrowded facilities and the high recidivism rate for men. If drug addiction were treated as a medical problem (as it

is in Spain, Italy, and Portugal) and not a crime, the prison "problem" would significantly decrease. The Department of Public Safety estimates that 80 percent of Hawai'i's inmates have substance-abuse problems, but prisons provide treatment for fewer than 20 percent of these inmates. Hawaiians make up 40 percent of all substance-abuse program participants in Hawai'i, demonstrating the need for programs that are culturally tailored to Hawaiians.

Ho'omau Ke Ola is one of the few drug programs integrating traditional Hawaiian practices such as *ho'oponopono* (spiritually based conflict resolution). Headed by a Hawai-

Hawaiians are twice as likely as any settler group to be incarcerated after going through the colonial legal process.

ian woman, Hooipo DeCambra, this program operates in Wai'anae, the largest Hawaiian community in Hawai'i. Appropriate drug treatment rehabilitates prisoners and prevents recidivism. A statewide system of culturally-based rehabilitation centers would greatly reduce the need for prison space and the number of incarcerated Hawaiians.

However, the state of Hawai'i rarely invests in developing and expanding alternative programs. It instead reinforces the colonial cycle of incarceration for Hawaiian families. While Hawaiian children make up 35 percent of juvenile arrests, they comprise 52 percent of Hawai'i's youth correctional facility population. Approximately

5,000 Hawaiian children are arrested annually, and a significant number "graduate" into adult facilities.

Imprisonment of the Nation

While most white and local Japanese settlers have never been inside a colonial prison, most Hawaiians have family members or friends who are or were incarcerated. Recently, a local Japanese man in his speeding car killed two people on two separate occasions, yet walked free. Meanwhile, a Hawaiian man convicted of one count of attempted murder serves a 17-year sentence far from his family in a private Arizona facility. These are typical examples of colonial justice. When Japanese settlers commit crimes, the settler public is shocked, as these acts contradict stereotypical expectations. The notorious "Xerox" killings by Byron Uyesugi, who shot seven people in 1999, shook the settler population. Uncomfortable with seeing a Japanese face labeled "mass murderer" in Hawai'i's newspapers, settlers focused on "why did he do it?"—a question never asked about Hawaiian defendants, who are often assumed guilty.

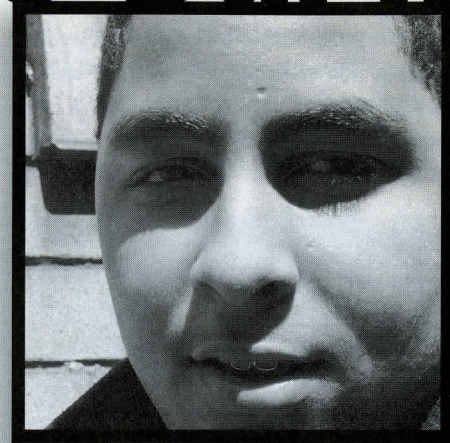
For Native Hawaiians, American correctional facilities are part of the violent colonial

apparatus. These facilities commit human rights abuses on prisoners and exploit them for government and private profit. Denying the need for alternative programs, Hawai'i's Public Safety Department, run by local Japanese and other settlers, criminalizes, dehumanizes, and deports Hawaiians at a disproportionate rate. Since the arrival of foreigners and their "systems of power," which brought mass death, oppression, and disenfranchisement for Native Hawaiians, we have been degraded to criminal status in our own homeland and become a nation incarcerated. ♦

For more information contact Protect Our Native 'Oluana (PONO), P.O. Box 61844, Honolulu, HI 96839, pononative@hawaii.rr.com.

Counting in the Dark

Michael Omi shows that the census has become a critical racial battleground.



At a projected total cost of \$6.2 billion, Census 2000 represents one of the largest peacetime mobilizations in U.S. history. Census results determine the drawing of legislative boundaries within states, the number of congressional representatives from each state, and the allocation of nearly \$185 billion in federal funds to state and local programs. As different groups come to realize the political value of racial classification and the strategic deployment of "numbers," the census has increasingly become the site of racial battles for recognition.

In recent years, conservatives have urged the total abandonment of racial and ethnic classification in the census under the guise of promoting "color-blind" policies and practices. Native Hawaiians, people who identify as multiracial, and Arab Americans have disputed the way they are classified in the census. These different political claims illustrate that racial categories are never static or stable, but are constantly changing in response to shifting demographics, emerging issues, and evolving social identities.

From Oppressive to Corrective

The intent and use of census racial classification has shifted dramatically over time. Prior to the 1960s, policy-makers used racial

categories to politically disenfranchise and discriminate against groups defined as non-white. From prohibitions on naturalization rights to the setting of quotas for the 1924 National Origins Immigration Act, census categories were strategically deployed to circumscribe the political, economic, and social rights of groups of color.

Over time, the idea of race as a biological construct was increasingly discredited in academic and scientific circles. The "race question" would have been excluded from the 1970 census had it not been for the passage of civil rights legislation. The new laws required federal agencies to compile data, look for patterns of discrimination, and redress them through various programs and initiatives. This made it necessary to continue to employ some form of racial classification and statistics.

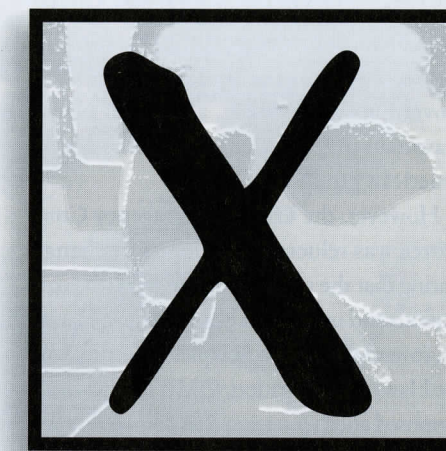
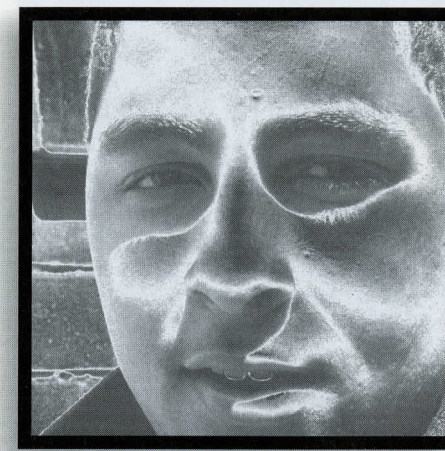
In 1977 the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Statistical Directive No. 15 that fostered the creation of "compatible, nonduplicated, exchangeable racial and ethnic data by Federal agencies." The Directive defined the basic racial and ethnic categories to be utilized by the federal government for three reporting purposes: statistical, administrative, and civil rights compliance. The five standard categories were American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or

Pacific Islander, Black, White, and Hispanic.

The categories are rife with inconsistencies. Only one of the definitions is specifically racial, only one is cultural, and only one relies on a notion of affiliation or community recognition. The Directive, for example, defines a black person as one having their "origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa," but it does not define a white person with reference to any of the white racial groups of Europe or elsewhere. Indeed "Black" is the only category that is defined with an explicit "racial" designator—one which is quite problematic. What, we might ask, are the "black racial groups of Africa"?

Hispanics are not considered and classified as a "race," but as an "ethnic group." The Hispanic category is, in fact, the only ethnicity that the state is interested in explicitly identifying and classifying. The category is defined through cultural designators—a person of "Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin." In this definition, Hispanics can be of any race.

The category of "American Indian or Alaskan Native" illustrates another dimension of classification. To be counted as part of this group, individuals must not only trace their origins to any of the original peoples of North America, but they must maintain



Racial categories are fundamentally unstable: they have changed nine times in the past 10 U.S. census counts.

"cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition"—a condition not imposed on any other group.

Despite these inherent contradictions, the OMB Directive was a significant and positive move from a civil rights perspective. Once the categories were institutionalized, groups could obtain a wealth of new data on the disparities between white and non-white populations in the areas of voting rights, public accommodations and services, education, employment, and housing.

However, all racial and ethnic categories are fundamentally unstable. Official racial categories have changed nine times in the past 10 U.S. census counts. In the planning of Census 2000, the Census Bureau once again faced increasing public demand for revising the racial categories. Arab American groups lobbied for a "Middle Eastern" category. Currently classified as "White," Arab Americans have argued for a separate

Michael Omi is professor of ethnic studies and acting director of the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the co-author with Howard Winant of *Racial Formation in the United States*.

category to address, in part, issues of discrimination such as hate violence in the wake of the Gulf War and continuing political instability in the Middle East. Taiwanese Americans have been lobbying for a distinctive designator as Taiwanese, separate from that of Chinese under the Asian or Pacific Islander category.

Two of the most controversial claims that surfaced were Native Hawaiians' request to relocate to the American Indian or Alaskan Native category, and the push to add a multiracial category to the census.

Native Hawaiians

Native Hawaiians, along with other Pacific Islanders, were finding that being in the Asian/Pacific Islander (API) category did not serve their interests. Data from the 1990 Census illustrated deepening differences in the demographic profile between Asian and Pacific Islander groups. Between 1980 and 1990, Pacific Islanders decreased from seven percent of the total API population to five percent. There were 365,000 Pacific Islanders in 1990 compared to 6.9 million Asians. At the same time, only 13 percent of Pacific

Islanders were foreign-born, compared to 66 percent of Asians.

More importantly, socioeconomic indicators also suggested two distinct groups. Only 11 percent of Pacific Islanders 25 years and older had bachelors degrees compared to about 40 percent of Asians. Median household income was \$33,955 for Pacific Islanders and \$41,583 for Asians.

To address these differences, Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii) initiated a discussion and subsequent lobbying effort to move Native Hawaiians out of the Asian/Pacific Islander category beginning in the early 1990s. Senator Akaka's office had been receiving phone calls from students and alumni of Kamehameha High School complaining of the difficulty of convincing mainland colleges and universities to consider Native Hawaiian admissions and scholarship decisions separately from those of Asian Americans. Native Hawaiian students cited unique social hurdles and economic difficulties in pursuing higher education. College and university administrators countered that Native Hawaiians would be considered part of the API category and not be guaranteed any form

of "special" consideration.

In March 1993, Senator Akaka contacted the OMB and proposed to create a new indigenous category of "Native American," that would group Native Hawaiians together with American Indians and Alaskan Natives. This proposal received support from the entire Hawaii congressional delegation, then-Governor John Waihee, a range of Native Hawaiian organizations, and some Native American groups.

However, the OMB's Interagency Committee was reluctant to adopt this change, fearing that the move would open up the contentious and unresolved issue of Native Hawaiian sovereignty. At a subsequent meeting with the Hawaiian delegation, OMB's Sally Katzen proposed another option that completely surprised Native Hawaiian advocates: Why not put Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders together into a separate category? The proposal became official on October 30, 1997, when the Asian or Pacific Islander category was disaggregated into two categories. Whether this reclassification will enhance the visibility of Pacific Islander communities and allow them to more effectively advance their interests and concerns remains to be seen.

The case of Native Hawaiians illustrates how inclusion in a broad, panethnic category like Asian/Pacific Islanders can mask or even undermine the specific needs and concerns of smaller and more impoverished groups. It also illustrates the ability of small and marginalized groups to, in some instances, effectively advance political claims and successfully lobby for distinct forms of state classification.

The Multiracial Option

On the issue of people of mixed race, OMB Directive No. 15 of 1977 states that "[t]he category which most closely reflects the individual's recognition in his community should be used for purposes of reporting on persons who are of mixed racial and/or ethnic origins." This presupposes, however, that a person can identify an unambiguous community. Indeed, the logic of the census is that each and every individual possesses a clear, singular, and mono-racial identity.

Since the 1970s, individuals and groups

have formally protested the notion of mutually exclusive racial categories embodied in the "single-race check-off" policy. Much of the public pressure came from the parents of school-age multiracial children, who did not want their children to face the dilemma of having to choose one race in public school data-gathering efforts. Beginning in the early 1990s, both the Association of MultiEthnic

Census definitions have had the unintended consequence of shaping the very discourse of race and the distribution of vast resources.

Americans (AMEA) and Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) actively lobbied for a separate multiracial category for Census 2000. Some groups, such as Project RACE, framed the multiracial category as a "self-esteem" issue, while others saw it as a means to generate more accurate data on multiracial people and to educate the larger public about multiracial identity.

Over time, most of the major civil rights organizations, such as the Urban League and National Council of La Raza, along with groups such as the National Coalition for an Accurate Count of Asians and Pacific Islanders, opposed a multiracial category. These groups feared a multiracial category would diminish their numbers and undermine the "protected status" of non-white groups and individuals. Some estimated that from 75 to 90 percent of those who previously checked the "Black" box could potentially check a multiracial one if it were an option. Civil rights groups also argued that existing federal civil rights laws and programs were based on exclusive membership in a defined racial/ethnic group.

After several years of intense debate, the OMB rejected the proposal to add a separate multiracial category. In 1997, the OMB amended Directive 15 to permit multiracial Americans to "mark one or more" racial category when identifying themselves for the census and other government programs. The Census Bureau will eventually release data

for 63 different racial combinations that are now possible under the system of allowing multiple check-offs for the race question.

The debate over a multiracial category reveals intriguing aspects about the social constructedness and fluidity of race. It will be interesting to see how multiracial people identify themselves on the census, and the complex issues of civil rights monitoring and

enforcement that will emerge from the institutionalization of the "one or more" race option and corresponding aggregation of data.

Unintended Consequences

Racial and ethnic classifications are increasingly mediated by the Census Bureau. While originally conceived simply to provide consistent categories for use by federal agencies, the census' definitions of race and ethnicity have had the unintended consequence of shaping the very discourse of race and the distribution of vast resources in the United States. These categories have become the *de facto* standard for state and local agencies, the private and nonprofit sectors, and the research community. In addition, these categories inordinately influence group identities and forms of political mobilization.

Yet racial categories are inherently unstable and shifting. We can never have categories that will be conceptually valid, measurable, and reliable over time. Yet we cannot simply abandon the use of racial and ethnic categories. Without them, we cannot monitor and track racial inequality and discrimination—for example, racial profiling. However "unscientific" and imprecise these categories may be, some form of racial classification is needed to discern trends and discriminatory patterns.

Given this, the census will continue to be the site of struggles for group recognition and empowerment in the coming years. ♦



KIRK CONDYLES, IMPACT VISUALS

Betting on Sovereignty

Andrea Smith navigates the complexities of Indian gaming and Native sovereignty.

The recent proliferation of Indian gaming has triggered enormous public outcry. In 1999, 198 Indian tribes were involved in gaming operations, generating \$8.26 billion a year in revenue, 10 percent of the total gaming revenue in the U.S. Some argue that Indians have lost their culture and sold out to capitalism. Others celebrate that Indians are finally weaning themselves away from government dependency.

Public debate about Indian gaming revolves around the pros and cons of gaming regarding social costs and economic benefits. The assumption is that if Indian gaming has negative social consequences for tribes, it should be prohibited. If not, it should be permitted.

In fact, the impact of gaming on tribes is complex. Some tribes have been able to

parlay the monetary gains of gaming into more economic and political power. But sometimes gaming aggravates problems in tribal societies. Whether the advantages of gaming outweigh its pitfalls can only be gauged from tribe to tribe. But whatever the consequences of gaming, it is primarily a sovereignty issue. Non-Indians need to realize that only Native tribes have the right to decide whether to pursue gaming.

