

RACE, GENDER & SPORTS

Jesse Jackson on School Discipline ✦ Race in The New Millennium ✦ Afrofuturism ✦ Revolution Rock

RACE
CULTURE
ACTION

ColorLines

Spring, 2000 ■ \$3.95 US/\$4.95 Canada

FIELD OF BROKEN DREAMS Baseball's Latinos

Decline of the Black Athlete?

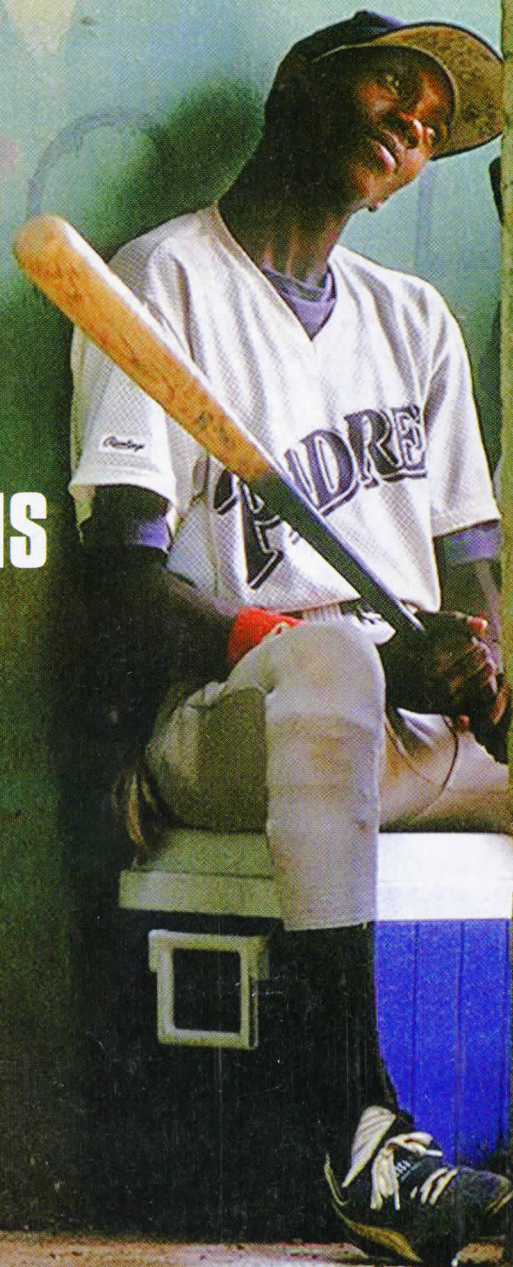
Women of Color In Sports

Anita DeFrantz

Richard Lapchick

Fighting the Redskins

Hold until April 15, 2000



Editor's Notes

- ◆ **Publishers**
Applied Research Center and
Center for Third World
Organizing
- ◆ **Executive Editor**
Bob Wing
- ◆ **Editorial Board**
Gary Delgado
Julie Quiroz
Esmeralda Simmons
Mark Toney
- ◆ **Managing Editor**
Jeff Chang
- ◆ **Administrative Assistant**
Mónica Hernández
- ◆ **Editorial Staff**
Nicole Davis
Melia Franklin
Jacqueline Keeler
David Leonard
Patrisia Macías Rojas
Ryan Pintado-Vertner
Oliver Wang
Greg Winter
- ◆ **Contributing Writers**
Marcos Bretón
Donna Daniels
Tomio Geron
Patrisia Gónzales
Suzan Shown Harjo
Hua Hsu
Terry Keleher
David Leonard
Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez
Alondra Nelson
Barbara Ransby
Roberto Rodríguez
Rinku Sen
Howard Winant
Colette Winlock
- ◆ **Copy Editors**
Melia Franklin
Michael Laslett
Valerie Haynes Perry
Susan Starr
- ◆ **Photography and Art**
Lalo Alcaraz
Keith Knight
Rick Rocamora
Rana Sidahmed
José Luis Villegas
- ◆ **Cover Art**
José Luis Villegas
Rana Sidahmed
- ◆ **Design & Production**
Lisa Roth
Sharon Dang
- ◆ **Print Management**
Denise Granger

Volume 3, Number 1

IF KARL MARX WERE ALIVE TODAY, HE MIGHT amend his famous statement to say that sports, not religion, is the “opiate of the masses.” Certainly it is one of the central arenas where issues of race, class, and gender are on public display.

I am a sports fanatic. Only my (lack of) height kept me out of the NBA. “I coulda been a contender.”

Actually, my daughter, Josina, has a better chance. She pitches for Pitzer College. Parenting her has led me into the heart of the contradictory world of girls’ and women’s sports.

Recently, Richard Lapchick of the Center for the Study of Sport in Society informed me that, in fact, girls in the cities have only 15 percent as much opportunity to play sports as girls in the suburbs. I experienced this first-hand when Josina had to travel some 700 miles per week to participate on a competitive girl’s softball team in the suburbs.

I feel buoyed by the success of the U.S. women’s soccer team, but seriously dismayed by the media’s failure to appreciate that Brianna Scurry, the black goalie, was the real hero of the championship game.

In fact, sports, like the society at large, is undergoing a sea change. Corporate and parental money, resources, and time—or

lack thereof—are playing a bigger role in shaping youth sports than ever. Suburban soccer moms proliferate, even as sports disappear from innercity parks and public schools. Elite travel teams sponsored by Nike, McDonalds, Easton, and other corporations overshadow school teams, except in football. Affluent parents spend a small fortune to equip and train their children. These and other factors, especially the epidemic of jailing young black men, lead Harry Edwards to warn that the “golden age of black athletes” is over.

The racial situation in girls’ and women’s sports is especially aggravated by these changes, as they are becoming popular precisely as these changes take effect. So, even though athletes of color play a prominent role in the most popular men’s sports, most women’s sports are overwhelmingly white. I am convinced that this will be a major political drama in the new millennium.

In this issue of *ColorLines*, some of the leading activists in sports—International Olympic Committee Vice President Anita DeFrantz, Harry Edwards, Suzan Shown Harjo, Richard Lapchick, and author Marcos Bretón—address these and many other pressing social issues in sports.

—Bob Wing

Editorial Offices

ColorLines Magazine
4096 Piedmont Avenue, PMB 319
Oakland, CA 94611-5221
Phone: 510-653-3415 Fax: 510-653-3427
E-mail: colorlines@arc.org
Call or e-mail for bulk orders or reprint rights.

Media Inquiries:

We Interrupt This Message ...
415-537-9437

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 e-mail address. Call for reprint information.

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 or call 1-888-458-8588.

Canada & Mexico Subscription Rates:

US \$20 for 4 issues.

International Subscription Rates: US \$24 for 4 issues. **ColorLines Magazine** (ISSN 1098-3503) is published quarterly.

Visit our Web page at
www.colorlines.com

RACE
CULTURE
ACTION

ColorLines

Volume 3 ■ Number 1 ■ Spring 2000

Special Section

RACE AND SPORTS

- 13 **Field of Broken Dreams: Latinos and Baseball**
Marcos Bretón shows us the story of Latinos in baseball has much to tell about the future—and past—of race and sport.
- 20 **The Decline of the Black Athlete: An Interview with Harry Edwards**
Harry Edwards says the golden age of black athleticism is over. David Leonard asks him why.
- 25 **Gazing at the New Black Woman Athlete**
How do we see the new woman athletes of color? Donna Daniels gazes at Venus and Serena Williams.
- 27 **Running the Invisible Race**
Former track star, Colette Winlock, looks back at Title IX.
- 28 **From Medal Stand to the Table: An Interview with Anita DeFrantz**
Rinku Sen talks to a powerhouse in international athletics.
- 30 **Fighting Apartheid in Sports: Richard Lapchick**
by Bob Wing and Jeff Chang

CULTURE

- 34 **AfroFuturism: Past-Future Visions**
Afrofuturists want to bridge techno-culture and social justice, novelty and tradition. Alondra Nelson tells us who they are, what they think, and why they matter.
- 38 **“One Big Life:” Asian American Documentarists Carve Out a Niche**
Tomio Geron takes us inside this vibrant community of Asian American documentarists.

41 **Race-Ing Rock**
Hua Hsu wonders if bands of color can make rock revolutionary again.

40 **Big Ideas**
by Barbara Ransby.

43 **Race Records**

ACTION

- 31 **Zero Tolerance and Racial Bias: An Interview with Jesse Jackson**
Bob Wing and Terry Keleher talk to the Reverend Jesse Jackson about Decatur and school discipline.
- 33 **CD-ROM Helps Organizers Confront Institutional Racism**
by Nicole Davis

DEPARTMENTS

- i **Editor's Notes**
- 2 **About the Contributors**
- 3 **Letters to the Editor**
- 4 **RaceFile**
by Melia Franklin

44 **La Cucaracha and The K Chronicles**
by Lalo Alcaraz and Keith Knight

TO THE POINT

- 5 **Race in the New Millennium**
Globalization has increased the importance of race in the new millennium. Howard Winant tells us why.
- 8 **Bring Me the Foot of Oñate**
Roberto Rodríguez and Patrisia Gónzales weave a tale of conquistador commemorations, Hispano bigots, and missing feet in New Mexico.
- 11 **The WTO: Where was the Color in Seattle?**
Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez on the whiteout at the Great Battle.

About the Cover

A young Dominican prospect for the San Diego Padres dreams of making the big leagues. Photo by José Luis Villegas.

Contributors

Marcos Bretón, "Field of Broken Dreams: Latinos And Baseball." Marcos is a senior staff writer at *The Sacramento Bee* and is a past winner of the Guillermo Martínez-Marquez Award given by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. He is co-author of *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Ballplayer*, and is now collaborating on the autobiography of Sammy Sosa.

Donna Daniels, "Gazing at the New Black Woman Athlete." Donna is assistant professor in cultural anthropology and African and African American Studies at Duke University. She is currently writing a book on gender and religion in the African diaspora.

Tomio Geron, "One Big Life? Asian American Documentarists Carve Out a Niche." Tomio is a graduate student in the American Studies program at New York University who is focusing on Asian American culture and politics. He has written for *AsianWeek* and *Dialogue*.

Patrisia González, "Bring Me the Foot of Oñate." Patrisia co-writes *Column of the Americas*, a nationally syndicated weekly column. She is the co-author of *Uncut and Uncensored*.

Suzan Shown Harjo, "Fighting the R-Word." Suzan (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee) is president of The Morning Star Institute in Washington, DC and former president of the National Council of Indian Nations. She has helped recover over one million acres of Native lands.

Hua Hsu, "Race-Ing Rock." Hua is a writer and student from Berkeley, California. His zine, "hella", is circulated every now and then.

Terry Keleher, "Zero Tolerance and Racial Bias." Terry is director of the ERASE program (Expose Racism and Advance School Excellence) of the Applied Research Center. He was a co-founder of the National Organizers Alliance.

Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez, "The WTO: Where was the Color In Seattle?" Betita is a long-time activist and author,

and chairperson of the Institute for MultiRacial Justice in San Francisco.

Alondra Nelson, "AfroFuturism: Past-Future Visions." Alondra is a Henry Mitchell MacCracken fellow and doctoral candidate in American Studies at New York University, and co-editor of the forthcoming *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life*.

Barbara Ransby, "Big Ideas." Barbara is an initiator of the Black Radical Congress and a founder of African American Women in Defense of Ourselves. She is assistant professor of history and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and is currently completing a biography of Ella Jo Baker.

Roberto Rodríguez, "Bring Me the Foot of Oñate." Roberto co-writes *Column of the Americas*, a nationally syndicated weekly column. He is co-author of *Justice: A Question of Race*.

Rinku Sen, "From Medal Stand to the Table: An Interview with Anita DeFrantz." Rinku is the former co-director of the Center for Third World Organizing. Her writings on race and gender have appeared in *Social Policy* and *Women Transforming Politics*.

José Luis Villegas, cover. José is assistant director of photography at *The Sacramento Bee* and a two-time winner of the Grand Prize for Photography awarded by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. His photos appear in *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Ball Player* and in the recently released photo book, *Far From Home: The Latin Baseball Story*.

Howard Winant, "Race in the New Millennium." Howard is professor of sociology at Temple University. He is the author of *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*, and the co-author of *Racial Formation in the United States*. He is currently writing a book on the comparative historical sociology of race.

Colette Winlock, "Running the Invisible Race." Colette is a community activist, leadership trainer, and doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Classified

CO-DIRECTOR sought by national organization promoting progressive activism and investigative journalism on campuses. Skilled leader with background in non-profit administration, campus activism, and at least one year of community, racial justice, or labor organizing. Experience raising money from foundations & direct mail/membership programs. People of color, women, l/g/b/t encouraged to apply. 40+ hrs/wk. \$23,000-\$29,000/yr. DOE plus health/dental benefits. Start: ASAP, ideally March. Send cover letter & resume to Center for Campus Organizing, 165 Friend St, #1, BSN, MA 02114. Equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB). The College of Public and Community Service (CPCS) and the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy seek applicants for a joint tenure-track Assistant/Associate Professor position. The position has equal research and teaching responsibilities. Responsibilities at CPCS include teaching a total of three courses per year at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. Teaching will focus on needs and resource assessment, strategy and proposal development, evaluation design and participatory planning processes. Responsibilities at the Gaston Institute include researching the socio-economic status of Latinos in New England and Grantsmanship. Education at the Doctorate level is expected; advanced ABD may be considered. Other qualifications include experience conducting research on the Latino population, knowledge of Latino community organizations, and bilingual (Spanish) ability. Applicants should send copies of cover letter, curriculum vitae, and the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three references to both the Office of Human Resources and the Gaston Institute (Attn: Mary Jo Marion) at UMass Boston, Search 850-375, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125-3393. UMB is an Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, Title IX employer. Consideration of applications will begin November 15, 1999 and continue until the position is filled. Expected start date is September 1, 2000.

For more information please visit
<http://www.umb.edu/academicprograms/epes.html>
and <http://www.gaston.umb.edu>

U Mass Boston

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Your recent focus on domestic militarization and racial lines in the suburbs is found tragically true in the case of Irvin Landrum, Jr., an 18-year-old African American man killed by police in Claremont, California last year.

The Landrum incident is a case study of police violence. Irvin was driving through the affluent and predominantly white suburb of Claremont at about midnight on January 10-11, 1999. Allegedly stopped for speeding, Irvin was cited for driving without a license or a valid vehicle registration, but only warned for speeding.

Inexplicably, the officer asked Irvin if he was on probation, and Irvin told him that, in fact, he was on probation for carrying brass knuckles in his car several months earlier. The officer asked whether or not Irvin was carrying a gun, to which Irvin replied negatively.

The officer then decided to search Irvin's car, and called for backup. When the backup arrived, he also asked to search Irvin's person prior to searching Irvin's car. At this point, both officers stated that Irvin took two steps back, and pulled "something" from his waistband. They said they saw a muzzle flash and heard a gunshot and then returned fire, fatally injuring Irvin, who died six days later without regaining consciousness.

It turned out that the gun found at Irvin's feet was a collector's revolver last registered to the now deceased police chief of a neighboring city. Forensic investigation determined that the gun had not been fired and bore no discernible fingerprints. One of the officer's statements were immunized as he declined to tell investigators what happened on the grounds of self-incrimination.

Since the killing of Irvin Landrum, Jr., his family has mounted an aggressive campaign to get to the truth of the case and to seek criminal indictments against the police officers, including weekly demonstrations. The City's most recent response was to name the officers "Employees of the Year" with its accompanying \$1,000 bonus. And, recently, police supporters have shown up to counter the weekly demonstrations.

The City of Claremont also published highly erroneous and misleading "criminal records" of one the leaders of the movement for social justice. The mayor of Claremont wrote the presidents of the five Claremont Colleges in order to question the appropriateness of several faculty members, including myself, who have been involved in the search for the truth.

With each stumbling move by the City of

Claremont to endorse the cover-up of the killing of Irvin Landrum, Jr., the popular movement for justice has grown stronger.

More can be learned about this case at <http://bernard.pitzer.edu/~hfairchi/landrum/index.html>.

—Halford H. Fairchild
Chairman of the
Intercollegiate
Department of
Black Studies at the
Claremont Colleges

Dear Editor,

I just finished reading "The War on Youth" article *ColorLines*, Winter 99-2000) and I just want to commend you for an outstanding job.

I am strongly against the Juvenile "Injustice" Initiative in California and I am glad that people are realizing it is a battle that we minorities must fight together.

From the inside, i.e. prison, I am doing my part to raise awareness. I encourage everyone to do the same. We can defeat this initiative. "¡Sí se puede!"

—Mario A. Rocha
Salinas Valley State
Prison, Soledad, CA

Dear Editor,

Excellent article ("The Economics of the New Brutality," Winter 99-2000). I am a white reader with a teenage son (also white) who gets regularly harassed by cops. Both of us realize

the harassment would be a lot worse if he weren't white. In fact, some of the harassment has been because he hangs out with non-white teens, many of whom have been victims of police violence that goes beyond harassment.

As a parent as much as a radical, I want to do what I can to fight the youth crime bill. I never expected to be worrying about whether my kids could become the victims of police violence. Now, I feel a link (with parents of color) I never felt so strongly before. I don't know what it feels like to be negatively singled out because of race, but I do know how it feels to be a mother worrying if my son will even have a future, let alone the one I expected him to have at his age. Please continue to keep me informed.

—Millie Phillips
via E-Mail

Write Us

Submission Guidelines
We welcome letters to the editor. Letters must include the writer's name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit letters that we publish.

ColorLines

Letters to the Editor
PMB 319
4096 Piedmont Avenue
Oakland, CA 94611
colorlines@arc.org

By Melia Franklin,
ColorLines Staff

Lawsuit exposes high tech's underside

As high tech stock prices soar, few stop to ponder who pays the ultimate price for these profits. Until recently, some firms counted on immigrant workers' silence to conceal a dirty little secret: near-third world labor conditions in the midst of plenty. A lawsuit filed in December by two San Francisco-based civil rights groups—the Asian Law Caucus and Equal Rights Advocates—is seeking to break the silence and expose the rampant violations of wage and hour laws among computer firms and their subcontractors.

Kamsan Mao, a Cambodian immigrant with a college degree, worked as an employee at Top Line Electronics, Inc., a Silicon Valley computer repair and manufacturing firm, for six years. Like hundreds of immigrant workers in the high tech industry, Mao was also asked to do piecework at home without overtime pay or safety precautions. "Sometimes I worked seven days a week for months without a break," he said in a statement. "I also used a lot of chemicals," added Mao. But "Top Line never told me to be careful" or provided any safety equipment. Mao later developed health problems, including asthma.

When he complained

about the conditions, he was fired. Mao filed a lawsuit asking for overtime and back pay for the homework. More broadly, Mao and his attorneys want to set a precedent that will protect other immigrant workers—most of whom are women—from such exploitative practices of high-tech firms and their subcontractors. "I want companies to know they cannot treat workers like they treated me. What they did was wrong," said Mao.

Race and Workfare

How black women fare at the end of the welfare process has a lot to do with racial discrimination they encounter at the beginning. A recent study by Dr. Susan Tinsley Gooden of Virginia Tech University found that black and white women in Virginia have very different experiences entering the welfare system, which profoundly influence the jobs they get on the other end.

For example, her study found that while white women participating in Virginia's workfare program reported receiving hundreds of dollars in discretionary transportation assistance for car repair, driver education, and the like, black women indicated that they were offered the standard \$10-a-week allowance only. "These benefits would greatly impact one's ability to get a job and even search for a job," she said in an interview with the

Grass Roots Innovative Policy Project (GRIPP). Gooden also found that black women were more likely than white women to get assigned night work, which made it more difficult for them to spend time with their children.

According to Gooden, racial discrimination within the welfare process is fostered by the broad discretionary powers wielded by local welfare staffers over workers' placements, benefits, and training. For more information, visit www.arc.org/gripp.

Showdown on Vieques

Political tensions between the U.S. and Puerto Rico are escalating over the U.S. military's continued use of the island of Vieques as a military training and weapons testing ground. Facing mounting P.R. protests after a civilian guard was killed in a bombing accident during a U.S. military exercise last year, President Clinton offered in December to ban exercises using explosives on the island, and to end all exercises within five years. He even offered to throw in a \$40 million economic revival package.

Puerto Rico's governor rejected the offer. In response, Senator John Warner (R-VA) proposed to close the \$3 billion Roosevelt Roads naval station in Puerto Rico if the U.S. couldn't use Vieques for "live fire" exercises—a move

that would cost Puerto Rico's economy some \$300 million and wipe out thousands of military and civilian jobs. Hearings were scheduled to begin in January.

