

The Wings of Ethiopia

AND LETTERS by *Wilson Jeremiah Moses*



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More than an Ethnic Group, Less than a Nation



The pattern of Afro-American life in the United States has been one of gradually increasing acculturation, despite persistent segregation and despite the fact that separate institutions within black communities continue to spring up and to thrive. Acculturation is the process whereby two or more groups of people living in cultural proximity tend to become more similar with the passage of time. I would not use the term "cultural assimilation" as a synonym for acculturation, because assimilation implies changes of a rare and extreme nature to the extent that one of the groups becomes culturally absorbed by the dominant or assimilating culture, and indistinguishable from it.¹

For black Americans, slavery was a melting-pot experience; members of numerous tribal and national groups were forced to assume a common identity. Ancient ethnic distinctions between the various imported peoples were destroyed at the same time that acculturation to European ways was occurring. Afro-Americans became a "new people," in the rhetoric of the nineteenth century. Genetically and culturally speaking, they were amalgamated into a composite of numerous African racial and ethnic groups. They were a new people in another sense, as well. Because of the acculturation they had undergone in two fundamental areas of life, language and religion, they were now no longer simply Africans; they were, like it or not, black Americans. Members of slave communities born in the United States differed from first-generation African slaves. By the end of the eighteenth century, the typical black

American spoke English reasonably well and had accumulated at least a veneer of Christian attitudes, although these were often superimposed on a body of spiritual beliefs and worship forms that were clearly African in origin. African religious vestiges were melded into an eclectic hodgepodge of old-world beliefs, mythologies, and conjure rites. They differed from pristine African religion, which is always identified with specific ethnic roots and with secret and exclusive community rites among people who share a common language and a common ancestry. Tribal exclusivism is characteristic of traditional religions in many parts of the world; it is not limited to West Africa, but it is a fundamental ingredient of West African religion.²

By the late eighteenth century, most black Americans had been stripped of their various African languages and their ethno-specific religiosity. They had also acquired the English language and various forms of Afro-Christianity. Two hundred years later, in the late twentieth century, those distinctive characteristics that separate black language and religion from the language and religion of white Americans have become subtle and elusive. Black Americans tend to resemble the various white groups with which they have the greatest amount of contact. The differences among American blacks resulting from class, religion, and other forms of diversity may be greater than those between individual white and black persons of similar education and class background. But white black Americans today are almost entirely acculturated linguistically, and while most of us who are religious have been religiously acculturated to some degree, the majority of Afro-Americans have not been and for the foreseeable future will not be integrated into American social life, despite their acculturation.

Integration usually refers only to the mechanical proximity of blacks and whites within the same social, political, educational, and economic institutions. Indeed, most black Americans, even in this final decade of the twentieth century, participate only mechanically in racially mixed institutions. After leaving the classroom or the workplace, they either voluntarily separate themselves or, more commonly, they are segregated away from those areas of life referred to as "purely social." Most Americans see this as perfectly natural and inevitable, and the reason is simple.

Although the word "integration" seems to imply only a mechanical proximity among blacks and whites, complete social integration cannot take place without integration of the family, because the family is society's basic unit. In other words, integration cannot occur without racial amalgamation, and that is something that few Americans, black or white, see as desirable. The fear of racial amalgamation makes impossi-

ble anything other than a very gradual rate of integration in any social institution. Black Americans have been slower to enter the middle class in America than other groups because racial separatism is the norm in this society. Racial separatism guarantees that social and economic knowledge will not be transmitted from sophisticated and highly organized white groups to unsophisticated and disorganized black masses.