Money to Fight

Some non-Indians find it disturbing that gaming has given tribes greater financial ability to fight for their rights.

In Wisconsin, tribes used gaming revenues to fund legislative and court battles against the state of Wisconsin to stop mining on Indian lands. Through these efforts, promoting Republican Governor Tommy

Andrea Smith (Cherokee) is an anti-violence and Native American activist who recently co-founded a new organization called Incite: Women of Color Against Violence.

Thompson was forced to sign an anti-mining moratorium. As anti-mining activist Justine Smith (Cherokee) notes, "Few people see the relevance of Indian gaming, but in Wisconsin, efforts at dismantling Indian gaming are thinly disguised assaults upon the environment."

Native tribes were also able to use gaming revenues to oust notorious anti-Native rights U.S. Senator Slade Gorton (R-Wash-

"The whole movement against gaming is really an attack against Indian people."

ington) in the recent election. In an unprecedented joint effort, gaming tribes pooled over \$5 million to defeat Gorton. This was more than five times the amount all Indian tribes spent during the entire 1996 presidential election.

Gorton has a long history of undermining Native sovereignty. As Washington's attorney general in the 1970s, he contested Washington tribes' treaty-protected rights to salmon fish all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the Senate, he advocated sharp cuts in tribal budgets in 1995 and introduced a proposal two years ago to force tribes to waive their sovereign immunity in lawsuits. His defeat last year was particularly important because Gorton was one of the senators slated to fill the position of chair of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs.

Sammy Toineeta (Lakota) of the Racial Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches notes that many church denominations have begun organizing against gaming since the advent of Indian gaming. These churches did not protest when whites developed gambling in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. "It's still that unconscious attempt to keep tribes economically dependent," Toineeta says. "The churches say they want us to be independent, but they really don't. The whole movement against gaming is really an attack against Indian people."

Undermining Sovereignty

While it is important to defend tribes' right to engage in gaming, Indian gaming

A casino along the Apache Trail in the middle of the Arizona desert.

can entail an erosion of Indian sovereignty. For example, in order to negotiate state compacts, Indian tribes have to allow state jurisdiction on their lands.

In addition, much of the rhetoric used by tribes to garner public support for gaming could eventually backfire on them. Cal-

ifornia tribes consciously used language about promoting "tribal self-sufficiency" rather than "tribal sovereignty" in the recent campaign for Indian gaming initiatives. While they were successful in passing these initiatives, self-sufficiency language has been used against Indian tribes in the past. Once a tribe is deemed "self-sufficient," it is presumed to no longer need treaty status, and thus vulnerable to termination of its sovereignty rights.

Another issue is the impact of outside contractors on Indian gaming. Many tribes rely on outside companies to run the day-to-day operations of their casinos. The Interior Department's Office of Inspector General issued a report in 1993 alleging that tribes stood to lose \$12 million from mismanagement by these outside firms. It also found that 18 out of 27 bingo management contracts had overcharged tribes to the tune of more than \$62 million.

Greed and Guns

Gaming can also exacerbate internal political factionalism. In 1995, for example, the Keweenaw Bay Chippewa found themselves in the midst of an armed confrontation. The tribal chair, Fred Dakota, had run the tribe with an iron first, but with the influx of casino gaming revenues, his greed completely got the better of him. When a tribal election resulted in defeat for his supporters, he stripped 202 members of the right to vote. This move led to an armed confrontation between Dakota and his opponents. Dakota was eventually arrested and sentenced to



two-and-a-half years in federal prison for accepting \$127,000 in bribes from a New Jersey slot machine dealer and evading taxes on that income.

To add insult to injury, Dakota (unsuccessfully) attempted to evade imprisonment by arguing that as the chair of a sovereign nation, he was immune from federal prosecution. Gerlinde Picard, an activist against Dakota's regime, observed, "Corrupt tribal leadership is a clear and present danger to tribal sovereignty. It is the tribes that are sovereign not tribal chairs."

In another example, violence erupted in the Elem Indian Colony Band of Pimos on October 7, 1996 over tribal Chairman Thomas Brown's control of the reservation's two casinos. After one faction filed a lawsuit charging Brown with embezzling money from the casinos, the rancheria became a battleground. Over the next six days, 10 residents were wounded by gunfire while nearly 70 others fled.

Opponents of Indian gaming were only too happy to use these violent scenarios as examples of why tribes shouldn't have gaming. Tribal member Jim Brown says biased media portrayals of the Elem conflict "played directly into the hands of the State of California's campaign to control Indian gaming or destroy it completely."

More than 30 percent of Indian gaming revenue goes to two small reservations.

Are Indians Getting Rich?

In the absence of other forms of economic development, many tribes see no other choice but to pursue gaming to achieve self-determination. Sometimes, the choice is between gaming or storing a nuclear waste dump. But the economic effects of gaming are also complicated.

Since casinos are labor-intensive, they can contribute to significant reductions in Indian unemployment. The Minnesota Gaming Association reported that in 1992 Indian gaming contributed a total of 30,000 jobs to Minnesota. On Prairie Island, unemployment dropped from 77 percent to 7 percent with the advent of gaming. Gaming in California has created 50,000 jobs. Some tribes have used gaming revenues to expand social services and educational opportunities for their members.

But the reality is that the majority of Indian gaming revenue goes to a few tribes. More than 30 percent of gaming revenue goes to two small reservations—the Pequot and the Oneida—and 50 percent of the revenue goes to 10 tribes. Gaming is not a viable option

for many tribes—many are too far away to attract tourists; others live in states where gaming is already legal. Gaming supporter Sammy Toineeta says that gaming has not been a successful venture for her Rosebud tribe. "Rosebud is a rural community and no major interstate highways lead to it, so there is no way to pull people into the casino."

Despite gaming revenues, the economic situation for Indians in general has worsened rather than improved. The per capita income of Indians is currently \$4,500, compared to a national average of \$14,000.

Nonetheless, news reports on Indian gaming often project the falsehood that all Indians are doing well. Particularly in the era of "welfare reform," when the poor are being told that they just need to "get a job," Indian tribes that are not as successful as the Pequot or the Oneida may be blamed for not being able to improve their economies. Philanthropic organizations may also be less willing to fund Indian organizations because they mistakenly believe all Indian communities are benefiting from casino revenues.

Gaming Guinea Pigs?

If Indian gaming is terminated and Indians are thus deprived of their competitive advantage, what will befall Indian tribes dependent on Indian gaming? About 25 percent of gaming tribes distribute revenues on a per capita basis to members. Sherry Wilson (Ho Chunk) of Women of All Red Nations complains that "Per caps can be a curse. They often promote individual greed rather than cooperative effort. All these people now want to join our tribe, when they didn't care about being Ho Chunk before." Once a tribe establishes per caps, it is very difficult to end them as members become dependent on this income. Consequently, tribes can find themselves in spiraling debt trying to maintain per cap payments when gaming revenues cannot support these payments.

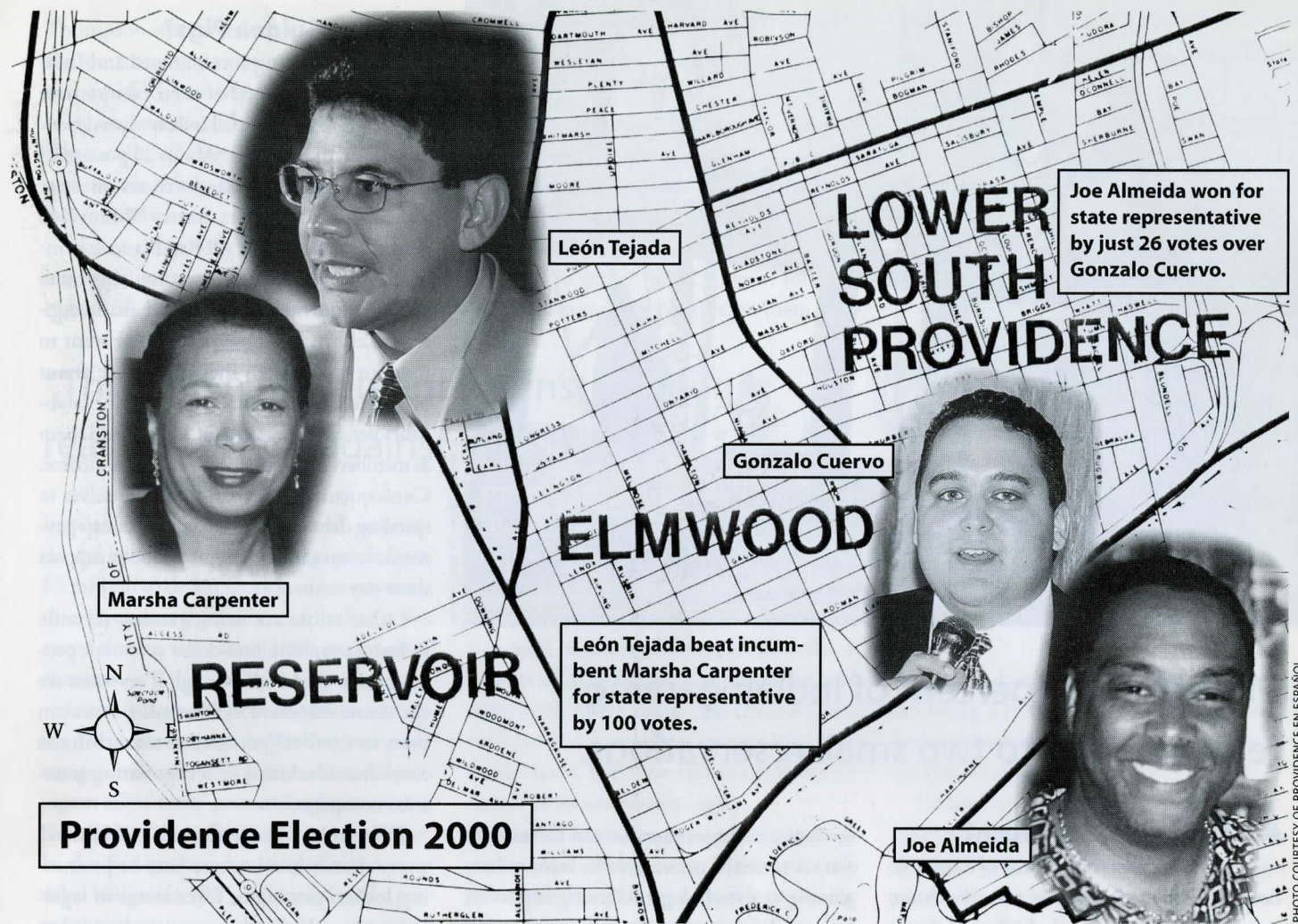
Other tribes are using gaming revenue to finance multimillion-dollar economic programs that could fall through if revenues are cut. As we witnessed in Wisconsin, states can then use tribes' precarious situations as economic blackmail in renegotiating state-tribe compacts.

Douglas M. George-Kanentilo (Mohawk) warns that certain interests may be promoting Indian gaming to force states to legalize gaming. If that happens, Indian tribes will be left in the lurch.

He states that Indians are "gaming guinea pigs."

On the other hand, many tribes are not counting on gaming to last forever. Seventy-two percent of gaming tribes use gaming revenue to finance other investment projects that can help sustain them if gaming ends.

When one looks at the precarious political, economic, and social status of Indian tribes in this country, it is clear that there are no simple answers. Indian nations are forced to cope with difficult decisions regarding economic development, cultural preservation, and national sovereignty within a society that never meant for them to survive. For many nations, gaming is a partial answer to the problems they face. For others, it is part of the problem. However, the decision to pursue gaming or not is a choice that only Indian tribes have the right to make. ♦



Brown Power vs. Black Power

Shannah Kurland discusses how Latino politicians targeted progressive black incumbents in Providence last fall.

An explosion of Latino voting in Providence, Rhode Island this fall should have been a cause for celebration. Instead, it has revealed an electoral quicksand that pits Latinos against African Americans and separates identity from ideology—conditions ripe for manipulation by an entrenched white power structure whose corruption is legendary.

Some people think that Latinos (backed by the white power elite) made a deliberate and reactionary grab at what little black political power exists in Providence; others see the conflict as a predictable, if frustrating, outgrowth of the demographic shift that has concentrated the potential electoral power of all people of color in the same few districts. Either way, there was no net increase in elected officials of color in a campaign marked by a complete absence of substantive discussions of policy or politics that would promote social justice.

The institutions that guided the surge of Latino voting emphasized themes of Latino pride and power, while the multiracial teams supporting progressive black incumbents spoke of the courage and integrity of their candidates without articulating any racial justice message. All of this energy was squeezed into the three neighborhoods with the largest

concentration of people of color. People of color throughout the rest of the city were left hungry for action, with no place to go. The white power structure was never called on to defend itself.

Providence is not unique; the effective electoral displacement of African Americans by Latinos is playing out from Southern California to Miami, and countless places in between. Does the expansion of Latino political power have to come at the expense of black representation? And beyond the identity of the individuals representing districts of people of color, are our communities even talking about racial justice when we engage in electoral work?

A Changing Population

For most of the last 26 years, Providence has been ruled by Mayor Vincent (Buddy) Cianci, a brilliant old-school Italian machine politician with illusions of mafia grandeur, who was once convicted of felony assault on his estranged wife's lover. Cianci's agenda of corporate welfare through downtown development is driven not so much by ideological preference as by a burning desire to consolidate personal power and wealth. He is currently the subject of a Department of Justice investigation that has so far resulted in the conviction of three members of his administration for various graft-related crimes and the indictment of his former chief of staff. Many folks feel that the best preparation for finding your way around City Hall is to watch *The Sopranos* a few times.

Cianci's relationship to communities of color has grown cruder over the years: when co-optation and crumbs fail to buy peace, as in the period following the murder by Providence police of a black off-duty officer last winter, he simply severs contact and writes off the black vote. Cooperation between various factions of Irish, English, and Italian ethnic politicians has created a solidly white political establishment at the state level as well, with more interest in creating personal

Shannah Kurland is the outgoing director of Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) in Providence, RI.



The electoral displacement of African Americans by Latinos is playing out from Southern California to Miami.

wealth and appeasing the suburbs than dealing with messy "urban" issues of social or economic justice.

Providence is about half people of color. More than 25 percent of the city's popula-

tion is Latino, about half of whom are immigrants from the Dominican Republic. They're joined by Puerto Ricans, South Americans, and an emerging population of Mexicans. Like the Cape Verdeans who immigrated

to Rhode Island in huge numbers throughout the first half of the century, and like most other Caribbeans, Dominicans are part of the African Diaspora. African slaves, a few indigenous survivors, and European colonizers created a population that has as many degrees of oppression as it does skin tones.

In Providence, African Americans make up another 15 percent of the population. With about six percent share of the city population (and growing), Asians have not yet

"We're more apt to run against ourselves than someone white, since there is a fear of taking on the power structure."

emerged as a potent force in the political scene. Due in part to the search for decent housing, a sort of reverse colonization process has taken place, with the result that not one working-class neighborhood in Providence remains predominantly white. Councilman John Igliozi, whose family thinks they own the working-class Silver Lake neighborhood, recently lamented that not enough white people are moving into his ward.