Public housing residents to sue gunmakers

The fight to hold the gun industry accountable to innercity gun violence recently moved onto new terrain: public housing projects. In December, the Clinton Administration announced it was preparing a lawsuit on behalf of the nation's three million public housing residents, who are predominantly people of color and experience disproportionate rates of gun-related violence. According to the White House, more than 500 murders are committed a year among the 100 largest housing projects—70 percent of which involve firearms.

The lawsuit, which would back the suits of more than two dozen cities against the gun companies, would accuse the firearms industry of failing to make guns as safe as possible and of marketing and selling weapons so that they end up in the hands of convicted felons. The goal is to pressure gunmakers to accept a global settlement to change how they make and sell weapons, essentially achieving gun control measures through the courts which have been thwarted in Congress. **RACE**

RACE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Globalization has increased the importance of race in the new millennium. Howard Winant tells us why.

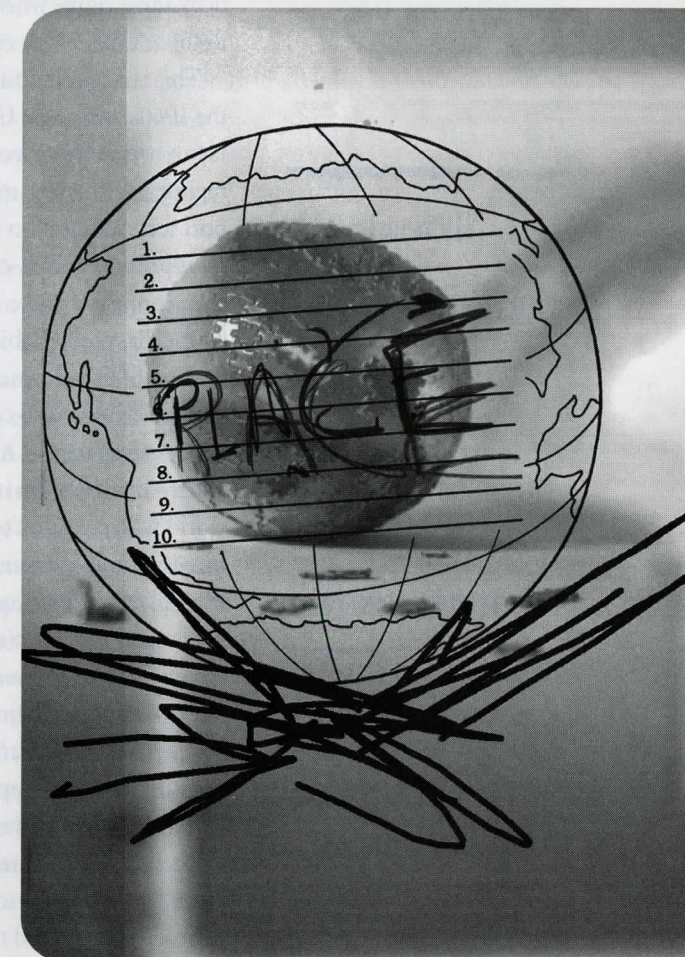
Now that the world has lurched into the 21st century, there is widespread confusion and anxiety about the political significance, and even the meaning, of race.

In my opinion, far from becoming less politically central, race still defines and organizes the world's future. I challenge the idea that the world, or any national society for that matter, is moving "beyond race." On the contrary, I believe that the future of democracy itself depends on the outcomes of racial politics and policies, as they develop both in various countries and in the world at large.

The present moment is unique in the history of race. Starting after WWII and culminating in the 1960s, there was a global shift, a "break," in the worldwide racial order that had endured for centuries. The shift occurred because many challenges to the old forms of racial hierarchy converged after the war: anticolonialism, anti-apartheid, worldwide revulsion toward fascism, and perhaps most important, the U.S. civil rights movement and U.S.-U.S.S.R. competition in the world's "South."

These developments and conflicts called white supremacy into question to an extent unparalleled in modern history. They linked anti-racism to democratic politics more strongly

Howard Winant is professor of sociology at Temple University and co-author, with Michael Omi, of *Racial Formation in the United States*. He is currently writing a book on the comparative historical sociology of race.



By Rana Sidahmed

confronted racism on a world scale. Indeed, they accomplished a great deal, mobilized a lot of people, and changed the way the whole world thinks about race. But they did not "solve" the "race problem."

POST-WWII RACIAL PATTERNS

At present, world population is growing at about 100 million per year and now totals over 6 billion. Population growth is quite modest in the world's North, but it is very rapid in the global South. And, since there is no appreciable improvement in "life chances" in most of the South, the pressures for migration to the North cannot be expected to abate. Indeed, over the last quarter century, migration to the Northern societies has reached the point where ethnically diverse societies are in place just about everywhere.

These diverse societies are usually racialized as well. In the Americas, racial hierarchy is a long-established phenomenon. But in Europe and elsewhere, with some significant exceptions, ethnic and racial divisions are quite new. One major outcome of this situation is restrictive immigration policies. Citizenship is being used in the U.S. and the European Union, not to afford democratic rights to the millions who strive for them, but to

The right's
racial positions
are gaining
ground in
the political
mainstream.

deny these rights whenever possible, especially to those classified as racially "other."

This is a big reversal from the heady days of the 1960s, when the U.S., Europe, and even Japan had more welcoming immigration regimes. In the new millennium, official support for immigration to the world's North has disappeared. The ex-colonizer states experience confusion and conflict when confronted by the diasporic mobility and political mobilization of their former colonial subjects.

Racialization also continues in post-colonial, post-apartheid Africa, just as it does in Latin America. Even in those areas of the world where we don't usually draw racial lines, race is looming larger. In Japan and China, for example, the supremacy of the dominant ethnic groups—Yamato and Han respectively—is coming in for renewed questioning. In Australia, Asian populations are expanding and indigenous peoples are more organized than ever. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, national and religious conflicts are increasingly seen as racial. This list could extend even farther, to the Indian subcontinent, Indonesia, and the worldwide phenomena of diasporae (African, Chinese, South Asian, Japanese, and beyond).

This often new and generally racialized heterogeneity calls into question previous concepts of national identity and the role of the state. It is also linked to other forms of economic and social crisis. And it threatens political regimes—both parties in power and opposition parties.

The "New Right" and the "New Racism"

In this context, the right's racial positions are gaining ground in the political mainstream. This is because the right can express white racial anxieties and sound traditional nationalist themes, which the center and left cannot so easily assert.

In an effort to recruit white workers in the North, the right presents the welfare state and the low-income (racialized) strata as the enemies of the "salt of the earth" types who "play by the rules," "go to work each day," "pay their taxes," and end up "getting screwed" by

the "freeloaders" who "don't even belong in this country," and who "don't believe in the work ethic."

But, there are a variety of positions on the racial right. A significant current on the right makes use of racial nationalism, whose core concepts of national identity and the national culture are called into question by racial egalitarianism, pluralism and heterogeneity, and immigration. But a more effective strategy on the right has turned out to be incorporation: the reinterpretation or cooptation of ideas and principles taken from the racial justice and anticolonial movements of the earlier postwar decades.

The right learned this the hard way: by failure. After their intransigent opposition to civil rights and national liberation was defeated, after their attempts to defend segregation and to reassert French (or British, or Portuguese) colonial rights in Africa and Asia were overwhelmed, many on the right decided to step back and reassess their positions.

In the U.S., neoconservatism and the "new right" were the result. In Europe the so-called "new racism" and "racial differentialism" emerged. These new currents made some concessions to progressive movement positions, generally limited and symbolic ones, but real concessions nonetheless. In various forms they repudiated the old white supremacy and professed support for racial equality and cultural pluralism. But this new, "moderate" racial right sought to use its new "moderation" to defuse and deflect movement demands for racial justice and recognition.

The "colorblindness" rhetoric used by U.S. opponents of affirmative action is only one version of this. Other examples may be found in Europe, where "respect for difference" is used to reinforce ideas about the "integrity of national cultures" and thus for curbs on immigration and citizenship.

So this is the racist system we face now: it's the old "good cop" and "bad cop," who are actually working hand-in-hand. The racial right combines symbolic and incorporative concessions—many students tell me: "I don't see color. A person's just a person to me. I

judge everyone on their merits"—with underlying racial nationalism. As French neofascist Jean-Marie Le Pen put it: "I have no problem with Arabs, no problem with Muslims. So long as they remain in the Maghreb."

Anti-Racist Politics in the New Millennium

At present, there is very little popular mobilization against the racial nationalism of the right. Why?

First, because neoconservatism and the "new racism" have reworked the political battlefield; second, because the centrist regimes now in power do not want to redistribute resources or step on the toes of capital; and third, because much of the left is still complicit with white supremacy, of both the old-fashioned and regrooved varieties.

The traditional, trade union-based Northern lefts are somewhat paralyzed by the new racism, largely because of the narrowness of their social base. Northern trade unionists have always been suspicious of changes in the composition of the labor force (ex-slaves, immigrants, women, ex-colonials) and fearful of low-wage competition. Today they are further threatened by the emergence of a "lean and mean" capitalism which is less dependent on the "mass worker" than ever before.

Many examples attest to the continuing crisis of the trade union left in the face of racism and nativism: the British Labor Party's resistance to the black population; the anti-immigrant politics of the German Social-Democrats and the French Socialists; the complicity of the Clinton Democrats in welfare "reform." Quite often, appeals to the "interests of the working class" have been made to oppose the interests of people of color and served to buffer racism. Of course, there are some efforts within trade unions and socialist parties to overcome this legacy, but they have yet to achieve any major successes.

What about mobilization on the part of racially subordinated groups themselves? These groups face serious obstacles: they must confront the high degree of racial chauvinism which the Northern "democratic" national cultures still contain. Such groups—indige-

nous peoples, diasporic Africans, post-colonial immigrants, Arabs from the Maghreb or Palestine—thus find it difficult to reinterpret national identity and national culture in the North in a progressive way, to gain white allies, or to acquire the resources needed to confront the system.

So, to break this isolation and effectively counter the ascent of the right, the continuing relevance of race needs to be recognized again by progressives, egalitarians, trade unionists, feminists, gays, students, etc.—potential "movement" people of all categories. Against the dominant viewpoint in various countries that claims finally to have "transcended" race—the "colorblind" position in the U.S. is a particularly clear example—we need to fight for the continuing centrality of race and racism. And against the tendency to "broaden the appeal of progressive politics" through the "common denominator" of class, we need to emphasize that only by explicitly combining class with race can we understand actual world dynamics, challenge racism, and hope to mobilize the majority of people in the new millennium. **RACE**

Much of the left
is still complicit
with white
supremacy,
of both the
old-fashioned
and regrooved
varieties.

yds

FEMINISM DEMOCRACY SOCIALISM

Speak truth
to power.

Join the country's largest group of kids
with the guts to call themselves socialists

young democratic socialists
(212) 727-8610 dsa@dsausa.org
180 Varick Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10014

Bring Me the Foot of Oñate

Roberto Rodríguez and Patrisia Gónzales weave a tale of conquistador commemorations, Hispano bigots, and missing feet in New Mexico.

What does it say about a society that can't get enough of statues honoring dead white men?

Currently, at huge expense, the Puerto Rican government is slated to erect a massive statue of Christopher Columbus. Not to be outdone, the cities of El Paso, Texas, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, are also scrambling to put up huge monuments to their conquistador, Juan de Oñate.

In the Americas, the elites like to remind themselves that they came, conquered, and claimed the land for themselves. Of course, what allows them to take pride in genocide, slavery, mass rape, and plunder is that they have convinced themselves that the peoples they attempted to vanquish were primitive and heathen, not worthy of being treated as humans.

Monumental Assaults

This helps explain why the descendants of those whom they encountered continue to be treated as less than human. But not to fret: in all this, people who might not otherwise talk to each other are stepping forward to fight off these monumental assaults.

Catherine Davids, an indigenous rights activist from Michigan, has this to say about the 300-foot statue, built by Russian sculptor, Zurab Tsereteli: "Five hundred years ago, Columbus and his sailors and priests cleared the land of the Taino and Arawak through mass murder. Now the government of Puerto Rico, acting on behalf of Columbus, is going to clear land for this disgusting statue that does nothing but pay tribute to genocide."

Closer to home, El Paso and Albuquerque bureaucrats are undertaking a similar enterprise. Each is attempting to honor Juan de Oñate, a conquistador who came through the area in 1598.

The Tale of Oñate

Oñate was little different than other conquistadors of his era. He was a rich miner from Zacatecas, Mexico who got rich by brutally exploiting Indian and African slave labor. He hoped to do more of the same in what is today the Southwest, but found no riches comparable to those found in Mexico and Peru.

Oñate is most remembered for waging war against the Acoma Pueblo,

killings hundreds and enslaving the remainder. After the battle, Oñate's men had one foot of each Acoma male cut off. Less known, but perhaps more gruesome, was the fact that his men virtually wiped out the entire Jumanos Pueblo.

Eventually, Oñate's depredations led to him being tried, convicted, and banished in chains from New Mexico for life. Years later, he paid off the fines levied against him with monies acquired through more slave labor in Zacatecas and managed to get his New Mexican convictions wiped clean.

But his brutality has never been forgotten. In 1998, the left foot of Oñate was severed from his statue in the town of Alcalde. That should have signaled that not all things were well.

Those who support placing his statue in Albuquerque euphemistically refer to him as the person who "opened up" the Southwest to farming, evangelization, and civilization. Those in opposition see it quite another way: that he opened it up to land theft, genocide, and slavery. This eventually led to the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, a coordinated rebellion that drove Spaniards out of the region for twelve years. The rebellion was so complete that everything Spanish was destroyed, including

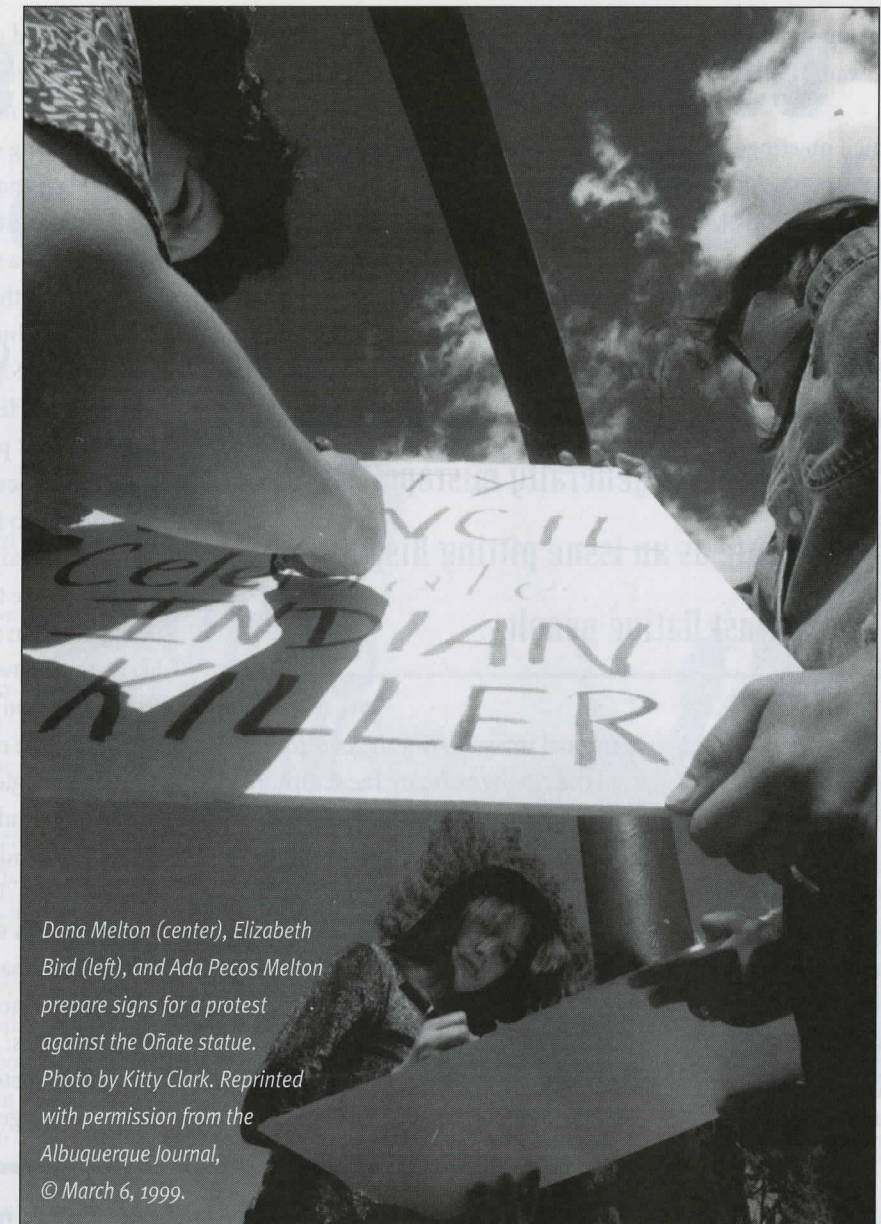
missions, churches, government buildings, and the mines that exploited Indian slave labor.

Hispanic Bigots

Ironically, the most vocal supporters of the Oñate statue are people who identify as Hispanos or Hispanics, and the mainstream press has generally misreported the Oñate statue dispute as an issue pitting Hispanics against Native people. The reality is that it has been a struggle between some bigots, who happen to be Hispanos, along with their allies on the city council, against virtually the entire community.

The Hispanos of New Mexico and southern Colorado are unique. They are descendants of people who settled in New Mexico prior to the U.S. annexation of the Southwest through the U.S.-Mexico War of 1848; Mexicans or Mexican Americans immigrated later. Most

of these early settlers were culturally and racially mixed and came not from Spain but from lands under the Spanish crown, especially colonial Mexico. Their current-day descendants are the product of considerable mixing with indigenous people, Mexicans, and Anglos in the many years since the annexation. The end result of this is that identities sometimes get blurred.



Dana Melton (center), Elizabeth Bird (left), and Ada Pecos Melton prepare signs for a protest against the Oñate statue. Photo by Kitty Clark. Reprinted with permission from the Albuquerque Journal, © March 6, 1999.

In the Americas, the elites like to remind us that they came, conquered, and claimed the land for themselves.

Hispanos are extremely diverse politically. For decades, many have waged a concerted fight to retain the land and water rights specifically protected under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the U.S.-Mexico war. That struggle gained nationwide attention in 1968 when a group of Indo-Hispanos led by Reis Tijerina raided the county courthouse at Tierra

Indians, and mestizos. This tension has played out in the struggle over the Oñate monument.

Millie Santillanes, a former city official who is the titular head of the pro-statue forces, is one of this latter group. She and many of her sympathizers claim pure Spanish blood and are deeply insulted if confused with Mexicans. At a press conference earlier

Amarilla. The raid was one of the most electrifying events of the 1960s and a landmark in the development of the Chicano movement.

On the other hand, an Hispano elite has historically been part of New Mexico's ruling establishment, fending off, allying with, or holding Anglos politically at bay, even now. Some of these folks defend bilingual education (being themselves Spanish-speaking), but simultaneously hold a hard line against immigration (to keep Mexicans from inundating New Mexico). Many conservative Hispanos claim Spanish purity and despise Mexicans,

this year, she read a group statement that proclaimed: "We want nothing to do with diversity."

At several city council meetings, representatives from the Hispano, African American, Native American, Jewish, and white communities all testified as to the inappropriateness of dedicating a statue to a man who wrought death and destruction in the region. Many

Replacing the Past

Years ago, many of the same people who now support the Oñate statue battled the city's decision to place a statue called the "Southwest Pieta" in the same Tiguex Park where they now plan to erect the monument to Oñate. The sculpture, by Luis Jiménez, depicts the Aztec legend of two lovers turned into volcanoes; it has since been declared a

sites and build churches on top of them, often with the same foundations and the same materials, for the purpose of wiping out indigenous knowledge and memory. The calendar, which has been downtown for some 30 years, is considered a sacred site for those who practice the ancient Mexica tradition. As in Albuquerque, the prime movers are people who identify as Hispanos or Hispanics. They apparently believe that passing as Spaniards makes them acceptable as whites and insulates them from racism that is visited upon Mexicans and Indians.

Chances are that the Oñate statue will be approved in some form, but most likely it will have to be placed in another park. Litigation over the issue may ensue. But the most important upside of these struggles is that a broad multiracial and multicultural opposition is being built, and valuable lessons are being learned. The struggle promotes awareness of a view of history in New Mexico that many people do not know.

Darva Chino, a leading opponent of the statue says: "When we do not learn the lessons history is meant to teach us, there is a danger that we will repeat it.

The mainstream press has generally misreported the Oñate statue dispute as an issue pitting Hispanics against Native people

who identified as Chicano, Mexican American, and Indo-Hispano also chimed in.

Despite the racial and cultural diversity of this opposition, even the local newspapers keep insisting it's a struggle between Hispanics and Natives.

