

UNIT 10

Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations: Exploring Challenges

Unit Selections

46. **The Trouble with Tolerance**, Stanley Fish
47. **American Self-Interest and the Response to Genocide**, Roger W. Smith
48. **Ethnic, Religious Fissures Deepen in Iraqi Society**, Rajiv Chandrasekaran and Anthony Shadid
49. **Never Underestimate the Power of Ethnicity in Iraq**, Amy Chua and Jed Rubenfeld
50. **Correlated Conflicts**, Jonathan Fox
51. **The Geometer of Race**, Stephen Jay Gould
52. **Trading Left Jabs**, Thomas B. Edsall
53. **Colorblind to the Reality of Race in America**, Ian F. Haney López

Key Points to Consider

- Will the ethnic and religious conflict that is emerging in Iraq overshadow the American formulation of its future as a free market and democracy?
- What can and should be done about genocidal violence? By whom?
- Does China run a parallel risk as it attempts to extend the influence of the central government into its western regions where Islamic populations and a range of ethnic groups seem to be intent on maintaining their autonomy?
- Are political solutions to pluralism and military/economic regimes in support of free markets and democracy compatible?
- Do regional organizations and/or international organizations such as the United Nations have the capacity and the rightful authority to intervene in ethnic group conflicts? Or to prevent the wholesale destructions of ethnic groups within countries? Why or why not? Are there human rights that are beyond the claims of sovereignty? Explain.
- Are religious affiliations and state citizenship as well as a single ethnic tradition, a defensible goal and a worthy political objective? In what ways are religious representation and participation related to public affairs and social policy?
- How will increased immigration, technological advances, and more competitive world markets affect the relationships between religious and ethnic groups?

Student Web Site

www.mhcls.com/online

Internet References

Further information regarding these Web sites may be found in this book's preface or online.

Yale University Guide to Ethnic Studies

<http://www.library.yale.edu/rsc/ethnic/internet.html>

American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation

<http://www.repatriationfoundation.org>

Center for Research in Ethnic Relations

http://www.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/CRER_RC

The International Center for Migration, Ethnicity, and Citizenship

<http://www.newschool.edu/icmec>



The articles in this section invite us to pursue the search for fresh insight into the social and symbolic formation of cultures. The debate regarding the relationship of various ways of knowing invites us to search for understanding and particular skills, competencies, and rules for dialogue among religious, ethnic, and political traditions. Support of civilization and peaceful means of resolving differences are clearly imperative. While the situation of these issues is worldwide, understanding and action in this arena is nearly always local and specific to the particularly social history and interaction of cultures and political leadership. The American Constitution initiated and institutionalized the divisive tradition of exclusionary race relations. For generations, slaves and their descendants were not considered, nor legally

warranted rights, as persons. American legal and political entities supported a race-conscious culture that sustained its economy. This fundamental pattern continued even as a more complex web of cultures and economic development changed the social composition of the population. Aided by an open immigration policy that sought the benefits of large-scale population growth, industrialization, and urbanization, America began to transform itself. The transformation yielded American ethnicities and a new free-associational form of religiosity—a traditional alien to the dominant Protestant churches. When Catholicism and Judaism become socially effective, new claims were woven into the deep structures of a changing cultural and social fabric.

The theory and practice of developing a new political culture and an inclusive constitutional tradition drew its energy and inspiration from a wellspring of hope articulated in American aspiration to “liberty and justice for all” manifested in the Declaration of Independence. In the United States, after nearly a century of social and regime construction and reconstruction, our understanding of pluralism, at best, yields the following finding: Ethnicity is one of the modern identities developed by the largely peasant migrants who poured into the United States during the last two centuries.

For most immigrants, their ethnicity became a cultural modality that emerged as they became Americans, and their religious faith and institutions were influenced by the new dynamics of American development. This new notion of peoplehood replaced loyalty to village or region as the reference point around which they organized their sense of life, located the place of their family in the moral and physical universe, and shaped their community. The continual mismeasures of intelligence and misreading of meaning indicate the long-term need for critical reformulation of the very ideas of race. Concrete strategies for improving this situation call upon both the public and the private sectors in areas of relief, institution building, education, employment, and training. The emergence of new findings and scholarly contentions in genetics and its applications to medicine are intersecting race, ethnicity, and religion. The outcome of this great debate may establish new horizons for which our understanding of the human condition, in an era of science and human rights, may enable us to perceive the wonders of pluralism with deepened insight and respect for its awesome complexity and profound unity.