



**Black
and
Multiracial
Politics
in America**

EDITED BY

**YVETTE M.
ALEX-ASSENSOH**

**AND LAWRENCE
J. HANKS**



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To the men in my life:

In loving memory of my father, the Reverend Livingston Alex (1928–1998), and to

my younger son, Livingston Alex Kwabena Assensoh, my older son, Kwadwo Assensoh, and my sweetheart, A. B. Assensoh.

—Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh

To my mother, Kathleen Williams Hanks, and my foremothers, my first teacher, and, for continuing to inspire me, also: Clara Mays Williams (maternal grandmother); Susie Nikerson Mays (maternal great grandmother); Grandma Mattie (maternal great-grandmother); Versie Turner Hanks (paternal grandmother); Frances Hanks (paternal great grandmother); Sara Rivers Turner (paternal great-grandmother); Celia Rivers (paternal great-great-grandmother); and Hannah Turner (paternal great-grandmother).

—Lawrence J. Hanks

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Foreword

Dianne Pinderhughes

Black and Multiracial Politics in America explores, in vivid detail, the intersections of race and ethnicity that stem from recent patterns of American immigration. At the end of a century prophetically described by W. E. B. Du Bois as the Century of the Color Line, there seems little doubt that current debates and conflicts over color will extend well into the twenty-first century. And so, to better understand the current racial topography in the United States, we must ask ourselves certain basic questions: What are the demographic parameters of multiracial America? Which groups are accounting for the explosion in America's nonwhite population? Where do they come from? Where do they live? How do they relate to one another? What are their politics, and how do they vote?

The diversity of America's immigrant population is such that the very catch-all term "immigrant" is of diminishing utility. The dramatic growth in the non-European population has occurred in specific regions of the country as networks of settlers from Mexico, Central and South America, Asia, and, to a certain extent, Africa have established bases of settlement, which have then expanded with the arrival of waves of new immigrants over the past several decades. Hispanics as a whole are spread relatively evenly throughout the country (although the largest proportion is in the South), but when we look closely at patterns of distribution for groups from particular nations, we find that they are much more specifically located: for instance, Mexican Americans and Asian-Pacific Islanders live primarily in the West, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cuban Americans in the South. A majority of African Americans reside in the South, and most of those not in the South live in urban areas. National politics is therefore likely to take on

a regional character that is profoundly influenced by the racial/ethnic/cultural characteristics of each region's population. As the racial/ethnic, political, and cultural composition of the United States undergoes profound changes, it is imperative that we understand as best we can the tangible, quantitative realities of immigrant life and experience, and the often subtle tensions and conflicts that define the immigrant experience.

Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh and Lawrence J. Hanks present, in this volume, a collection of essays that can serve as a prism through which to view black and multiracial politics in the contemporary United States. Structuring the book around four subject areas—political incorporation, racial polarization, and interethnic discord; political and media institutions; political behavior; and race consciousness and gender, the editors have selected essays that focus on the politics of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Africans, and, to a lesser extent, Whites, to demonstrate how we can best broaden our theoretical paradigms and methodologies. Importantly, *Black and Multiracial Politics in America* recognizes that the black political experience is central to any understanding of American racial politics; therefore, many of the essays in the volume use the scholarship on black politics as a point of departure for discussing the emerging political strategies of newer immigrant groups. Through careful scholarship and the utilization of various methodological techniques, *Black and Multiracial Politics in America* presents a fresh perspective on racial politics, one that is undergirded by sound theories and reasoned findings.

The complexities of multiracial politics will continue to push and pull at the very foundation of American politics and political institutions and at the country's racial hierarchy in the years ahead. One possible outcome of this process of national self-examination is a renewed commitment to democracy and equality for all, a commitment that both results from and is tailored to the current and future demographic realities of the United States. Consider, for instance, the ways in which African Americans have over the course of their long, tumultuous history pushed for changes that have not only benefited them as a group but ultimately improved the quality of life for all Americans. That long history suggests that Blacks as well as other racial-cum-ethnic groups will likely also meet the manifold challenges posed by *Black and Multiracial Politics in America*.

Acknowledgments

In large measure, the idea for this volume came from Larry, who suggested that we compile a series of essays that would focus on controversial issues in black politics in a form of debate. However, it soon became evident that Larry, who was then finishing the last two years of his five-year term as Dean of Afro-American Affairs at Indiana University, would be too consumed with administrative, teaching, service, and family-related commitments to serve as the lead editor for the project. Therefore, Yvette assumed the responsibility, in ample consultation with Larry, for revising the overall theme of the volume and also for inviting additional contributors, creating an edited volume that is devoted to an examination of black and multiracial politics in America. The contributing scholars, from various racial and ethnic groups and backgrounds, have discussed the implications of demographic and other shifts for the practice and process of black and multiracial politics in American society.

We are extremely excited about the end product, and we appreciate all of our colleagues and friends who have labored with us in giving birth to this edited volume. In this regard we extend much gratitude to Niko Pfund, our editor at New York University Press, who never failed to provide the necessary encouragement just as our energy was failing and who also continued to believe that we would pull the project off without a hitch. Additionally, we express a profound sense of gratitude to the NYU referees who read the entire manuscript and offered valuable suggestions for improvement.