The Latino Challenge

Despite the spread of Latinos throughout the city, all but one of the Latino candidates decided to try to unseat progressive black elected officials. The three races involving Latinos were focused in South Providence, which is still over 50 percent black and has been represented exclusively by black politicians for more than 20 years, and in the adjoining Elmwood and Reservoir Triangle neighborhoods, where white politicians have generally ruled despite a clear majority of people of color. South Providence has experienced a steady growth in Latino population, and the Latino presence in Elmwood has tripled in the last 10 years, while the black population has remained at 25 percent. Reservoir Triangle was mostly white until the residency rule for city workers was temporarily lifted in 1992, sending hundreds of white firefighters, clerks, and police officers stampeding to the suburbs as if they were escap-

ing the seven plagues. Now Latinos and blacks together outnumber whites in the Triangle.

The September 2000 primary and the November general election were historic in terms of the number of Latino voters, but this high turnout had precedents. In 1994, Luis Aponte became the first Latino to run for City Council, and four years later he won. Anastasia Williams of Panama became the first Latina state representative in 1992, and in 1998, three Latinos ran for city or state office.

By election 2000, the other shoe dropped. At Sackett Street School, the city's most heavily Latino polling place, lines reached down a flight of stairs and out to the street, while Dominican-owned taxi and shuttle services dropped off vanloads of voters in 15-minute intervals, and dozens of campaign volunteers swarmed the sidewalks. Poder 1110, the city's most popular Latino radio station, pounded the airwaves all day, broadcasting live from the polls and exhorting listeners to get out and vote Latino.

In Elmwood, León Tejada, owner of an income tax service, beat Marsha Carpenter, a six-year incumbent black woman, for state representative by a mere 100 votes. A member of the political party currently in power in the Dominican Republic, the social democratic Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), Tejada was more a symbol of that group's emergence as local political power than a known entity in his own right. The PRD was instrumental in Tejada's victory, helping him overcome the fact that he moved into the district only a month before the filing deadline and had the very public backing of Joseph Voccola, a lawyer and state representative out of a mob-infested suburb, who trashes South Providence.

In South Providence, a young Latino marketing consultant named Gonzalo Cuervo ran against the social justice flag-bearer, Joe Almeida, a freshman black representative and

former police officer who bucked the House leadership and led a successful charge to pass a law for collection of racial profiling data in Rhode Island. Almeida beat Cuervo by just 26 votes. Cuervo, whose political leanings are as much a mystery as his decision to run, works for a restaurateur who has a strong relationship with the Mayor. The latter has urged Cuervo to make a run against South Providence's militant black councilwoman Balbina Young. Nationalism got ugly at times in the Cuervo campaign—Gladys Gould, a Dominican who organizes with DARE (Direct Action for Rights and Equality), a multiracial social justice community organization, spent the day hustling votes and working polls to support Joe Almeida, "because of his courageous fight on Driving While Black legislation. I know he makes a difference for all people of color." In response, Cuervo supporters screamed "traitor" in her face.

What Black Means

Almeida acknowledges that racism is a problem in getting blacks and Latinos together, and compares it to the privilege that lighter skin color carries within black communities. "Every Latino who ran is light-or white-skinned. What we have in common is that we come in shades, and we need to accept that within ourselves, as who we are." He explains that as people of color, "we're more apt to run against ourselves than someone white," since there is a fear of taking on the power structure.

Gwen Andrade, an African American political and community activist, warns that racism has created a wedge between blacks and Latinos rather than forging a bond. After running for state senate in the Elmwood and Reservoir Triangle neighborhoods in 1992 and managing successful campaigns including her Puerto Rican husband's bid for city council, she sees this election as a sign that many Latinos will respond to racism by more readily aligning with whites. This is especially frustrating because the Caribbeans who make up the vast majority of Providence's Latino population share not only African roots but also a history of slavery and brutal oppression with North American blacks.

"In America the further away from 'black'

you get, the better," says Andrade. "That's the perception that's been set up—it's the historical perspective of any group of people that has African roots. If you've got that African heritage that comes out in the skin color, or in the hair, you're fighting even harder to distance yourself from it because of what black means in this country." Or in this hemisphere, one could add.

The only local Latino candidate to challenge a white incumbent was Juan Pichardo, who lost a bid for state senate in Elmwood and Reservoir Triangle by less than 100 votes.

Dominican leader Peña Gomez argued that Dominican immigrants must become U.S. citizens, involve themselves in their local communities, and win elections.

Pichardo comes out of a new generation of Latino political operatives, having served as campaign manager for a young Dominican man who ran against Joe Almeida for state representative in 1998. His opponent this time was Bob Kells, a five-term white incumbent and current police captain with inconsistent positions ranging from progressive to fascist.

Pichardo tried to play the middle ground but alienated the black political establishment by failing to support Marsha Carpenter, the progressive black incumbent state representative from Elmwood. The PRD, on the other hand, was disappointed that Pichardo failed to give unequivocal support to Carpenter's opponent, León Tejada. Of all the local Latino candidates, Pichardo came the closest to building a base of black

supporters, and also drew heavily on his strong relationships with white progressives at Ocean State Action (an affiliate of US Action) and the Rhode Island Young Democrats.

Most of all, Pichardo's race proved to be a test for RILPAC, the Rhode Island Latino Political Action Committee. Founded in 1998 by Dr. Pablo Rodriguez, a respected activist and philanthropist, the organization reflects its founder's solidly progressive politics and has a sizeable base of young Latino professionals. But RILPAC also plays the curious role of providing a "safe" space for white politicians of both major parties to get exposed to Latinos. The organization has raised eyebrows by endorsing black candidates, most recently by supporting Marsha Carpenter over León Tejada for state representative. In a reflection of internal struggle, RILPAC endorsed both Joe Almeida and his opponent Gonzalo Cuervo.

The Dominican Connection

If RILPAC has been up front in the political establishment's eye, then surely the PRD has been the stronger player on the street. Having this year recaptured the presidency in the Dominican Republic for the first time in 14 years, the PRD is no stranger to building membership throughout the hemisphere. It was founded in 1939 by exiled leaders during the brutal, U.S.-backed dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, and soon had a strong leadership base in New York. In 1961, party members returned to the Dominican Republic and overthrew Trujillo's regime.

One of the heroes in the resistance to the 1965 U.S. invasion that (not surprisingly) followed was the young Francisco Peña Gomez, who went on to become the party's presidential candidate in 1996. He came in first, but lost the run-off when his opponent made an unholy alliance with Trujillo's successor.

Tragically, Peña Gomez died of a brain tumor two years after the election, but his legacy remains crucial. He laid the groundwork for dual citizenship for Dominicans, ensuring that participation in the U.S. political process would not require someone to sacrifice her or his Dominican political identity. Understanding the potential force of

colonized people within an imperial power, he argued on countless trips to New York that Dominican immigrants must become U.S. citizens, involve themselves in their local communities, and win elections.

Equally important to the emergence of racial justice perspectives in local politics is the fact that Peña Gomez was black. Not mestizo, *ni* mulatto, *ni* any shade of brown, but dark black. In a country ravaged by racist imperialism, his leadership and expected victory represented a major accomplishment.

Locally, the PRD has built effective electoral operations but comes up short on multiracial coalition. However, if the PRD is to reach its goal of expanded citywide and eventually statewide influence, it will require a broader base. Providence PRD President Rhadames Duran declares, "We believe it's necessary to work for the community as a whole. By uniting as minorities, as soon as we get ourselves organized politically, we can reduce the impact of racism." While the PRD's only major support went to Tejada, Duran claims that the party will be prepared to support any candidate who conforms to its mission.

In Providence's fall elections, concrete discussion of the values and policies that might promote racial justice was absent, but there may be nowhere to go but forward. Joe Almeida, for one, sees some black/Latino unity in the future, and suggests that leadership in that movement may come from today's multiracial babies who embody both cultures. RILPAC spokespeople have been explicitly describing the links between Latino interests and those of other "urban" communities in public forums. Rhadames Duran speaks of redoubling the PRD's work, so that within six years there will be a viable "minority" candidate for mayor representing a unified front of Latinos, African Americans, and Asians.

As for the possibilities for creating a unified racial justice agenda, Gladys Gould of DARE says, "We're all in the same boat in terms of the struggle. Right now, the Latino community has the idea that the vote is a weapon, but they don't know how to aim it. Carrying a gun doesn't make me powerful—it's how I use that gun that makes me powerful." ♦

Native Americans and whites transformed violent treaty conflicts into a powerful environmental movement in Wisconsin.

From Enemies to Allies

BY ZOLTAN GROSSMAN AND DEBRA MCNUTT



Natives marched in Keshena, Wisconsin to protect the Wolf River from Exxon's Mining Company.

The late 1980s and early 1990s was a time of intense conflict between Ojibwe (Chippewa) Indians and white sportfishers over Native treaty rights in the forested northern third of Wisconsin. For months, the normal peace and quiet of this ceded area outside of the state's six Ojibwe reservations was shattered by whites chanting racist taunts such as "timber n____," assaulting tribal elders, and ramming Ojibwe vehicles to protest the ancient practice of Native spearfishing.

Less than a decade later, Native American nations and white sportfishing groups are cooperating to protect the same fish they had fought over, and building a powerful alliance that has chased several mining companies

out of the state. International mining industry journals now express worry about the contagious spread of Wisconsin anti-mining strategies, and identify Wisconsin as one of four global battlegrounds for the industry's future.

While some activists downplay racial differences in order to build short-term cooperation between different groups, the Wisconsin experience shows that such a strategy is counterproductive. The Native nations that asserted their rights most strongly also developed the strongest cooperation with neighboring non-Indian communities around issues of mutual concern, and against outside corporate threats. The Wisconsin experience demonstrates that racial politics do not con-

tradict anti-corporate politics. In fact, the assertion of rights by particular oppressed groups can help build and strengthen multiracial alliances.

Treaty Conflicts

Under the treaties of 1837 and 1842, the Ojibwe had reserved rights to use natural resources—such as fish, game, wild rice, and medicinal plants—in the "ceded territories" they sold to the U.S. The tribe's historic practice of spearfishing was outlawed in 1908, driving the tradition underground, until a 1983 federal court decision recognized that Wisconsin Ojibwe had retained treaty rights in the ceded territories.

In response, a backlash gained steam among white sportsmen who feared that spearfishing would deplete the lakes of fish. Although the Ojibwe never speared more than three percent of northern Wisconsin fish, they were repeatedly scapegoated by the media and sportfishers for the region's environmental and economic problems.

Indain speafishers were confronted by mobs of white anti-treaty protesters held signs reading "Save a Walleye—Spear an Indian." They shouted racist epithets such as "timber n____," "welfare warriors," and "spearchuckers," and threw rocks, bottles, and full beer cans at Natives. Ojibwe saw their elders assaulted and nearly run over, their drum groups harassed with whistles and mock chants. White sportfishers blockaded, swamped, and attacked Ojibwe boats

Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt are co-founders of the Midwest Treaty Network and longtime social justice activists.

with metal ball bearings, pipe bombs, and sniper fire.

The state deployed National Guard helicopters, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) patrol boats, and riot-ready police from nearly every county at boat landings during the two-week spring spearfishing seasons. But they actually did precious little to stop the violence, which centered around the Lac du Flambeau and Mole Lake Reservations.

In response, the Midwest Treaty Network (MTN), founded in 1989 as an alliance of Native and non-Native groups supporting tribal sovereignty, initiated the Witness for Nonviolence, modeled after similar moni-

White sportfishers attacked Ojibwe boats with metal ball bearings, pipe bombs, and sniper fire.

toring programs in Central America. During the treaty conflicts, about 2,000 trained witnesses stood with Ojibwe fishing families as a supportive presence, documenting anti-Indian violence and harassment, and trying to deter or lessen the violence and promote reconciliation.

Witnesses noticed that many followers of the anti-treaty groups were confused by anti-Indian propaganda, and genuinely concerned about the environmental effects of spearing. Even at the height of the spearing clashes, the late Red Cliff Ojibwe activist Walter Brette had predicted that white northerners would realize that environmental and eco-

To protest mining corporations in Wisconsin, Native Americans led a march from the Mole Reservation to the proposed Crandon mine site.

economic problems are "more of a threat to their lifestyle than Indians who go out and spear fish.... We have more in common with the anti-Indian people than we do with the state of Wisconsin." How to turn this potential into a reality was the question.

Mining Invasion

The opportunity came with the 1990s invasion of mining companies into the area. The environmental threat they posed provided a crucial common enemy around which to build an alliance. A number of multinational mining companies, such as Exxon and Kennecott, had long eyed the metallic sulfide deposits in northern Wisconsin. They saw the administration of pro-mining Republican Governor Tommy Thompson as the ideal opportunity to propose new mines, particularly since Native and non-Native communities were split over treaty rights.

Ironically, it was Native sovereign rights guaranteed by treaties that became a key factor in building a multiracial alliance against the mining companies in Ojibwe ceded territory. The treaties gave the tribes legal standing in federal court to challenge environmental degradation. This political clout forced whites who were seriously interested in environmental protection to sit down at the table with the Native nations as potential allies.

This budding alliance first appeared when local white environmentalists and the Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe Nation jointly opposed Noranda Corporation's proposed Lynne mine

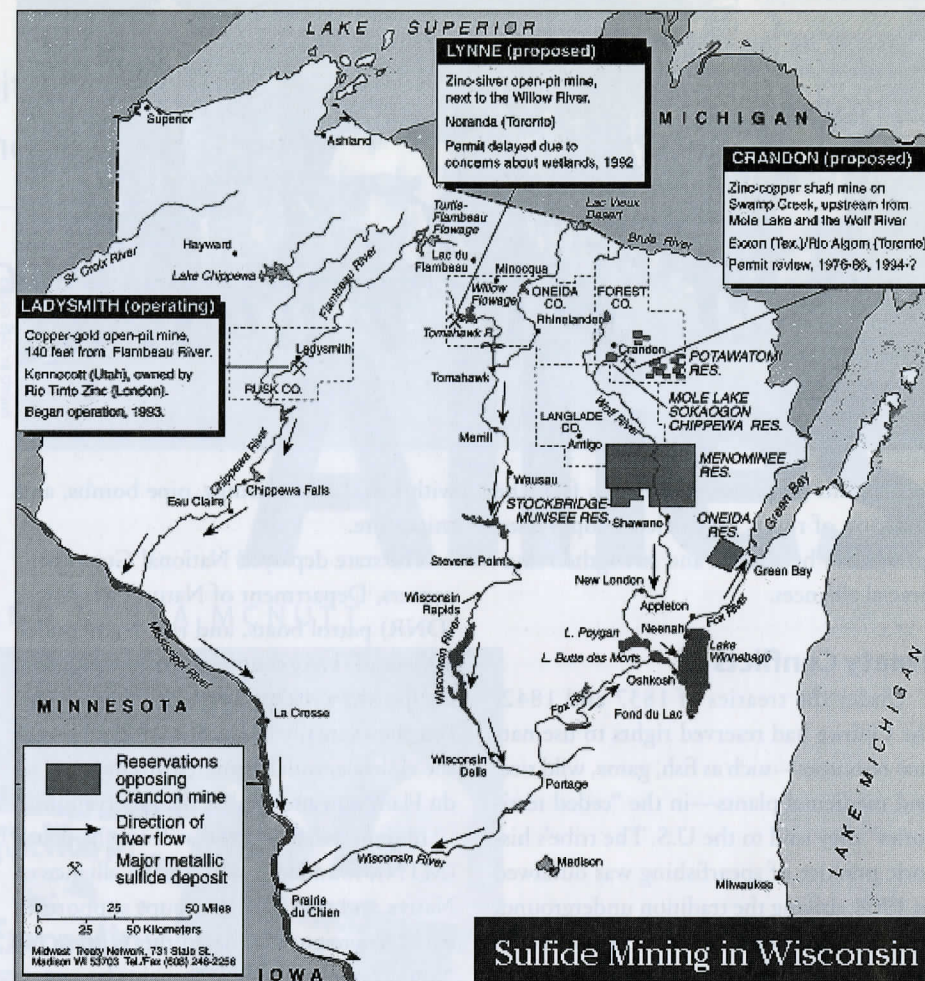
near the Willow Flowage in Oneida County. The area had been the scene of some of the most intense spearing clashes, but an alliance against the mine nevertheless developed quickly. As a result, the company was forced to withdraw in 1993.