Many people refer to black Americans as an ethnic group, but of course things are not quite so simple. In a brilliant work in progress, Professor Carl Senna of Providence College has noted that an ethnic group is united by communality of beliefs and by specific modes of behavior. It is possible to speak of certain groups of black people who possess U.S. citizenship or residency as American ethnic groups. For example, first-generation black immigrants, who still think of themselves as Puerto Rican-Americans or as West Indian-Americans or as Cape Verdean-Americans, may be spoken of as ethnic groups. These are subgroups within the Afro-American group and are distinguished by behaviors and beliefs from the amorphous black mass. Ethnicity, as Professor Carl Senna points out, is a category of behavior and belief. It has to do with learned behavior, rather than with racial characteristics.³

It is too much to expect, however, that Americans will ever utilize a systematic, consistent, or rational terminology to describe the patterns of black American life. Therefore, the purpose of these remarks is to clarify my own usage of some of the terms that are commonly used in discussions of American race relations. They are also aimed at identifying problems in popular terminology. Most discussions describe black Americans in terms of one of the following patterns: race, ethnic, or immigrant group, class, caste, minority, nation. Each of these modes of description will provide some insight into who and what we are.

Race is the category most often applied to black Americans. Most of us are physically identifiable as descended from "Negro stock" and are therefore racially distinct from the majority of North Americans, who are "Caucasian." However, many Afro-Americans are much closer in physical type to their European than to their African forebears. There is as much contrast of physical types within the Afro-American population as there is contrast between stereotypical Afro-Americans and stereotypical Euro-Americans. If we are to speak of Afro-Americans as a racial group, we should remember that many "black" Americans are more Caucasian than Negro in terms of the accepted criteria of racial classification developed by physical anthropologists a century ago.⁴

It may be useful at times to speak of Afro-Americans as an ethnic group, although to do so may be seriously misleading. Ethnicity is a confusing term because it is sometimes used to imply cultural traits and

learned behaviors, as well as biogenetic features.⁵ Many scholars, among them Sterling Stuckey and John Gwaltney, argue passionately that Afro-Americans possess distinctive cultural traits. If they are correct, this would seem to justify referring to black Americans as an ethnic group. On the other hand, "The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups" and the works of Thomas Sowell offer compelling evidence that black Americans are a "racial group," displaying numerous signs of ethnic diversity within the group.⁶ I place the term "racial group" within quotation marks because, as Ely Chinoy remarks in an eminently respectable sociology textbook, the physical differences among American Negroes are distinct enough to provide "evidence that in the United States 'race' refers primarily to social rather than to a biological race and ethnicity." Chinoy reduces "race" to a social category and equates "ethnicity" with "biological race," thereby illustrating the confusion and inconsistency of terminology that runs throughout all discussion of American race relations.⁷

Aside from the linguistic dangers arising from the problem of referring to black people as an ethnic group, there are serious implications for social policy. Scholars like Nathan Glazer have used the ethnicity model to argue that black Americans are like any other American ethnic group and that their position in America is no different from that of Irish Catholics or Russian Jews. There is no logic to such a position, which irrationally assumes that Irish Catholics and Russian Jews can be lumped together in one category called "ethnics" and that their assumed uniformity of experience can be employed as a model for what black Americans ought to do.

The ethnicity approach to race relations imposes the irrelevant model of European immigration on black Americans. In 1968 the Kerner Commission report outlined a number of similarities and differences between black Americans and the white "ethnics" who arrived in northern cities before World War I. The Commission noted that black ghettoes of the 1960s, unlike immigrant ghettoes at the turn of the century, appeared to be dead ends, rather than stopping off places on the way to ultimate Americanization. The reasons for this difference in the experience of the two groups were given as follows: a decline in the importance of ethnic politics and political machines, and a lack of strong cultural, economic, and intellectual life among black Americans. The Kerner report concluded that "what the American economy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was able to do to help the European immigrants escape from poverty is now largely impossible. New methods of escape must be found for the majority of today's poor."⁸

Nathan Glazer, a sociologist, expressed disagreement, along with

the belief that the Commission's conclusions must be rejected. This was not so much because he found the arguments invalid as because of what he saw as the dire political consequences of accepting them. To accept the Kerner Commission's findings and to act on them might "divide the country to the disadvantage of all groups." But, argues Glazer, if we proceed on the assumption that the black experience will parallel the immigrant experience, then all we need to do is wait for time to improve the status of black Americans.⁹

Of course, neither the Kerner Commission nor any other group of informed people have ever rejected the analogy with the white immigrant experience, nor have they rejected the idea that time will be required to solve racial problems. What has been rejected is the tendency to stretch the ethnic immigration analogy too far.