Adding fuel to this controversy is the fact that Tiguex Park has been designated as the site for the Oñate statue. Tiguex Park was created as a result of a successful class action lawsuit filed in 1973 on behalf of 20 Mexican American families who argued that their section of town was being ignored. After establishing the park, it was the wish of the families that the park be named Tiguex, which is the Native name given to northern New Mexico prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, and that it be dedicated in honor of the region's Indian Pueblos.

Despite this, the media persist in lumping Mexicans in the same category as the aforementioned Hispanic bigots, as if the latter represent all Hispanos and Mexicans. This is not surprising, considering the media's historical role of suppressing Mexican or Mexican American culture.

national treasure. But the controversy led the city to resituate the sculpture in the nearby barrio of Martineztown. Twenty years later, in October of 1999, a photo of the sculpture was used in promotional material for an Hispanic culture festival. Oñate proponents picketed the event, claiming that the indigenous image was an insult to New Mexico's Hispanic population and demanding its replacement.

This is reminiscent of the colonial era, when Spaniards would destroy temples, pyramids, and other sacred sites and build churches on top of them.

Down the Rio Grande River in El Paso, Texas, officials are contemplating placing a statue of the same conquistador in a downtown site. To do this, the city proposes to move the current display—a replica of an Aztec calendar—to another site.

This is reminiscent of the colonial era, when Spaniards would destroy temples, pyramids, and other sacred

This was an opportunity to evolve as a human race and not repeat the disrespect of indigenous people. Indigenous people experienced the ultimate in disrespect and suffering 401 years ago. Honoring Oñate repeats that history. When you disrespect any group you disrespect yourself. When you honor people of Indian heritage you honor everyone." **ACTION**

The WTO: Where Was the Color in Seattle?

Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez looks for reasons why the Great Battle was so white.

In the vast acreage of analysis about the splendid victory over the World Trade Organization last November 29–December 3, it is hard to find anyone wondering why the 40,000–50,000 demonstrators were overwhelmingly Anglo. Yet the WTO's main victims in the U.S. and around the world are people of color. Understanding the reasons for the low turnout of people of color, and what can be learned from it, is crucial if we are to make

Seattle's promise of a new, international movement against imperialist globalization come true.

Those of color who did attend included activist-experts and labor leaders from third world countries. The People's Assembly, an international body committed to fighting imperialist globalization, led a march of people of color from here and abroad. Rank-and-file workers of color attended the November 30 rally of 25,000 in a giant stadium and participated in the big march that followed. David Bacon, a Bay Area expert on labor issues, helped me identify some of the particular contingents: young African Americans in the building trades, Latinos from the Los Angeles local of ILWU and blacks from ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco, Asian Americans from SEIU in the Northwest, along with Teamsters and painters

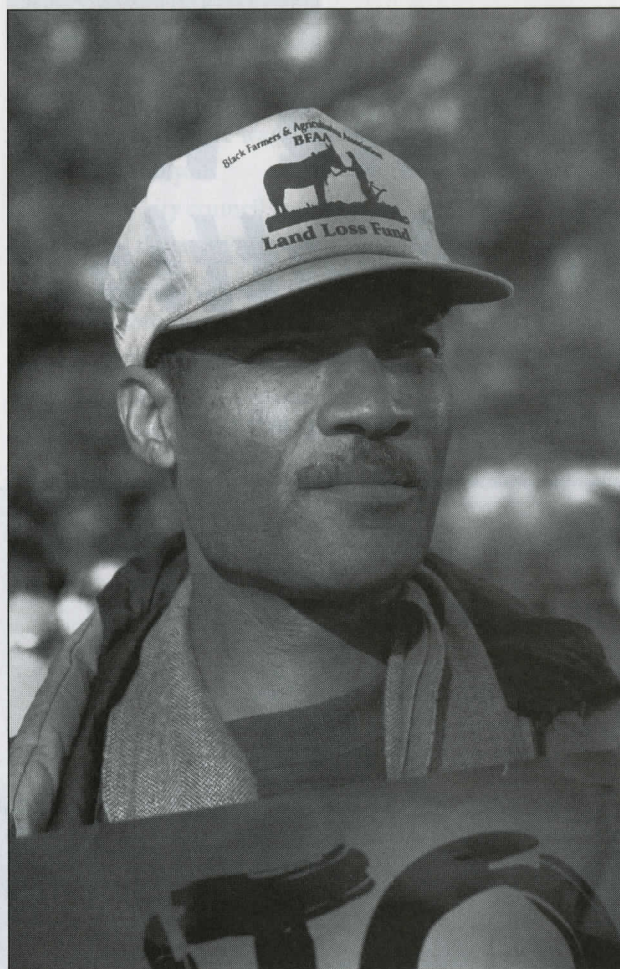
Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez is a long-time activist and author, and chairperson of the Institute for MultiRacial Justice in San Francisco.



Anti-WTO labor protesters at the AFL-CIO rally, November 30, 1999. Copyright 1999, Jim Leavitt, Impact Visuals.

union members from the state of Washington. Among U.S.-based community activists of color, two major organizations sent sizeable delegations: the Indigenous Environmental Network and the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. Seattle-based forces included the Filipino Community Center, blacks fighting for an African American Heritage Museum and Cultural Center, and the 27-year old Centro de la Raza. From California came dozens of youth activists.

Still, people of color from the U.S. totalled only about five to seven percent. Activists whom I interviewed gave several reasons for this. They included concern about the likelihood of brutal police repression, an assumption that the protest would be white-dominated combined with a legacy of distrust about working with progressive whites as equals. Practical obstacles like lack of travel funds or inability to miss work also limited attendance, although Just Act—a mostly



Ridgely Muhammed, a black farmer from Georgia, protests the agricultural policies of the WTO.

Copyright 1999, Jim Leavitt, Impact Visuals.

white Bay Area group—arranged major financial help that enabled many youth of color to attend. Art and Revolution also gave support.

But the most common reason for not going to Seattle was having little knowledge about the WTO and how it affects U.S. communities of color. The fact that working-class blacks and Latinos lack Internet access compared to whites (9 percent to 27 percent) aggravated this problem. “Activists of color felt they had more immediate

issues at home,” said Rashidi Omari of Oakland from the hip-hop group Company of Prophets. “Also, they may have been apprehensive about family and friends saying, ‘Why are you going there? Stay here and help your own people.’”

Much local follow-up work is needed, including learning about the links between WTO and the terrible conditions in our local communities of color. For example, WTO decisions:

- encourage sub-livable wages everywhere;
- encourage privatization of health care (more profit);
- bring cutbacks in public education, which fosters criminalization of youth of color and expanding the prison industrial complex;
- say it is “unfair trade” to ban the import of gasoline in which certain cancer-causing chemicals have been used;

- allow workers in Silicon Valley to be chemically poisoned by the chips they work on, because protection would cut back on profit.

“We have to work with people who may not know the word ‘globalization,’” said Jinee Kim, a Korean American activist, “but they LIVE globalization!”

If only a small number of people of color actually went, those who did found it exhilarating. “I saw the future.” “I saw the possibility of people working together.” “It was an incredible awakening.” They felt, as the chant popularized by Chicano students in MEChA says, “Ain’t no power like the power of the people/’Cause the power of the people don’t stop!” **ACTION**

An expanded version of this article is available at www.colorlines.com.

KNOW YOUR RESOURCES!

Annotations: A Guide to the Independent Critical Press

Eye-opening coverage of 328 magazines and newspapers that are changing the world.

With summary reviews from the experts at the Independent Press Association and the Alternative Press Center.

“Proof that there is much more beyond the soft ice cream ladled out by the mainstream corporate press.”

— Ralph Nader

“An excellent, in-depth tool.”

— Library Journal

0-9653894-2-1

V/MC

US\$28⁰⁰ (includes shipping)
To order call (877) INDYMAC
or visit www.indypress.org



FIELDS OF BROKEN DREAMS



The Hopeful: Pitching prospects crowd the A's Dominican baseball camp in La Victoria every year. Photo © José Luis Villegas.

LATINOS AND BASEBALL

Perhaps no worthier story has remained more hidden than that of Latinos and baseball. Marcos Bretón shows us the story has much to tell about the future—and past—of race and sport.

Photos by José Luis Villegas

Marcos Bretón is a senior staff writer at the Sacramento Bee and author of *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Ballplayer*. He is currently writing the authorized autobiography of Sammy Sosa for Warner Books.

The conversation was with a nationally syndicated sports columnist.

I said: "Did you know that at the end of the 1999 season, nine out of the top ten hitters in the American League were Latino or had Latino roots?"



The Star: Only Sammy Sosa has registered in a meaningful way with the America people—and he had to hit nearly 130 home runs in two years to do that.

Photo © José Luis Villegas.

**Latino players defied
America's narrow,
black or white,
definition of race.**

Silence...."I didn't know that."

This ignorance came as no surprise to me after having spent most of 1999 promoting my book *Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Ballplayer*, along with my collaborator José Luis Villegas. Despite an explosion of exciting new Latinos stars, the story of Latino baseball players in the major leagues is still grossly underreported.

Even more troubling is the invisibility of the realities behind this story.

Almost all the Latino stars in baseball today—now 25 percent of major league rosters and growing—come from overwhelming poverty, a reality that Major League Baseball (MLB) avidly exploits. For example: The focal point of my book—Miguel Tejada, shortstop of the Oakland Athletics—came from a destitute barrio in the Dominican Republic with no running water and little electricity.

Knowing he had no alternatives, the Athletics acquired Tejada's considerable talent for a mere \$2,000. By comparison,

Tejada's white American teammate, Ben Grieve, received a \$1.2 million signing bonus. Similarly, the Texas Rangers acquired Sammy Sosa's services in 1986 for \$3,500—the exact amount the Brooklyn Dodgers paid to sign Jackie Robinson in 1946.

"Boatload Mentality"

Every team in Major League Baseball exploits Latino baseball players. Dick Balderson, vice-president of the Colorado Rockies, frankly calls this the "boatload mentality"—sign a "boatload" of Latinos for little money and if only a couple make it to the big leagues, teams still come out ahead. "Instead of signing four [American] guys at \$25,000 each, you sign 20 [Dominican] guys for \$5,000 each."

The justification for this "boatload mentality" used by baseball people is this: Tejada and other budding Latino players are fortunate that MLB affords them an opportunity to escape the third world poverty they grew up in. Baseball gives them a way out, a chance to get paid, eat regularly, sleep in clean beds, and, for the very best, a crack at fame and fortune.

After all, their reasoning goes, isn't Sammy Sosa—a former shoe shine boy like Tejada—a perfect example of the rags-to-riches life only MLB can confer on Latino kids otherwise bound for the sugar cane fields or worse?

The answer is yes. And there is a fundamental truth to the notion that baseball was the only way for Sosa and Tejada to pull themselves and their families out of poverty.

But does that make it right for MLB to sign Latino ballplayers—whose talent is paying huge dividends for big league teams—for next to nothing? It is, after all, the same justification used by U.S. employers for their pervasive mistreatment and exploitation of Latino immigrant workers.

According to Major League Baseball, 90 to 95 percent of Latino players signed to

contracts never reach the big leagues. The vast majority never get a chance to play in the U.S., not even in the minor leagues. And all but a few of those brought to the U.S. are released without ever playing major league ball.

Most of these discarded Latino players stay in the U.S. as undocumented immigrants rather than return as "failures" to a country that offers them little future. The lives these young men lead are often dangerous, destitute, and sad. Many go to New York because they have friends or family in what is the largest concentration of Dominicans in the United States.

José Santana was a Houston Astros prospect until he was released in 1995. Now he mops floors in a Brooklyn bodega and plays semi-pro on the weekends, all the while frantically placing calls to an American agent who once filled his head with dollar signs, but now can't be bothered. Tony McDonald is a former minor league star who had the misfortune of being a third baseman in the Philadelphia Phillies organization at the same time Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt was in his prime. Today, McDonald works in a warehouse. These castoffs represent the underside of the Sammy Sosa story, the rule rather than the exception in the high-stakes recruitment of ball players from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Talent Plunder

Baseball is investing millions in Latin America, sending scouts across the Caribbean basin in search of barefoot boys with quick reflexes, strong hand-eye coordination, and powerful arms.

Miguel Tejada was one of these boys. Born and raised in a miserable barrio in the Dominican town of Bani, Tejada's family was displaced by a hurricane when he was three. For the next five years, the family lived in homeless shelters until settling in a shanty town on the outskirts of Bani. Tejada was shining shoes by the age of five.

He quit school to work full-time at the age of eleven. His mother died when he was 13. At about the same time, his father left to find work in another town, leaving Tejada and his older brother to fend for themselves. For the next four years, Tejada lived a hand-to-mouth existence.

But it turns out that Miguel had baseball talent, and he was signed by the Oakland Athletics in 1993 when he was 17. He was sent to a "baseball academy" the Athletics built in a Dominican jungle, where signees are drilled in baseball fundamentals all day every day. At the academy, Tejada ate balanced meals for the first time in his life. He was given English lessons every night. And he was taught to steel himself for competition.

There were 70 other Miguel Tejadas at his camp alone, all of them from backgrounds similar to his, all with the same intense desire to stand out—not just for the love of the game, but for survival.

And all were signed for almost no money. Most big league teams run academies in the Dominican Republic because it costs a small fraction of what it takes to field minor league teams in the U.S. The best of the best get sent to America. The ones who aren't good enough or "cooperative" enough are sent back to the poverty they've always known. These academies

**The Texas Rangers
acquired Sammy
Sosa's services in
1986 for \$3,500—
the exact amount the
Brooklyn Dodgers
paid to sign Jackie
Robinson in 1946.**

The Forgotten: Former minor league players Robert Valera, Carlos Made, and Alexi Valera hang outside a beauty parlor in the Bronx. Photo © José Luis Villegas.



are baseball factories producing big league talent at subminimum wages.

Tejada started his first summer league game on the bench, watching other players the Athletics thought had more talent. Then he got his first at-bat: he hit a home run. Soon, this destitute, uneducated kid was being shipped to the U.S. as a "prospect."

Speaking no English, he put aside intense homesickness to make a name for himself on the field in far-flung towns like Medford, Oregon, Modesto, California, and Huntsville, Alabama.

He came alive only when he was on the field. Off the field, he had few friends, no transportation or understanding of the world around him. Like all Latino minor leaguers, he led a lonely life in the U.S. From 1995 to 1997, Tejada spent his off-field time isolated in his room watching Spanish-language novellas on TV, cooking Spanish rice and beans, and listening to his music.

On the field, he played among American players of far less talent who had signed for far more money than he. With his skills, Tejada would have easily commanded a seven-figure signing bonus were he an American.

A bright young man despite his lack of formal education, Tejada knew exactly where he stood in baseball's hierarchy. He somehow managed not to let it get him down, but other Latinos burn with rage at the inequities they face at the hands of MLB.

When Tejada reached the big leagues in August of 1997, his dream was realized and baseball people could rightly say that the game had given a wonderful life to a kid with no options. But Tejada was the only survivor from the dozens of Dominican kids signed at the same time he was. While those other young men have been forgotten, numerous eager young Latino players have been signed to take their place.

Meanwhile, Tejada has secured his spot in the Athletics infield. He is now a fan favorite with a bright future. And he is coming of age at a time when Latino players like Sammy Sosa, Ivan Rodriguez of the Texas Rangers, and Pedro Martinez of the Boston Red Sox are dominating the game. I call their story "the last great, untold story of baseball."

Gunboats and Baseball

Few Americans realize that Tejada's Dominican Republic, the greatest producer of Latino players today, was invaded and occupied by U.S. forces twice in this century and has been bullied and dominated by the U.S. ever since.

It was those invading U.S. forces, and the employees of the big American companies that followed, that taught Latinos the game of baseball. The sport spread from Cuba, to the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, Colombia, and Nicaragua as the U.S. flexed its muscles throughout the Western Hemisphere in the 20th century. The way Dominican players like Tejada are recruited is an extension of that history of exploitation.

Latino players have been in the majors since 1902, a full 45 years before Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier. At least 45 Latinos, mostly Cubans, played big league ball between 1902 and 1947, the year of Robinson's historic breakthrough. Some, like Rafael Almeida and Armando Marsans—signed by the Cincinnati Reds in 1911—were forced to sign pieces of paper stating that they were of European and not African descent.

Most of these Latino players had African, European, and indigenous blood flowing through their veins. Their appearance defied America's narrow, black or white, definition of race. In fact, José Acosta and Jacinto Calvo, both Cubans, pulled an amazing feat—first playing in the old Negro Leagues in 1915 and then "passing" in the segregated big leagues five years later.

Why have they been forgotten?

Because many early Latino players, with their "un-American" skin colors, were treated like novelties and slipped under the U.S. racial radar. But the best Latino players, whose African ancestry was evident, were barred from the big leagues, along with legendary Negro Leaguers like Hall of Famer Josh Gibson.

Those who slipped into the big leagues were sworn to lie about their African heritage and barely made a dent in the public consciousness before fading into oblivion. For centuries, the U.S. refused to forthrightly deal with the racism it visited upon African Americans. And Latinos were rendered invisible.

Once Robinson entered the game, all things racial in baseball were overtaken by his story. But historians have never given Robinson credit for opening the doors of opportunity for the best players Latin America had to offer—men who were black as well as Latino.

"Hot-Tempered Showboats"

Minnie Minoso, Roberto Clemente, Orlando Cepeda, and others took baseball by storm in the 1950s, and changed the game.

Chico Carrasquel, a Venezuelan who starred with the Chicago White Sox, transformed the shortstop position into one of artistry and flair in the early 1950s, ushering in today's era of dazzling Latino shortstops. Vic Power, a Puerto Rican, won seven Gold Glove awards at first base in the late 1950s and early 1960s by pioneering the one-handed catch.

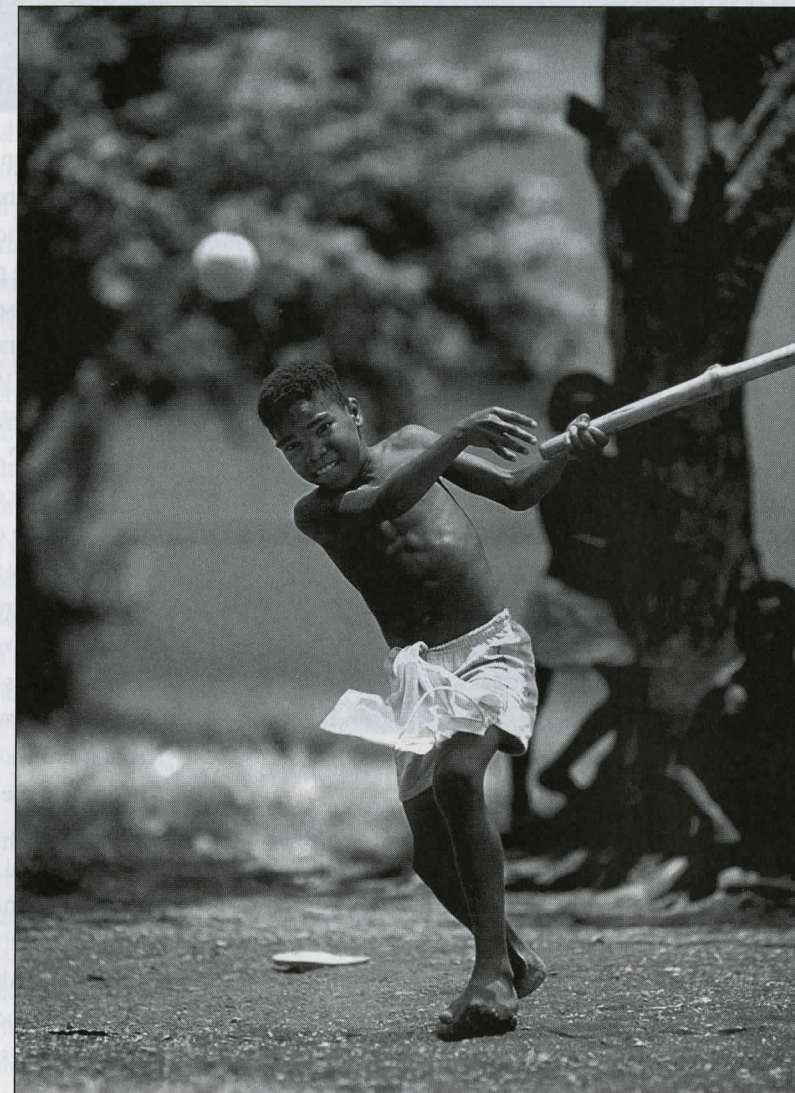
Because of this and because Power—who was also black—refused to be cowed by Jim Crow segregation, sportswriters coined a new phrase to describe him: "the showboat." Other negative labels soon followed: "moody," "hot-tempered," and, worst of all, "not a team player." These labels were rooted in negative white perceptions of Latinos, labels that took hold and became a burden even the great players had to carry.