Teacher and environmental leader Carolyn Parker asserted that the spearfishing conflict "closed some people's minds but opened others," including some sportsmen who had been anti-treaty group followers. As anti-treaty groups revealed their racist agenda, most of their "environmental" following fell away, especially when they refused to oppose new mining plans that threatened the fishery. Lac du Flambeau spearfishing coordinator Tom Maulson, who was later elected tribal chairman, said that the spearfishing conflict offered an "education on every-

Native sovereign rights guaranteed by treaties became a key factor in building a multiracial alliance against the mining companies.

body's part as to what Indians were about. It needed a conflict to wake them up."

But the key struggle broke out when Exxon attempted to mine the large Crandon metallic sulfide deposit in Forest County with backing from Governor Thompson. The Crandon mine site is one mile upstream from the ancient wild rice beds of the Mole Lake Ojibwe Reservation, five miles upstream from the pristine trout-rich Wolf River (which flows through the Menominee Nation), and five miles downwind from a Potawatomi Reservation.



In 1995, the MTN initiated the Wolf Watershed Educational Project (WWEP) campaign, which quickly mushroomed into a grassroots alliance of Native, environmental, and sportfishing groups against the Crandon mine. The campaign organized a speaking tour to 22 river communities, and a rally of 1,000, unprecedented in the region. In 1997, the WWEP toured the state to increase support for a Mining Moratorium bill, which Exxon unsuccessfully tried to defeat with a \$2 million blitz of TV ads and lobbying. (The bill passed but has since been undermined by the state DNR.) A 2000 WWEP tour visited schools around the state, culminating in a rally at the capitol in Madison and passage of a bill to ban cyanide in mining.

Building Bridges

The WWEP tours brought many non-Indians into contact with Natives for the first time. Communication between the two communities was often facilitated by individu-

als whose family or personal history brought them into contact with the other group, particularly rural white teachers, shopkeepers, and nurses. In the wake of the previous conflicts, key players felt motivated to sit down at the table and to educate each other about common concerns. The groups came to view this alliance-building process as a welcome diversion from continued racial strife; it became a conscious goal of many participants. Retired white engineer George Rock observed, "Things we've gained from knowing who people are will not go away...When you work with people, you don't just work on the issue...the passing of the pipe becomes part of the understanding."

By initiating positive relations between former enemies, the WWEP and other Wisconsin anti-mining campaigns created a major headache for the mining companies. In 1998 Exxon sold the Crandon project to its Canadian partner Rio Algom, which was bought out by the London-based South African firm

Billiton in 2000. While Billiton is still trying to revive the Crandon mining operation, international mining journals now describe the WWEP as "one example of what is becoming a very real threat to the global mining industry."

Unity Out of Conflict

How has such a grassroots movement managed to slow down the corporate Goliath? Part of the answer lies in Native nations' perseverance in defending their sovereignty and treaty rights. Another part of the answer lies in Wisconsin's history of environmental ethics, and its tradition of populist and progressive politics. Part of the answer also lies in a regional rebellion by rural northern Wisconsin, which has been historically poorer and more neglected than the southern part of the state.

The alliance was built on a sense of commonality cemented by environmentalism. Environmental protection not only served as a unifying concept, but helped build cultural understanding that extended beyond the issue that initially brought unity.

This environmental unity was deepened by a common sense of place. The geographic setting, and the landscape's hold on the imaginations of tribes and their neighbors, unified the alliance. Langlade County sportfisher Bob Schmitz says that a "mutual love of the river" brought together angling groups and tribal members. Groups bonded in defense of places that both perceive as "sacred"—such as the Willow Flowage or the Wolf River—even though they perceive this "sacredness" in very different ways and use natural resources for very different purposes.

Most political strategists seek to avoid or lessen differences between different communities. But in areas such as Lac du Flambeau and Mole Lake, the strong Native assertion of sovereignty was key to forging the alliance.

The alliance allowed both sides to use Native sovereignty and stewardship to the advantage of the whole community. Tribal representatives described treaties as posing a stronger legal obstacle to mining than weakened state laws, and sportfishers sug-

gested that the Ojibwe had done a better job than the DNR in monitoring the fishery. In 1995, the Mole Lake Ojibwe and Potawatomi used federal laws to strengthen their reservation environmental regulations, to protect the air and water for Indians and non-Indians alike.

When voters in the township of Nashville (covering half the Crandon mine site) ousted their pro-mining town board in a 1997 election, they elected a Mole Lake Ojibwe to fill one of the three board seats. The new board not only went to court to try to stop the mine, but instituted a joint economic development program with the tribe and approved the expansion of the tribal land base.

In addition, some Native nations used their sovereignty rights to open large casinos in the mid-1990s, generating income that strengthened their ability to fight mining companies in the courts and in the arena of public opinion, despite threats by Governor Thompson to close the casinos if the tribes did not back down from their treaty rights and environmental demands. Even some former anti-treaty protesters were given jobs at the casinos.

In fact, absent the demonstrated power of treaty and sovereign rights, rural whites would have felt little reason to sit down at the table with the Indians. Facing an unequal relationship with their neighbors, Native residents likewise would have little incentive to unite with them. The demand for Native sovereign rights equalized Natives and non-Natives, and this equality was a prerequisite for building real unity. Al Gedicks, executive secretary of the Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, says Native treaty victories help solidify the "perception that we are now dealing with equals rather than with a community perceived as victims."

Ironically, the previous treaty conflicts served to define the land and its resources as something both rural communities needed to defend in order to preserve their resource-based ways of life. An outside threat from the mining companies helped to build a common territorial identity that included all groups that lived in the threatened local area, but a strong assertion of Native nationhood was necessary to get to that point.

In places where a treaty conflict was prevented or did not occur, the later Native/non-Native cooperation was not as fully developed, and environmental alliances may have failed as a result. For example, in Rusk County, next to the Flambeau River, Kennecott Corporation opened the Ladysmith mine after the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe ran out of funds to stop the mine in court. The tribe had not aggressively pursued off-reservation spearfishing in an attempt to build a relatively better relationship with non-Indians. Consequently, local whites may not have become aware of the treaties' legal powers and the copper-gold mine was able to operate successfully from 1993 to 1997.

Al Gedicks says that rural whites would be more likely to work with tribes if the treaty issue was "in their face...they would have had to have an opinion, get educated."

A New Environmentalism

Resource corporations are used to dealing with environmental groups made up largely of white, urban, upper-middle-class 20-somethings, who protest projects supported by rural communities for the jobs they produce. The companies have been able to portray such activists as hippies and yuppies who do not care about rural people, and white urban environmentalists often reinforce the stereotype by not being inclusive or supportive of people besides themselves.

What corporations face in northern Wisconsin is something new—an environmental movement that is multiracial, rural-based, middle-class and working-class, and made up of many youth and retired elderly people. This movement does not just address the mining industry's environmental problems, but also its threats to Native cultures and the local tourism economy, its "boom-and-bust" social disruptions, and its mistreatment of union employees. Try as they might, the mining companies could not divide Wisconsin communities by region, by class, or by race. ♦

For more information:
Midwest Treaty Network, 731 State St., Madison, WI 53703, (608) 246-2256, Email mtn@igc.org, <http://www.treatyland.com>

KIWA mounts a
multiracial class
challenge in L.A.'s
Koreatown.



Showdown in K-Town

BY TRAM NGUYEN, COLORLINES ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The efficient yet laborious path that creates Korean barbecue beef or Mexican *carne asada* and moves it from the kitchen, to the server, to the customer's table feels familiar enough, whatever corner of Los Angeles' many ethnic enclaves you may wander into for lunch. This is the underside of the well-worn, sweat-stained story of mom-and-pop, immigrant businesses: their success often comes on the backs of those more recently arrived and worse off. In L.A.'s bustling Koreatown, with about 300 restaurants inside a five-mile radius, these small businesses seem the embodiment of a model minority's entrepreneurial industriousness.

Fueling this industry is an underground army of almost 2,000 Latino and Korean workers who cook, serve, and clean in sweatshop conditions for sub-minimum wages. Largely unregulated and ignored in the past, this enclave economy is a layered example of the hardscrabble success of some immigrants and the bone-weary survival of others—but it's not going unchallenged in Koreatown.

For the past three years, Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA) has wrestled with the local restaurant industry, one restaurant at a time, to comply with labor laws. The workers and organizers of KIWA are trying to draw a multiracial class line

through Los Angeles' fissures of racial tension, class conflict, and immigrant struggle. A Korean American-run organization, KIWA has attacked the exploitative practices of Korean businesses—and members have been called traitors by their compatriots for their efforts. This chorus grew louder when they sided with Latino as well as Korean workers. KIWA's industry-wide campaign to build a Koreatown restaurant workers' association, a groundbreaking joint effort of Latino men and Korean women, asserts an alternative vision of worker dignity and organizing in the midst of fierce employer resistance. It's been a fight all the way.

Jung Hee Lee of KIWA's Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown and Angel Martinez of CHIRLA's Association of Latin American Gardeners of L.A. demonstrated Korean and Latino solidarity in a Koreatown march.

The Class Line

KIWA started out with a deliberate political strategy of building a base in the Korean community from which to set forth a progressive agenda. Organizers didn't want just to improve conditions among low-wage workers, but to foster a working-class identity among Korean immigrants that would stretch across race and ethnicity to include solidarity with other workers.

"KIWA works really hard to show Korean workers that their interests are distinct from Korean business owners who employ them," said Mark Toney, executive director at the Center for Third World Organizing, who researched KIWA for his doctoral dissertation. "Seventy-five percent of Korean immigrants are workers, not entrepreneurs, and the majority of them are low-income. The work of KIWA is creating a distinct politi-

cal voice for Korean workers that demonstrates that Koreans do not constitute a monolithic community."

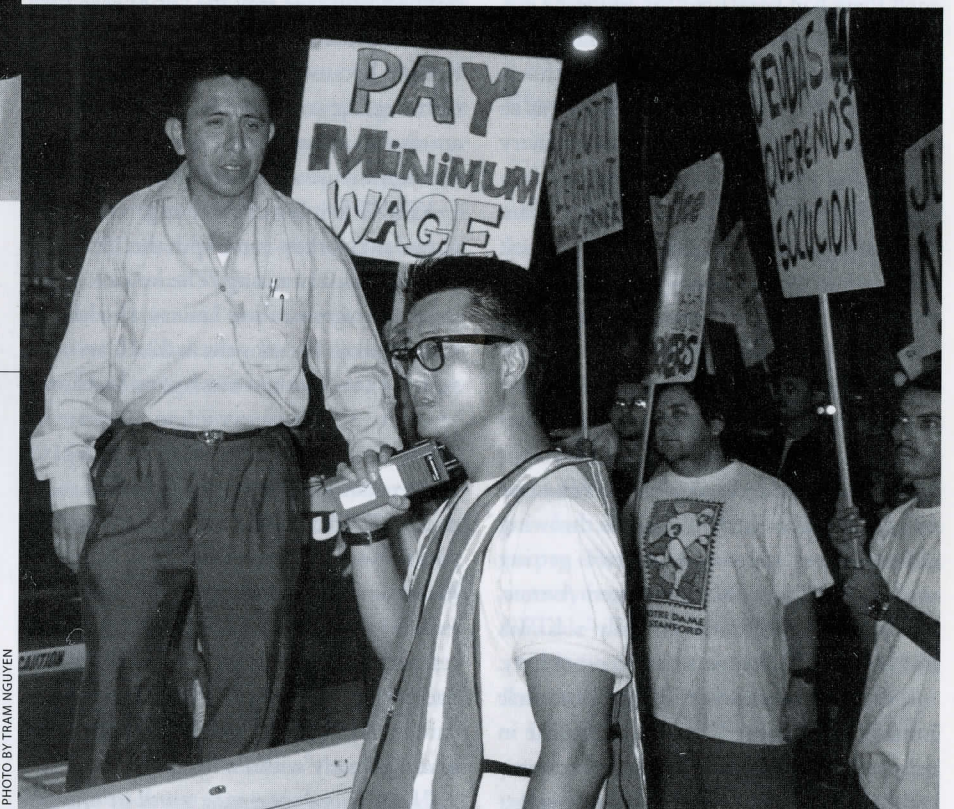
In 1991, L.A. was already shot through with media-fed racial tension between African Americans and Korean Americans. The city would flare into the riots that came a year later after the acquittal of police officers who beat Rodney King. People of color in L.A. were being pitted against each other and, if they were immigrants, getting screwed in exploitative industries, often by employers from their own communities. These were the issues on the minds of Roy Hong and Danny Park when they founded KIWA in 1992.

"Unless minority communities have alternative leadership that critically challenges this fostering of racial tension by

of business. Other actions, such as siding with garment workers against the Jessica McClintock clothing company, poised the organization as one of the few to articulate a working-class agenda from an Asian American perspective. Their early efforts, much of which took place within the insularity of an ethnic community, had implications that rippled beyond the Koreatown microcosm.

"When people think of the Asian American community, they don't think of the immigrant working class as the main voice. KIWA plays a major role in redefining politics within the Asian American community," said Glenn Omatsu, an Asian American studies instructor at UCLA and longtime supporter of the organization.

To circumvent Koreatown's prevailing conservative ideology, the organization opened its doors to workers with a simple



Román Vargas and Paul Lee of KIWA are key organizers of the Restaurant Workers Association of Koreatown.

the dominant force of society, we cannot counter it in an effective manner," said Hong, KIWA's executive director.

KIWA's first act was to demand emergency aid in the wake of the riots for Korean workers who had lost their jobs as stores went out

offer: you've got a problem, come to us. It became clear through the steady stream of translating, filing labor grievances, and counseling, that the restaurant industry harbored the worst abuses and offered the ripest opportunity for action.

"People worked 10 to 12 hours a day, and the employer didn't provide food. How can you work for fuckin' 10 hours and not get fed! In a restaurant!" Hong exclaimed. "Why aren't government enforcement agencies coming into ethnic enclave economies? They don't want to do anything about it—it's racism. Years and years of laissez-faire and no regulation caused these employers to become monsters."

The restaurant campaign was launched in 1997 to haul the entire Koreatown industry up to fair labor standards. This has involved filing hundreds of worker complaints and boycotting dozens of restaurants, publicly shaming them into paying thousands of dollars in back wages.

It all began with Cho Sun Galbi, a Koreatown institution for barbecue beef and the first major battleground for KIWA. A Korean cook there had been fired for asking KIWA to help with his employment contract.

"Strategically, our approach was, this is going to be an industry-wide campaign, so let's go after the biggest fish in the industry by making an example out of it," remembered Paul Lee, KIWA's lead organizer. "Cho Sun Galbi was the wealthiest and ritziest restaurant in the community. The owner was the vice-chair of the Koreatown Restaurant Owners' Association. When we had a chance to take them on, it was like a perfect fit."