In a similar vein, we express effusive gratitude to our contributors, including those who really meant well in agreeing to provide contributed essays but who never met a single deadline. Additionally, we are grateful to Professor Dianne M. Pinderhughes, who took time out of a very busy schedule to read the entire manuscript and to write the Foreword. Additionally for research assistance, we are grateful to Ms. Kimberly Mealy,

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As we delved through the existing research to verify facts and to formulate our integrative framework, we have come to realize the debt of gratitude that we owe to scholars who have gone before us, particularly the original pioneers in the field of black politics, who received little appreciation for their work but who certainly provided a formidable foundation for later research. We also appreciate scholars in the fields of Latino politics, Asian American politics, and, in general, racial politics who have provided the theoretical and substantive foundations for our collaborative essays. Above all, we are grateful to Almighty God, who provided us with the faith and perseverance to complete this volume, even in the midst of trying personal and professional challenges.

Yvette is grateful to various scholars and friends at Indiana University and in the Bloomington-Bedford communities who have, through discussions, social events, and encouragement, facilitated this volume's completion.

Finally, Yvette thanks those who have provided the everyday love, encouragement, and patience that we needed for this project and we need for others in the future. She is extremely grateful to A. B. Assensoh, who befriended her more than fifteen years ago and who now is a great fan, cheerleader, soulmate, and husband. His constant but gentle reminder that she needed to forge ahead with the edited volume provided Yvette with the necessary encouragement and solace to persevere, even in the face of discouraging and exhaustive reminders from pessimists that an edited volume counts little. As a trained journalist-cum-editor and historian, and as an author in his own right, A. B. read a great deal of the manuscript for the volume and offered much insightful editorial assistance. The couple's sons, Kwadwo and Livingston, provided Yvette with the necessary balance that all scholars need. This scholarly project has also benefited from the encouragement given by Yvette's mother, Mrs. Thelma Coleman Alex, herself a writer of short stories, as well as from some earlier discussions about racial politics with Yvette's late father, the Reverend Livingston Alex, and with her sister, Joslyn Alex, an attorney of Breaux Bridge, Louisiana; Mrs. Enola

Thomas, her godmother and an aunt, also of Breaux Bridge; Mrs. Jean Wade, of New York; Ms. Toni Reddick; and Dr. William E. Nelson, who provided Yvette with an initial scholarly foundation in the area of Black Politics.

For Larry, his mother, Kathleen Hanks, continues to inspire him and to give his life tremendous meaning, while his father, James J. Hanks, who made the transition to the world of spirit in January 1997, continues to be a wise counselor. His siblings and their spouses, Frances and Edmond Cook, Carolyn Hanks Holley, Hasan Hanks and Julie Barbot, and Willie Paul Hanks, continue to support him personally and professionally, while also teaching him much more about the life experience. Larry's cousins Issa Jelani and Kenneth Hanks provide him with valuable insight and challenge him "to keep on keeping on." His aunts, Susan Williams and Marie Stephens, and his great-uncle, Winston Mays, provide valuable links to his ancestral past.

Above all, Larry's manifested family—in his own words, "the family that I have helped to create"—is a major source of fulfillment. His wife, Diane, continues to be beloved life partner on his life's journey. His children, Shonda, Julius, Joy, and Mahogany, help him to clearly see what is really important. His mother-in-law, Eunice Gordon, is the embodiment of human decency. Larry's extended family continue to be heavenly ambassadors, who also continue to enrich his life. His Morehouse brothers and their spouses—Adlai and Cheryl Pappy; Adverse and Iyanth Ponder; Vincent and Lorraine Cole Stovall; Oliver and Sharon Robinson; Reginald Capers; and Derrick Dunn—have been shelter in the time of storms. In Larry's words, "A wide variety of friends have been there for me and my family over the last few years. Chief among them are the following: Louis and Estella Stovall; Michael Ford and Chalmer Thompson; Lafayette and Martha Chamberlain; Charles and Rosland Greer; Michael and Thurmond Gordon; Bob and Mary Lou Morton; Brian and Tommie Easley; A. B. and Yvette Alex-Assensoh; Wayne Martin and Hanadi Al-Samman; James Mumford; and Annie Dunn."

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Introduction

In Search of Black and Multiracial Politics in America

Yvette M. Alex-Assensoh

The unprecedented growth in the populations of Latinos and Asians in the United States constitutes one of the most dramatic racial/ethnic shifts in American political history. According to the most recent demographic evidence, the number of Hispanics and Asians is increasing at a faster rate than that of African-Americans, presently considered to make up the largest single American minority group.