The now legendary Roberto Clemente, who died in 1972 in a tragic plane crash while rushing emergency aid to earthquake-ravaged Nicaragua, railed at the negative labels placed upon him by reporters in the 1960s and early 1970s. Reporters branded him a "malingerer," an injury faker, and worse. They mocked Clemente's English skills. Unable to deny Clemente's talent, they added the now familiar racist caveat: the "troubled," "angry" star.

In a game where mythology and the clever quote spawn legends, Latino players saw their on-field talents ignored because of their inability to communicate with reporters. Even milestones, such as when Cuban shortstop Zoilo Versalles was the first Latino named Most Valuable Player while with the Minnesota Twins in 1965, were scarcely noted.

And when Latinos get injured or pass their prime, they are

quickly abandoned. "It happens to all of us," said Tony Oliva, a Cuban and the American League batting champion in 1964, 1965, and 1971. "We all get released....To the Americans, we are like some stray dog, like a rudderless ship at sea."



The Future: Carlos de la Rosa plays stickball in San Pedro de Macoris, a town known for its shortstops. Photo © José Luis Villegas.

Ready or Not

Sports, it is often said, is a mirror of society.

What does baseball tell us about the 40 million Latinos in this country?

We can say: it's time their story made it onto the cultural radar screen because—ready or not—Latinos have arrived. We are not just a black-and-white country anymore.

It's time for this country to come to grips with the harrowing road traveled by Latinos, ballplayers and workers alike, because Latinos are becoming a major force in baseball and the broader society.

In 1998, Latino players swept the Most Valuable Player awards. And in 1999, eight of the 12 players selected to the Associated

Press's All-Star team were Latino. Sammy Sosa is leading a Latino wave that is energizing the game, just as African American players did in the 1950s.

But, so far, only Sosa has registered in a meaningful way with the American people—and he had to hit nearly 130 home runs in two years to do that. As Tejada's story shows, there is much more to baseball's Latino story than Sammy Sosa.

Whether that story and the exploitation of Latino prospects ever becomes known or debated remains to be seen. Right now, it's MIA on our sports pages.

Theirs is part of a story that eluded us in the 20th century. Hopefully, this new century will be different.

RACE

FIGHTING THE R-WORD

SUZAN SHOWN HARJO AND A GROUP OF NATIVE AMERICANS FOUGHT THE WASHINGTON REDSKINS—AND WON. HERE SHE TELLS US HOW THEY DID IT.

THE SCORE IS NATIVE AMERICANS, 1, WASHINGTON REDSKINS, 0.

The contest is between protection against racism and profit from racism. It's half-time in the life of a pocketbook-incentive lawsuit filed by Native Americans seeking to end the Washington team's trademark rights.

Marketing names and logos in pro sports is big business. With a federal trademark, team owners can exact top dollar from anyone who uses their team's identifiers and stiff penalties from violators. Native Americans take "Redskins" as a racial slur and say the federal government should not reward the Washington professional football team for using it.

Last year, a panel of federal judges agreed, and decided to cancel trademark protections for the Washington Redskins.

What is the R-Word?

"Redskins." Not just any fightin' word, the r-word is the equivalent of the n-word, as most Native Americans see it and many dictionaries define it. The team's owners say it's a "neutral term" like "colored."

But there is no worse reference to Native Peoples in the English language. Over the centuries, European Americans have used various mean-spirited, insulting names for Native Peoples—Primitives, Savages, Hostiles—but the one reserved for the really

nasty name-calling has been Redskins.

The despised term arose in the 1600s and 1700s, with the colonists' practice of paying bounties for dead Native adults and children. When wagonloads and gunnysacks of corpses became a transportation problem for bounty-hunters and a disposal problem for traders, scalplocks instead of heads and red skins in lieu of whole bodies were accepted as evidence of Indian kill.

The epithet was first used for an American pro team in 1933, the Boston Redskins, which moved to the District of Columbia in 1937 and initially trademarked Washington Redskins in 1967.

"Vanishing Americans" No More

The r-word and other Native references were popularized in educational athletic programs around the turn of the century, when the "Vanishing Americans" were considered dead or dying. In the 1930s, the Native population hovered at a near-extinction level of 350,000, and Native People were thought to exist only in symbolic terms.

In the 1960s, the physical and political presence of Natives rose, and protests of these references also increased. In response, schools began retiring their Native-related sports names and symbols, beginning with the University of Oklahoma's Little Red in 1970. Stanford, Dartmouth, and Syracuse quickly followed suit and, to

date, about one-third of the colleges—over 1,000—have dumped their Native sports references. Some newspapers have stopped printing the r-word or other Native sports names or images on their pages, starting with *The Oregonian* in 1991. *The Washington Post* editorialized for the Washington team to drop its name in 1992.

The team's owners, however, have moved in the opposite direction. They have not only ignored pleas from Native America to drop the name, they deny that any Native Americans are offended.

Seven of us who are offended filed the seminal lawsuit on the issue, *Harjo et al v. Pro Football, Inc.*, in 1992. We petitioned the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (PTO), the agency that decides what material the federal government will license and protect against imitators, to cancel the trademarks for Redskins, Redskinettes (their cheerleaders), and associated names of the team in the nation's Capitol.

Contemptuous and Disparaging

The team's owners lost the important first round in litigation on April 2, 1999, when the PTO's three-judge panel ruled unanimously on the Native American side. The PTO's governing law says that materials that are "disparaging," "contemptuous," "disreputable," or "scandalous" cannot be federally protected. The federal panel canceled the Redskin and Redskinettes trademarks on three of the four grounds, holding that they "may disparage Native Americans and may bring them into contempt or disrepute."

The month after the judges' ruling, the National Football League (NFL), which reaps the lion's share of marketing profits and has bankrolled the team's litigation, announced the long-anticipated sale of the team for a record-breaking \$800 million. New owner Daniel M. Snyder immediately took up the mantra of the NFL and his predecessors, declaring that the name is not offensive and won't be changed.

Religious leaders in the Washington area wrote to the NFL, urging against an appeal of the decision. The heads of national organizations representing and serving the vast majority of Native Americans also wrote the NFL on May 26, asking it "to change the contemptible name." Six days later, the team's owners filed an appeal for a new trial in federal district court for the District of Columbia.

Change the Name!

Scores of social justice and religious groups answered with "Change the Name! An Interfaith Gathering to End Racism in Sports," a June 19, 1999 event hosted by Washington's National City Christian Church. The gathering was sponsored by such diverse groups as the Hotel & Restaurant Employees' Union—Local 25, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the National Conference of Black Lawyers—DC Chapter, the National Italian American Foundation, and UNITY: Journalists of Color.

Native sponsors included the National Congress of American Indians, the Native American Rights Fund, the International Indian Treaty Council, and other national organizations representing Native nations, tribal officials, and traditional leaders. They were joined by the leading associations of Native artists, attorneys, activists, educators, journalists, and youth.

One of the Native parties to the lawsuit, Manley A. Begay, Jr. (Navajo), opened and closed the gathering with his traditional tribal songs and described his grandmother as "a fine woman who would not understand being called a Redskin." "We are here to tell [the team's owners] that it's over, it's time to



Manley A. Begay, Jr., sings at "Change the Name! An Interfaith Gathering to End Racism in Sports" at the National City Christian Church in Washington DC. Photo by Lois Raimondo. ©1999, the Washington Post. Reprinted with permission.

change," said another co-litigant, Raymond D. Apodaca (Ysleta del Sur Pueblo). Vine Deloria, Jr., Esq. (Standing Rock Sioux), a noted author of some 20 books, explains, "We don't want future generations of Indian children to bear this burden of discrimination."

The other Native parties to the lawsuit are Norbert S. Hill, Jr. (Oneida); William A. Means (Oglala Lakota); and Mateo Romero Cochiti Pueblo).

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Cheyenne), the highest ranking Native federal official, says: "Redskins' is offensive to Indian people. Whether it is considered offensive by non-Indians is not the issue. It is offensive to us, and open-minded, caring people will readily see why."

When the team's owners wanted a new stadium on federal lands, Campbell introduced legislation in 1993 to force them to forego ethnic or racial stereotyping there. Before the popular measure was enacted, the owners evaded the issue by moving the team away from Washington, DC, and off lands governed by federal law.

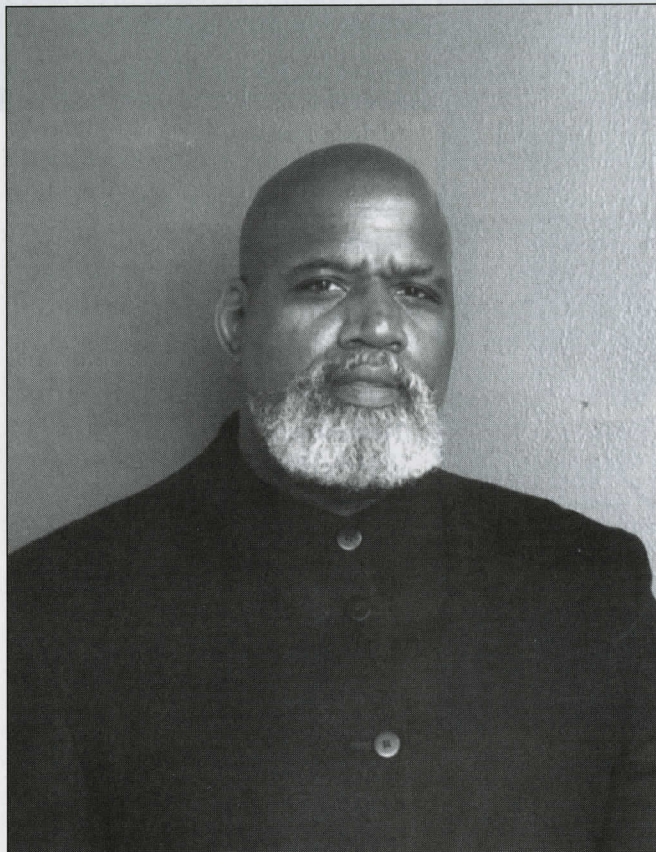
Senator Daniel K. Inouye, past chairman of the Senate's Indian panel and now its vice chairman, stated when the case was filed that "Native American leaders have taken what could prove to be the first step in eliminating offensive names and images from the sports world."

"As we prepare to enter a new century," said Inouye, "it is time to leave this era behind with the symbolic and substantive evolutionary act of changing offensive names and negative images in sports."

The professional sports business continues to resist all societal pressure to drop their Native references. Recently, lawyers for the Washington football club visited the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in Lakota country, and shamelessly passed out sweatshirts, duffel bags, caps, and other trinkets with the team's moniker and asked for support for the r-word in court.

The legal paper chase, now in its eighth year, goes on. But Native Peoples now wield a new legal weapon in the fight against racism. **ACTION**

Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne & Hodulgee Muscogee) is president of The Morning Star Institute in Washington, DC, and former president of the National Council of Indian Nations. She has helped recover over one million acres of Native lands and is the lead party in *Harjo et al v. Pro Football, Inc.*



THE DECLINE OF THE BLACK ATHLETE

An Interview with Harry Edwards

*Harry Edwards says the golden age of black athleticism is over. Is he serious?
ColorLines staffer David Leonard does the asking.*

Photos by Rick Rocamora

After three decades in the spotlight, as sociology professor at the University of California, and as a consultant to the San Francisco 49ers, Dr. Harry Edwards remains one of the premier activists in sports. *ColorLines* last spoke to Dr. Edwards on his role in organizing the "Revolt of the Black Athlete" at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968 (*ColorLines*, Vol. 1, No. 1).

Lately, Dr. Edwards has been engaging another heated debate over the role of athletics in the black community. While black athletes have never been more visible or more

culturally influential, Edwards now advances the provocative thesis that the "golden age" of black athletes is coming to an end. *ColorLines* recently asked Edwards exactly what he means. Is he out of touch or on point? You decide.

ColorLines: In the last year many people have cited America's love affair with the women's world cup team as an example of America's, and the sports world's, progress on gender equity. How much progress do you see?

Dr. Harry Edwards: First of all, the women's soccer team was projected as an "all-American, family-oriented team," which

was a sideways suggestion that the team was not about "those lesbians." It was also projected as a substantially "white-girl-next-door" team, which was, as one person stated outright, to provide a counter-example to the bad behavior of men in men's sports, which is to say black men in particular. They are looking at Lawrence Phillips, Dennis Rodman, O.J. Simpson, Jim Brown, and countering that image.

But neither the "all-American girl" team nor the "white-girl-next-door" image has anything to do with women's sports. In other words, the reception of the women's soccer team was not about sports, but revolved around the utility of the women's soccer team by the powers that be. This is evidenced in the kinds of endorsements some members of the team received following the World Cup. You had, for example, soccer Barbie, which is one of the most sexist images in American society. Then, of course, the athletic bra endorsement that Brandi Chastain got was again indicative of the maintenance of traditional images of women.

Q: A student of mine wrote a paper in which he juxtaposed the image of Tommie Smith and John Carlos in 1968 versus that of Charles Barkley and Michael Jordan during the 1992 Olympics—the raised black fist compared to a draping America flag strategically placed to cover up a Reebok label on their sweatsuits. What do these opposing images say about the last thirty years of black sports participation?

A: Thirty years ago there would not have been any issue of them covering the Reebok logo because they would not have had the Nike contract that was in conflict with it. That would have gone to a white athlete. So what this change tells me is that black athletes are sufficiently integrated into the business matrix of sports. That there is some-

thing there, a business interest, which they feel obliged to protect.

Q: In a number of spaces you have argued that we are currently witnessing the end of the "golden age of black athletes." Why is the "golden era" of blacks in sports coming to an end?

A: Through societal processes, through institutional erosion, through the degradation of the black athletic pool, through disqualification, judicial procedures and deaths, we have so emaciated the black talent pool that we are beginning to see a drop-off in performance at every level, in all sports where blacks participate in numbers. We are simply disqualifying, jailing, burying, and leaving behind our black athletes, right along with our potential black doctors, black lawyers, and so forth.

Look at high school sports: an increasing number of high schools cannot even field a team. Last year, three San Francisco high schools could not field a football team. A number of years ago, Richmond High, which has produced many great black athletes in the Bay Area, had five people try out for the football team. Even if schools have enough players, they often times don't have the funds to put a team on the field.

You look at boxing and the same things are happening. I remember when you had Ali, Frazier, Ernie Shavers, Ernie Terrell, George Foreman, Floyd Patterson, Buster Mathis, and Sonny Liston. Now, you have Evander Holyfield, basically a puffed-up cruiser weight, and Mike Tyson, who spends more time in trouble out of the ring, when he is not getting in trouble in the ring. Where are the boxers? The boxers are in the cemetery, in jail, in gangs, and on the street. That is where the potential football, basketball, and baseball players are as well.

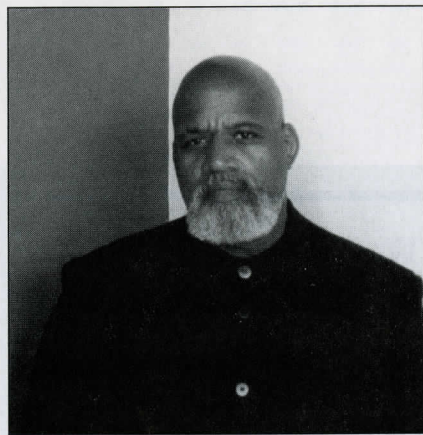
The talent pool in the black community has been so eroded that when you

**"We have so emaciated
the black talent pool
that we are beginning
to see a drop-off
in performance at
every level."**

SPORTS FACT

In 1998, the percentage of black players decreased in all professional sports and at the Division I level, reaching ten year lows in Major League Baseball (15%), and five year lows in the NBA (77%) and the NFL (65%). In Division I men's college basketball and baseball, the percentage of black student-athletes was at the lowest level in seven years.

Source: 1998 Racial And Gender Report Card, <http://www.sportinsociety.org>



Increasingly, blacks are going to be wearing a jailhouse number and a jailhouse uniform, instead of a sports team number and an athletic uniform.

have a sport that is 80 percent black, like the NFL, or 88 percent, like the NBA, the fall-out is going to show up. In basketball this situation is crystal clear. In 1990, 27 out of 29 teams averaged over 100 points per game. In 1997 only four teams averaged more than 100 points, and last year only one team, the Sacramento Kings, was able to reach that level. Every statistic is down. You see the same statistical decline at the college level. The performance standards are down in free-throw average, points per game, rebound average, assist average.

Why? You just don't have as great an athlete today. We are jailing, burying, and academically disqualifying our potential point guards, wide-receivers, running backs, power forwards, centers, and so forth, at a very early age. If we look at it historically, literally from 1947, when Jackie Robinson broke into the major leagues, to 1997, those 50 years marked the golden age of the black athlete. Now we are seeing a precipitous drop-off, and the reasons are not inside sport; the reasons are in society, which are ultimately reflected in sport.

Q: So what will the next thirty years look like?

A: I think over the next thirty years we are going to continue to see a decline of black athletic participation. More importantly, I think we are also going to see a phenomenal split within the black community. The black middle-class moving on to become doctors, lawyers, and engineers; the black masses not moving at all, being left behind. That is going to be an explosive situation.

The overwhelming majority of black athletes come out of the lower echelons of black society. I don't think it is accidental when you look at the inordinate number of blacks in jail and the proportionate number of blacks not on athletic teams. You are essentially looking at the

same guy. They both have numbers; they are both in uniforms, and they both belong to gangs. Only they call one the Crips or the Bloods, while they call the other the 49ers, Warriors, Athletics, or the Giants. They are all in pursuit of respect. They all, at one level or another, keep score. The parallels are all there. It is the same guy.

But I think what you are looking at over the next thirty years is that the guy in the jail uniform is going to outstrip, in both numbers and impact, the guy in the athletic uniform. Increasingly he is going to be wearing a jailhouse number and a jailhouse uniform, instead of a sports team number and an athletic uniform.

Q: So might the 21st century be the "Golden Age" of white athletics or the "Golden Age" of Latino athletics?

A: I think that ultimately the 21st century will be a global sports age. The world is so small and sports is so international that I think you are going to see the same thing in American sports that you see in basketball and baseball today. When you look at athletes coming from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other parts of the world, you see the future of sports. Right now, 40 percent of major league baseball players are foreign-born.

More generally, I believe sports are going to change. They are going to take on the hype of professional wrestling to cover the lack of quality of performance. I think sports will be hyped more and more as a business, and less and less as a performance craft. Rules changes will keep scoring up, but you won't see the caliber of players you saw in the past. You will still have the hitting, the dunks, but most importantly you will have the games being hyped and rules being changed, so that points keep going up, fans keep watching the games, and the money keeps rolling in.

Q: Last year, *Sports Illustrated* featured a cover story entitled "What Ever Happened to the White Athlete?" Do you know what has happened to the white athlete?

A: Well, the white athlete over the last 50 years has simply been displaced by a pool of largely untapped athletic talent, generated by a lack of alternative high-prestige occupational opportunities for masses of young black males, and increasingly, females. That is what happened to the white athlete in basketball, football, track, boxing, and to a certain extent in baseball.

But in 95 percent of American sports the white athlete is there in numbers and dominant: swimming, diving, water polo, golf, tennis, badminton, auto racing, horse racing. The white athlete is there in soccer, walking, gymnastics, and all the winter sports in dominant numbers. What happened to the white athlete? The white athlete is there, except in the few sports where blacks have had access.

The other thing that has happened is that blacks have changed the nature of some sports. Black culture, isolated from white society from slavery right up to integration, developed styles of playing sports that whites have had to learn or get out of the sport. So if you'd brought in a point guard who dribbled the ball through his legs and passed the ball behind this back, you better have a guy to guard him. What this generally meant was going into the black community to get someone who had played that kind of ball.

Whites have access to the full spectrum of sports, and the full spectrum of high-prestige occupational positions. They are not channeled into sports in disproportionately high numbers, and white talent is spread out across all sports and occupations. Well, blacks don't typically have those same opportunities.

Q: Several years ago you argued that the black community's "singled-minded pursuit of sports" represented a severe problem within the black community. Looking back on this argument, do you still maintain this position, or have you changed your views on black athletic participation?

A: There is still, thank God, a disproportionately high emphasis on sports achievement in black society, relative to other high-prestige occupational career aspirations. Given what is happening to young black people, who have essentially disconnected from virtually every institutional structure in society, sports may be our last hook and handle. They are unemployed in disproportionately high numbers, and increasingly they are unemployable. They drop out of school in disproportionately high numbers, and now they are not just uneducated and mis-educated, but often times disengaged. They have disengaged even from the black church. They are affiliated with the gangs, not the church. The street is their temple; the gang leader is their pastor. They don't seek the respect of anybody but each other. But they still want to be "like Mike."

That sports emphasis gives us a hook and a handle on them. Through mid-night basketball, through Saturday football, or recreational facilities, we can put them back in contact with the clergy, mentors, health workers, counselors, government workers, with people from the economic and corporate sector. Without that we have no way of getting to them at all, except through police and judicial action.