Six months of bitter conflict at the picket line followed as the restaurant management and their supporters confronted KIWA-organized protesters: little old ladies throwing elbows, flying spit, and boycotters getting pushed off the sidewalk onto Western Avenue, all while the LAPD looked on idly—KIWA had hit a raw class nerve with the community.

"It was a very controversial time. The whole industry was abuzz. It was the first time in our community that any organization was publicly and directly confronting another institution," Lee said. "So in the beginning, almost everybody got a chance to taste another person's spit."

As it became clear that Cho Sun Galbi wouldn't beat the KIWA boycott, the other members of the Restaurant Owners' Association reckoned they were better off pulling out rather than risk becoming the next tar-

Román Vargas, a former dishwasher and now co-coordinator of the Restaurant Workers Association, helped lead a picket in front of the Elephant Snack restaurant.

get. The Association disintegrated, and Cho Sun Galbi reinstated the cook with back wages. KIWA had won its first major victory.

Latinos as Key

The workers of Koreatown's restaurant industry are about 30 percent Korean and 70 percent Latino, so KIWA soon realized that the Latinos were key to the success of their efforts.

However, notes Victor Narro, director of the Workers' Rights Project at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), tensions between Korean business owners and Latino employees, already strained, worsened after the Los Angeles riots.

"I find there are a lot of stereotypes about Koreans because there are a lot of owners out there treating workers badly. Every time Koreans exploit a day laborer, the word gets out, like 'don't trust a Korean,'" Narro said.

KIWA's first big effort to organize Latino restaurant workers came with the 1998 boycott of Baek Hwa Jung. The boycott, seeking back wages for three Latinos who labored 12-hour days for months at \$2.20 an hour, signaled an important message to Koreatown residents. KIWA was going to advocate for all low-income workers in the area, regardless of nationality. The organization was showered with "traitor" accusations. "How could you as Koreans do that to other Koreans?" Paul Lee remembered critics asking him.

After five months of weekly pickets, the restaurant finally agreed to pay \$14,000 in back wages. Since then, KIWA has organized extensively among Latino workers, collaborating closely with CHIRLA.

"KIWA is doing race work at a grassroots level in the area where there could be the most conflicts in the most marginal situations," Omatsu said.

Dealing with Difference

The typical restaurant set-up—with Korean waitresses and cooks and Latino cook helpers, busboys, and dishwashers—is an

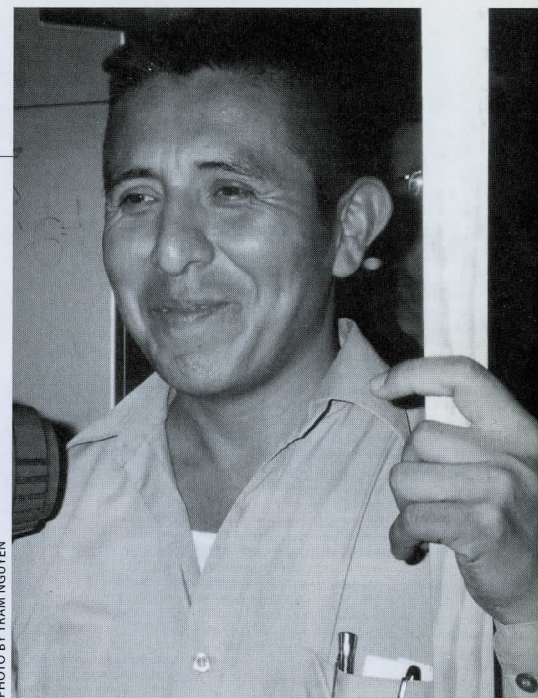


PHOTO BY TRAM NGUYEN

employer tactic to keep the groups divided, organizers said. In some restaurants, Latinos are paid less and receive worse treatment than Koreans. But there are also restaurants that pay minimum wage only to Latinos on the assumption that they are more likely than Korean workers to file complaints if they don't get fair wages.

Coming into an environment laden with racially tinged disputes and malcontent, KIWA's approach is to break down racial and ethnic perceptions between the workers and build up a shared class identification that stretches across race lines. In this way, they see the restaurant campaign as a crucial form of racial justice work.

"You cannot talk about race without class and look at class without race. If you do that, you fall into the trap of racializing, or the other side of the coin, become ethnocentric or nationalistic," Hong said. "We strongly feel that worker organizing should not be categorized as just an economic justice issue. It's not. It's the most effective way for workers to build racial unity."

In a classic example, organizers have encountered many conflicts among workers over the issue of sharing tips. Latino workers complain that Korean waitresses don't share their tips with Latino busboys. Without context, this situation could easily be

interpreted through a potentially damaging cultural rationale—that Koreans are selfish and don't share tips because of prejudice against Latinos. But KIWA tries to educate about the structural causes that keep bottom-rung workers bickering over nickels and dimes.

The waitresses, many of whom get paid a salary of about \$600 a month, need every extra tip dollar to get by. Though supportive of tip sharing, KIWA raises the bigger issue of why the boss isn't paying all the workers better.

"We take a potentially divisive ethnic/racial issue and turn it into a class issue. By getting the workers to come around to fighting for better working conditions, not just the tips, we begin the process of fighting the owner and developing a bond between the two groups," Lee said.

Bringing together Korean women and Latino men, all first-generation immigrants and most non-English speakers, generates particular challenges for workers and organizers building a united front against employers. Latino men bring with them the experience of Korean employers calling them derogatory names and using disrespectful language. Korean women are overcoming cultural and gender barriers that have kept them from interacting as colleagues with men, especially of another race.

Paul Lee stresses the importance of understanding each community's unique characteristics. In Koreatown, that means realizing that Korean women are often trapped in the enclave economy by language and cultural barriers; therefore the threat of employer blacklisting makes it difficult for them to join worker associations. Latino men, on the other hand, can work in restaurants across the city, and their mobility in the industry presents another challenge in getting them organized. The Korean women are mostly wives and mothers, often the primary breadwinners in their families. Many of the Latino men left behind families they are supporting in Mexico or Central America.

Despite these differences, workers said the urgency of their common concerns overshadows any discomfort they initially feel with each other.

"The problem isn't between Korean and Latino workers. The problem's with the employer," said Román Vargas, a former dishwasher who is now one of the co-organizers of the workers' association. Vargas came to KIWA seeking support after getting fired from a hotel restaurant where he worked 12-hour days for less than \$2 per hour.

Worker meetings, taking place at 8 a.m. on Sundays (early enough for most to get to work afterward, late enough for the women to take care of children and husbands in the morning), are a demonstration of the flexibility called upon from everybody. With headsets and written agendas, everything is translated into Korean and Spanish.

"When we look at the economy, we see who are the ones doing this kind of low-wage work. They're not white Americans, they are immigrant workers," said Jung Hee Lee, a former waitress and the association's other organizer. "I think we play such an important role in U.S. society."

Since the restaurant campaign began three years ago, Koreatown's restaurant industry has, painfully and stubbornly, changed for the better. The industry had a 97 percent rate of non-compliance with labor laws in 1997. A recent KIWA survey showed a drop to about 41 percent non-compliance among the area's restaurants. Just as importantly, word has spread among owners that they can't exploit with impunity.

"Some of the stuff we hear, that we like a lot, are rumors about certain owners cursing us behind our backs," said Paul Lee. "That's a positive change, whether they're admitting their wrongdoing and voluntarily changing or they're changing because they realize they have no choice."

Worker Centers Thrive

The Restaurant Workers' Association of Koreatown is one of numerous independent worker centers that have sprung up in different parts of the country during the past 20 years. These immigrant-identified associations don't want to be subsumed within unions, which they criticize for failing to reflect the multicultural reality of workers or to address ethnic enclave economies with truly substandard labor conditions. As com-

prehensive worker centers, they go beyond unions in not only improving working conditions and wages but also building worker power that ties into a community-based agenda for racial and economic justice.

"We need labor to be on our side. They have all the resources," said Victor Narro. "There's going to have to be a lot of alliance building. But these [worker] movements also have to be respected as autonomous immigrant workers forming their own collective actions."

At CHIRLA, Narro has helped establish associations for domestic workers, day laborers, and gardeners where workers take the leadership, bring in resources, and sustain their own movement with support from the parent organization. Plans are underway for a new garment workers' center providing Latino, Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese workers with a place for advocacy, legal advice, and political education.

Eleven is Not a Lucky Number

KIWA currently is in the middle of a protracted dispute with Elephant Snack Corner, a Korean fast-food place that stiffed eight Latino workers out of an estimated \$210,000 in wages and overtime.

Every Friday since the beginning of summer, a band of 15 to 20 local activists and workers have been picketing at the street corner in front of Elephant Snack. Customers used to take up two benches outside the restaurant waiting for a table. Now both the benches and most of the tables inside are empty. The sign above the restaurant has recently begun advertising an "11th anniversary sale" with slashed prices.

"Eleven is not a significant number in Korean culture," Paul Lee remarked dryly.

Despite the combined squeeze of street protests and a KIWA lawsuit, the owner has refused to give in. And so KIWA continues slugging it out with this restaurant, the way they have with others before.

"After three years, the restaurant owners tell us now employers have to worry about what employees think. That change means dignity and respect on a daily basis," reflected Roy Hong. "Why is that? Because we beat the hell out of some employers." ♦

Inside-Out

An Interview with Anne Braden

and Upside-Down:

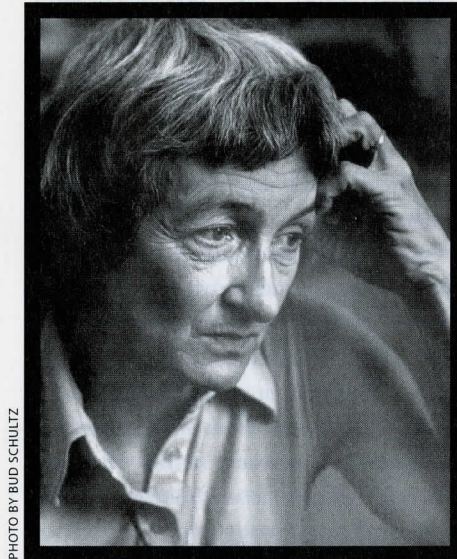


PHOTO BY BUD SCHULTZ

June Rostan talks about multiracial organizing with one of the South's amazing freedom fighters.

In 1954, when black people couldn't use most public facilities or buy homes in segregated neighborhoods, Andrew and Charlotte Wade asked a white couple, Anne and Carl Braden, to buy a house on their behalf in an all-white area of Louisville, Kentucky. The Bradens bought the house, and the uproar that followed changed all their lives. The house was bombed. No one was hurt, but the perpetrators were never caught. Instead, the state charged Anne and Carl with sedition—Carl was sentenced to 15 years in prison and served eight months. Anne wrote a book about this incident, *The Wall Between*, in 1958 that was reissued by the University of Tennessee last year with a must-read 40-page epilogue. The bombing catapulted Anne into the freedom movement, and since that time she has been at the heart of anything that has to do with race and justice in the South.

Anne and Carl formed a lifetime partnership of social activism and were so committed to self-determination and leadership for people of color that for years they were regarded as pariahs by white liberals and castigated as Communists. In the late 40s

and early '50s, they worked with civil rights and labor groups in Louisville. In the 1960s, they staffed the extraordinary Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), and were central to the civil rights movement. Carl passed away in 1975. After SCEF broke up in the early 1970s, Anne helped found the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC). Now 76, she works with SOC and the Kentucky Alliance Against Racism and Repression in Louisville. Anne has set the benchmark for white, anti-racist organizing in the South for more than 50 years.

You have an incredible ability to look at people who opposed you and Carl, to understand where they are coming from and not be judgmental. How are you able to do that?

I never did hate those people who opposed us in the '50s because I knew that I could have been in their position. I was just lucky that I was able to break out of being white in a racist society and privileged in a classist society.

The "open sesame" for my generation was

race. Once we could understand what racism had done, then everything fell like a house of cards. It opened everything to question: economic injustice, foreign policy. If you don't understand white supremacy, then you do not understand the country. The first thing I had to realize was that the people I loved, my family, my friends, the people running Alabama were wrong. But once you realized that, it was not hard to realize that the people running the national government were wrong too.

What did your generation learn from the Civil Rights movement of the '50s and '60s?

The '60s were so important because the country had to confront the issue of racism which it was built on. When African Americans began to organize, they were the foundation. The foundation moved and the whole building shook. That is why people were able to organize against the war. That's why women were able to organize. All that hap-

June Rostan is the director of the Southern Empowerment Project.

pened because of the black movement.

I think our country was moving tentatively in the '60s toward turning its assumptions, policies, and values upside down. Southern whites of my generation who got involved in the Civil Rights movement turned our lives around. What we did is what this whole country needs to do: turn itself inside-out and upside-down and build a society that is not based on racism. You have to come to terms with this: that the society you live in is totally wrong and that it is destroying you as well as people of color. I have not overcome racism in myself. I have worked at it for 50 years but I still see life through white eyes.

How do we get other low-income and working-class white people to start working to overcome white supremacy?

If you want to get white people involved in the anti-racist movement, the starting point is not to ask them to give up their privileges. That is not a good organizing approach. White people who are struggling economically or living in terrible poverty have a hard time seeing that they have white privilege.

A lot of white working-class people have been turned off to our movements because they have been put down. There is an assumption among white intellectuals who think

they are liberals or anti-racists that all working-class and poor whites are flaming racists. They may have been some of the people who joined the Klan, but I have met just as many flaming racists in the country-club set.

Why do you say that white people have to come to their understanding of racism, not just through an intellectual experience, but through something emotional?

Because racism goes so deep. The kind of emotional experience that can make a difference varies with different people. Some get there through personal relationships. I didn't meet just one person, I met a movement. A community has to go through a process of turning itself inside-out. I think of Birmingham—it's not perfect, but it's better than a lot of places in the South today. It went through the turmoil. White people in Birmingham in the '60s had to look at what the heck was going on. You had four little girls killed when the church was bombed, you had dogs and fire hoses turned on black protesters.

Do you think we can build multiracial social justice and organizing groups in the South?

The South is not black and white any

more. We have growing Latino and Asian populations. And the Native Americans were always here, but we didn't know it until that movement surfaced visibly in the '60s. To build multiracial organizations in a racist society is virtually impossible. Impossible means it just takes a little longer. I tell people not to get discouraged if they try and fail, to try again.

I am part of two organizations that are really interracial, multi-ethnic, and definitely led by people of color. They are the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC) and the Kentucky Alliance Against Racism and Repression. We need more whites who are willing to take action and to serve in organizations with people of color in the leadership. Those of us who are white have to be careful that we aren't trying to dominate. We are so used to running things.

In the late 40s when it was so repressive, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), which was started in 1938 as an economic justice group, reorganized into SCEF around a single issue: race. There were other issues but Jim Crow segregation had to be dealt with first. SCEF was bi-racial from the beginning. Its outreach was to white Southerners. We wanted to get them involved in action on picket lines and going to jail, not just sitting around in human relations meetings.

When the movement won the lunch counter battle and voting rights, SCEF began to shift back to more economic justice issues,

"This was the scene in the courtroom during final arguments in Carl's 1954 trial on sedition charges. Did you ever see so many white men in your life? The jury is in the foreground, also a I white. You can see me at the defense table to the right, behind our defense lawyer."

—Anne Braden



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANNE BRADEN

as the black movement did. But then SCEF broke up in 1973. I came to the conclusion that the basic weakness in SCEF was that it became overwhelmingly white. We got this great influx of whites, after SNCC the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) told whites to go organize whites. SCEF became a battleground for white people to fight out their quarrels. The real purpose got lost.