White immigrants, organized around religious and economic institutions, often established charming ethnic neighborhoods within a generation. As time passed, however, most white ethnics abandoned their distinctive languages and many of their old-world religious practices. In subsequent generations, the grandchildren of immigrants often migrated to nonethnic suburbs, where traditional ethnic traits were almost impossible to maintain. In the meantime, old ethnic communities often dissipated before an influx of poor blacks, whose arrival accelerated the pace of suburban migration and converted ethnic neighborhoods into racial ghettos. While time seems to have had the effect of breaking down white ethnic neighborhoods, it is uncertain whether the immigrant paradigm is applicable to black ghettoes. Fifty years was sufficient to do away with the stereotype of the white immigrant slum of the turn of the century. But the quality of life in black slums, which originated thirty or more years later, seems to deteriorate rather than to improve with the passage of time. It is indeed appropriate for scholars to understand the relationship between the black experience and the white immigrant group experience. And we should, as Glazer suggests, bear in mind the political consequences of all the possible interpretations of that relationship.

Another approach to black-white relations in the United States emphasizes class. At its most simplistic, the class analysis of racial problems is found wanting for the same reason that the immigration approach is found wanting. Proponents of the class model attempt to argue that since the overwhelming majority of black Americans are in the working class and since black Americans are more frequently represented at the lower levels than at the upper levels of society, they are just another lower-class group, who happen incidentally to be black. The principal difficulty of Afro-Americans, so the argument goes, is essentially one of

connection with class, find it impossible to discuss the question with any objectivity.

Some scholars—notably John Dollard, Lloyd Warner, and Gunnar Myrdal—have suggested that the system of racial segregation in the United States is analogous to the caste system in India.¹¹ Negroes are assigned their status at birth, and although they may experience some vertical mobility within the group, they cannot move laterally across the caste boundary. Such an analysis is not without merit, so long as we bear in mind that all analogies are by definition imperfect. Caste is almost entirely a social rather than a biological category. It is based on the social phenomena of Hindu religion and culture. The caste system of India is maintained with the consent of the various castes affected. Each caste is tied to a traditional economic role as well as to a social status. Only recently have the lower castes of India launched anything approximating a civil rights movement, and this does not seem to have any militantly integrationist overtones. Nor have the lower castes impressed the outside world as having a national consciousness, a national mission, or a desire for a separate national identity or homeland. All of the foregoing attitudes have been present among the blacks of the United States. Furthermore, while the ethnic-group model has been appropriately applied to black Americans, there does not seem to be any way of applying it to the Indian castes.

If the black movement in the United States may be compared to the struggle of various Indian castes for greater social status and economic power, it is even more comparable to the struggle of the Indian people as a whole to free themselves from colonial rule. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King, the civil rights movement in the United States was deliberately patterned after Mahatma Gandhi's anticolonial struggle. Charles Silberman, in his once popular book *Crisis in Black and White*, viewed black Americans as colonial subjects of whites. Afro-Americans were linked to the rest of the country in a relationship of dependency by the vicious cycle of unemployment, poverty, and welfare. More sophisticated and imaginative applications of the colonial model began to appear in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Stokely Carmichael, Charles Hamilton, Robert Blauner, and Robert S. Allen viewed the black situation in terms of internal colonialism. Every aspect of black life, so the argument goes, is controlled from outside the black community. Whether in urban or in rural areas, the black community is a colony because it exists in a state of economic and administrative dependency, while ironically serving as a valuable repository of labor essential to the larger society.¹²

The approach that emphasizes the black population's "minority sta-

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economic deprivation, and the best way to do justice to black Americans is by improving their economic status.