The implications of these demographic shifts are especially dramatic in melting-pot metropolitan areas, that is, urban centers with significant concentrations of two or more minority groups. All of the cities listed in Table I.1 (Frey 1998, p.41) have non-Hispanic white population lower than the national average of 73 percent. In addition, they have two minority groups whose share of the population exceeds those populations' national averages.¹

Whites are now considered among the minority population in many municipalities. From William Frey's very useful demographic studies, we learn that between 1990 and 1996, as many as forty-three counties turned from "majority White" to "majority minority" (Frey 1998). Among the new majority-minority counties are Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania; Alameda County, California; DeKalb County, Georgia; St. Louis County, Missouri; and Merced County, California. Recent evidence suggests that these trends are not as isolated as previously believed. Demographic evidence shows significant concentration of Latinos in California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Florida, while significant concentration of Asians exist in California, Hawaii, New York, New Jersey,

TABLE I.1
*Melting-Pot Metropolitan Areas (Qualifying Metros and
 Their Racial Distribution, 1996)*

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Indian/ Eskimo
Laredo, TX MSA	44%	18%	37%	2%	0%
Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA CMSA	44	7	38	10	0
Fresno, CA MSA	45	4	41	8	1
Salinas, CA MSA	46	5	40	9	1
Merced, CA MSA		4	38	9	1
Visalia-Tulare-Porterville, CA MSA	48	1	45	5	1
Stockton-Lodi, CA MSA	52	5	28	14	1
Odessa-Midland, TX MSA	53	2	38	2	5
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, TX CMSA	54	17	24	4	0
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA CMSA	36	8	19	17	0
San Diego, CA MSA	59	6	25	9	1
Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-Lompoc, CA MSA	60	2	32	5	1
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA CMSA	61	16	17	6	0
Killeen-Tempic, TX MSA	63	18	15	4	0
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI-CMSA	64	19	13	4	0
Modesto, CA MSA	65	2	27	6	1
Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	65	25	5	5	0
Yuba City, CA MSA	67	3	18	11	2
Brownsville-Harlingen-San Benito, TX MSA	68	14	15	3	0
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX MSA	68	16	15	1	0
Sacramento-Yolo, CA CMSA	69	7	14		

NOTE: Melting-pot metros are those cities where the percentage of non-Hispanic Whites is lower than their U.S. share (73 percent) and where at least two minority groups constitute a larger percent of the metropolitan-area population than their national averages. CMSA is a consolidated metropolitan statistical area; MSA is a metropolitan statistical area.

SOURCE: William Frey, "The Diversity Myth," *American Demographics* 20, no. 5 (1998):41.

and Washington. Moreover, the migration of Latinos to southern states is currently reshaping the social and cultural landscape of many southern communities, promising to test just how much the South has learned from its racist past (Parker 1999). In fact, if current immigration patterns and birth rates continue, demographers predict that, by the year 2056, the majority of Americans will trace their ancestry to places like Africa, Asia, Hispanic nations, and the Pacific Islands (Takaki 1993).

These racial and ethnic shifts are occurring at a time of unprecedented economic expansion but also of mixed prosperity for African Americans, who will soon be replaced as America's largest minority

group by Latinos. Over the past quarter century, the African American middle class has, to a significant degree, become incorporated into the mainstream of American political life, particularly with regard to electoral politics. We have seen an increase in black elected officials, greater administrative control by black Americans over urban political institutions, and the legitimation of civil rights advocacy groups in mainstream politics (Karnig and Welch 1980; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Tate 1993; Walters 1988; Jennings 1992; Barker 1988; Stone 1989; Walton 1985, 1997; Hochschild 1995; Dawson 1994). For a growing black middle class, opportunities abound for home ownership, gainful employment, education, and the flowering of interracial social networks (Pattillo-McCoy 1999; Simpson 1998).

And yet, although some Blacks are thriving, others are not. Many Blacks remain, in the words of the sociologist Elijah Anderson, “beneath the surface of socio-economic viability” (Cose 1999). These Americans continue to suffer from grinding poverty, inadequate educational systems, deteriorating neighborhoods, government dependence, and increased involvement with the criminal justice system as persistent offenders (Alex-Assensoh 1998; Wilson 1987; Waldinger 1996; Cohen and Dawson 1993; Cohen 1999). For them, the central, agonizing question remains: How is it that American cities have offered so much hope and opportunity to new immigrants from around the globe in the past few decades, yet have offered very few opportunities for Blacks and, increasingly, for Latinos who have been caught in a web of poverty, hopelessness, and despair?

Indeed, the great waves of immigration, the political incorporation of Blacks, and the subsequent socioeconomic disenfranchisement of the black poor have not been lost on the American political scene. These phenomena have figured prominently in a number of high-profile incidents that have defined the American racial landscape late in the twentieth century.

The multiethnic racial rebellions in Los Angeles and other cities in the 1990s revealed that, while the story of racial conflict is not a novel American phenomenon, the actors in the ongoing drama are changing rapidly. In the Los Angeles uprising in 1993, for example, Korean stores bore the blunt of the property loss, while Latinos constituted the majority of those arrested (Morrison and Lowry 1994). The grinding poverty, joblessness, and disenfranchisement that prompted the Los Angeles riot remain in place, and many observers fear a repeat performance.

The O. J. Simpson trial was a case of unprecedented complexity in terms of the racial and class issues involved: a famous black football player, well assimilated into the white world, was tried by a prosecutorial team largely defined by a white female attorney (Marcia Clark) and a black male attorney (Christopher Darden) for allegedly killing his white wife, Nicole Simpson, and her white male Jewish friend Ron Goldman, and defended by a team of black and white—mainly Jewish—attorneys, before a predominantly black jury and a judge of Japanese-American descent, Lance Ito.