I made up my mind then that I would never spend another minute of my life building something that was all or mostly white because it is not going to change anything. It is a waste of time.

We deliberately organized SOC as an interracial group. It has evolved into an organization that is clearly led by people of color.

What about groups that are made up of people of color only?

People of color need their own groups. African Americans and Latinos need their own separate groups. They need self-determination. They need to come together because they are oppressed. White people are not oppressed as white people. That is the difference.

What we did in the South in the '60s is what this whole country needs to do: turn itself inside-out and upside-down in building a society that is not based on racism.

Both the SCHW and SCEF, though interracial, were white-dominated. Yet I kept working to keep them going. I was so determined that we needed some kind of network in the South. I was willing to work for nothing and scrape by. I think SOC may be the only interracial group in the country that has evolved from a white-dominated group to a people of color led group, and I am very proud of that. In the mid-'80s some strong African American leadership emerged and took over.

The whole history of the South has been littered with the ruins of movements that brought disenfranchised blacks and whites



Anne Braden speaking at a Louisville rally against police brutality in the 1990s.

together and broke up on the shoals of racism. When the chips were down, whites always fled back to the security of their white skins. Principled black-white coalitions don't work unless there is a strong group in the black community first. The coalitions that fall apart

used to say it will take 50,000 organizers to organize the South. I don't care if we put all of our organizations together, we can't do it with just paid staff. Any social justice movement that made any difference had lots of people involved as volunteers.

Do you think it is important to keep bringing in new people?

That is the biggest weakness of our great progressive movement. We are reluctant to reach the people who are not involved. It's worst among whites who consider themselves anti-racist. They don't want to talk to white people who are not involved. Most whites who come into anything interracial go through the stage of working mainly in black communities because it is more comfortable and exciting. That is what I did years ago.

In 1951, I wrote to William Patterson, head of the Civil Rights Congress, about what I was doing, including going to some of the black churches. He wrote me and said, "You don't need to be going to the black churches, Anne. They don't need you to tell them that they are oppressed. You need to be talking to the white churches." That changed my life right then.

That was when I really decided that my mission was to get out and talk to white peo-

ple. That is why I was startled when all these white folks in SNCC got upset when they were told to go organize white people. Didn't they know that was what they ought to be doing?

My father, a working-class white man, said to me in the late '60s, "There's a revolution coming in this country and I don't have anything to lose from it." Then 10 years later, his attitude was altogether different. He'd gotten this sense that blacks had asked for too much, that they had gone too far. What do you think happened to change his mind?

He did not come to that conclusion by himself. That was the propaganda that was being put out. The people in control knew what to do to keep control. This was what

ished business of the civil rights movement was economic justice.

What is our hope for the future?

I think that there will be a new mass movement. I have been part of three mass movements in my life, times of great drama when things really explode: the upsurge of the '50s and '60s, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and the Jesse Jackson campaigns of the '80s. They were movements that really changed things.

At the first meeting of the Jackson delegates in 1984, there were 400 people. People started talking about what was happening in their communities. There were white coal miners from Appalachia, Latinos from New Mexico, people from all over the country. To me, one of the political tragedies of the 20th century is that the grassroots base of the Jack-



Anne and Carl Braden with their children at home in Louisville, 1960.

son movement collapsed after 1988. If it had kept going, we'd have a viable third force and an alternative to the two main parties.

There was a campaign for the minds of white people and a campaign of repression against blacks. People don't understand the repression that happened in the late '60s. That movement did not just go away. It was destroyed by repression. They chopped off the black organizers.

It was irrevocably damaging to the country that the movement was blunted at that point. It really was merging the issues. It was taking on economic justice. The unfin-

ished business of the civil rights movement was economic justice.

Mass movements usually start from a specific struggle. The main thing you do, when you don't see the mass movement you have been hoping for, is work to build struggles around specific issues. We've spent lots of time in Louisville around the police brutality issue. We do the battles at our doorsteps, bringing new people in around specific issues. They are the building blocks. I don't know when this will explode into a movement. Nobody thought that Montgomery, cradle

of the Confederacy, would be the place where the movement would break out in the 1950s.

For whites, none of this will change unless we deal with white supremacy. It's fine to sit and talk and get your heart in the right place, but it ain't going to have one bit of impact. Whites need to be visible and engaged. We have to break that solid white wall of resistance.

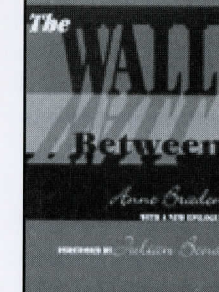
Do we talk about race or do we just bring people together to organize around common issues?

You have to attack the policies and practices of the society you live in. There are two different forms of attack: the common ground issues and the frontal attack on white supremacist policies and practices. In any community, you need organizations that are doing both. Living wage campaigns are common ground issues. Race and economic justice in this country are so intertwined that you can hardly talk about any economic issue where racism and white supremacy are not also involved. You can deal with a common ground issue and not only leave race out of it but also leave people of color out of it. And then you don't win. We need an organization in every community that makes a frontal attack on white supremacy. Those organizations need to involve white people and be led by people of color. ♦

The Wall Between

by Anne Braden

(University of Tennessee Press, 1999, 349 pp.)



Available through the Southern Empowerment Project for \$22, includes shipping (checks only).
SEP, 343 Ellis Avenue, Maryville, TN 37804
Tel: (865) 984-6500
Fax: (865) 984-9916
Email: souempow@bellsouth.net

A Chicana in Spain:

Remembering Our Arab Roots

Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez complicates "Hispanic" and "Chicano" politics by showing that Spain's heritage is not all that white.

For this hardline anti-imperialist, anti-racist Chicana activist who tends to see all European societies as "white" (oh, perhaps not the Irish), a trip to Spain can rattle some long-standing convictions.

Latinos who may prefer to be called "Hispanic" because it sounds more European and therefore white should wake up: hey, Spain's heritage is not all that white. The same truth may also frustrate their opposite: nationalistic Raza who hate Spain as just another white colonizer. Both groups forget that Spain was occupied and ruled for almost 800 years by Arab peoples who came from North Africa.

When Raza speak of being a mix of indigenous people, invading Spaniards, and enslaved Africans—which is certainly true—we rarely remember that Spain itself was a very mixed nation. We rarely remember our Arab roots or think about what they mean. We don't

even know that the very word Raza comes from the Arab *ras*, meaning head of, or beginning of, a lineage.

Before traveling to Spain last September, I knew of the long Arab occupation but still thought of Spain more as the home of those deadly 16th century conquistadores. So it didn't feel as wonderful as the guidebook portended to stand on the very spot in Granada where Columbus received Queen Isabel's message telling him she would, after all, approve his 1492 voyage in search of India. In one museum after another, in thousands of paintings that spanned centuries, I saw a single image of Native Americans (as captives brought back to Spain and being displayed in court). And, after two weeks of looking at those suits of armor made for guys like Hernán Cortés, nothing could bring relief except a big glass of sangria.

Desperate by then for anti-colonial revenge,



Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez in the gardens of the Alhambra.

The very word Raza comes from the Arab *ras*, meaning head of, or beginning of, a lineage.

Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez is a longtime activist and author, and director of the Institute for MultiRacial Justice in San Francisco.

I charged into Sevilla's giant cathedral looking for Columbus' tomb said to be located there. There it was: a big black casket held up by four black statues representing the kingdoms of Castilla, León, Navarra, and Aragón. Each statue supported a corner of the coffin and stood high in the air above me on a sort of platform. Damn, I couldn't even look down on Columbus and curse.

And Madrid's huge Plaza Mayor, filled with the brightly colored umbrellas of outdoor restaurants in the afternoon sun, didn't seem so charming after I learned that "infidels" were tried and executed on that same spot during the Inquisition.

There was more. In every major church, monument, and art collection, the over-

Columbus' coffin stood high in the air above me—
Damn, I couldn't even look down on him and curse.

whelming maleness of it all felt genocidal. Women, except the ever-present Virgin Mary, Queen Isabel, and one or two royal Infantas with their handmaidens, just didn't exist. Eight paintings of female saints tucked away in one Sevilla art museum came as a pleasant shock, but those sisters never showed up again.

Everywhere I found gilded Catholic altars, sometimes a hundred feet high, designed to humble the already humble. Looking at those stained-glass tales of Christian suffering and the innumerable paintings of saints and sinners made me feel alienated by awe, defeated by dazzle.

Imperialist, racist, sexist, hierarchical—that is indeed one Spain and its history, its culture. But there are other Spains, so listen up, all you brown folks in Gringolandia.

A Mestizo Spain

Southern Spain has a multiple heritage that is Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Roma (gypsy), and then some. The heartland of Muslim Spain is el-Andalus, originally settled by people often called Moors: a mixed race of Berbers and Arabs who crossed into Spain from Morocco and other parts of Africa. The heritage of el-Andalus (in Spanish, Andalucía) is strong in the city of Cor-

doba, which once had 3,000 mosques and a library of 400,000 volumes. It became the capital of el-Andalus in 756 A.D. and remained the glory of Muslim Arab society for three centuries until the Arab capital was moved to Granada.

Then, in 1492 the keys to Granada were handed over to a Catholic king and the Muslims expelled. The year 1492 signifies a triple blow from Spain's now-established Catholic rulers: the beginning of genocide for indigenous peoples in this hemisphere, the expulsion from Spain of Jews who did not convert to Christianity, and the same removal of Muslims. With the end of the only multiracial, multi-religious country in Europe came the birth of a vast imperialism.

But there is no forgetting the Muslim Arab heritage when the stunningly beautiful buildings, fountains, crafts, language, and the streets themselves affirm it all over southern Spain. Another heritage can be found in the "Juderia" or Jewish sections of various cities with synagogues dating back to the 1200s. The presence of yet another population, that of Spain's Roma (gypsies), makes itself known with their poverty and anger, music, and dress.

Originating in India, the Roma are a people whose physical darkness, proud culture, and semi-secret society have made them unique. Here, as all over the world, they are targeted by racism. Visitors to Spain hear almost nothing about them except as pushy hustlers and skillful pickpockets. Yes, one grabbed my hand and told my fortune unasked, then denounced my lousy 500-peseta offering. But who was I except a non-gypsy? And who but gypsies gave flamenco its songs of bitter lament, along with Arab troubadour roots?

The gypsies are also Spain, also not "white." It became so clear that we cannot simply say: Spain is a one-dimensional land that has always represented white supremacy. Like its people, its spirituality is mestizo—as is its art, architecture, music, dance, food, and so

much more. Spain is, and is not, Europe. And we Raza, like it or not, are Spanish as well as indigenous and African in origin.

Shared Worldview

Our Arab linkage is the strongest, I felt, and it's not just a matter of the biological link through invading Spaniards—a "blood" linkage. To be in Granada is to sense the presence of certain values shared by our indigenous ancestors.

There is, above all, the Alhambra, a spectacular walled complex of palace, fortress, and (once) a small city, resting high on a hill. The delicate, intricate loveliness of the Moorish palace, with its graceful arches, halls, courtyards, and spacious gardens, sets a tone of tranquility. The walls are covered with blue and green tile work called *azulejo* in patterns based on geometry, a science greatly enhanced by the Muslim Arabs. It all seemed marvelously appropriate for a belief system that prizes harmony and balance, that sees not separation but connection and the divine as part of everything. Such a worldview values tolerance. Muslim friends reminded me later that while Jesus Christ had said "I am the way," the Prophet Mohammed said "There are many ways to the mountain top."

In dramatic opposition to the arabesque harmony of the Alhambra's Moorish palace stands a palace built next door to it by order of Charles V, the Spanish king who dreamed of being "Emperor of the world." It has a facade that speaks of intimidating, granite power. Dualism prevails, not inter-connectedness. By contrast, the Arab fountains and pools of the Alhambra restore a sense of balance. The sound of bubbling water makes you feel the people responsible were more humble than other rulers, at least in relation to Nature. To respect water is to respect the planet and its makers. To love water is wisdom. It is not something to be "owned," nor is the land, in Islamic eyes.

This too echoes our hemisphere's indigenous cultures, for whom the land is our mother. This too is Spain.

Living With History

Spain has other lessons to offer Raza. One of them is a powerful sense of antiquity. Walk-



This young Chicano's sign reads: "Like the Mexicans, the Palestinians also want land and liberty."

ing down cobblestone streets, through winding, hilly *callejones* (alleys) with ancient names and barely enough space for a single car to pass, I often became lost in time and space. Spain feels so old, no matter how many business suits now rush by cradling cell phones. To be in a place where Neanderthals once lived, visiting cities founded by Phoenicians around 1100 B.C., then occupied by Carthaginians until 241 B.C. when Romans knocked them out, only to yield before Vandals and later Visigoths until Muslim Arab forces took over—and we're only up to 710 A.D.! Forget the U.S. of A., where any 200-year-old object attributed to the dominant society is "antique" and for most youth "old" means 30 years ago.

As Raza we can claim our own antiquity with ancestors who go back many centuries in Mexico: the Olmeca, Maya, Tolteca, you name it. Today many Chicano youth study those cultures and celebrate their ceremonies, dances, languages, beliefs. But we do not pass their legacy every day on the street; in this country, it's all paved over with stone and capitalism. And so our Raza pride in indigenous ancestry cannot easily translate into values we practice habitually. It cannot, for example, compel us to spontaneously refrain from throwing trash on a street out of respect for its long history.

The collective memory and sense of ownership that make most people keep cities clean voluntarily seem real in Spain—yet so hard to imagine in the U.S. Raza need to find new ways to live a beautiful worldview every day, to consistently affirm the unity of all living things in a society dedicated to the opposite. Our youth who enthusiastically embrace indigenous culture today need to translate it into how we relate to each other.

Not that Spain today lacks ancient curses too. Arab history includes cruelty and repression, and Arab women in particular have often suffered under brutal patriarchy.

During my visit, another ancient liberation struggle exploded. Last September 30 in Madrid, the headline in *El País* declared: "Atentado de los GRAPO contra la sede de 'El Mundo' en Barcelona"—the offices of a major newspaper had been bombed by an underground organization supporting national independence for Euskadi—the Basques. The long, long struggle of these people—who may well be the oldest indigenous population of what became Europe—goes unresolved today.

Then came a news report about would-be African immigrants being turned back at the border and I wondered about Spain's treatment of them. When I talked to the young night-clerk at my Toledo hotel, he

expressed concern about this, but assured me that Spain's attitude was not racism.

Hmm. What about Spanish attitudes toward Latin Americans, who are often derogatorily called *sudecos*? The reaction to Latinos who look Indian can be sheer racism. The irony is staggering. How can Spaniards with all their mestizaje despise other mixed human beings whom they in fact created?

Too bad they have forgotten that Spain's invaders of the Americas mostly came from Andalusia, with its long years of Arab occupation and racial mixing. Historians say that heritage helps explain why Spain had less overtly racist policies toward indigenous peoples than Anglo-Saxons; why, for example, except in the upper class, Spain routinely granted approval of marriage with Native women and recognized mixed-race children. Perhaps many Spaniards today, like Raza in the U.S., need to think more about the meaning of "Hispanic."

The Smoking Mirror

Filled with contradictions, my visit ended in an exciting certainty about the need to stretch our minds beyond what's assumed. To find the smoking mirror of indigenous legend called Tezcatlipoca that represents a moment of reconciliation of the past with the possibilities of the future. We must look into it to acquire the sense of memory that steers intuition, as my friend Jennie Luna has written. To find the sense of history that calls for liberation. And let me add: for a balance that does not equate good with evil but does reflect complexity, fearlessly.