I still maintain that there is a high and inordinate emphasis on sports in the black community. That emphasis has been transmuted, however, by the processes of the "end of the golden age of black athletics" from a liability to a virtue, in a sense that it may provide us with the last hook and handle that we

"What happened to the white athlete? In 95% of American sports the white athlete is dominant."

SPORTS FACT

66% of African American males between the ages of 13 and 16 believe that they could make a living playing pro sports. The odds of a high-school basketball player making it into the NBA are 50,000:1; for college basketball players, 2,344:1.

Source: Northeastern Center for the Study of Sport in Society

have on a substantial proportion of this generation of young black people.

Q: So you disagree with John Hoberman, whose book *Darwin's Athletes* argues that blacks should get out of sports, because such a singled-minded pursuit of sports has fueled societal racism and, therefore, historically hurt the black community?

A: Yes! *Darwin's Athletes* is a classic case of intellectually picking up the ball and running the wrong way. You cannot look at sport, where a certain level of opportunity has been opened up, and say that because of the racist spin that white society puts on achievement in that arena, that blacks should desist, not just from valuing that sports participation, from idealizing the people who participate in sports, but that we should get out of it all together. This is like saying, A, whites have cancer, therefore, B, let's treat black folks. The emphasis should be upon why white society puts that racist emphasis upon black sports achievement and, secondly, why is black achievement limited to sports in disproportionately high numbers, and not at least representative across the full spectrum of high-prestige occupational categories? These are the issues that Hoberman should have been dealing with.

Q: What do you think will be the greatest challenge in sports over the next hundred years?

A: Sports always recapitulates society, in terms of its character, dynamics, and the structure of human relations. Just as I believe emphatically that the challenge of the 21st century will be diversity in all of its guises, the challenge in sports is also going to be diversity. We are going to be looking at circumstances where we cannot separate out race from class, gender, sexuality, techno-class status, or age.

I worry about what is going to happen to this society. We are already in a situation where we are expecting children to play games that they cannot afford to watch. They, especially the classes that generate the athletes, can't afford the ticket to get into the stadium; they can't afford money for the pay-per-view. But, even as we attack them, we continue to expect them to be the athletes on our teams. Even as we jail them, even as we disqualify them from schools, even as we revoke the social services that support them, even as we eliminate the affirmative action that brings them to college campuses, we still want them to be on our teams. So as we look at the situation, it becomes very, very clear that we are headed for a set of crises, all of which revolve around diversity in sports, just as in society. **RACE**

For more, visit *ColorLines* Online at <http://www.colorlines.com>.

Race Rules:

**Equity, Justice and Public Policy
May 19-20, 2000
American University**

Race Rules is a convening of practitioners, researchers and others who are committed to addressing institutional racism. It is part meeting, part strategy session to take stock of what's working in the U.S. and internationally, develop and refine strategies, and explore opportunities for collaboration to address what is arguably the fiercest and most stubborn challenge facing this nation.

A project of the Grass Roots Innovative Policy Program,
a program of the Applied Research Center

For registration, sponsorship or program information, please call (540) 857-3088 or log onto www.arc.org/gripp.

Sponsored by Applied Research Center in conjunction with American University, Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Institute on Race and Poverty, Center for Third World Organizing, Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, Center for Community Change, and Center for Policy Alternative (partial listing).

GAZING AT THE NEW BLACK WOMAN ATHLETE

**How do we see the new women athletes of color?
Donna Daniels gazes at Venus and Serena Williams.**

In the afterglow of the success of the U.S. women's world cup soccer team and the re-emergence of women's professional basketball, we are enjoying an unprecedented level of American interest in and access to women's sporting events and women athletes. But we must question what this interest and access is predicated upon.

Newly founded women's professional leagues, sporting events, and televised sports coverage are made possible by a recognition of girls and women as consumers, by an acknowledgment of the strength of our consumer dollars and the consumer dollars of those who love and support us.

This coverage, sponsorship, and presentation of women's sports and women athletes is a by-product of a set of strategic marketing and advertising plans.

The sporting woman is a marketed and marketing figure. Women's sports

Donna Daniels is assistant professor in cultural anthropology and African and African American Studies at Duke University.



Vandalized by RS

for and celebrate her, and even as she may inspire us as fans, weekend warriors, and athletes, our access is predicated on the power of our consumption, on the potential deep pockets of those of us who support and/or participate in women's athletics. Yet all of these facts take on a particular spin when race is factored into the equation. Let us consider Venus and Serena Williams to explore these themes as they affect the new black woman athlete.

Got Game?

As I am writing this piece I receive my most recent complimentary issue of *Sports Illustrated for Women*, one of two magazines focusing on women's sports and women athletes that debuted about two years ago. It is a glossy

sits solidly at the intersection of advertising and marketing and the woman athlete comes to us as a mediated figure. She is presented to us through her varied ties to companies and advertisers; she wears the shoes and clothes of companies with whom she has endorsement contracts. Even as we are granted access to her, even as we root

magazine, taking its cue in form and content from mainstream women's magazines. When I toss the issue onto the floor near my bed the back cover catches my eye. There they are, Venus and Serena Williams, featured in the current series of "Got Milk?" ads sponsored by the National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Board.

The sisters Williams, two young black women, stars of the women's professional tennis circuit, are pictured each with one arm around the waist of the other and a second arm bent with a hand on their respective hips. Serena also holds a racket in her hand. The Williams sisters wear their trademark form-fitting athletic gear, milk mustaches, and their signature beaded cornrows. This time the beads are white, a

SPORTSFACT

Many of the Adidas World Cup soccer balls were made in China, by prison laborers, making \$15 dollars per month.

nice contrast to their black outfits and skin. The Williams sisters are confident, they have attitude, they are exceptionally physically fit, they are competitive, and they have sisterly pride. We are encouraged to be awed and intimidated, impressed and skeptical.

How the Williams Sisters Came to Be

Televised matches featuring Venus or Serena Williams often refer to their "unconventional" path to the professional ranks. As smart, articulate, confident young African American women, sportscasters often seem challenged and mystified by what to say about them. Too often, when groping for commentary, sportscasters turn to what I call the Williams sisters' origin myth.

In this story, their father is cast as an eccentric, Svengali-like coach who thumbed his nose at the tennis establishment and used his daughters as part of a diabolical scheme. Richard Williams, the story goes, decided that Venus and Serena would bypass the junior circuit—a circuit that many contend is a decidedly unfriendly one if you are not one of the young, white, and entitled players who treat it as

their personal backyard—and instead debut as professionals. As black girl-children, straight outta Compton no less, they operated outside of the traditional channels of the sport.

Commentators portray Richard Williams as having taken an unnecessary and reckless gamble with his daughters' careers, even as he explains his actions as part of a tactical decision to protect his daughters—from racism, we can infer—and promote their development.

Earlier in their careers, this story would end with a question about their chances for achieving the athletic success for which their father had groomed them. Now, having each demonstrated their exceptional athletic skills by winning major events, as evidenced by Serena's recent win at last year's U.S. Open, their origin myth has been transformed into a story about their unorthodox path to gaining legitimacy and respect, with commentators' early skepticism now remembered as warmly held expectation.

Got the Look?

The role of the visual in producing an image and prompting our understandings of black women athletes should not be underestimated. Venus and Serena's bodies communicate athletic training and prowess. Venus and Serena work and train like all athletes who desire sports success. Black athletes are often celebrated in terms of a brute physicality and innate athleticism that denies the role of intelligence in athletic success. The Williams' superior physical conditioning should not be understood to eclipse their use of intellect, tactics, and strategies.

Unlike their white counterparts, their beauty is not imagined, let alone admired or commented upon—think Anna Kournikova. Then there's Venus and Serena's hair. Commentators con-

tinue to remark upon it with curiosity and fascination. "Why do they wear their hair that way?" they wonder. In narrating the sisters' competitive court play, the sportscasters debate whether their hair is noisy and disruptive.

Image and Access

While Venus's success over the last two years and Serena's outstanding play this past year have silenced many critics, white sportscasters often seem unable to discern the confident and intelligent black woman athlete. Instead, black confidence and intelligence conveys arrogance to the white media. Venus's remarks expressing her competitive spirit and self-confidence are often read as cockiness. The press seems to prefer passive, amicable, and non-threatening personas.

For the new black woman athlete, creating a likeable image is a formidable challenge. Existing outside of a white female aesthetic norm, black women athletes must monitor and strategize about how they are seen and understood by a public not used to their physical presence or intellect, whether on the court, field, or peddling a product. With sports advertising and marketing so solidly joined, black women athletes negotiate their athletic play and careers in an arena unaccustomed to acknowledging and making sense of their existence and motivations.

Sports is big business and our access to women's sports is all about consumer dollars and market share. Our challenge as fans and supporters of women athletes and women's athletics is to think beyond the image and to see past the apparatus of marketing and advertising. The questions become: what price will we pay for our access? What will we tolerate on the path to supporting women's athletics and women athletes? **RACE**

Running the Invisible Race

Former track star, Colette D. Winlock, looks back at Title IX, and winning the race.

by Colette D. Winlock

My athletic career lasted from 1970 to 1986. I posted many national and world-ranking times as a 400 meter hurdler in the sport of track and field. I came up through the ranks of the Amateur Athletic Union's Junior Olympics, had a successful collegiate career, and in 1996 was inducted into my college's Sports Hall of Fame. So when *ColorLines* asked me to reflect on the impact of race on my sports career, my first thought was: "Which race? I ran so many!"

In fact, within our sports world, we rarely thought about race or racism as institutions. If you were slighted or disrespected by the "gray" girls, you just whupped them through your sport, talked about it amongst yourselves, or confronted the offender. I'd grown up in the South during the early 1960s, so running into overt prejudices didn't surprise me. I dealt with it by training even harder and growing more aloof from my white teammates and coaches.

That intense involvement in sports kept me in a kind of suspended consciousness.

During those years when I spent every Monday running up "Drag Ass Hill" in Hayward, right around the corner in Oakland the Black Panther Movement was in full swing, but I never realized it. My world involved work, school, practice, and competing. If you don't know how seductive the illusion of advancement through sports is, you've probably never been told, "You've got talent, you could go far."

Many people think that when Congress passed Title IX of the Civil Rights Act in 1972, it ushered in a golden age for female competitors. While it's true that Title IX created new opportunities for elite female athletes across the country, at the same time the numbers of girls and women who participated in after school sports and inter-collegiate athletics plummeted. I watched the numbers of girls participating in sports drop from hundreds to the 20 or so who were good enough to make the varsity or travel teams. Male coaches increasingly replaced women, lured by the new prestige and money of women's sports and considered more qualified by athletic directors.

Organizing bodies like the Girls Athletic Association dis-

appeared, and coaches for women's sports began competing for funds to field their teams. On the college level, the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women disbanded and joined the ranks of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the NCAA.

I have to wonder whether this reduction in our numbers and the loss of those autonomous women's organizations kept female athletes from speaking about race. If we had been able to maintain a critical mass of women, would our leadership have been more visible?

The sports industry is a white and male-dominated institution. Historically, black women have been offered one of two roles in such institutions. We can either be the self-effacing, take-care-of-everybody, don't-rock-the-boat, wise Mammy, or the quick-tongued, exotic Sapphire. In neither case are we a real threat to the system, because we are women, and women do not have real power.

It makes sense to me now that my acts of resistance to a racist and sexist system involved improving my athletic prowess and maintaining a calm aloofness. My training at home told me that in order to get half the credit you had to

be twice as good as white people. At the same time, the world of sports taught me to be "nice," by offering dazzling rewards to the "coachable" woman athlete, the one who didn't rock the boat. But these individual responses of working harder and being nicer actually make it easier for the sports industry to deal with you. Instead of angry women athletes of color, they get hard-working, nice girls.

With the high visibility and real financial gains of women in the WNBA, soccer, tennis, figure skating, gymnastics, and other sports, don't we owe it to ourselves and future female athletes to stop being nice? Women athletes have a lot to talk about. Maybe those of us who are retired can start the real conversation. What do we have to lose—now? **RACE**

SPORTSFACT

Before Title IX, the percentage of women coaching women's teams was 90 percent. In 1998, that percentage was down to 44 percent.

Source: 1998 Racial and Gender Report Card.
<http://www.sportinsociety.org>

Colette Winlock is a community activist, leadership trainer, and doctoral candidate at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

FROM MEDAL

An Interview with Anita DeFrantz

STAND to the TABLE

Anita DeFrantz got her political education at the Olympics. Now she's a Vice President of the International Olympic Committee. Rinku Sen talks to a powerhouse in international athletics.

Positioned at the center of massive controversies ranging from drug use by elite athletes, illegal payoffs to International Olympic Committee members, and racial and gender conflict within sports, Anita DeFrantz is one of the most influential women in international athletics. She started her career as an athlete, winning six National Championships in rowing, and was a bronze medalist at the 1976 Olympic Games.

Once an outspoken critic of the racial, gender, and power inequities of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), she is now not only a member of that powerful body but in 1997 became the first woman in the IOC's 103-year history to be elected Vice President. *ColorLines* talked to her recently in Los Angeles, where she is president of the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, an organization which works to improve and expand youth athletics and runs "the best sports library and jammin' website in the country." (www.aafla.org)

ColorLines: What do you remember most about your Olympic experience as an athlete?

Rinku Sen is the former co-director of the Center for Third World Organizing, a nationwide racial justice organization of people of color. Her writings on race and gender have appeared in Social Policy and Women Transforming Politics.



Anita DeFrantz: When I first went to the Olympic Games, my main thought was that I wanted to be a champion. But upon reaching the Olympic village, I saw a team from an African

nation and went over to talk. I said, "So, are you guys excited about being here?" Their answer was: "No. We're leaving. Our country has called us home because the New Zealand rugby team played in [apartheid] South Africa." Many of the African Olympic Committees boycotted in 1976. At first I couldn't understand it. I didn't realize the enormous role of the Olympic movement in bringing attention to the apartheid regime in South Africa and in pressing for a full recognition of humanity in that country.

Q: How'd you get onto the International Olympic Committee?

A: It might have been standing up to the President of the United States

in 1980. I think that had a lot to do with it. President James Earl Carter decided that the best way to get the Soviet troops out of Afghanistan was to keep the U.S. Olympic team home from the 1980 Games in Moscow. In fact, the administration did its best to destroy those Games, even though not one penny of federal funding went to support the team. All of my training was done with my own private support. I believed that I as a citizen of the U.S. had the right to make that decision about whether to compete, and expressed my opinion loudly.

In 1981, I moved to LA and worked for the U.S. Olympic Committee. Eventually I became vice president and was responsible for planning and operating one of the three Olympic villages in 1984. I was also responsible for ensuring that the African National Olympic Committees felt comfortable and would come.

South Africa's participation had been an issue for the Olympic movement since 1964. My goal was to make sure that there would be nothing that we did that would prohibit or prevent African nations from competing in the Games. I'm pleased to say that all but two came, even though one came and then left because their journalists were refused entry because Interpol thought they were coming not to report news, but to create it, if you catch my drift.

Q: What do you think accounts for the recent Olympic bribery scandals, and does it break down at all according to the wealth and status of the countries from which IOC members come?

A: It's a new phenomena that has occurred because of the enormous amount of money involved and with the relatively new practice of the IOC visiting the bidding cities. Without the visits to the bid cities, without the heightened interest in bidding for the Games, I don't think this would have happened.

No patterns emerged about the racial or economic background of the committee members, although it might be easy to perceive it that way. Of the people expelled, two were from Africa, two from South America, and one from Samoa. Most of the ten members that were reprimanded were European.

Q: What do you think the major issues facing people of color in sports are today?

A: We do damage to our children saying that if you're black you're a sprinter; if you're white you're a marathoner. The second African woman ever to win an Olympic medal was an Ethiopian woman who won—what?—a marathon. In this country, NBC does news shows providing all this scientific evidence that only blacks can jump. Yet at the time of the most recent show, the world high jump champion was a white guy. Now it's a Cuban. Shame on coaches for teaching kids these misguided perceptions and steering them to sports they don't need to be steered to!

Over the last 15 years, the public school system has pretty

much taken sports out of their budget. They cut sports out without understanding the positive things you learn about decision-making and working with a team. Girls and women learn that you don't have to be isolated; there are others you can depend on. There's a lot that is of value in sports.

Then you get to the economic issues. Proposition 13 in California did huge damage because parks no longer have the funding to put on programs. If you live in an affluent area, it doesn't matter because your parents can pay for the programming. But if you're poor, there is no programming. When we're talking about access, you have to have playing fields, you have to have coaches, and you have to have time to participate.

Q: Girls and boys both receive a lot of sports media. What effect do you think that media has on kids?

A: Most of the media stories about malfeasance by athletes focus on blacks. In baseball, the few African American ath-

letes always seem to be getting busted. But then there's Steve Howe; here's a white guy that's been banned from baseball for life for cocaine addiction—seven times! He keeps being allowed to come back, is rehired by different teams, and keeps pitching until his next "lifetime ban."

Sportswriters relate to people who look like them. That's why Brandy Chastain got so much

more attention over the World Cup game than did Brianna Scurry, who was really the key person helping the U.S. team win the gold in Atlanta. A colleague of mine who considers himself a big ethics person has decided that Brianna "cheated" during the World Cup by moving prematurely to block the kick. But he celebrates Mark McGuire, who took a banned drug in his record-breaking year.

Q: Many people feel that sports is the country's only level playing field, and that participation in sports helps the country overcome racism. What do you think about this?

A: The same things that affect racism throughout society show up in sports. Sport reflects society. I've never bought into the notion that through sports you can make people different. I think that you learn to make decisions in sports and you can decide to understand and respect, but this notion that if you can just get your kids to play together that will end racism, it won't. **RACE**

SPORTSFACT

In 1997–1998, 40% of Division I college athletes were women. But while 40% of athletic budgets were spent on women's sports, only 20% of salary expenditures went to coaches for women's teams.

Source: *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 21, 1999

FIGHTING APARTHEID IN SPORTS:

Richard Lapchick

By Bob Wing and Jeff Chang, ColorLines editors

When Richard Lapchick was five years old, racist picketers hung his father's image in effigy on the tree outside his window.

"For several years after that, I would sometimes take phone calls when my Dad was on the other line and the callers would yell, 'nigger lover, nigger lover, nigger lover,'" recalls Lapchick. His Dad, Joe Lapchick, the championship coach of the New York Knicks and a former Boston Celtic star, had just made Nat "Sweetwater" Clifton the first black player to be signed to play in the NBA.

Richard's youthful racial awakening became the backbone of his life. An advisor to both management and the players associations of the NBA, NFL, Major League Baseball, and other professional and collegiate leagues on racial hiring practices, he is recognized as one of the most powerful people in sports.

In 1978, Lapchick was the national chair of the coalition to boycott South Africa in sports. When the South African tennis team was scheduled to come to Nashville to play in the Davis Cup, Lapchick organized protests of the event. The matches were eventually cancelled, making international headlines.

Back on campus in Virginia the next night, he was beaten by two assailants who inflicted liver damage, kidney damage, a hernia, and a concussion. They left him unconscious, the word "nigger" carved on his stomach with a pair of office scissors. Lapchick recalls, "Four days later the local police leaked to the press that they thought I had self-inflicted these wounds."

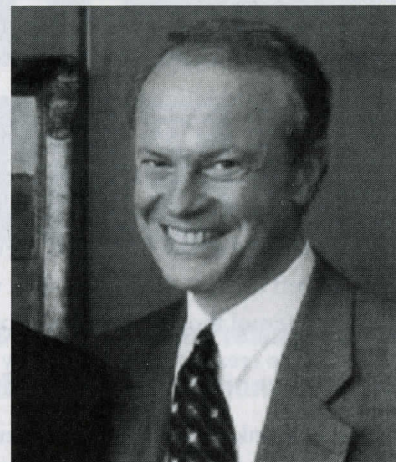
He received kidnap threats and his son had disappeared for hours at one point. So, for safety's sake, Lapchick left his campus job to work with the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid. A conspiracy involving the South African government, the Virginia Ku Klux Klan, and the local Virginia police was later uncovered. "The U.N. was literally trying to rescue me out of Virginia, they knew what was going on," he says. "The experience was horrible. But it also made me stronger and, ironically, gave me more credibility to do my work."

That work now includes running the Center for the Study of Sport in Society, a powerhouse institution he founded at Northeastern University in 1984. Lapchick also directs the National Consortium of Academics and Sports, a group of more than 180 colleges that has enabled more than 15,000 athletes to return to NCAS schools to pursue their degrees.