This approach has both radical and conservative proponents. Among the conservatives, the most prominent was turn-of-the-century leader Booker T. Washington, who took a strongly materialist view of black life and culture. He argued that life-styles ought to be geared towards improving the economic welfare of the American Negro and worked out a theory of uplift based on cleanliness, thrift, and Puritan morality. A radical formulation of the economic-uplift theory came from Marxism, which began to attract a significant black following during the 1930s. In the Marxist view, black Americans were a special component of the working class, who should be assisted along somewhat independent lines to develop socialistic institutions. Like Washington, however, the Marxists tended to ignore the emotional basis of American racism, which seemed destined to perpetually override class issues. As Du Bois noted in 1940, "the split between white and black workers was greater than that between blacks and capitalists; and the split depended not simply on economic exploitation but on racial folklore grounded on centuries of instinct, habit, and thought. . . . This flat incontrovertible fact, imported Russian Communism ignored, would not discuss." The class approach to race relations was reformulated by William Julius Wilson, a black sociologist at the University of Chicago in 1976. He argued that in the second half of the twentieth century there has been significant erosion of the racial folklore and traditional bias that have kept black people a nation apart.¹⁰

Wilson argues that class distinctions within the black community are becoming more significant than racial distinctions between white and black. He presents controversial evidence that class is becoming more important than race in determining the life chances of black individuals, and argues that younger, more affluent blacks are becoming increasingly estranged from the urban ghetto poor. The central argument of his book will be welcomed by those who feel that any stick is good enough to beat the black middle class. It will likewise be appreciated by those conservatives who wish to undercut public and private-sector programs designed to correct racial imbalances in the higher levels of American life. The value of Wilson's renewed emphasis on class is that it has encouraged continued discussion of the alienation of the black middle class from the rest of the black population. If such analysis leads the middle class to dedicate itself to racial goals, then the effects of Wilson's study will be salutary. The danger is that many of the book's severest critics have read no further than its title. And the black bourgeoisie, perpetually ridden by guilt and confusion whenever race is discussed in

tus" is perhaps the least useful for analysis of its social and economic condition. The prevailing definition of the "minority" concept has been expressed by Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris in their *Minorities in the New World*.¹³ It refers simply to self-conscious, endogamous groups whose members are born into them and "which are subject to political, or economic, or social discrimination by a dominant segment of an envolving political society." The term is laden with problems since, as Wagley and Harris are aware, "neither term, minority or majority, in this technical sense refers to a numerical minority or majority." Nonetheless, the use of the term carries with it the implication that the disadvantaged status of black Americans is mainly due to their numerical inferiority. It also has come to imply that the status of blacks can be compared to that of other "minorities," such as white males, hereditary millionaires, or homosexuals.¹⁴ By lumping all such groups into the category of "minority," journalists and politicians have tended to obscure, rather than to clarify, issues. The problems of black people in white-dominated societies have nothing to do with their numerical minority status. Whites have been willing and able to treat blacks just as shabbily where blacks have been in the majority, as, for example, in eighteenth-century South Carolina and twentieth-century South Africa. The use of the term "minority" when speaking of the problems of black Americans confuses issues. German Catholics are a minority; so, too, are Jewish-American heiresses and Spanish-speaking aristocrats, but placement in these groups does not handicap members in the exercise of power or the enjoyment of privileges.

The popularity of the term "minority" in recent public discourse stems in part from its convenient vagueness. The term provides a semantic dodge for subverting affirmative action and equal opportunity programs. The hypothetical question that might be posed by persons hostile to programs for achieving racial justice is: "Why should blacks be treated any differently than anyone else? After all, aren't we all minorities? Shouldn't equality of opportunity be a principle applied equally to all of us?" When the question is posed in these limited terms, the answer can only be, "Yes." If the predominant sociological term used to describe black Americans were to become "minority," then Nathan Glazer's position would be given considerable undeserved validity on mere semantic grounds. At this point in time, it would be exceedingly cynical to pretend that black people should be treated no differently than "minorities" that occupy more advantaged positions in society or that, unlike black people, are represented broadly throughout the American class structure.