Remembering our Arab roots includes affirming links with the search for one's homeland and struggle for land. Raza sometimes call our homeland Aztlán and often see Mexican people in the U.S. as originally a colonized people. What of the Palestinians fighting for their homeland? When Raza fought against the colonizer, we were called "bandidos" as the Palestinians today are called "terrorists." In our respect for the fights of indigenous peoples, let us support the Palestinian struggle for *Tierra y Libertad*—land and liberty.

May the smoking mirror always reveal interdependence. ♦

Race and the Revolution

Arnoldo García and Vanessa Daniel discuss racial politics with renowned Cuban cultural leaders Nancy Morejón and Nisia Agüero.



Cuban poet Nancy Morejón.

Soon after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro delivered a historic speech in which he abolished Jim Crow segregation and announced that the revolution would bring racial equality to the island. It was nearly 30 years before he broached the topic of race again. In the interim, it was assumed that racial healing would occur as a natural effect of other changes. The government line, widely held by the Cuban population, was that to speak about race directly would only accentuate differences and divide the people at a time when unity under a single "Cuban" national identity was necessary to fend off U.S. attack.

Forty years later, the topic is still controversial, but increasingly, Cubans are breaking the silence about race to address persisting inequalities. On a U.S. tour this fall to foster greater cultural exchange between Cuban and American artists, Nisia Agüero and Nancy Morejón spoke with *ColorLines* about race in Cuba.

Arnoldo García is a poet and singer and a staff member of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Oakland. Vanessa Daniel is a research associate at the Applied Research Center in Oakland.

Nisia Agüero is the director of the National Theater of Cuba and founder of the Cultural Center for the Development of Community Theater and Popular Art, "La Baraca," which extends access to the arts to disadvantaged communities in Cuba.

An internationally acclaimed writer, Nancy Morejón has published 12 collections of poetry, three monographs, a dramatic work, and four critical studies of Cuban history and literature. Most widely recognized in the U.S. for her book of poetry, *Where the Island Sleeps Like a Wing*, Morejón's poetic voice, at once deeply sensual and political, is a feminist-infused expression of the Afro-Cuban experience.

"For years Cuba did not admit that there was any kind of racial discrimination. That's why the recent Congress was a landmark."

Q: How is race different in Cuba compared to the U.S.?

Nancy: Like the United States, our history has been marked by the plantation economy, by migrations, and by the battle of the skin. Race and color are fundamental to the life and existence of Cuba, yet they are distinct in their history and presence. Exploring race in Cuba has become a fad, and we must be careful, because many books and materials have been produced by individuals who, while they may be well-intended, take only a cursory and frivolous glance at the issue. There are those who arrive from

PHOTO BY VANESSA DANIEL



Arnoldo García with Nancy Morejón and Nisia Agüero, director of the National Theater of Cuba.

Madrigal For Runaway Slaves
For Miguel Barnet

Head and hands dangling, flaring,
mocking the Slave-Tracker's clue.
Their sweating bodies dive into the
tangled wet brush.

What a hard beauty their hearts have.
On their machetes as on slender
branches
pigeons and tropical mice nest.
And days of suns,
and days of moon,
and days of will
resurrect their lives, and they are like
children,
sweet children of a liberty already
won.

—Nancy Morejón

the outside thinking Cuba is a racial paradise. Cuba is not a paradise, but neither is it hell. Then there are those who arrive with a disrespectful and paternalistic attitude, thinking they have a better analysis than Cubans themselves. Cuba is a different reality, and race does not function in the same way that it does in the United States. People pontificate on these issues after visiting Cuba for 10 and 15 days. I've known great cultivators of the theme of blacks and race in Cuba who have not been to Cuba since 1971

Q: What, then, is distinct about the Cuban identity?

Nancy: The concept of color to us is revolutionary and innovative because it reflects an international phenomenon. For example, *mestizaje*—the concept of a mulatto identity—exists throughout the Americas but changes depending on your location. In Haiti, the mulatto class betrayed the revolution. They allied themselves with the French and created a separate social class. This did not occur in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, or Cuba where the color line is not as rigid. In Cuba, the black and mulatto population basically made up the most impoverished stratum, but in the interior of the republic there were many white *campesinos* within that same stratum. So in Cuba, the economics of the color line are not so fixed. To be a mulatto does not mean you belong to the middle class or to the opulent class, as it does in Haiti.

Mestizaje also goes to the cultural question. If I enter South Africa in 1980, I suffer the apartheid that any black person there suffers. But the moment I speak, it becomes clear that I am not from South Africa because culturally I am Hispanic. This cultural question is a torment for the racial nomenclatures of the U.S.. What am I? Spanish is my language, so how can you say that I am not a *mestiza*? The Afro American world, the world of the Americas, is really a mixed/*mestizo* world. Understanding this, we then have

to recognize that there is still this pervasive vision of race that is very Saxon—a mentality which promotes the idea that there are still pure races and which becomes the cornerstone of fascist positions.

Q: Many have made the distinction between the severity of the U.S. color line and the more permissive nature of Cuba's color continuum.

Nisia: There is a saying from the 19th century that goes, "Are you Mandinga or Carabalí? If you're not from the Congo, you're from Carabalí." In other words, you are more or you are less black, but everyone is mixed and everyone has some black in them. There are no pure whites—they don't exist in Cuba. The culture is syncretic.

Q: Has the Cuban revolution adequately addressed race?

Nancy: The independence philosophy of Cuba has very strong and long internationalist roots. Revolutionaries in Cuba nourish ourselves with the philosophy of José Martí, the Apostle of Cuba's Independence, who lived for many years as an immigrant in New York. He learned directly about issues of race in the U.S. He translated the novel *Ramona* by Helen Hunt Jackson, which dealt with Native Americans in the U.S. Our love of liberty was partly taught to us by the *cimarrones*, runaway U.S. slaves who fled into the mountains and afterwards joined in the Wars

of Independence.

The originality of the Cuban revolution lies in the fact that it was not a European-style revolution. It was created by and among people of color. The Cuban revolution looked toward Asia and Africa. When the Algerian revolution triumphed, Che Guevara discovered Franz Fanon. This was not accidental, or because Africa was in vogue, but because there was a recognition of the natural bond Cuba has to African history. Cuba and the revolution connects and draws from many parts of the world. The revolution has done an outstanding job of teaching everyone this history. However, 500 years of the philosophy of pillage, of racial discrimination, is not erased by 40 years of exercising the Cuban revolution.

Nisia: The revolution has bettered race relations. Before 1959, those who danced and played "black" music were denigrated. The time right before the revolution was one of intense discrimination. The Cuban elite had copied the U.S. model of Jim Crow segrega-

The originality of the Cuban revolution lies in the fact that it was created by and among people of color.

tion. Blacks were barred from certain beaches, restaurants, hotels, and other spaces. They couldn't work in the banks, or certain stores. The grandson of Antonio Maceo, who is one of Cuba's greatest patriots from our independence struggle, was not allowed to enter a university in Havana because he was black.

I am older, so I can speak of "before" and "after" the revolution and can remember a time whites stepped on blacks to keep us down. Racism was pervasive. The former president of the republic, Carlos Prío Socarrás, divorced his wife, a mulatto woman, and married a white woman so that his political party would allow him to run for the presidency. Still, as Martí always said, "In Cuba, being Cuban is much more important than being white, black, or mulatto."

Q: Was there silence around the issue of race following the revolution?

Nancy: In the '60s and the '70s race was

a taboo and forbidden topic. But over time, writers and artists have used our work to open space for dialogue. Over the past two years, writers and artists have spoken to the Cuban Congress about it. We have accepted as a fact that racial prejudice hasn't ended in Cuba, that it forms part of a conflict in the history of our country and that it is something we have to continue fighting.

Nisia: It is true that in Cuba there have been periods of extremism, eras in which, like the 1970s and 1980s, there was no way to admit that there was any kind of racial discrimination.

Nancy: It was an error. On the other hand, while it is true that issues of race, gender, and sexuality were not talked about immediately after the revolution, there were also other, more immediate priorities. The feeling was, if the U.S. decides to drop a bomb on Cuba, the bomb is not going to choose blacks or whites. There was a lack of debate as a result. That's why the recent Congress was a landmark in stating that we still have social

conflicts that reveal the existence of prejudices. This is crucial because when you are aware of something, you are able to start working on it. Now we are finally beginning to discuss and deal with these issues.

Q: Can you explain more about why you believe that race is so important now?

Nisia: Everyone is unhappy with television programs. There is bias. Still, I can say with certainty that in Cuba racial discrimination does not exist.

Nancy: I differ—racism and discrimination are related. Constitutionally, no one in Cuba can say, "I don't like blacks." It is not very socially acceptable; it is condemned. But subtle discrimination persists.

Nisia: It is not an institutional but a social problem. The Cuban leadership is conscious and is struggling against it, but it is complex. Fidel Castro openly acknowledged the prob-

lem by standing up and saying, at the opening session of Congress, that Cuba still has racial problems that must be addressed.

Q: In Cuba, television remains dominated by fair-skinned cubanos. Is there a disconnect between the ideological image of *cubanidad* [Cuban-ness] and that which is actively put forth to represent national Cuban culture?

Nancy: As artists we see this about television and disagree with it. Still it is complex. Those are problems that can't be resolved through laws.

April

Those leaves flying beneath the sky
are the language of our nation.

These birds that breathe
the hostile languor of the storm

know that April
unleashes all aggressions.

O country of my birth
I see you standing fierce, by the sea;
this dust I walk
will be the magnificent common
garden.
And if we fall, once again
our bones will rise up on the sand.

Our spirits dwell here
in the unforeseeable month, April,
where the island sleeps like a wing.

—Nancy Morejón

Nisia: The leadership of our country is conscious and is struggling against it. But the former president of the Cuban Institute of Television is black, and he also perpetuated the problem by mainly casting whites.

The revolution moved and changed the structures. But racist values remain in the minds of many. Many of these values are inculcated in us—these racialized concepts of beauty or intelligence cannot be resolved institutionally but must shift socially, among the people. ♦

Christina Wilson checks into this premier site of revolutionary art and international solidarity.



The "Song of Unity" mural at La Peña's entrance depicts the peoples of the Americas struggling for freedom.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LA PEÑA

Where Art Means Politics: La Peña's 25th Anniversary

The first sight that greets visitors to La Peña Cultural Center is the "Song of Unity" mural gracing the front of the building. The mural depicts the peoples of the Americas rising up together towards freedom—visually portrayed through the ascendance of the eagle, the condor, and the Quetzal, which symbolize North America, South America, and Central America. The birds' upward flight is supported by images of people working together, making art, and building unity by breaking down the politically oppressive governments and borders that bind and separate them. Some of the artists in the mural are holding up the central figure of Victor Jara, who represents revolutionary artists in struggle. An

internationally renowned musician, Jara was a powerful voice in the Chilean struggle until he was murdered by the Pinochet dictatorship in 1973. Jara is surrounded in the mural by other revolutionary artists such as Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and Nicaraguan revolutionary Augusto César Sandino.

The "Song of Unity" mural symbolizes La Peña's one-of-a-kind history as a community arts center steeped in a tradition of political art-making and cultural education that has lasted and evolved from its 1970s roots in Latin American solidarity. Located directly across the street from the historic first national headquarters of the Black Panther Party, at the border of Berkeley and Oakland, La Peña offers music, painting, poetry, film, and other

diverse art forms that express political struggles around the world. Nearly every night of the week, a variety of artists and political groups stage programs at La Peña's different venues.

At a recent show in the performance space, which is part of a series entitled Collective Soul, I was able to see how La Peña puts its mission into action. This show featured many artists from the Bay Area, including DJ crew Local 1200, hip-hop group Company of Prophets, MC Dream Nefra, a member of a crew of spoken-word artists called the Liv-

Christina Wilson is development associate at the Center for Third World Organizing. She also works with the Oakland branch of the Uhuru Movement and the Campaign to Free Fred Hampton, Jr.

ing Word Project, and singing acts X Roads and Goapele.

Leaving the muses of revolutionary spoken word and hip-hop, I walked into a full-on jam session next door at La Peña's cafe space. These Friday night jam sessions bring together artists from all over the Bay Area who explore and share the folkloric traditions of Latin America. Seeing all of these seemingly disconnected art forms happening in one intimate space, grounded in unity and political action, is food for the soul of those who have hope and faith in peoples' revolutionary struggles worldwide.

Yet as La Peña reaches its 25th anniversary, it faces new challenges, and some controversy. Some fault the center for focusing on international solidarity at the expense of connections to local communities of color. As it strives to maintain political relevance

fate. Many came to the San Francisco Bay Area, bringing the history, teachings, and art of revolutionary Chile with them. In 1975, a group of Latinos and North Americans working with a solidarity organization called Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH) got together in Berkeley and decided to build a space that would instill political consciousness through culture and arts.

The concept of La Peña came out of the tradition of *peñas*. *Peñas* were created throughout Latin America in the 1960s as spaces where artists and community could come together to share and create, independent of the stifling cultural institutions that smothered Latin America at the time. Many of the artists that organized *peñas* were instrumental in founding the New Song Movement, which promoted the use of indigenous instruments and folk music to express revolutionary ideas

people to be informed about things that are happening outside of our borders so that we can maintain a critical consciousness about what our country is doing," noted Paul Flores, the center's volunteer coordinator, house manager, and program coordinator.

La Peña's roots lie in the Chilean resistance to Pinochet, but it is also committed to bringing a diverse range of artists and politics to its stages.

In a single week, visitors to La Peña can view drawings and collages by Argentine artists, attend a poetry open-mic for youth, see Latina lesbian comedian Marga Gomez, participate in a discussion on California's educational system, catch local hip-hop groups, attend a Cuban dance performance, or sing in the La Peña choir.

"Solidarity reaches every level of what La Peña does," Flores continued. "We've created this international relationship with folks who know that it is a place where you can have not only international music and art, but reach out to different political environments that are undergoing serious oppression."

How the Center Works

La Peña's mission of building diversity and political consciousness also carries over into the center's organizational structure. One of the most unusual aspects of La Peña is that it never became identified with any single leader. Seven staff members make up the La Peña collective, which runs the day-to-day operations. In 1995, the organization formed a working board recruited from former staff members and founders and recently appointed its first executive director, Paul Chin. Chin said the reorganizations were needed, "because it was difficult to convince funders that a collective was a viable or positive way to run a nonprofit."

La Peña also maintains a diverse array of



Members of Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH) demonstrated solidarity in 1978 with Chilean resistance to the Pinochet dictatorship.

and artistic edge today, La Peña must continuously define and redefine itself as a peoples' cultural space.

Roots of Solidarity

When the U.S.-backed Chilean military overthrew that country's democratically elected socialist president Salvador Allende in 1973, Chile's extraordinary cultural movement was also ruthlessly crushed. Some revolutionary artists were murdered; thousands of others fled the country to escape the same

and struggles. The New Song Movement solidified art as a crucial medium of the peoples' struggles, and *peñas* became a major component of Salvador Allende's cultural program in Chile from 1970-1973.

While La Peña's roots lie in the Chilean resistance to Pinochet, the center is also committed to bringing a diverse range of artists and politics to its stages.