Or, consider the following news story from 1996, which aptly characterizes the complexity of multiracial politics at the millennium:

At Martin Luther King Hospital, the pride of Watts, patients are disgruntled. Three fourths of them are Mexicans, Salvadorans, or Guatemalans. The vast majority of the hospital staff are black, and there's no lack of friction between staff and patients. Thus far, the hospital administrators have shrugged it off. But recently, Mark Finucane, the new health director of Los Angeles County, made things plain: Hospital recruitment must better reflect the makeup of the population and advance under-represented communities. "At present, that means Latinos," he added to make himself clearly understood. Browns versus Blacks: Latino immigrants versus the descendants of slaves. That is quite a cast of characters. (Boulet-Gercourt 1996)

At the end of the twentieth century, native Blacks and, increasingly, Latinos, who once symbolized outsider status in American society, are likely to be perceived by newer immigrant groups as representatives of the very power structures and institutions by which they were once seen as victimized. Consequently, multiethnic conflict, of a type that remains invisible to many outside these groups, abounds.

Clearly, the traditional black-white framework of white injustice no longer appropriately characterizes American racial politics. Yet, much of the research on racial politics in America, and even that on black politics, is still framed in the context of a black-white phenomenon, although a few scholars have ventured beyond the black-white paradigm (Jackson and Preston 1991; Jennings 1994; McClain and Stewart 1998; Rich 1996; Waldinger 1996; Light and Rosenstein 1995; Omi and Winant 1994; Barkan 1992; Harding 1993).

By including in this volume several essays that address the politics of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Afro-Caribbean, and African im-

migrants, we hope to bridge existing gaps in the scholarship that focuses only on black politics and the emerging scholarship on multiracial politics. Making use of a wide variety of data and analytical techniques, *Black and Multiracial Politics in America* thus deliberately addresses issues from both qualitative and quantitative stances.

Moreover, while other books on multiracial politics have focused only on such specific themes as urban politics, employment issues, coalitions, and political behavior, *Black and Multiracial Politics in America* casts a wider scholarly net to explore a host of interrelated issues, among them group identity, racial polarization, interethnic discord, political and media institutions, and political behavior. Some essays focus exclusively on the black experience, while others take a broader, multiracial perspective. A conscious effort has been made to group essays with common themes, regardless of their racial perspective. After all, these racial processes occur simultaneously and very often alongside one another.

Undergirding all of the essays is the crucial understanding that the black-white paradigm, or what W. E. B. Du Bois, in the early 1900s, called the “problem of the color line, is the fundamental historical prism through which all racial and ethnic group relations are filtered. Indeed, for at least 250 years, America, in a loose sense, was a racial dictatorship, in which American identity was defined as white and also as the negation of “otherness” that was first defined as African and indigenous, most recently as Latino and Asian (Omi and Winant, 1994). Using these definitions of otherness, the distribution of political, social and economic resources was organized around a dichotomous color line, which served as the fundamental division in American society. The social construction of black subordination and discrimination was comprehensive, and it was replicated in the economic, educational, housing and political arenas (Smith and Feagin 1995).

More recently, the African American struggle for freedom, as evidenced by the abolitionist movements, the civil rights movements, the struggles for electoral power, and, most recently, the struggle for economic empowerment, has paved the way for successive political movements on the part of Native Americans, Latinos, and Asians. As such, it is often the most appropriate starting point for evaluating and analyzing racial politics in America.

Several essays in the volume address the implications of the post-civil rights movement era and the institutionalization of black politics

for various political phenomena. All of the essayists enlist the black-white paradigm to explore issues that will ultimately affect other racial minorities. For example, as immigrants continue to flow into major cities that are currently dominated by Blacks, they will find many of these cities likely to be governed by black mayors. Howell's essay on black mayors reveals that the evaluation of black mayors by white citizens has little to do with quality-of-life issues and job performance but is defined by racial attitudes over which the mayor has little control. Citizen evaluations of black mayors, she argues, will become even more nettlesome as the white majority declines and other ethnic and racial groups form a bigger share of the municipal population.

In their essay on the media, Nacos and Hritzuk demonstrate how journalism shapes the way different racial and ethnic groups think about one another as well as public policy issues. Using a comparative analysis of photographs and news stories from the 1960s and 1990s, the writers demonstrate that, while the portrayal of Blacks is generally more nuanced and accurate than it was a quarter century ago, African Americans are still depicted predominantly as athletes, entertainers, or criminals, while they are sorely underrepresented in stories on politics, the sciences, and business. These discrepancies, Nacos and Hritzuk believe, are primarily the result of the corporate profit motive and of institutionalized stereotypes embedded, often unconsciously, in the minds of journalists and other members of the media. Importantly, these unconscious stereotypes affect the portrayals not only of African Americans but also increasingly of Asian and Latinos.

The multiracial blend of American politics is also redefining the meaning of partisanship and the role of party affiliation. Using the historical and contemporary experiences of Blacks in America as both yardstick and starting point, Hanks offers a persuasive argument for diversification, a more complicated understanding of how politics and racial/ethnic/group identity intersect. Marion Orr's essay offers a clear demonstration of how the preoccupation with racial hegemony has often affected the nature, substance, and timing of anticrime legislation. He argues that anticrime legislation, while traditionally aimed at the black masses, is increasingly geared toward other racial groups, including various Latino subgroups.