Black nationalism, the last of the models to be discussed here, represents one of the constant themes in this series of essays.¹⁵ There is a

difference between citizenship and nationality, and although Afro-Americans are, for the most part, loyal citizens of the United States of America, they tend to perceive themselves, and to be perceived by others, as a permanently distinct people in the land of their birth—in other words, as a "nation within a nation." The "Negro People of the United States," as they were once called, have a sense of identity as Americans, which coexists, somewhat uneasily, with feelings of identity with other black peoples throughout the world. While black Americans think of themselves as a part of the "American people," they nonetheless feel somewhat disassociated from them. It is difficult to feel a sense of common nationality with a dominant majority that does not wish to socialize with, to intermarry with, or to live in proximity with one's own group. Black nationalism is only partially a reaction to patterns of rejection. It also arises from a shared racial mythology and a shared sense of historical mission and destiny. The mystical, teleological element in American black nationalism has usually been related to religious tradition. In the nineteenth century, black nationalism was almost inseparable from religion. At present, this religious, mystical quality of black nationalism seems to be strongest among the lower classes.

Defining and describing black nationalism is a problem that has intrigued many scholars. Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick are agreed that the term has been used to indicate a broad variety of phenomena, "ranging from the simplest expressions of ethnocentrism and racial solidarity to the comprehensive and sophisticated ideologies of Pan-Negroism or Pan-Africanism."¹⁶ For the present study, I shall adopt the inclusive approach. Black nationalism is the belief that all African peoples suffer to some degree from oppression by whites, and that a common heritage of oppression provides the basis for a system of universal cooperation among the Africans of the diaspora. American black nationalism involves the political belief that the Negro people of the United States are different from other ethnic groups in that they are historically separated from the rest of the citizenry. Chief Justice Taney stated in 1857 that they were brought to the Americas not as individual persons with expectations of individual rights and responsibilities but as a subject people.¹⁷ The citizenship of black Americans is no longer disputable since the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, but the black American is still perceived as a different sort of citizen. Although most white Americans would agree with the abstract proposition that black Americans are entitled to all the legal and political rights of citizens, there is widespread resistance to the idea of full inclusion for black Americans in all areas of American life. There is even greater hostility to the idea that the government should become an agency for bringing about such inclusion.¹⁸

better life after death. On the other hand, a significant component of much black religion has been the belief that the God of history had promised deliverance for His long-suffering people, the African race. As Booker T. Washington noted, black religious music at the time of the Civil War expressed a hope for "freedom of the body, and in this world."²²

Black nationalism in the nineteenth century was closely interwoven with religion and seemed, at times, a sort of pseudoreligion in its own right. In its origins, the Western tradition of nationalism is often buttressed with a religious justification—as, for example, in the Declaration of Independence. The supernatural element in the origins of proto-nationalistic thought are exceedingly ancient. Many primitive cultures have known the concept of divine kingship. The ancient Jews saw the Hebrew nation as enjoying a special relationship to God. The Athenians linked the destiny of their polis to the formidable Athena, Zeus's favorite daughter. Medieval and Renaissance statism accepted the divine right of kings and imbued the political structure with divine authority. Pan-Slavists spoke of the sacred destiny of holy Russia. German nationalists of the nineteenth century viewed every nation as representing some aspect of the divine personality. When black nationalism began to rise during the late eighteenth century, contemporaneously with Zionism and the classical expressions of European nationalism, it adopted the tradition of placing national destiny within religious frames of reference. Modern revolutionary nationalisms, especially in the Islamic world, clearly indicate the continuing relationship between religion and nationalism, as does anti-Soviet sentiment in Poland. Revolutionary nationalism has often developed with an intrinsic and essential element of what Vittorio Lanternari has identified as the religion of the oppressed.²³