Access and opportunity for women and people of color are at the core of Lapchick's philosophy. "The opportunities for girls who live in the cities to participate in youth sports is 15 percent of what it is for girls in the suburbs," he says. "The increased importance of facilities, money, and parental participation is skewing girls' sports to the suburbs. One of our biggest new programs is called Urban Youth Sports which seeks to create sports opportunities in the city of Boston, especially for girls. We are starting a middle school field hockey league this spring for 100 girls of color."

Through the Center, he produces the annual *Racial Report Card*, which has become a crucial tool in ongoing efforts to diversify sports from the playing field to the board rooms. He has begun SportsCap, a program which connects decision-makers in the sports world with organizations that represent women and people of color. But he's sanguine about change coming from the top. "It is not happening fast," he says. "Historically, baseball has lagged the most, though there are some hopeful signs now. The NFL has also lagged behind, especially on the issue of gender."

As with his father, Lapchick's commitment to sports has gone far beyond the mere winning and losing of contests; sports are also a battlefield for the mind and soul. "I see myself as a 'civil rights activist,'" says Lapchick. "I do other things, but that would be the closest to my heart." **RACE**



Zero Tolerance and Racial Bias

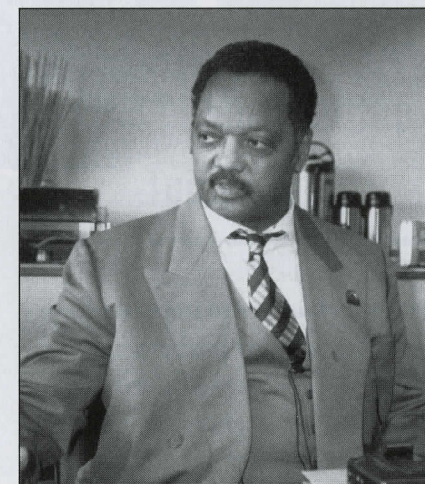
An Interview with Jesse Jackson

When seven high school students in a small town in Illinois were expelled, the Reverend Jesse Jackson saw something else going on. Bob Wing and Terry Keleher talk to him about the subtext of Decatur

On September 17, 1999, seven African American male students were involved in a brief fight at a football game in Decatur, Illinois. While no weapons were involved and no one was injured, each was expelled for two years. The Reverend Jesse Jackson saw the expulsions as an issue of racial bias in school disciplinary policies.

After leading a 5,000 person protest march, Jackson was indicted on charges of mob action, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and solicitation to commit a crime. But by taking on the Decatur school board, he

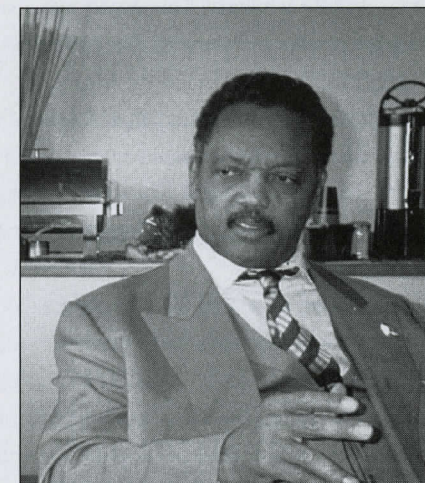
has dramatized the racial bias of zero tolerance policies and the racial disparities in suspension rates throughout the country. We interviewed Reverend



Jackson on December 13, 1999 on the importance of the case.

ColorLines: What actually happened that led to the expulsions in Decatur?

Jesse Jackson: The *Chicago Tribune* did a full investigation of the fight, which took place at a high school football game on September 17, 1999. They found that the fight lasted 17 seconds and involved seven male students, all black. They found that there were no



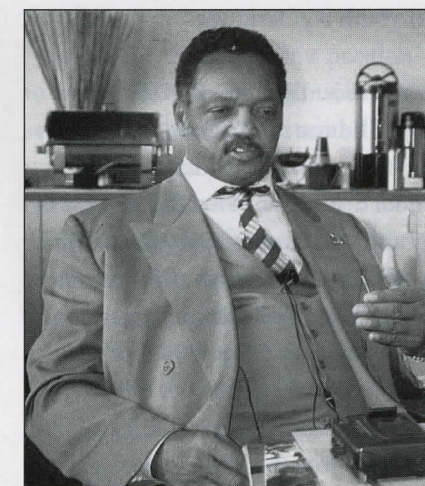
guns, no drugs, no chains, no knives, no bloodshed, no injuries. The fight was less violent than a hockey match. They found that there was no premeditation. But the seven kids were expelled for two years!

At first, the principal suspended two or three of the boys for ten days. That would have been ordinary. But, the Decatur school board overruled them, saying it had "zero tolerance," and expelled the kids for two years. Two of the students were seniors, with less than four credits to go for graduation.

At the hearing, the boys were not allowed counsel. They were not allowed to face their accusers. There was no cross examination. The parents were given no role, no degree of involvement.

Q: Your involvement helped bring the state officials into the case. What is their stance?

A: The state superintendent of schools said the expulsions should be put in abeyance and the students should be put into alternative education. The



Bob Wing is executive editor of ColorLines. Terry Keleher is director of the Applied Research Center's ERASE Initiative.

state attorney general agreed, but the Decatur school board rejected their advice.

Then, Illinois Governor Ryan, a Republican, also said that the sentence was too harsh. The Decatur board said, well, ok, then we'll expel them for one year—totally arbitrary. They unequivocally refused to give the kids due process. So we said, no. We rejected the idea that all of the kids should be expelled for one year without due process.

Q: What are the latest developments in the case?

A: The board escalated after we rejected their one year offer. They made a school film of the fight available to CBS. They called the kids “mob-like,” “gang-like,” and “thugs.” They got the State Attorney to file charges against the students for mob action. They intend to try them in court in February. They released the students' private records to the press. That's against the law, but they released their private records.

So, we got the parents to file a lawsuit against the board for releasing the private records. And we have a suit in court protesting the racial disparity in the whole process of punishment in Decatur.

Q: Why is the school board so intransigent?

A: The school board is the third largest employer in town. It is a major power base in the city: there is a power structure involving its employees, its contractors, its consultants.

Sixteen percent of Decatur's population is black and 40 percent of Decatur's public schools students are black or brown. But there are six whites and one black on the school board. Many whites who vote for the school board send their children to private academies.

They have a political or business interest in the board of education, not in the children that are being served by it.

So blacks are effectively disenfranchised inside that school system; the parents have no voice. Every position of influence is held by a white person—the counselors, the contractors, the vendors, the school board officers, and 95 percent of the teachers—every position of power.

“They either track black kids or subtract them. When they locked us out, we fought, but we have gotten used to being pushed out.”

Q: Why is this case so important? What do you think it represents?

A: Actually, once we got pulled into it, we thought it would be a relatively short stay, but it just got deeper. Decatur reveals the DNA of this racial crisis, this class crisis in the schools.

As I got deeper into it, I realized there is this tremendous anger towards America's youth—Three Strikes and You're Out, mandatory sentencing, and so on. Politicians refuse to modernize schools, they cut out midnight basketball, but build all these new jails. First-class jails, second-class schools. This is zero tolerance.

That is why I kept saying this issue is not just black and white, it's wrong and right. There is an ethical issue. There's clearly a race pattern, but there are also

class and gender disparities in how this punishment's been meted out arbitrarily and capriciously.

Q: At first you seemed to be downplaying the race issue, saying this was an issue of right and wrong. More recently you've emphasized the race cut.

A: I tried to be a racial bridge in that situation and not further tear the community apart. I said that it's not right that there were over 1,700 suspensions last year, out of 10,000 students. One thousand of them were black. But there are too many suspended, whether white or black. I was trying to keep mobilizing white allies and not unwittingly solidify whites behind the race fear.

There's definitely a heightened race dimension, but there is generally a move against all youth. Toward punishing pregnant girls. Jailing kids, sentencing them as if they were adults. Ninety percent of kids in jail are high school drop-outs and 92 percent are functionally illiterate. Eighty percent of them are in on non-violent drug charges, but only one in ten get drug treatment. So they come out of jail sicker and slicker, and return quicker. There is a 75 percent recidivist rate. The racial disparity is clear, but the very move towards intolerance toward our youth is a basic one.

Q: You recently met with U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley to discuss the racial disparities in public school discipline. What did he have to say and what did you propose to him?

A: Well, one thing I was asking for was for some national data on suspensions. His latest data is from 1994. But he promised to come out with more recent data this Spring. Secretary Riley said he thinks it's true that those suspended are disproportionately black and disproportionately southern—the same forces

that once locked these [black] kids out of school, now push them out! They either track them or subtract them. When they locked us out, we fought, but we have gotten used to being pushed out.

Q: What do you see happening next?

A: I think that now there's a reevaluation all across the country of the absurdities of zero tolerance. It started out as zero tolerance against kids having guns in schools, but the add-ons to zero tolerance have made it absurd. One kid had a little rubber hammer as part of his Halloween costume: weapons charge. Another kid gave another kid two lemon cough drops: drug charge. Another kid's mother sent him to school with a little cake butter knife to give slices to her friends: weapons charge.

Now Secretary Riley is saying that no punishment should result in putting kids out of school. That is his interpretation of federal law—that those [school districts] who violate the law jeopardize their access to federal funds.

So, I think that we are in a position to begin to arouse the national consciousness on just how extreme these policies have become. We will question all of them: zero tolerance, Three Strikes and You're Out, mandatory sentencing. You see, when we take out school psychologists, truant officers, counselors, art, music, and athletics, and bring in the police, the school gets turned into a feeder system for the penal system. They are gutting the educational infrastructure, and replacing it with the police. **ACTION**

CD-ROM HELPS ORGANIZERS CONFRONT INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

by Nicole Davis, *ColorLines* staff

For years, anti-racist education organizers have sparred with officials over institutional racism. Disparities in test performance, suspension rates, resource allocation, and classroom segregation, they have argued, are racial. But officials have just as often denied that race is at issue.

Now a new CD-ROM created by the Applied Research Center's ERASE (Expose Racism and Advance School Excellence) Initiative—an organizer's research tool called “Making the Grade: A Racial Justice Report Card”—allows organizers to confront institutional racism using the school district's own data.

Black parent Shakira Abdullah is a member of the Providence, RI-based community organization, Direct Action for Rights & Equality (DARE). Two years ago, at a teacher's request, her son used a small utility knife to remove a diskette from a broken computer. For this, he was referred to the principal for violating “zero tolerance” weapons rules and expelled just months short of graduating from high school.

Abdullah thought the punishment was severe. Her organization, DARE, agreed, and used the Racial Justice Report Card to gather and analyze information from the school district, including suspensions and expulsions, teacher composition, and drop-out, graduation, and college-entry rates. Abdullah learned that, although African Americans made up 23 percent of the public school enrollment in Providence, they accounted for 39 percent of those suspended or expelled.

In fact, the school district received failing marks in nearly every performance category, resulting in an “F” grade. When DARE publicized the results, they got the attention of Providence's new superintendent and the local media. “The Racial Justice Report Card was a powerful research tool that helped spark a public discussion about race in schools,” says Abdullah. “Now we had concrete numbers on how a variety of issues from suspensions to the demographics of teachers had a negative impact on people of color.”

More than 20 organizations around the country are now using the Report Card. In Los Angeles, the African American Parent & Community Coalition for Educational Equity, *Padres Por Unidad*, and other parent groups formed a new coalition called the Equity Network to use the Report Card to promote racial equity in the schools. Indian People's Action (IPA) in Missoula, Montana, is using the Report Card to inform campaigns addressing racial disparities.

The ERASE Initiative is compiling the data collected by community-based organizations and will release a report on national trends in racism in schools this Spring. But perhaps the biggest victory of The Racial Justice Report Card is that it confirms that the injustices experienced by parents, students, and teachers are not isolated incidents, but part of larger patterns of inequality that can be addressed. **ACTION**

*The Report Card can be downloaded from www.arc.org or obtained from ERASE, 510/653-3415.

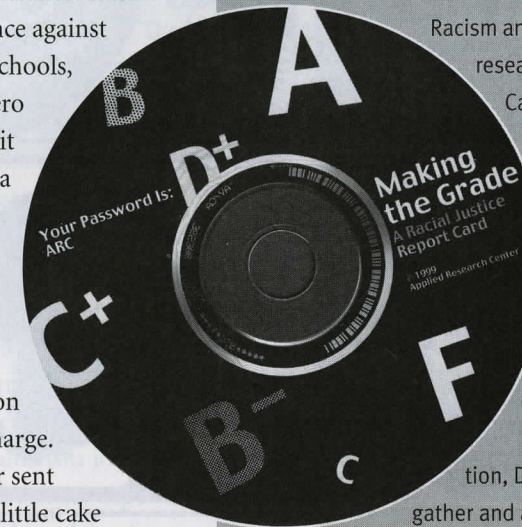




Illustration by Rana Sidahmed

WHERE WE SHALL GO IS WHERE WE HAVE BEEN; WHERE WE HAVE BEEN IS WHERE WE SHALL GO—BUT WITH A DIFFERENCE. —RALPH ELLISON, JUNETEENTH

AFROFUTURISM: *Past-Future Visions*

AfroFuturists want to bridge technoculture and social justice, novelty and tradition. Alondra Nelson tells us who they are, what they think, and why they matter

Visions of the future abound, celebrating progress, speed, and the empowering presence of technology in our lives, often accompanied by pronouncements about a brave new world coming into being—a world free from race, class, and gender conflicts. But how utopian are visions of new gizmos and gadgets fueled by commercial imperatives? And to whom do these futures belong?

They say you can't see race in cyberspace, but it is certainly not a coincidence that post-identity sentiments thrive in a climate intolerant to appeals for social and racial justice. Cyber-libertarian ideology holds that assertions of race, class, or gender difference in technologically enabled environments are like broaching politics at a dinner party—the epitome of bad taste. As a result, a false opposition is created, placing women and people of color on one side of the utopian equation, and technoculture on the other.

This split is partly a function of the “digital divide”—a gap that, not surprisingly, falls along race and class lines. Even in the midst of a digital revolution, the social conditions produced by the new information order have much in common with those that shaped the old industrial order. So the digital divide has become a call-to-arms for many African Americans, activists and entrepreneurs alike. But while it speaks to very material concerns that require real solutions, the digital divide is also ideological. This gap has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, reinforcing stereotypes of black technophobia; it confirms that African Americans can't keep pace in a hi-tech world that threatens to outstrip them. Focusing on the digital divide has paralyzed the thinking even of those who seek to bridge it.

Why don't we look at the innovations in technique and communication that can be found throughout black diasporic culture? Technology speaks to identity, but identity also



Fatimah Tuggar, “Working Woman.” Digital Image © 1997 Courtesy Alondra Nelson.

speaks to technology. While identifying the class, race, and gender inequities that structure the so-called digital divide, we can also identify glimpses of creative possibility in the application of African diasporic cultural traditions to technology.

AfroFuturism has emerged as a term of convenience to describe the analysis, criticism, and cultural production that addresses the intersections between race and technology. Neither a mantra nor a movement, AfroFuturism is a critical perspective that opens up inquiry into the many overlaps between technoculture and black diasporic histories. AfroFuturism looks across popular culture—jazz, hip-hop, and techno music; experimental film; graffiti art; new photography—to find models of expression that transform spaces of alienation into novel forms of creative potential. In the process, it reclaims theorizing about the future.

New Icons, New Heroes, New Futures

In response to prevailing views about race, culture, and technology, alternative AfroFuturist narratives insist that who we've been and where we've traveled is always an integral component of who we can become. They provide novel takes on lived experience in a technologized world, perspectives that open up space for new ideas about politics and new visions of black life: new icons, new heroes, new futures.

AfroFuturist communiques are issued in the writing of Ishmael Reed, Octavia Butler, Ralph Ellison, Samuel R. Delany, and Nalo Hopkinson; they are delivered in the music of Sun Ra and the Omniverse Arkestra, George Clinton, 4 Hero, Underground Resistance, Lee “Scratch” Perry, Missy Elliot, and DJ Spooky; they are made manifest in the imagery weaved by video maker Hype Williams, independent director John Akomfrah, and filmmaker Julie Dash; and they are revealed in the visual speculation of artists Rammellzee, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Fatimah Tuggar, and Keith Piper.

These artists are self-styled mavericks whose creations reflect the long and impressive history of African diasporic culture, but also push the envelope of these traditions. They garner text,

sound, and image in the service of reimagining black life. They create reflections on the African diasporic past and renderings of our possible futures. These are past-future visions, and in this sense, AfroFuturism is an antidote to unbridled, raceless future-lust.

Envisioning the Future

Cultural production can produce social reflection. Art that attends to themes of science and technology offers particularly sharp models of social reflection, for it is in the realm of art—with its ability to bring heightened perception and a critical distance to bear on lived experience—that we are better able to consider how technology is significant in everyday life. And AfroFuturist narratives in which time collapses into a single plane are not necessarily unconcerned with history.

The work of digital artist Fatimah Tuggar might best be characterized as “cyborg realism”—a body of work that is equally true to the traditions of the Nigerian communities that she photographs and to shifting social relations in an increasingly technological world. Tuggar's unlikely cyborgs are most often rural African women engaged in domestic activities.

“Focusing on the digital divide has paralyzed the thinking even of those who seek to bridge it.”

Tuggar's method tricks the eye. At first glance, her digitally modified and U.V. laminated images seem to depict familiar visions of Africa: Nigerian women in traditional dress and rural villages bereft of modern influence and modern comforts. These images are seductive, drawing the viewer's eye with rich hues and tones. They are also deceptive. Tuggar's images seem to provide confirmation of the “real Africa” we already know, that place where technology has never existed, that dark continent that is the opposite of the West.

But, in fact, the surreal settings she composes exist in “no place.” For these are images of a *virtual* Africa—virtual because they are digitally built environments and because, in their juxtaposition of hi-tech artifacts with rural African life, they depict scenarios that are unimaginable, and therefore unreal, to many Western eyes. The result is a body of utopian, and sometimes dystopian, reflections on Africa and modernity.

Tuggar also deals with domestic and information technologies that are coded as feminine. Her collaged images bring into relief the contradictions and the ambiguities of post-modern progress,

Alondra Nelson is a Henry Mitchell MacCracken fellow and doctoral candidate in American Studies at New York University, and co-editor of the forthcoming *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life*. Also, visit <http://www.afrofuturism.net>



Fatimah Tuggar, "Village Spells." Digital Image © 1996. Courtesy Alondra Nelson.

simultaneously exploring the important role that non-Western women play in the free trade zone assembly lines, or rural data processing outposts, and their desire for modern convenience. Her method allows her to consider, side-by-side, the contradiction between the sometimes tragic history of modernity and colonialism in Nigeria, and the power that digital technologies offer to better connect Africa to the global flow of goods, services, and information.

In this sense, her work responds to what she keenly terms "soft power," the flow of electronics and information that enables neo-colonial power, despite the absence of physical proximity. Tuggar believes that soft power must be battled with soft power. She exercises her own by creating images of African women at ease with technology in the public and private sphere, women who own and desire technological gadgets and the power that they can wield. Her representations are not blanket indictments of technological advance, but rather an opportunity for the viewer to consider the incongruities and contradictions of uneven development. They examine soft power as both a tool of domination and a tool of possibility.

With her digital photomontage, Tuggar provides alternative, critical icons for the digital revolution that look neither like the hyper-aestheticized cyborg women of television, film, or photography nor like the white male "pirates of Silicon Valley." Her unlikely cyborgs, rather than indulging in the glamour of the posthuman, offer images and reflections on the effect of technology upon women's everyday lives. Tuggar's images revisit the past, redefine the probable, and forecast the possible.

Alien Nation

The central focus of AfroFuturist thought is in defining the relationships between race and technology through the many places where they intersect, including fiction and digital art. But there is no consensus among critics about the absolute significance of these associations. Like the cultural productions they write about, the strength of what we might cautiously call AfroFuturist criticism lies in the speculative and fragmented nature of the ideas.

Mark Dery coined the word "AfroFuturism" in a 1993 essay, first published in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, called "Black to the Future." Dery argued that "African American voices have other stories to tell about culture, technology, and things to come." He continued, "If there is an AfroFuturism, it must be sought in unlikely places, constellated from far-flung points."

Surveying black cultural production in film, music, literature, genre fiction, comics, and the arts, Dery assembled these "other stories," models of subjectivity which resonated with African American history due to their uncanny parallels with the geographic dislocations and abuses of chattel slavery. In an oft-quoted passage, Dery wrote, "African Americans, in a very real sense, are the descendants of alien abductees; they inhabit a sci-fi nightmare in which unseen but no less impassable force fields of intolerance frustrate their movements; official histories undo what has been done; and technology is too often brought to bear on black bodies (branding, forced sterilization, the Tuskegee [syphilis] experiment and tasers come readily to mind)."

"AfroFuturist narratives insist that who we've been and where we've traveled is always an integral component of who we can become."