Building on Harold Cruse's pendulum theory, which posits that, since the mid-1800s, black leadership strategies have shifted like a pendulum between nationalist and integrationist strategies, Errol Hender-

son provides a theoretical framework from which to assess the role of war, the political cycles, political climate, and other factors on black leadership strategies. His analysis demonstrates that macropolitical factors were most important in determining the strategies that black leaders employed. He also discusses the implications of these findings for the resurgence of white nationalism, as well as the emerging nationalism among Asians and Latinos.

Black and Multiracial Politics in America also focuses on major contemporary racial protests and marches by Blacks in order to offer an understanding of how demographic shifts will affect the practice and process of black politics in future. In their essay on the Million Man March, Joseph McCormick 2d and Sekou Franklin survey the ideological rationale of participants in the 1995 march in an effort to discern whether African Americans are more disposed to inclusionary or exclusionary political strategies. Surprisingly, their findings demonstrate that, despite the rise in white nationalism and the backlash against race-based public policy, African Americans favor inclusionary political strategies.

Mamie Locke's essay uses the Million Woman March, which took place in Philadelphia in 1997, as a backdrop against which to focus on gender and political empowerment. Utilizing a "womanist" theory of political empowerment, she contends that before black women can formulate links with other women of color, they must deconstruct the centuries of racist and sexist oppression. While her argument does not preclude interracial alliances, she asserts that black women must make sure that they have formulated the tools for change and defined themselves in an acceptable manner before they seek linkages with other groups.

In America, the meaning and implications of race are dynamic, constructed as well as transformed sociohistorically as a consequence of competing political processes and institutions (Omi and Winant 1994). The work is thus informed throughout by a belief that the traditional theories of assimilation, political incorporation, political behavior, and public opinion, which have served as guideposts for political science research, are, as constructed, sometimes untenable when applied to Asians, Latinos, Africans and Afro-Caribbeans.

As a partial remedy to this inadequacy, Reuel Rogers, in his essay on Afro-Caribbean immigrants, assesses the assimilation and political incorporation experiences of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, mainly from

the Caribbean or the West Indian islands. He finds that, because of the ethnic differences between Afro-Caribbeans and other Blacks, as well as the racial differences between Afro-Caribbeans and previous immigrant groups, such as the Irish, no current theoretical framework provides an accurate explanation for Afro-Caribbean immigrants' incorporation into American politics. Not content merely to underscore the need for a broadened theoretical framework, he offers up the concept of "differential political incorporation" and contends that voluntary immigrants may have strategic and cognitive options that are not available to African Americans.

The traditional black-white color line in American racial politics allows for virtually no distinction among Blacks, regardless of their ethnic background or country of origin. In his analysis of conflict and cooperation among Africans and African Americans, Akwasi B. Assensoh presents convincing evidence to challenge the conventional wisdom that ethnicity is unimportant among Blacks, and that black is simply Black everywhere. Furthermore, he demonstrates how macropolitical events facilitate either conflict or cooperation among African immigrants and their American-born kith and kin. As ethnicity among Blacks becomes more prominent, they will, Assensoh predicts, begin to experience problems in political mobilization and coalition building similar to those faced by their Asian and Latino counterparts.

Also challenging conventional theoretical frameworks, in this case regarding the ever controversial issue of affirmative action, M. Margaret Conway and Pei-te Lien show that the theories of symbolic racism, group interest, and ideology commonly utilized to explain public opinion differences among Blacks and Whites do not necessarily apply to Latinos and Asians. They call for broadened racial paradigms that are sensitive to the panoply of ethnic and racial groups that now makeup American society.

In other ways, the essays here demonstrate the robustness of existing theories of political behavior. For example, in their examination of the factors that affect the substantive or policy representation of Black and Hispanic congresspersons, Endersby and Menifield demonstrate that partisan identification rules.

Black and Multiracial Politics in America further seeks to apply mainstream theories about political processes to the multiracial landscape. In "Immigrants, Blacks, and Cities", Michael Jones-Correa explores the tensions between institutional stability and democratic val-

ues by focusing on how cities have responded—and are likely to respond in future—to new actors in the urban political environment. Using a new institutionalist framework in which urban governments are categorized as either hierarchical or vertically organized, the author examines the adaptability of urban political institutions. He shows that the variation in urban institutional frameworks has important effects on how cities respond to Blacks as well as to Asian and Latino immigrants. Especially useful is the author's focus on the current political reality, in which many new immigrants find themselves in conflictual situations with black political officials and bureaucrats, who frequently serve as gatekeepers in contemporary urban America.

Black and Multiracial Politics in America expands traditional concepts and measurement strategies and, in turn, reveals the lingering consequences of structural barriers to electoral participation and the extent to which the resulting impediments vary for different racial minority groups. In her analysis of the relationship between race and voter turnout, Lien begins with the contention that existing research overlooks important political processes by using a black-white dichotomy. She further illustrates that voting is a two-step process and that, for new immigrant groups, the registration aspect is the most important and, often, the most difficult hurdle to surmount. Accordingly, her conceptualization and measurement of turnout includes voter registration among voting-age citizens as well as voter turnout among the registered. Her complicated, thorough analysis reveals that race has profoundly different meanings for American Indians, Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, and that it is affected by individual orientation toward class, social networks, institutional constraints and political mobilization.