In the twentieth century, non-Christian forms of black nationalism, including Marxist and Islamic forms, began to appear among black Americans. Islam had long been present among Afro-Americans, but it was only in the years immediately before the First World War that Islamic black nationalism made its presence felt in the Moorish Science Temple.²⁴ Marxist black nationalism was evident in the African Blood Brotherhood during the 1920s and in the left wing of the Garvey movement, some of whose members defected to the Communist party during the 1920s and 1930s. Although W. E. B. Du Bois was still suspicious of communism in 1940, he advocated a variety of black nationalism based on the development of an independent economy but having no ambitions towards territorial separatism. Other black Marxists advocated a separate black territory in the Black Belt or a forty-ninth state, accepting elements of the communist definition of black Americans as a nation,

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Although black Americans are ethnically diverse, they have historically thought of themselves as a people because of a shared history of racial oppression. They have developed a sense of common identity through the common experience of exclusion from the benefits of American nationality due to their racial distinctiveness. Black nationalism, like most nationalisms, is a reaction to outside pressures, and it represents an attempt to construct defenses against hostile practices and oppressive ideologies—in this case, the code of white supremacy. In its purest form, American black nationalism is concerned with territorial separatism and with the establishment of a separate government. In its more inclusive forms, it is broadly concerned with the codification and maintenance of culture and ideology to reflect realities of black American history and to serve as a guide towards a happier future.¹⁹

The term "black nationalism" is sometimes used synonymously with "pan-Africanism," the idea that all peoples of African ancestry are united in the struggle against the code of white supremacy and that they therefore have had thrust upon them the same cultural and political goals. Imanuel Geiss and J. Ayodele Langley have noted that before World War I the term "pan-Africanism" was always used to denote spiritual and political unity among African peoples, regardless of what continent they lived on. Only in recent decades has it been confused with the movement to unite the continent of Africa into a federation of states. Pan-Africanism focuses on Africa as the center of concern for all people of the diaspora but does not require of all its supporters that they immigrate.

Black nationalism early revealed a tendency to link cultural assimilation with political separatism. Early examples of proto-nationalistic literature written in English, like Ottobah Cugoana's *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (1787), reveal a tendency to utilize Christianity for political purposes. Olaudah Equiano, in his *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789), recognized that the moral power of religion might be used to oppose the slave trade and the doctrine of African inferiority.²⁰ Abolitionist writers in the United States soon began to construct biblical arguments against slavery; these were offered as a counterbalance to the rationalistic arguments of pro-slavery Christians. Biblical arguments against slavery were by no means confined to black authors, but David Walker went a step beyond most of his white sympathizers with the assertion that God was on the side of the African race and that the Europeans, including those in the United States, were threatened with oblivion.²¹ To be sure, much black Christianity has often been escapist, a subtle opiate placating its adherents with promises of a

black nationalism will disappear from Afro-American thinking in the immediate future. It will be eclipsed among the upper classes, however, for as long as upward economic mobility and access to mainstream institutions are available. At this moment, it seems clear that black nationalism is not on the decline among the lower classes and that it will persist in its religious forms as an important basis of community organization and cultural mythology. Among artists and intellectuals, cultural nationalism and ethnic chauvinism will continue to play an important part in rhetoric and ideology for as long as there is an identifiable black presence in North America.

NOTES

1. The relationship between these concepts, as well as their occasional interchangeability, has been commented on by Milton M. Gordon in *Assimilation in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 61. This is part of an extended discussion of the concepts and "a sample of the accumulated usages and meanings of the terms used to describe the processes and results of the meeting of peoples" (pp. 60-68). James H. Dorson and Robert R. Jones, *The Afro-American Experience: A Cultural History through Emancipation* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), pp. 1-26, contains a useful section on the distinctions between race and culture.
2. Works that discuss the early acculturation process among Afro-Americans and the retention of blending of African cultural forms in North America are too numerous to mention here. Among the most significant are Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941); John Blassingame, *The Slave Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina* (New York: Norton, 1974); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
3. Carl Senna, "Being, Behavior, and Belief," typescript (1988).
4. Oliver Cromwell Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), discusses black Americans with reference to all these terms. Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), is the most influential study emphasizing race as the major determinant of the status of black Americans. For discussion of black Americans as a racial group, see Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967); James J. Jones, *Prejudice and Racism* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1972); Richard A. Goldsby, *Race and Races* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).
5. The ethnicity approach is presented by Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan in *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), and Nathan Glazer, "Blacks and Ethnic Groups: The Difference and the Political Difference It Makes," in *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience*, ed. Nathan Huggins et al. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), pp. 193-211.
6. Stuckey, *Slave Culture*; John Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America* (New York: Vintage, 1980). Stephen Thernstrom, ed., *The Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). Thomas Sowell, *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality* (New York: William Morrow, 1984), pp. 73-90.