Was there ever anyone more "alien" than the black men and women abducted from Africa and brought to the New World against their will? Wasn't the history of black Americans a "sci-fi nightmare" in which the tools of the future were continually turned against black people? In posing these questions, Dery brilliantly elucidated recurring themes in black culture that crossed genres and forged paths for further inquiry.

But he leaves the full depth of Afrodiasporic technoculture underexplored. We are presented with an abject people with escapist visions. By virtue of their historically subjugated relationship to technology, blacks are given more of a reactionary than a constitutive relationship to technoculture in Dery's account. The affiliation he established between AfroFuturist artists is limited to their shared racial background rather than to the improvisation and innovation of black diasporic culture. These artists are notable more because they appropriate images of technology than because of the use of

technologies in their work. By focusing on themes rather than techniques, Dery underappreciates the history of black technological innovation.

Free at Last—Of History?

Much of that innovation has occurred in music production, so it's not surprising that another strain of AfroFuturist thought has developed in music writing and criticism. In hip-hop, the separation and machination of break beats, achieved with turntables and sampling technology, become the building blocks for new combinations of sound. For cultural critic Tricia Rose, author of *Black Noise. Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, these technological innovations express the Afro-diasporic "cultural priorities" of rhythmic layering and rupture. Other experimental and electronic music forms like electro, techno, and drum-and-bass have built on these innovations. These often lyric-less musics marry science fiction themes in song titles and futurist imagery on cover art, with a post-industrial soundtrack of synthetic sounds and noises. Because the lyrics or narrative elements of these musics are pared down or absent, the techniques that make them possible are often brought to the forefront.

For Kodwo Eshun, author of *More Brilliant than the Sun*, the complexity of these compositions, and the high level of aptitude required of the music makers, deserve nothing less than the name "science." "Breakbeat science" describes the application of scientific technique to the production of music. Eshun even extends the term "science" to musics that existed before the advent of this "sampladelia," like the music of John Coltrane and Sun Ra. In this clever formulation, Eshun duly recognizes the artists' ingenuity of aesthetic and technique.

Eshun is also interested in the philosophical possibilities of the "break." Musical innovations always begin as breaks with tradition, as stark discontinuities with how music had been made prior to the point of innovation. For Eshun, such breaks are irrevocable, they mark an unbridgeable distance between the past and the future. What is produced stands alone in the sphere of novelty.

Tradition, Eshun argues, hinders our ability to experience the "new." Eshun wants "to reverse traditional accounts of Black Music. Traditionally, they've been autobiographical or biographical, or they've been heavily social or political. My aim is to suspend all of that absolutely, and then, in the shock of these absences, this huge world is opened up." But, despite Eshun's focus on what is usually called Black Music—a term that he rejects—the effect of this position is to negate the constitutive role of racial histories in shaping representations of the future and uses of technology.

Race disappears into technology and the "Afro" in AfroFuturism is deconstructed until its effects are negligible.

If with Dery, AfroFuturism leads down a path to the constraints of history, with Eshun the future holds a new, improved, and dispersed "blackness," free of the weight of the historical past. Eshun's disposable history reacts to theories of black culture that place all Afrodiasporic cultural production in a linear and strictly chronological trajectory, that fail to recognize the borrowed and hybrid melange from which these creative efforts spring.

Beyond Reality

Though Eshun can be taken to task for his dismissal of any semblance of a unified black cultural tradition, he does rightly critique what might be called "black authenticity"—the tendency to believe that there are real and true ways of uniformly representing the collectivity of black diasporic experience. Black creative life has too often been determined by this impulse to

"keep it real." In order to be taken seriously, we have fostered and encouraged a long tradition of social realism in our cultural production. And we feared that to stop keeping things real was to lose the ability to recognize and protest the very real inequities in

the social world. But we created a cultural environment often hostile to speculation, experimentation, and abstraction.

Yet future vision is a necessary complement to realism, for the reality of oppression without utopianism will surely lead to nihilism. And we should not think of speculative cultural production as only "escapist," but rather as holding important insights about people's lived conditions. Uniting the strengths of Eshun and Dery, from a decidedly feminist perspective, Fatimah Tuggar's "cyborg realism" projects the future as a hybrid of times, places, influences, and techniques; novelty and tradition exist simultaneously.

Here imagination becomes crucial. As science fiction writer and theorist Samuel R. Delany suggests: "We need images of tomorrow; and our people [black people] need them more than most. Without an image of tomorrow, one is trapped by blind history, economics, and politics, beyond our control. One is tied up in a web, in a net, with no way to struggle free. Only by having clear and vital images of the many alternatives, good and bad, of where one can go, will we have any control over the way we may actually get there in a reality tomorrow will bring all too quickly."

The future is neither an uncritical embrace of the past nor a singular conception of what lies ahead. It's ours for the imagining.

"Black creative life has too often been determined by this impulse to 'keep it real.' Yet future vision is a necessary complement to realism."

"One Big Life": Asian American Documentarists Carve Out A Niche

Asian American documentarists are articulating community politics and crashing the Hollywood gates. *Tomio Geron* takes us inside this vibrant community.

The lights shone brightly on stage at Hollywood's biggest event, the Academy Awards, as Jessica Yu stepped to the podium to accept the 1997 Oscar for Best Short Documentary.

Yu, a previously unknown filmmaker, had directed *Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of Mark O'Brien*, a serious piece about a journalist's struggle with disability. She had never taken formal film training, but now she was on stage at the big gala in a black Mary McFadden dress. "You know you've entered new territory when your outfit cost more than your film," she quipped.

In the history of the Oscars, the only directors of color ever to win best documentary have been Asian American. That three Asian Americans (and one Asian) have done so since 1990 is just a small indication of the growing impact of Asian American documentary film.

Twenty years ago, when Yu was just another 13-year-old suburban Californian, the release of just one Asian American documentary felt like a historic event. Today, it is not unusual for three or four feature-length Asian American documentaries to be released annually. Long-standing Asian American film festivals in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York attract 30,000 people each year. As many as one-third of the films screened are documentaries.

From humble beginnings in Chinatowns, Manilatowns, and Japantowns to classrooms, public and cable television broadcasts, and movie theaters nationwide, Asian American documentaries have made critical political interventions. They have taken on issues of immigration, economic inequality, homophobia, people of color and international solidarity, and struggles for justice.

"Different Values"

"Early work was by, for, and about our own," says Spencer Nakasako, a documentarist, director, and producer whose work has spanned decades in Asian American film. "If my peers liked it, I didn't really have expectations for all of America to know, understand, or like it."

In the 1960s, young Asian Americans formed collectives to create socially committed film, which they saw as a direct form of community activism. They were influenced by Latin American "Third Cinema," Mao's theory of art as politics, and other filmmakers of color. Organizations such as Visual Communications in Los Angeles (nicknamed "VC" after the Vietnamese guerrillas), King Street Workshop in Seattle, and Third World Newsreel and Asian CineVision in New York made oral histories of elder community members or accounts of community struggles.

"Film as entertainment was not a topic of discussion," said Nakasako. Instead film was seen as education and empowerment. "I noticed that films and video moved students more immediately than books," said Elaine Kim, who teaches Asian American Studies at U.C. Berkeley and has co-produced documentaries such as *Sa-I-Gu*, *Kansas Doi Moi*, and *Slaying the Dragon*.

By the 1980s, Asian American documentaries had become crucial in shaping Asian American identity and politics. Curtis Choy's powerful *The Fall of the I-Hotel* (1983), which chronicles the violent eviction of elderly Filipino men from a San Francisco Chinatown hotel condemned for "redevelopment" and the subsequent community struggle, was a

defining work. Christine Choy and Renee Tajima-Peña's *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988), about the murder of a 27-year-old Chinese American by two white autoworkers in Detroit, emerged out of the justice for Chin movement. The film itself became a landmark, defining issues of anti-Asian violence and making Asian American panethnic identity real for generations who have since viewed the film in Ethnic Studies classes.

The importance of documentary continues for community organizations. The Vietnamese Youth Development Center in San Francisco and the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles use documentary film workshops for community empowerment. Many more groups use film screenings for education. In November 1999, Arkipelago, a New York City Filipino cultural activist group, offered its sixth annual film festival, *Sa Pinilakang Tabing* ("On The Silver Screen"), not only to

audiences in Manhattan, but also to audiences in public libraries in Flushing, Queens, and Jersey City, New Jersey, where large Filipino communities are located.

"A lot of Asian American filmmakers come out of an organizing background where you don't see organizing, filmmaking, and art as separate entities. We see it as one big life," says Tajima-Peña. "Particularly if you're a documentary filmmaker, you have to have different values—you're not going to have the glamour and [monetary] compensation."

Working the Mainstream

In 1981, Wayne Wang's independent film *Chan is Missing* received strong mainstream reviews and the first theatrical release for an Asian American film. *Chan is Missing* threw everything on its head. Prior to that, it was all straight documentary *verité*. You go out to the community and shoot," said Nakasako.

But it wasn't just Wang's new style of narrative that had an impact. The wide mainstream acceptance of a film with a clear Asian American sensibility was mind-boggling. "It wasn't just television, it was theatrical distribution. At that time for us, if you just got a national PBS broadcast, that was the shit!" said Nakasako. "So people started to think bigger in terms of a larger audience. People started going for the big CPB [Corporation for Public Broadcasting] and NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] grants, not the Sears budget."

In 1980, the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA) was formed in San Francisco to consolidate these efforts. It has since grown into an advocacy, funding, and distribution group. Pacific Islanders in Communications in Honolulu serves a similar function for Pacific Islanders.

As filmmakers sought a wider audience through bigger, more sophisticated films, technical and aesthetic achievements became more important. The rough, gritty aesthetic of early Asian American documentary films went out of style. Films such as Loni Ding's *Nisei Soldier* (1983), Arthur Dong's *Forbidden City, U.S.A.* (1989), and Steven Okazaki's *Days of Waiting* (1990) aired nationally on PBS. *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* and *Forbidden City, U.S.A.* were each nominated for an Oscar. Okazaki finally became the first Asian American to win an Academy Award.

By the 1990s, Asian Americans were entering documentary film in a wider range than ever before, some via film or art school. Freida Lee Mock's *Maya Lin: A Clear Strong Vision* (1994) and Yu's *Breathing Lessons* (1996) marked a peak in mainstream visibility, when each won the Oscar for best documentary.

Both Yu and Mock have made films on Asian American topics, but have gotten wide mainstream recognition for films on non-Asian topics. Yu made her first film about San Jose's Chinatown, but went on to acclaim for *Breathing Lessons* and the HBO-commissioned *The Living Museum* (1998). Winning the Oscar has given Yu mainstream opportunities, such as a recent series of commercials for Hyundai. Since winning an Academy Award for a documentary on Vietnam War Memorial designer Maya Lin, Freida Lee Mock's newest film is the unabashedly patriotic *Return With Honor*, which chronicles U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam.

The Third Wave

Yu and Mock are part of a "Third Wave" of Asian American filmmakers, which has a much wider range of interests and commitments than the "community politics" of those in the early days. "I love both documentary and fiction," said Greg Pak, whose film *Fighting Grampa* won a student Academy Award and

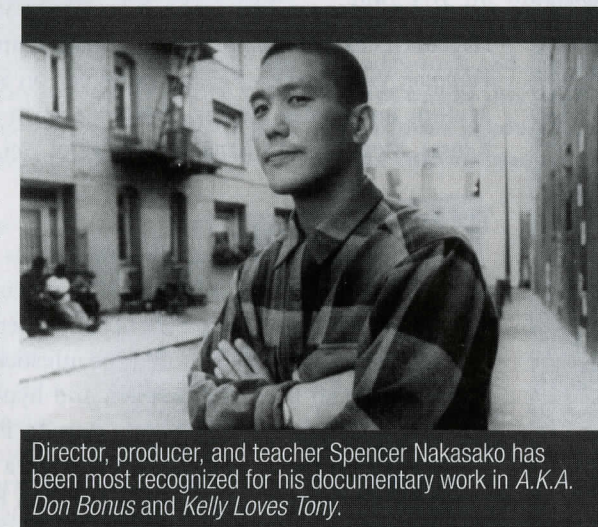
aired on Cinemax's "Reel Life." "It means while I'm struggling for my dream of doing fiction, I can work on getting a smaller scale doc off the ground."

During the 1980s, "independent" films were praised as an alternative to studio-produced Hollywood films due to their populist politics and innovative style. Some filmmakers of color, notably Spike Lee, established themselves as major figures. Yet, today, independent film often seems like just a path to conventional Hollywood film, as studios search to snap up the next Quentin Tarantino. Like "alternative" music, "indie" film

is now a label that no longer seems so far outside of the mainstream.

Commercial imperatives—the pressure to make a work "marketable"—have been a constant presence that Asian American documentarists have had to confront. With recent cuts to groups such as the NEA, documentary filmmakers have had to compete for an even smaller portion of the funding for "Asian American" works. Works that are not safely identifiable as "Asian American documentaries"—those about marginalized ethnic groups or Asians not exclusively in the U.S., or that employ non-traditional documentary methods—can have an especially hard time getting funded.

For queer Asian American film, finding funding is an issue. Yet traditional documentary is not always the best way to critically address sexuality. "It seems that most queer Asian filmmakers are

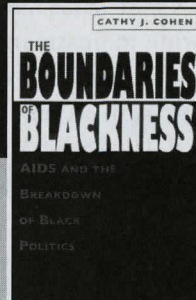


Director, producer, and teacher Spencer Nakasako has been most recognized for his documentary work in *A.K.A. Don Bonus* and *Kelly Loves Tony*.

Tomio Geron is a graduate student in American Studies at New York University and has written for *AsianWeek* and *Dialogue*.

{BOOKS THAT MOVE US}

CATHY J. COHEN,
*BOUNDARIES OF BLACKNESS:
AIDS and the Breakdown of
Black Politics* University of
Chicago Press, 1999.

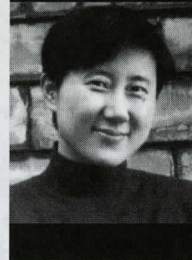


In his award-winning film, *Black Is, Black Ain't*, the late filmmaker, Marlon Riggs, highlighted the contested meaning of black identity as it relates to sexuality, class, and politics. Yale professor and community activist, Cathy J. Cohen, takes Riggs' message to another level in this provocative book. She shows that, even as the black community was being ravaged by AIDS, black political, media, and religious leaders hesitated to take on the issue, and even distanced themselves from it.

Why? Cohen contends that most black leaders caved in to the politics of respectability. They did not want issues like IV drug abuse or homosexuality to draw negative attention to the black community. So, they policed the meaning of what was, and was not, an authentic black issue. Cohen's brilliant and provocative case study of how the dynamics of class and identity play themselves out in the politics of AIDS makes this book a "must read" for activists and students of black politics. **CULTURE**

BY BARBARA RANSBY

BARBARA RANSBY, AN
INITIATOR OF THE BLACK
RADICAL CONGRESS,
TEACHES AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO AND
IS COMPLETING A
BIOGRAPHY OF RADICAL
ACTIVIST AND INTELLECTUAL
ELLA JO BAKER.



Hye-Jung Park's politically challenging, critically acclaimed works reflect communitarian spirit.

attracted more to experimental and narrative forms," said Richard Fung, who has made documentaries, such as *Orientations* (1985), about gay Asian Canadians, as well as experimental and narrative works. "I do find that there are challenges in distribution and exhibition, that is, finding audiences, particularly Asians, whom one may want to engage." And funding is difficult not just because of a lack of resources, but because of the growth in the number of Asian American filmmakers. "There are a lot more independent filmmakers; the competition is much harder than it was 30 years back," said Linda Mabalot, executive director of Visual Communications.

That also means there is a vast richness to recent Asian American documentary film. Just released or in production are Dai Sil Kim-Gibson's *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women*; Janice Tanaka's look at the psychological effects of concentration camps on Japanese Americans, *When You're Smiling*; Angel Velasco Shaw and Jessica Hagedorn's exploration of U.S. imperialism and Filipino identity, *Excuse Me, Are You Filipino?*; Vivek Renjen Bald's vibrant doc on South Asian popular music in England, *Mutiny*; and Renee Tajima-Peña's work on Asian and Latino labor struggles in Kansas, Mexico, and Vietnam, *Kansas Doi Moi*.

The Anti-Auteur

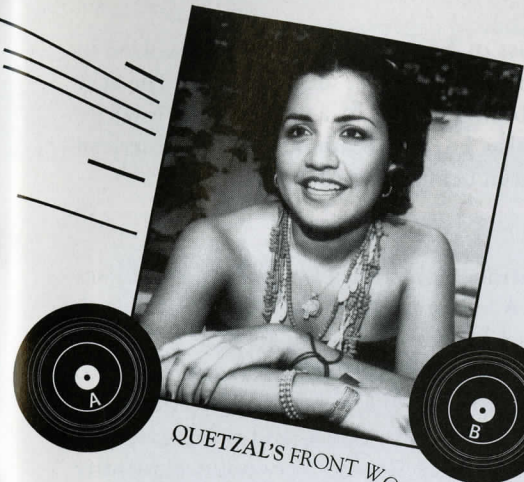
Amidst the explosion of documentaries and mainstream acceptance, many filmmakers are trying to stay true to their principles. Like the documentarists of the 1960s and 1970s, Hye-Jung Park is committed to making films with a no-nonsense critical edge and an impulse to expose injustice.

In contrast to the individualism and hyper-celebrity consciousness which the mainstream media produces and rewards, Park's collective, community-oriented filmmaking means attempting to maintain a collective process and spirit. "I don't identify with 'filmmakers,'" says Park, who has worked on or produced six other films. "I identify more with community organizing, but I also make films."

In the late 1980s, Park developed a love of film while translating videos smuggled out of Korea during the democratization movement. Her stoic exterior masks a deep passion for film. "I'm not creative enough to do narrative film," she says, matter-of-factly. Maybe she's being overly modest. She has co-directed two politically challenging, acclaimed films with J.T. Takagi: *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the U.S. Military* (1995), and *7 Train* (1999).

From her own experience riding New York's 7 train subway—dubbed the "International Express" because it carries 500,000 people from 117 different countries each day—Park knew there were many important, untold stories there. "On the 6:30 a.m. train, everyone's sleeping. All different ethnic groups, going [to] 12-13 hour days. I wanted people to know about the struggle that comes with the 'American dream.' I wanted to give the opportunity for those people to speak for themselves." *7 Train* tells of the struggles of four immigrants of color—a Korean man who works in Harlem, two Octavaleen women, Chinatown street vendors, and a Pakistani gay man who works at a sari store—who travel on the red subway.

Now Park works as director of programs at Downtown Community Television in New York City, a grassroots media center, and is involved with different community and media groups. Next year she is curating a film festival for the Guggenheim Museum on "Two Decades of Korean Social Movements" in Korea and the U.S. Still, Park pointedly remarks, "I'm not an independent filmmaker." **CULTURE**



QUETZAL'S FRONT WOMAN MARTHA GONZALEZ MARKS LATINO OPTIMISM AND ROCKING RESISTANCE.

RACE~ING ROCK

HUA HSU WONDERS IF
BANDS OF COLOR CAN MAKE ROCK
REVOLUTIONARY AGAIN

IS ROCK DEAD? Have the days passed when truth could be told and revolts incited with a blast of loud guitars? Certainly, rock hasn't seemed socially and musically relevant in years.

Yes, we have Rage Against The Machine, that sweatshop-fighting, peace-screaming, Zapatista-loving band featuring two mixed-race frontmen. Yet, despite the decidedly "rock" tag found on all their albums—"all sounds made by guitar, bass, drums, and vocals"—they kick the liberating rhymes and funky-hard boom bap rhythms which make hip-hop the exciting "now" sound.

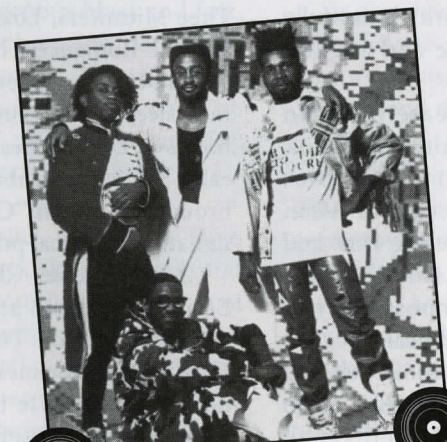
More to the point, Rage seems to inspire more head-banging from those tapping the bottom of the keg than consciousness for the faces they rep at the bottom of the well. What chance of political relevance does rock have if its most dangerous, rebellious act attracts thousands who would never associate "Black Panther" with the word "Party." Rock may not be dead yet, but its boring, substanceless state puts it pretty damn close.

Perhaps the true spirit of rock-fashioned revolution is still kicking in America's communities of color. Rockers of color around the corner, around the globe, and beneath the surface are flipping the tired traditions of "Anglo rock" with new sounds, new faces, and new colors which aim to return the revolution to rock.