Finally, the essays assembled in this volume offer important refinements to existing theories on intergroup relations. In reality, interethnic group relations operate along a continuum that ranges from cooperation to open conflict. Yet, existing scholarship has focused not on this continuum but on the existence of conflict or cooperation, without paying much attention to the process or to the factors and situations that facilitate the so-called ambiguous or middle-ground territory in interethnic group relations. Additionally, much of the research focuses on panethnic or racial groups, with very little disaggregation of individual ethnic groups; studies focus on Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, without paying much attention to subgroups.

In "Interminority Relations in Urban Settings: Lessons from the Black–Puerto Rican Experience," José E. Cruz provides a rich analysis of the historical and contemporary relationships between Blacks and Puerto Ricans in the city of Hartford, Connecticut. The distillation of the Puerto Rican experience from the larger Latino panethnic group provides a more realistic interpretation of the political and social reality of interminority group relations. Moreover, his refinement of the theory of cooperation and conflict to include the middle ground of indecision and ambiguity elucidates another important aspect of these complex relationships.

Overall, political science as a discipline has not devoted adequate attention to issues of race and ethnicity, very often relegating minority politics to a stepchild position in the discipline. *Black and Multiracial Politics in America* takes an important step in ameliorating existing shortcomings by placing race and ethnicity front and center as an integral aspect of the mainstream of American politics.

NOTE

1. Late in the 1990s, the major racial minority groups represented the following proportions of the nation's population: Hispanics, 11%; non-Hispanic Blacks, 12%; Asians or Asian/Indians, 5% (Frey 1998).

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Part I

Political Incorporation,
Racial Polarization, and
Interethnic Discord

Afro-Caribbean Immigrants, African Americans, and the Politics of Group Identity

Reuel Rogers

Pluralist theory suggests that assimilation and political incorporation are available to Americans of all racial groups and socioeconomic strata who desire these resources. For the Irish, political networks, the monopolization of certain trade unions, racial assimilation, and education went a long way toward facilitating their incorporation into society and their socioeconomic success. Eventually, the Irish, once seen as outsiders, were indistinguishable from their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in mainstream American society. Employing similar tactics, immigrants from Poland, Germany, and other European countries came to America and, in time, merged into the larger host society. As a result, it is often expected that all other willing groups can experience similar socioeconomic mobility and political integration into American society.

In her 1987 study of Chicago politics, Dianne Pinderhughes demonstrated the limits of pluralist theory, especially as it pertains to Blacks. In comparing the political experiences of Blacks, Poles, and Italians, she convincingly demonstrated that the so-called pathway of assimilation and political incorporation in American society works differently for White immigrants than it does for Blacks. Stated simply, race impedes Blacks' progress: "Blacks are not just another ethnic group . . . because the limits to their participation in the polity and economy are of a nature

and character beyond anything that immigrant groups have faced.” (Pinderhughes 1987, 258).

While Pinderhughes and others have demonstrated the fallacious assumptions of racial equality, America’s growing racial and ethnic diversity makes the whole question of political incorporation much more complex. Unlike immigrants of the early twentieth century, contemporary immigrants are more likely to come from nonwhite countries in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. What route to political incorporation will these groups follow? Moreover, how will foreign-born Blacks from Africa and the Caribbean be integrated into the American political system? Will their experiences be similar to those of Whites or to those of their native black counterparts, or somewhere in between? The answers to these questions have important implications for the distribution of political resources, socioeconomic mobility, and the practice of politics in American society.

I. Introduction

For much of its history, America has been a nation of immigrants, although it has not always extended the ready welcome implied by popular mythology and the famous Emma Lazarus poem. Just as it was at the turn of the century, when the country absorbed unprecedented numbers of immigrants, so it remains today as the century draws to a close. Indeed, in absolute numbers, the current wave of immigration already matches and likely will soon exceed in size that earlier historic apex. A few telling details from what is by now a well-documented catalogue of immigration statistics and demographic trends will make the point. Since 1965, more than 25 million immigrants have entered the United States. First-generation immigrants currently make up roughly 10 percent of the total American population, or 24.6 million people.¹ For a more dramatic rendering, consider that one out of every ten Americans is of foreign birth, and one out of every two new American citizens is an immigrant. Even more striking is the racial and ethnic composition of the current immigration flow. For the first time since Independence, America’s huddled immigrant masses are mostly non-European and nonwhite. Until the end of World War II, immigration to the United States was dominated by Europeans—German, Irish, Ital-

ian, and Polish immigrants who would eventually become the white ethnics of America's melting pot ideology. Today's immigrants, in contrast, hail predominantly from Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These three regions alone account for 85 percent of all immigration to the United States since 1965 (Passel and Edmonston 1994).

Taken together, these dizzying demographic shifts and the accompanying matrix of racial and ethnic divisions present some intriguing, and perhaps nettlesome, normative and empirical questions for social scientists to ponder. Chief among them is how America's cities will absorb these recent nonwhite immigrants. Some commentators worry about the economic consequences of the new immigration. Others speculate about the cultural and social adaptation of the immigrants and how they might alter American institutions. For political scientists, one of the most urgent questions is how the increasing numbers of nonwhite immigrants will be incorporated into the American political process; more precisely, how will they mobilize and achieve representation in the cities where they constitute a significant presence? Of course, we could look to history for normative guideposts in the experiences of earlier immigrant waves to help us chart the incorporative political trajectory of the new immigrants. To be sure, earlier European immigrants were able to achieve socioeconomic mobility and political incorporation, each in turn in a relatively steady march of ethnic transition and without significant disruption to the established political system or regime. Yet, the historical parallels will go only so far. Unlike their predecessors, the current immigrants are overwhelmingly non-European and nonwhite, and America's record of incorporating non-Whites into the polity has been deeply problematic. While it is true that some early European immigrants were initially subject to stigmatizing racial ascription and viewed as separate and inferior "races" by "old-stock" white Americans, they were all ultimately accepted as white and incorporated into the American body politic.² Not so for nonwhite, non-European groups.