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after Joseph Stalin in *Marxism and the National Question*.²⁵ By the 1950s, both Marxist and Islamic forms of black nationalism emphasized the acquisition of land and the development of political self-determination as fundamental goals. Similarly, black Jewish sects have pursued nationalistic goals and have defined their objectives in terms of territorial separatism, statecraft, and economic independence.²⁶

As I have said elsewhere, black Americans have combined the seemingly contradictory themes of political separatism and cultural assimilationism within a messianic myth. Black nationalism has ironically been the conduit through which assimilationist values have passed into black communities, and integrationist movements have often employed nationalistic rhetoric and have sometimes given birth to separatist activities. The fact that separatism so often seems to conceal assimilationist values, and integrationism so often asserts the exceptionalism of black American values and culture, indicates the ambivalence of black Americans with respect to aims and strategies, which is largely a result of the ambivalence of white Americans with respect to the destiny of black people in America.²⁷

There can be no denying that the position of black people in the United States today is unstable and potentially tragic. Since the Second World War, the black upper classes have experienced tremendous upward mobility and rising expectations. This has created much jealousy and resentment among the white middle class. The experience of the lower classes, on the other hand, is much more difficult to categorize. While, on the one hand, the legal obstacles to their advancement have disappeared, economic and cultural barriers to their advancement seem to be firmly in place as ever. The poverty, ignorance, and social disorganization that oppress lower-class black communities have made them breeding grounds for crime, violence, and disease.

The persistence of black-nationalist movements in the United States, especially among the lower classes, is in many respects a healthy sign. Black nationalism offers a counterbalance to the influence of narcotics traffickers and youth gangs. It is confrontational and offers channels for the articulation of rage in ways that are potentially constructive. Black nationalism offers a form of social organization within lower-class black ghettos that is appealing to those who are suspicious of traditional, mainstream bourgeois ideals, but not completely cynical with respect to them. The subject of black nationalism will continue to be a topic of interest to social, literary, religious, and intellectual historians.

In the absence of catastrophic social upheaval in the United States, it is unlikely that extreme black nationalists will soon attract many supporters for their goal of territorial separatism. It is equally unlikely that