"There are a lot of events at La Peña which serve to educate and create further solidarity movements in Berkeley. La Peña helps



PHOTO COURTESY OF LA PEÑA

Musician Kahil El'Zabar, of the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble in Chicago, performed at La Peña's Malcolm X Jazz Festival in 2000.

political voices within its walls. Organizations can pay a small fee to use the center as a fundraising, political education, or meeting space. La Peña has been used by such organizations as the East Bay Anti-Nuclear Group, Centro Legal de La Raza, Haiti Film Project, Jericho 98, Japanese Peruvian History Project, League of Filipino Students, and School of Unity and Liberation. The list is extensive, and although La Peña does not necessarily endorse the political ideologies of all of the groups that use its space, the center is dedicated to creating space for communication between many different organizations and community members.

Questions About Audience

While La Peña continues to play an important role in international solidarity and cultural activism, it also faces the challenge of reshaping itself to remain politically and socially connected to the changing local community. At its inception, La Peña focused exclusively on Latin American art. But, over time it opened up to other progressive communities in Berkeley and Oakland and made a statement that La Peña is part of the struggles of local people of color. However, some people think that the center is unduly resisting this change.

In an article for *Shades of Power*, the publication of the Institute for MultiRacial

Justice, former La Peña staffers Greg Morozumi and Elena Serrano described the difficulties facing the arts of people of color. Too often, they wrote, Third World cultures are in danger of becoming "entertainment for our 'enlightened allies.'"

"It's often easier for people working in Third World solidarity movements in this country to understand struggles going on 3,000 miles away. People do this instead of trying to understand those issues here, or understand how this person working in solidarity work in other countries may be contributing to devastation and oppression in their own community," said Morozumi.

Aware of criticism that it attracts an audience of mostly middle-class white progressives, La Peña has taken steps to bring in more people of color—mostly by hiring staff members who have worked in the local community. To open dialogue with La Peña, many young artists and activists of color have organized discussions with the center's staff and board of directors about La Peña's relationship with the community.

In response to questions of La Peña's accountability to its local community, Paul Chin said, "I think it's a legitimate discussion. But part of the mission of the organization is founded on the tradition of internationalism. La Peña started for a specific reason—we're not going to deny that history. Each organization has a historic purpose, and people should respect that."

Chin feels that La Peña serves a variety of communities. "There are so many different communities that enjoy the presentations, the artwork, and the classes. The magic of the place is to see so many people taking a chance and crossing borders. I don't know where the assertion that our audience is mainly white comes from. The audience changes depending on the program. For Latin American programs, the audience is mainly Latin American. For African American programs, the audience is mainly African American and so on. But I would certainly like to see more people of color coming to La Peña."

Given the limits of what a seven-person collective can do with limited funding and resources, these challenges are difficult to fully confront. Chin continued, "We sup-

port local groups to the extent that we can. It's our capacity that limits us."

Facing the Future

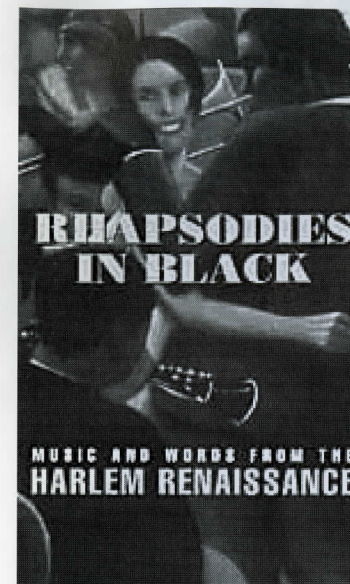
La Peña's tremendous political, social, and artistic influence in the Bay Area and internationally is long-standing and impressive. However, La Peña continues to face an uphill battle to procure the funding to stay afloat. La Peña is well known for staging amazing performances at reasonable prices, which makes it more accessible to people in the community. Comparable shows at other venues bring in twice as much money because they charge higher ticket prices. Since many of its programs are staged at a net loss, La Peña's annual deficit must be covered by fundraising.

Given this situation, Flores notes, "To keep La Peña going in the future, we need to build an endowment. What we're trying to do with the 25th anniversary celebration is build this endowment to \$500,000 or more to make sure La Peña is around for another 25 years. All this stuff with gentrification makes it even more critical that La Peña stays alive. We would like to be part of the resistance as well as the celebration of this community."

Another critical factor as La Peña turns its sights towards the future is the institution's ability to develop the next generation of leadership. Chin elaborated, "It's one of the challenges that many organizations from the 1970s are now realizing. The founders from the 1970s are aging and can't continue to do this work for the next 30 years. But it's a real challenge to find people interested in doing this kind of work, finding the resources to pay them a living wage, and developing new leadership."

As La Peña focuses on ensuring its sustainability over the coming years, the organization will undoubtedly undergo significant transitions as the new generation of leadership takes La Peña, and our community, forward. La Peña has been a rare and vital force in the Bay Area for the past 25 years. Its legacy must be protected and respected as it, and the entire Bay Area progressive community, struggles to meet new challenges in the future. ♦

■ race records



COMPILED BY
COLORLINES STAFF

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rhapsodies in Black (Rhino)

An amazing collection of works taken from, and inspired by the Harlem Renaissance. Classic words and notes by Ma Rainey and Langston Hughes are contrasted against contemporary re-readings by Joshua Redman and Angela Basset.

GARNET SILK

The Definitive Collection

(WEA/Atlantic)

The godfather and martyr of Jamaica's new roots movement, he forsook Rasta judgment for gentle reasoning with the hardcore bredren. His gentle spirit lives on these sides.

AUGUSTUS PABLO

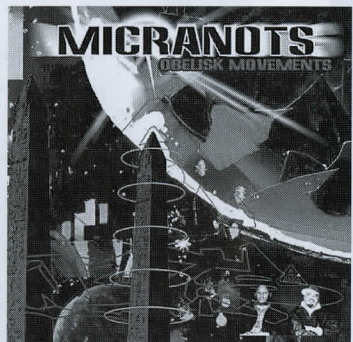
Dub, Reggae and Roots from the Melodica King (Ocho)

Competent UK anthology and introduction to the melodica-pierced dub-scapes of this late Jamaican musical pioneer

SADE

Lovers Rock (Sony/Epic)

After an eight-year hiatus, the '80s queen of sparse soulistics returns to form. Avoiding convention (i.e. no hip-hop cameos), Sade resurrects her seductive style for a new generation.



MICRANOTS

Obelisk Movements (SubVerse)

It's nation time again with this Atlanta duo's boom-bap Afrocentrism inspiring bottom shaking and raised fists. No topic goes untouched as everything from the drug trade to African repatriation gets their lyrical workover.

■ classifieds

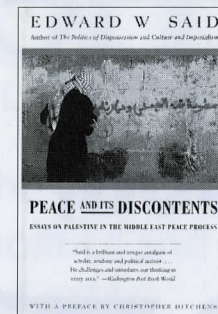
Defending Reproductive Rights: An Activist Resource Kit, by Political Research Associates, \$15. Order through PRA, 1310 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144 (617-666-5300). Comprehensive study of the attack on reproductive rights by the U.S. political right. Provides a wealth of facts, analyses, and resources to help activists and others protect reproductive rights.

Socialism for Skeptics A witty, zestful introduction to radical politics. 40 page booklet. \$5.00 Red Letter Press, 409 Maynard Ave. S., #201C, Seattle, WA 98104.

■ big ideas

Three Key Books about the Middle East

REVIEWED BY LAMIS ANDONI

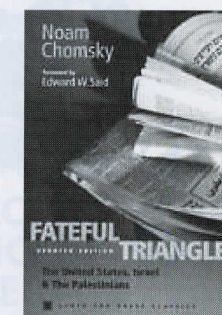


Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process

by Edward W. Said,
Vintage Books, 1996

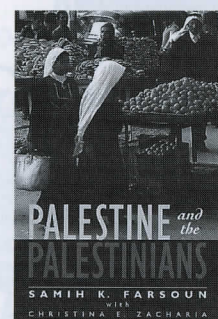
Said criticizes the underlying premises of the Oslo peace process and the subsequent agreements that perpetuate Israeli control over the Palestinians. Through a careful examination of the terms and language of the agreements and an acute analysis of U.S. and Israeli objectives, Said argues that the Oslo process is not only deeply flawed but blocks Palestinian independence. He also mercilessly attacks the Arafat leadership and holds it accountable for signing a Versailles-like surrender. Said's book is crucial to understanding the current eruption in the Palestinian territories.

► This is an incisive and in-depth analysis by one of the most important thinkers of our time on U.S. policy in the Mid-



Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians

by Noam Chomsky,
with a new forward by
Edward Said, South
End Press, 1999.
578 pages



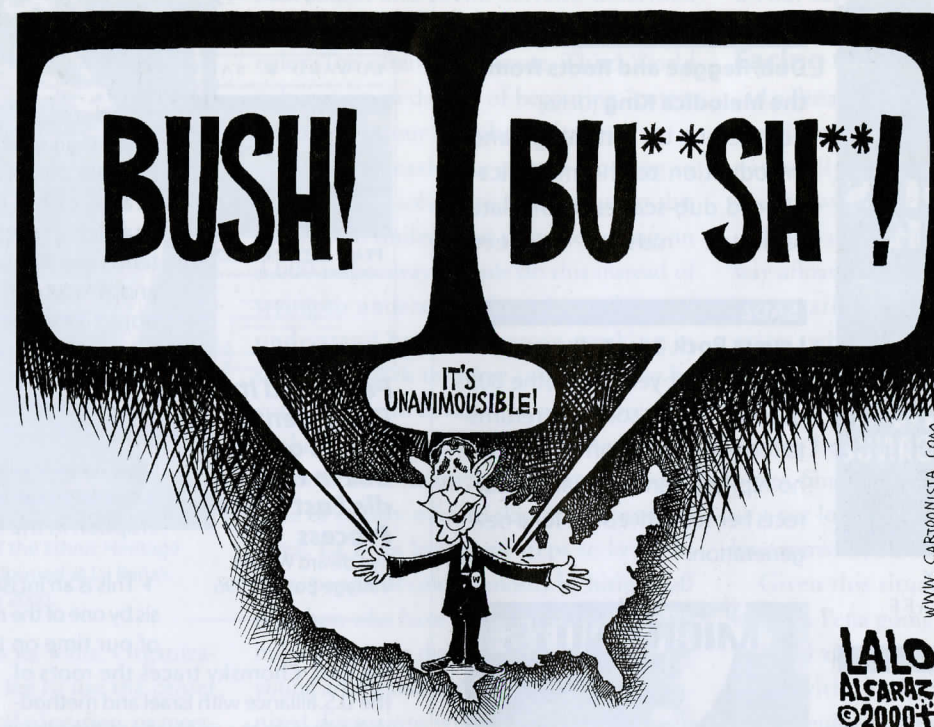
Palestine and the Palestinians

by Samih K. Farsoun,
Christina Zacharia
(Contributor),
Westview Press, 1998.
400 pages

dle East. Chomsky traces the roots of the U.S. alliance with Israel and methodically dissects the myth about America's self-declared role as an honest broker of peace in the region. He links U.S. policies to its economic interests, particularly securing the flow of cheap crude oil and sustaining U.S. military presence and Israeli prowess in the region. A must read to understand what motivates U.S. policies and their repercussions on the people of the Middle East.

▼ Although introductory, this book provides a thorough account of Palestinian history from antiquity to the present. It skillfully combines academic scholarship with an easy-to-read narrative, and is important for readers who are familiar with the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as those new to the issue. The book covers the range of forces that forged the Palestinian collective identity. It concludes with a forward-looking analysis of prospects for Palestinian self-determination.

► Lamis Andoni is a Jordanian journalist of Palestinian origin who covers the Arab world for the *Jordan Times*, the *Financial Times of London*, and the *Washington Post*.



(Th)ink

How HORRIBLE IS THE DEARTH OF MOVIE ROLES FOR WOMEN OF COLOR IN HOLLYWOOD? CONSIDER THE FACT THAT IN THE YEAR 2000, THE THREE BIGGEST ROLES FOR WOMEN OF COLOR HAVE GONE TO:



keeflix@hotmail.com

www.africana.com

ColorLines

RACE CULTURE ACTION

Subscribe to the only multiracial magazine covering the politics and creations of communities of color.

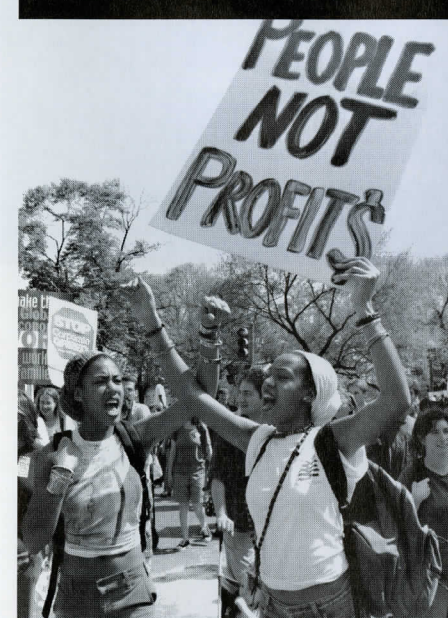
UTNE READER
ALTERNATIVE PRESS
AWARDS 2000 WINNER



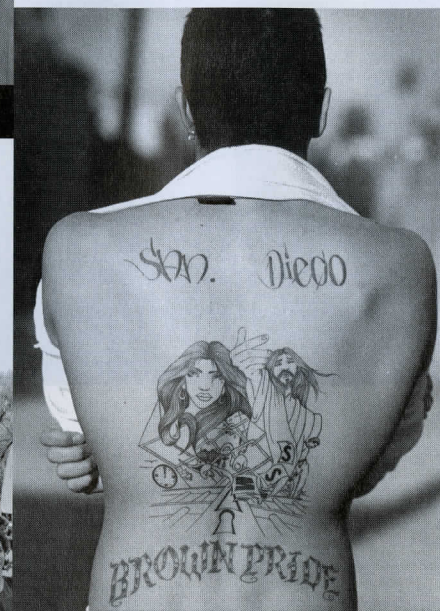
PEOPLE'S CHOICE FOR
BEST POLITICAL & SOCIAL
COVERAGE



TALKING RACE



TAKING ACTION



MAKING CULTURE

For fast ordering call: 1-888-458-8588 (credit card orders only).
or order online at www.colorlines.com

■ Send completed forms to: ColorLines, Department C-100, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834-9206

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

NAME _____

ORGANIZATION _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

☐ MY CHECK IS ENCLOSED ☐ 1 YEAR FOR \$16

☐ PLEASE BILL ME ☐ 2 YEARS FOR \$24

☐ CHARGE MY CREDIT CARD: ☐ VISA ☐ MC ☐ AMEX

SIGNATURE _____

NUMBER _____

EXPIRATION _____

Share ColorLines with a friend!

☐ YES! I want to send a gift subscription.
☐ 1 YEAR FOR \$16 ☐ 2 YEARS FOR \$24

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

A card announcing your gift will be sent (please provide your name and address)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____



colorlines.com

the destination for
race | culture | action

exclusive web features
welfare rights resources
racial justice online
instant subscriptions

Photo by Rana Sidahmed

ColorLines

RACE CULTURE ACTION

Applied Research Center
4096 Piedmont Avenue, PMB 319
Oakland, CA 94611-5221

Nonprofit Org.

US Postage

PAID

Oakland, CA

Permit #251

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

5

*****AUTO**3-DIGIT 100
JENNIE LUNA
790 RIVERSIDE DR APT 11J
NEW YORK NY 10032 7433