African Americans, of course, are the paradigmatic case in this regard. For them, the political incorporation process has been slow, radically tortuous, and arguably incomplete. In short, their experiences diverge dramatically from those of their white ethnic counterparts and defy all neat comparisons. Most observers agree that African Americans' racial difference and the deeply entrenched racist structures of American society have severely complicated their political incorporation. As non-Whites, the

new immigrants may encounter similar barriers and therefore, follow the same tortuous path as African Americans. Yet, here too, the historical parallels are not complete. While many of the new immigrants share non-white status with African Americans, they, like earlier generations of European white ethnics, are voluntary immigrants to America. African Americans can claim no such voluntary immigrant experience; rather, theirs is a singularly bitter history of coerced importation and enslavement. Moreover, the racial obstacles they have encountered have been more systematic and entrenched than those faced by any other group in American history.³

The current wave of nonwhite immigrants thus has no exact historical analogy. For the first time in history, American cities must confront the challenge of integrating large numbers of nonwhite voluntary immigrants into the political system. How, then, will race complicate the political incorporation process for these new immigrants? Doubtless, the incorporative political experiences of this latest wave of immigrants will differ in some respects from those of African Americans and earlier European immigrants because of significant changes in the political culture and institutions of American cities. Nevertheless, the question remains: To what extent will race complicate the incorporation process for these new groups as they contest for power in American cities?

While very little has been written about the incorporative political experiences of the new immigrants, there is an emerging literature that takes up this problem and some of the corollary issues. Scholars generally are of two minds on the question. Some contend that recent non-white immigrants will follow the incorporative trajectory marked out by earlier European immigrants. Accordingly, they largely reaffirm the predictions of the pluralist model, developed a generation ago by Robert Dahl and others to describe the political incorporation process among white ethnics (Dahl 1961). Although the pluralist perspective, especially in its earliest formulations, came under criticism for its inattention to racial difference, some scholars are now resuscitating this interpretation and applying it to the new nonwhite immigrants (Portes and Stepick 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Chavez 1991). Other commentators, however, reject this model and instead argue that Latinos, Afro-Caribbeans, and other nonwhite immigrants will have incorporative political experiences much like those of African Americans. By this view, the new immigrants are destined to follow the same course and strategies as African Americans in light of the persisting patterns of

discrimination against non-Whites in the United States. Recent non-white immigrants, the argument goes, encounter racial barriers comparable to those faced by African Americans, even if the obstacles are not quite as severe. Accordingly, they conclude that the new nonwhite immigrants will follow the model of political incorporation established by African Americans. In short, this "minority group" perspective stipulates that all racial minorities share in a common situation of oppression that inevitably impedes and complicates their political incorporation (Hero 1992; Barrera 1979; Henry and Munoz 1991; Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984; Takaki 1989).

The implications of both approaches are clear. Most scholars and commentators agree that the incorporative political experiences of black and white Americans have differed sharply. The question is where the recent nonwhite immigrants fit. If the minority group perspective is correct, then the incorporative political experiences of African Americans can be taken as a paradigm for all nonwhite groups, whether native or immigrant. If the neopluralist interpretation is more plausible, that is, if the new immigrants follow the course marked out by earlier European immigrants, then the African American case remains a singular exception, indeed a vexing anomaly, to American pluralism. Put another way, if the nonpluralist view proves accurate, then the "American dilemma" is most acutely a problem for African Americans; under the minority group formulation, the dilemma becomes an equally distressing problem for other nonwhite groups as well, whether native or immigrant. Both interpretations have troubling normative and practical implications that I will not spell out here. Yet this is an important debate that can potentially illuminate the extent to which racism remains an impediment to political incorporation for non-Whites and the modes of group politics deployed by non-Whites to achieve incorporation.

This chapter wades into that ongoing debate and concludes that neither of the two standard models readily applies to recent nonwhite immigrants. As others have observed elsewhere, pluralist and neopluralist approaches either minimize or altogether ignore the impact of race on the political incorporation process; that is, they overlook how racism might impede or complicate the incorporative trajectory. The minority group interpretation, based on the experiences of African Americans, gives due consideration to race; however, this model routinely attaches such overdetermining significance to race that it ignores important historical

and contemporaneous differences between African Americans and non-white immigrants. Asian and Latino immigrants, for example, do not necessarily fit the black-white binary framework that underlies the minority group perspective. I argue that, while African Americans and nonwhite immigrants both show patterns of *differential* incorporation, the latter groups, as voluntary immigrants, may have strategic and cognitive options that are not available to African Americans. These options make for subtle, but nonetheless important, differences in the incorporative trajectory of the new immigrants. The arguments I formulate in this essay do not yet fully cohere into an alternative model and do not apply to all non-white immigrants; nevertheless, they provide a somewhat different lens for understanding the political incorporation process among some of the new nonwhite immigrants.