White Noise

For self-proclaimed Media Assassin Harry Allen—the black cultural critic Public Enemy namechecked in "Don't Believe The Hype" the qualifier of "Anglo" smacks of redundancy. Rock is imbued with a certain elasticity which allows for constant reupholstering of its image, sonic qualities, and message, but never its dominant color. For Allen, the importance of this elasticity has more to do with sociology than sound. He explains, "Really, [rock] is a code word for whatever white people like, *en masse*."

In the 1940s and 1950s, fears mounted over the racial crossings of white youth appreciating black rhythm and blues. Black Rock Coalition member and musician Don Byron explains, "The industry found the solution that they always find: give the public the music, but with a different cast(e)." The "blackness" of the music was subsumed into rock, and today rock and the racial order are inseparable. "Out of that root comes this white country, and in the same sense out of this black production comes the white music," Allen says. "It's like custom-made music for the white zeitgeist."



LIVING COLOUR, BLACK ROCK'S GREAT HOPE OF THE EIGHTIES, WAS A SHOOTING STAR.

Black Rock

In the mid-1980s, one group tried to respond to the whitening of rock. "Rock and roll is Black music and we are its heirs," proclaimed the initial manifesto of the Black Rock Coalition (BRC), a group founded in 1985 by ex-Living Colour band leader Vernon Reid, Village Voice writer Greg Tate, and artist manager Konda Mason. The BRC has worked to re-deploy rock's black roots and black present through education, advocacy, and musician support. As Tate puts it, "Black Rock means Black people exercising their democratic rights in music."

The BRC roster spawned and still supports many bands who tweak the definition of rock further away from Allen's "white zeitgeist." Many of these acts were weaned on an informal post-Hendrix trinity consisting of ska pioneers Fishbone, the high profile politics of Living Colour, and influential hardcore rastafarians Bad Brains. Today, bands like L.A.'s funky Freak Juice (formerly Civil Rite), Jungle Funk (ex-Living Colour members Doug Wimbish, Will Calhoun, and percussionist Vinx), the heavy metal soul of 24-7 Spyz, and even vocalist Dionne Farris comprise the BRC roster.

But the BRC has constantly confronted static from both their own community and the industry at large. In mid-80s New York, the BRC's attempt to make racism an issue was threatening even to fellow black musicians, who felt like they already had a hard enough time. For Tate and his buddies,

though, the constant question was: "What is the problem, why is this such a threat?"

After Living Colour signed with Columbia and became a gold-selling act, a rush of bands flocked to the BRC. But as bureaucracy replaced the spark of conversation and philosophizing, the BRC's progress slowed. Living Colour's success became the exception. Allen, in all due respect, saw the BRC at its strongest as little more than a "niche organization." Charter BRC member Tracie Morris explains, "It was a bunch of artists embracing the world in which they lived and pointing out the political ramifications of what they chose to do and what chose them."

Asian Visibility

But importantly, the BRC created expressive space for other racial groups. Cruise up and down the West Coast and it's hard to find too many indie rock, pop, or ska combos without Asian American members. Mike Park's Northern California label, Asian Man Records, collects many of these groups, from the organ-driven ska of Park's own Chinkees project to the crunchy indie rock melodies of Korea Girl. Up in Olympia, Washington, Tae Won Yu seamlessly moves from the punk minimalism of the legendary Kicking Giant to new explorations into dub and electronic soul. The highest profile Asian Americans in the indie scene, though, are New York's beautifully raucous Versus and Chicago's complex, dense and angular post-punk quartet, Seam.

Still, despite demographics and the increase in Asian American participation in the indie scene (Smashing Pumpkins' James Iha, anyone?), don't expect an Asian American Rock Coalition anytime soon. Perhaps it is a reflection of Asian America's diversity that people like Seam's Sooyoung Park and Ben Kim, co-founders of the Foundation for Asian American Independent Media (FAAIM), concede the impossibility of finding an "Asian American" sound or unified political voice.

In 1995, Kim and Park's upstart collective Fortune4 released "Ear of the Dragon," the first national compilation of Asian American bands. They wanted to show that their Asian American community was affecting the racial dynamic of the indie rock scene in very tangible ways. Kim explains: "Our intent with 'Ear' was just to emphasize visibility and affirm that

there was a critical mass of Asian Americans being involved in indie rock that we wanted to recognize and celebrate." The very idea of being a visible presence in a traditionally white rock-derived genre makes FAAIM, Seam, and Asian American indie rock defiant without being outwardly political.

Optimism en español

In Chicano and Latino rock circles these days, optimism abounds. Here's L.A. based guerrilla artist and rock documentarian Ruben Guevara: "Rock can serve as a tool for status change. Aesthetically, rock is to me a form to communicate confrontation and challenge the status quo." For Guevara's Latino community in the barrio and at-large, rock is a viable form of expression which wages very political identity claims sonically and lyrically.

With hardcore West Coast "scenes" emerging around the international "Rock en español" bands and the diverse stateside "Latin Rock" movement, perhaps the diaspora-flavored Latino experience is resuscitating the tired sounds and messages of rock with a little bit of their flavor. "Right now is the best time in the history of Latin music to be in a band," says Alberto Cuellar of the California-based Aztlan Records, formed in 1995.

Cuellar refers to the rich yet marginalized history of Latinos rocking out in the U.S. Dig deep enough in the forgotten bins of decades past, and records by bands like Thee Midnites, Los Illegals, Cannibal and the Headhunters, and the Romancers hint at the forty years of proud Latin pop and rock produced alongside and often beneath the mainstream. Referring to the predominantly Latino neighborhoods of Los Angeles, the East Side Sound of the late 1960s and early 1970s was imbued with the same awakening desire that brought the term "Chicano" into the U.S. cultural lexicon. It remains a political point of reference for today's rockers.

Chris Gonzalez-Clarke of the Bay Area-based label Son del Barrio sees certain aspects of "Latin Rock" breaking away from the rock tradition. His label soundtracks the bicultural, schizophrenic consciousness of the *barrio* and inspires unity through dance with a style they've dubbed "Chicano Groove." "We probably saw ourselves more comparable to Motown in the sense that we were trying to develop a sound and body of work that came from a specific community and experience—in this case, the sound of Chicanos in the Southwest," he says.

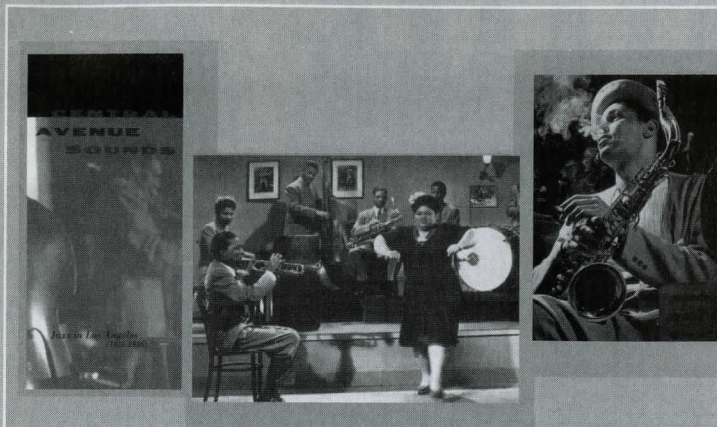
SEAM (WILLIAM SHIN, CHRIS MANFRIN, SOOYOUNG PARK, AND JOHN LEE) IS DEFIANT WITHOUT BEING OUTWARDLY POLITICAL.



ACP IMAGE © 1999. COURTESY YOFATTIM

RACE RECORDS

What we're listening to:



Central Avenue Sounds (Rhino) Luminescent, provocative 4-CD anthology of Los Angeles jazz from 1921-1956, the definitive case that the westside is not merely cool, free, gangsta or on the Hollywood side of New York.

Elephant Tracks (Asian Improv) Left Coast underground rappers and DJs—Asian/Pacific Islander and otherwise—bring the world-class turntablism and rhymes to benefit API youth programs.

Nitin Sawhney—Beyond Skin (Outcaste) From Britain's club underground, the sound is qawwali hip-hop or maybe it's South Asian soul. Whatever you call it, it's mesmerizing.

Krust—Coded Language (Island) Drum-n-bass at its darkest and least compromising. *Race Records* fave Saul Williams reaches a new level on the title track.

Angie Stone—Black Diamond (Arista) Refusing to pander to R & B's battle of the sexes, Angie Stone's loving soul feels refreshingly expansive.

Common—Like Water for Chocolate (MCA) On his fourth album, Common gets in touch with his inner soul ya'll, teaming up with the Soulquarians and dedicating an homage to Assata Shakur.

Chicano Groove bands like Los Otros and Quetzal eschew strict rock categorization in favor of something definitively theirs and definitely new—a sonic blend of indigenous blues and folk, 1970s Chicano rock, and compelling rhythms and percussion which manages to sound familiar yet futuristic. The effortlessly beautiful and powerful vocals of Quetzal's Martha Gonzalez on "Chicana Skies" and "Politics y Amor" point to something deeper, an undeniable love and understanding for their East L.A. community.

Elsewhere, labels like Aztlan, Xicano, Grita!, and Pinche Flojo fight to carve out space for Latinos in genres like ska, punk, and indie. "I think the most creative music is coming from people of color blending these elements of their culture and creating a fusion that makes something new," Cuellar says. Citing the addition of Latin percussion or horns, the work of bands like the rockabilly Los Skarnales, the jazzy ska enthusiasts Yeska, and the rap-rock combo Aztlan Underground could transform tired Anglo rock clichés into new, politically relevant sound styles.

Something New?

But others aren't so sure. "When people of color use rock to espouse their message," observes Windy Chien, owner of San Francisco's taste-setting Aquarius Records and a respected critic, "the message is a bit diluted because rock has already been invented, it already is a genre that was invented by white people no matter where they took it from."

If mainstream rock today seems to solely exist as a "white thing"—and as Byron laments, "It won't be long before hip-hop will join the ranks of formerly black music and we'll have to come up with something else"—what's next? That "something else" will likely emerge from the struggle and resistance that comes with life at the bottom, concludes Allen. "It's a little hard for me to imagine that anything but the music

produced by the people who are at the bottom will ultimately stand for rebellion in the strongest possible terms."

Yet for Guevara, rock has been a survival strategy: "Rock and blues have evolved in Latin America as a way of purging the horrors of history." Channeling their will to survive into acts of creation and documentation, the growth of rock-tinged music in other parts of the world help those cultures endure and diversify. Guevara is really invoking the ability of rock to regain consciousness in new contexts.

International groups like Mexico's El Tri or mainland China's Tang Dynasty introduce rock to contexts where the sound is still dangerous and rebellion-rhetoric has yet to slump toward cliché. The hard rock scene in China, for example, still sees rock as a revolutionary tool providing the unlawful audio backing to their daily wages of struggle. In Mexico, a group like Tijuana No! gives new life to a recording like The Clash's "Spanish Bombs." Without the programmed history of rock as white, these international rockers are allying community determination with the spirit of rebellious rock to create unique, new, and politically-charged musical traditions.

Free from, or in spite of, the pressures of history, rock has the potential to return to something beautiful and dangerous in these new contexts. Despite the segregated, swiped traditions which render mainstream rock nearly meaningless politically, its sonic appeal will always persist. Music is a visceral thing that, for most folks, either feels good or bad. Rock's attraction is sonic—the ability to create glaciers of six-stringed sound, to make the loves and loss of one singer seem monumental upon amplification, and, at its best, to meld three chords with the truth. **CULTURE**

Hua Hsu is a writer and student from Berkeley, California. His zine "*hella*" is circulated every now and then.

TEAM MASCOTS FOR THE MILLENNIUM

WANT TO SOLVE THE OFFENSIVE MASCOT PROBLEM? JUST PICK ONE OF THESE FOR YOUR SPORTS TEAM AND WATCH AMERICA LEAP INTO ACTION WITH MORAL OUTRAGE!

IT'S THE YEAR 2000 AND THESE RACIALLY INSENSITIVE SPORTS TEAM MASCOTS JUST WON'T GO AWAY. SO COLLECT THEM ALL!



OKLAHOMA

CHICAGO

HOLLYWOOD

HUNTSVILLE

SEATTLE

GEORGIA



BOMBERS



CHUNKOS



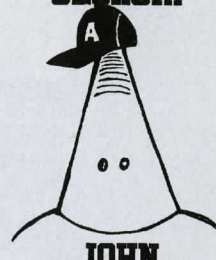
HEBREWS



HICKS



CYBERGEEKS



JOHN ROCKERS

© 2000 lalo alcaraz. 1/5 WWW.CARTOONIST4.COM

The K Chronicles by Keith Knight

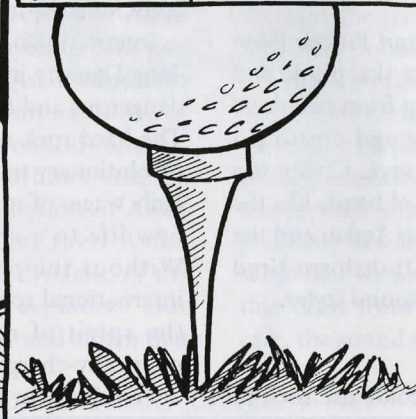
BETCHA DIDN'T KNOW!!

MARSHALL W. "MAJOR" TAYLOR WAS REGARDED AS THE FASTEST BICYCLIST IN THE WORLD FROM 1898 TO 1910, THE YEAR HE RETIRED FROM PROFESSIONAL COMPETITION...



TAYLOR RACED & BEAT ALL OF THE OUTSTANDING CYCLISTS OF HIS TIME IN THE U.S., CANADA, EUROPE, AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND. HE WAS SO GOOD THAT THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WHEELMEN TRIED TO BAN HIM FROM ITS RACES.

IN 1899, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN DENTIST NAMED GEORGE F. GRANT RECEIVED A PATENT FOR HIS INVENTION OF THE GOLF TEE..



..AND IN 1994, AT AGE 18, TIGER WOODS BECAME THE YOUNGEST AMATEUR GOLFER TO WIN THE U.S. AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIPS...NOW A SEASONED PRO WELL INTO HIS TWENTIES, WOODS ROUTINELY KICKS P.G.A. BUTT.

GEORGE "LITTLE CHOCOLATE" DIXON BECAME THE FIRST BLACK MAN TO HOLD AN AMERICAN TITLE IN ANY SPORT. IN 1891, HE CAPTURED THE BANTAM-WEIGHT TITLE AFTER KNOCKING OUT CAL MCCARTHY IN THE 22nd ROUND.



MANY IN THE WHITE COMMUNITY WERE HORRIFIED BY THE SUCCESS OF DIXON & DISCOURAGED WHITE BOXERS FROM FIGHTING IN INTERRACIAL BOUTS.

"We are in the midst of a growing menace. The Black man is rapidly forging to the front ranks in athletics...Are you going to permit yourself to be passed by the Black race?" -CHARLES DANA, New York Sun.

SOURCE: "LOU THINKS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AFRICAN HISTORY" KEETIX@HOTMAIL.COM

ColorLines

ONLINE

Instant subscriptions when you order online!

About ColorLines

Subscribe

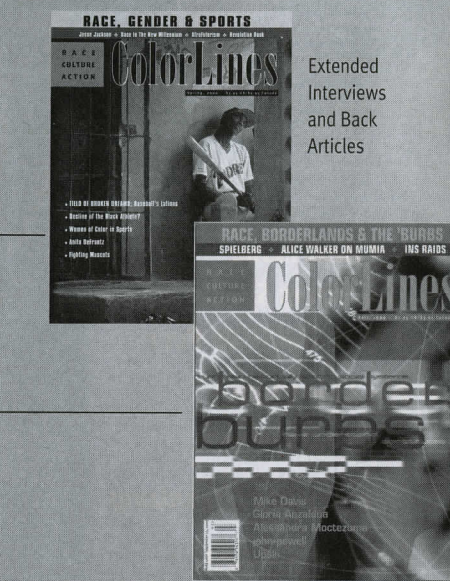
Current Issue

Online Archive

Join E-mail List

Sample Copy

Receive updates and announcements from ColorLines



www.colorlines.com

Your source for race, culture, and action on the internet!

SUBSCRIBE TO COLORLINES

- ☐ 4 issues for \$16 US (\$20 Mexico & Canada)
- ☐ Institutional Rate: \$32 for 4 issues
- ☐ 8 issues for \$24 US (\$40 Mexico & Canada)
- ☐ International Rate: \$24 for 4 issues

Name _____ Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Remittance

- ☐ My check is enclosed.
- ☐ Please bill me.
- ☐ Charge my credit card VISA / AMEX / MASTER CARD (circle one)

Signature _____ Date _____

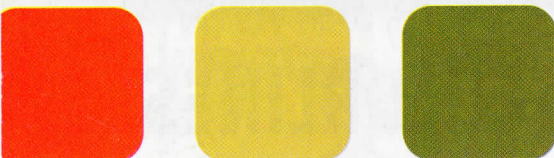
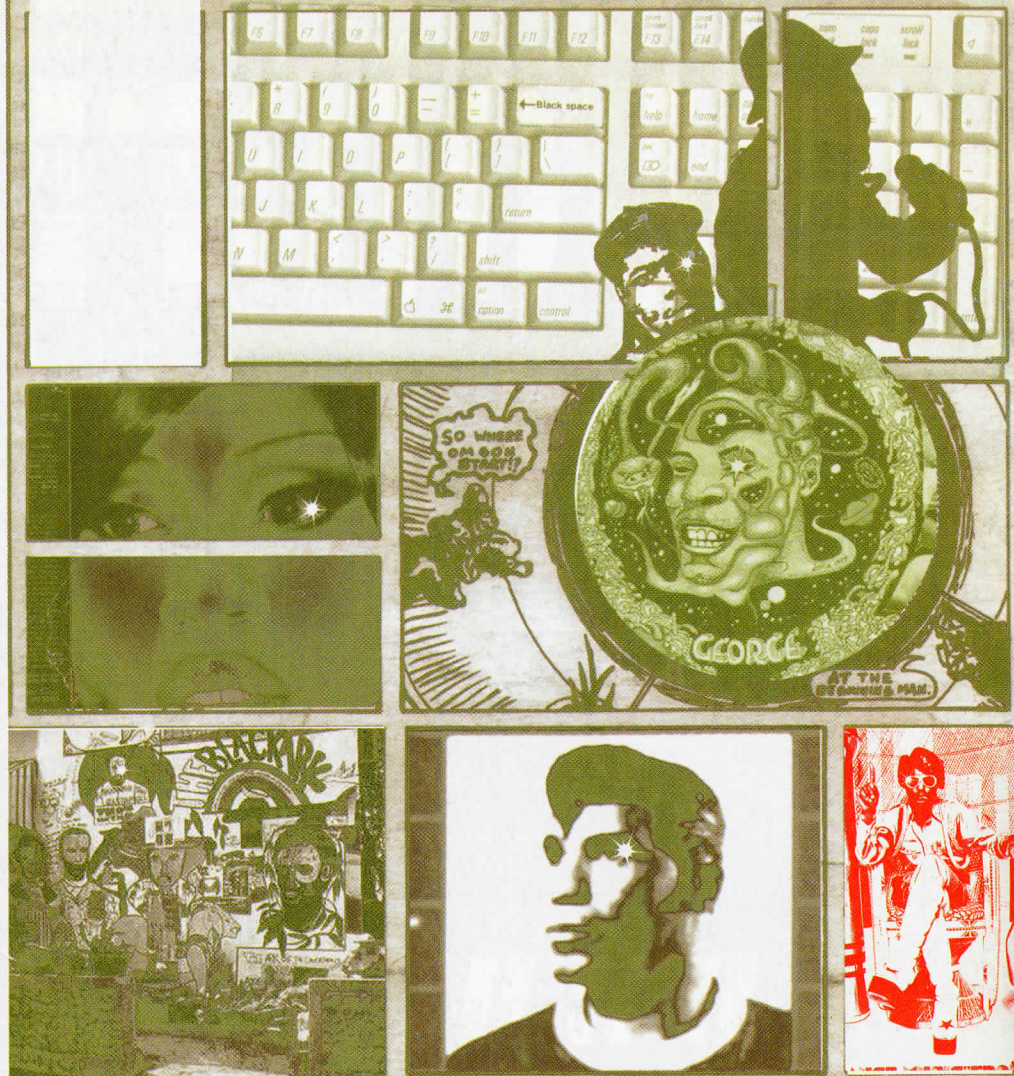
Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Send completed forms to: ColorLines Subscription Dept., P.O. Box 3000, Denville NJ 07834-9206



In the next issue

- ***Organizers Speak!
A Roundtable on Race***
- ***The New Welfare
Rights Movement***
- ***Ideology and Organizing***
- ***Vijay Prashad on
India's Dalits***



AFROFUTURISM

Graphic by Rana Sidahmed

ColorLines

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Oakland, CA
Permit #251