7. Ely Chinoy, *Society: An Introduction to Sociology* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 209–38; see also illustrations and commentary on p. 61. Legal definitions of race are discussed in Thomas Stephenson, *Race Distinctions in American Law* (London: D. Appleton, 1910), pp. 12–20. Claude Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land* (New York: Signet, 1965), seems less sanguine about the prospects of blacks conforming to the pattern of ethnic assimilation followed by European groups; cf. Glazer, "Blacks and Ethnic Groups."
8. "Comparing the Negro and Immigrant Experience," in *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, March 1, 1968 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), pp. 143–46.
9. Glazer, "Blacks and Ethnic Groups."
10. See W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (Harcourt Brace & World, 1940; reprint; New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 205. An opposing view, emphasizing Communist support for black nationalism and territorial separatism, is Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1951). William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). William Julius Wilson reflects further on class and cultural issues in *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 127–28.
11. The emphasis on "caste" is associated with Lloyd Warner. See his introduction to Allison Davis et al., *Deep South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), which also utilizes the caste model. Other examples are John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), and Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 2:667–88, 1002–4. Dollard defines caste on p. 62 of *Caste and Class* without making a systematic comparison to the caste system of India. Lloyd Warner's introduction to *Deep South* is likewise devoid of detailed analysis. A critique of the caste theory is provided by Cox in *Caste, Class, and Race*, pp. 489–544. Gunnar Myrdal's section, "The Decay of the Caste Theory" in *An American Dilemma*, pp. 1002–4, is disappointing; it describes neither the theory nor its decay.
12. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 2–32. Robert Blauner, "Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt," *Social Problems* 16, no. 4 (1969): 397. Robert S. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 2–20. Charles Silberman, *Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House, 1964).
13. Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris, *Minorities in the New World: Six Case Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 4–11.
14. Reference to the problems associated with the term "minority" is made in Alphonso Pinkney, *The Myth of Black Progress* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 27.
15. See Sterling Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972); Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975); Rodney Carlisle, *The Roots of Black Nationalism* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975); Alphonso Pinkney, *Red Black and Green: Black Nationalism in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1978). A variant on the national approach is the colonial approach developed by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power*, pp. 2–32; Robert S. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, pp. 1–20; John H. Bracey, "Black Nationalism Since Garvey," in Huggins et al., *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience*, pp. 249–79.

16. John H. Bracey et al., eds., *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), p. xxvi.
17. Taney's opinion in *Scott v. Sandford* is widely reprinted. Reactions of blacks to the Dred Scott decision are reported in *The Liberator*, 10 April 1857, where a meeting among black people in Philadelphia is described. There was apparently much bitter discussion concerning resolutions introduced by Robert Purvis and Charles L. Remond to the effect that black people were indeed not citizens and therefore owed no allegiance to the Constitution.
18. Nathan Glazer in *Affirmative Discrimination* (New York: Basic Books, 1970) argues that with the end of *de jure* segregation the responsibilities of the government to guarantee racial equality had been fully discharged. See also Barry R. Gross, *Discrimination in Reverse* (New York: New York University Press, 1977).
19. Definitions of cultural nationalism and other varieties of nationalism are in Bracey et al., *Black Nationalism in America*, pp. xxvi–xxx.
20. Selections from the writings of Cugoana are contained in Francis D. Adams and Barry Sanders, *Three Black Writers in Eighteenth Century England* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1971). *The Narrative of Gustavus Vassa* is reprinted in *Great Slave Narratives*, comp. Arna Bontemps (Boston: Beacon, 1969).
21. David Walker and Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles and also Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (1848; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 22.
22. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (1901), reprinted in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, ed. Louis Harlan, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 1:224.
23. Vittorio Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed* (New York: Knopf, 1963).
24. Allan D. Austin, *Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook* (New York: Garland, 1983). A description of the Moorish Science Temple is contained in Arthur Huff Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944). The best introduction to the Nation of Islam is in E. U. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).
25. For African Blood Brotherhood, see Robert A. Hill's introduction to Garland's reprint edition of *The Crusader*, which was the official organ of the African Blood Brotherhood and the Hamitic League of the World from 1918 to 1922. Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question* (1913), excerpted in *The Essential Stalin*, ed. Bruce Franklin, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 54–84. In that same volume, see "The National Question" from *Foundations of Leninism* (1924), pp. 145–54. A discussion of the Stalinist approach to black nationalism in America can be found in Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party*, chapter 3. A Marxist exposition of the nationalist argument is William Z. Foster, *The Negro People in American History* (New York: International Publishers, 1954), pp. 555–56. Of course, some black nationalists reject Marxist analysis.
26. Howard Brotz, *The Black Jews of Harlem: Negro Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Negro Leadership* (New York: Schocken, 1970); Hoyt Fuller, "An Interview: The Original Hebrew Israelite Nation," *Black World* (May 1975): 62–85; Israel J. Gerber, *The Heritage Seekers: American Blacks in Search of a Jewish Identity* (Middle Village, N.Y.: Jonathan David Publishers, 1977).
27. Wilson J. Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982).