To develop this argument, I turn to the case of English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans in New York, the largest group of black immigrants in the United States. Among recent nonwhite immigrants to this country, Afro-Caribbeans furnish an intriguing and uniquely important case for exploring the impact of race on the political incorporation process. The handful of recent studies on the political experiences of nonwhite immigrants has focused mostly on groups that are not black—Latino immigrants such as Mexican and Cuban Americans and Asian American groups. Yet many researchers agree that the latter groups may not be subject to the harsh forms of racial discrimination that Blacks have tended to encounter. Already, there is evidence that Latinos and Asians face far fewer racial barriers in the housing market than Blacks, leading one pair of commentators to conclude that “it is black race, not non-white race per se that matters” in the United States.⁴ It may be that the discrimination experienced by Latinos and Asians will prove to be less like the systematic barriers faced by Blacks and more like the prejudices encountered by earlier European immigrants.⁵ Hence, discrimination may turn out to be less of a complicating factor in their political incorporation than it has been in the case of African Americans. This remains to be seen.

Afro-Caribbean immigrants, however, share a common racial classification with African Americans. Under the peculiar American system of racial ascription, both groups are subject to classification as Blacks, a category that historically has brought a host of unwanted exclusions and disadvantages to its bearers. In phenotype and in some historical experiences, the two groups are practically indistinguishable.⁶ Ostensi-

bly, then, both bear the burdens of *blackness* in American society. Unlike African Americans, however, Afro-Caribbeans are voluntary immigrants and lay claim to a separate and distinctive ethnic identity beyond their shared racial identity with African Americans. An analysis of their experiences therefore affords an unusually clear window for exploring the impact of race on the political incorporation process among recent nonwhite immigrants.⁷

This examination draws on my interviews with fifty-six Afro-Caribbean immigrants in New York City, as well as a handful of other interview-based studies on the group.⁸ Although the analysis gives some attention to the outcomes of political incorporation, it is more focused on how groups navigate the process. Political incorporation is not simply an outcome measured in voting rates, representation, and policy benefits, although it is commonly treated as such in the political science literature. It is also a process. This analysis explores how that process unfolds for Afro-Caribbean immigrants. More precisely, it examines the kinds of claims the immigrants put on the political system and the group identities, interests, and ideological orientations that inform and animate those claims.⁹ Accordingly, the interviews specifically sought to illumine the immigrants' perspectives on this process. The chapter begins with an overview of African American political incorporation and considers how their experiences diverge from those of white European immigrants. I then explore the case of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, focusing on their recent incorporative experiences and how they compare with those of African Americans and earlier European immigrants.

II. The Pluralist Standard and the African American Anomaly

Most scholars agree that black and white Americans have taken radically divergent paths to political incorporation. Dahl put forward the seminal account of the political incorporation process in his case study of New Haven politics, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (1961). Hailed as the locus classicus of pluralist scholarship, the study is based on the experiences of successive waves of European immigrants to New Haven. Though it has been subject to some criticism and challenges, Dahl's interpretation has retained considerable currency

within political science. His pluralist model describes a rather neat linear path to incorporation that seems to apply to most white ethnic groups.

In brief, he argues that the process begins with the mobilization of group identity among new actors in the political system. Among European immigrants, for example, incorporation began with the emergence of ethnic group politics, with ethnicity serving as a cue for vote choice and partisan allegiance. In Dahl's view, immigrants mobilize around their shared ethnic group identity to elect coethnics to political office and win descriptive representation. Ethnic politics thus draws new groups into the political process, transforming immigrant outsiders into ethnic insiders and binding their allegiance to the system. Furthermore, as ethnic politics draws new immigrants into the political system, it has a deradicalizing effect on their ideological orientations. More precisely, even as ethnic politics binds the allegiance of new groups to the political system, it subdues their more radical political impulses. It deflects the attention of poor immigrants from their class interests and frustrations and instead focuses them on ethnic group loyalties. Hence, Dahl formulates, ethnic identity among European immigrants had no substantive ideological or political content. Indeed, he argues that ethnic politics centers on allocational policy interests and calls for symbolic recognition, while retreating from more radical or redistributive policy demands.¹⁰ In the pluralist account, then, ethnic politics is essentially nonredistributive and conservative; it poses little threat to the status quo and pushes groups toward the ideological center of American political culture.

Finally, Dahl contends that ethnic group politics is ultimately a transitional phase in the incorporation process. As groups attain upward economic mobility and achieve political integration, ethnic identity gradually melts away, losing its salience and instrumental significance. Dahl theorizes that as groups achieve mobility, their voting behaviors, once highly informed by ethnic group identification, are instead increasingly dictated by socioeconomic or, more precisely, middle-class concerns. Among incorporated groups, then, ethnic identity becomes a nostalgic fancy or symbolic adornment to be trotted out at cultural celebrations, religious observances, and the like.¹¹ And, accompanying the decline in ethnic identity are other indicators of inclusion into the American mainstream, such as higher rates of residential integration and intermarriage.

Dahl predicted that all groups would achieve full political incorpo-