Racism

White Oppression of Blacks in America
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In recent years, America has been indicted as a "racist society." Inherent in this charge is the recognition that certain distinguishable categories of citizens have been systematically excluded from participation in the affluence of the wealthiest nation on earth. Those categories of citizens who are most often denied access to American affluence are racial and ethnic minorities, for while poverty is the fate of millions of whites, minorities are vastly overrepresented in the poverty ranks. Among minority categories, blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Filipinos, and Native Americans are the most overrepresented.

Knowing which minority groups exist in poverty helps clarify the scope and content of American racism: racism is "something" practiced against minority groups by the white majority, and it is related to the impoverishment of disproportionate numbers of some minorities. But what is racism? How does it operate? In what ways does the white majority oppress a "nonwhite" minority? In this paper, we hope to provide some tentative answers to these questions.

CONCEPTUALIZING RACISM

Prejudice and Discrimination

Two key concepts have been used by social scientists in the study of "racism": (1) prejudice and (2) discrimination. As we will argue, the lack of clarity about

racism is partly the result of adherence to these limited concepts, but for the moment, we should review what they offer the study of racism in America.

(1) Prejudice denotes the negative images or perceptions which individuals in a society have of certain social categories. These images are usually stereotypical, involving simplistic, crude, and rigidly held conceptions of the attributes of individuals cast into a prejudicial category. As such, prejudices are typically emotionally charged images expressing antipathy that persist in disregard of facts which contradict them. Social scientists have used the term prejudice widely in referring to negative and inflexible attitudes toward racial, religious, ethnic, and national groups. *Racial prejudice* connotes prejudice toward a group assumed to be biologically distinct and identifiable on the basis of physical attributes, while *ethnic prejudice* refers to negative attitudes toward groups identified primarily by cultural criteria, such as language, customs, and religion. Race is thus a biological category and ethnicity a cultural classification.

Yet, as neat and precise as this distinction may appear, it is difficult to maintain, for in the world of everyday human affairs, the two are commonly confused. For example, even though it is impossible to distinguish Jews biologically from non-Jews, many antisemites wrongly regard Jews as a race with peculiar physical and cultural traits. Hence, is antisemitism a racial or ethnic preju-

dice? Even where rough biological distinctions can be made, as is the case between many blacks and whites, are the prejudices based upon biological or cultural criteria, or some combination of both? These are not trivial distinctions, for it makes a great deal of difference if people are classified as biologically or culturally distinct. In general, prejudices are most negative when a social category is defined by people in racial terms, for then a biological and presumably unalterable basis for negative stereotyping of traits can be assumed. Studies of prejudice tell us that the study of "racism" is not a biological inquiry, but an examination of how and why a majority of people in a society will *define for themselves* certain minority groups as biologically distinct and then proceed to act toward them as if they were biologically inferior and undesirable.

(2) Discrimination is the most commonly used concept for denoting the differential treatment of persons "on grounds rationally irrelevant to the situation" (Antonovsky, 1960). When, for example, someone refuses to hire a fully qualified black candidate for a job because of the candidate's "race," that person has practiced discrimination, since merit, ability, experience, and other more appropriate standards for hiring have been ignored. Although discrimination has often been defined as the "behavioral manifestation of prejudice," the relationship between prejudice and discrimination is not always direct and rarely simple. For instance, employers may discriminate against a black applicant not so much because of intense racial prejudice on their part, but because of the anticipated reactions of others who, if they encountered a black, might take their business elsewhere. Or, prejudice

may never be overtly expressed if either situations allowing for discrimination do not present themselves or social constraints inhibit its direct expression. Knowing whether someone is tolerant or prejudiced, therefore, will not necessarily lead to accurate predictions about discrimination.

Even the assumption that prejudice is a cause of discrimination is oversimplified, for there is a good deal of evidence that the reverse relationship is just as likely to be the case: "that prejudice is in part the *result of discrimination*—a way of rationalizing and getting rid of guilt feelings that arise when one has treated an individual unfairly, according to one's own definition" (Simpson and Yinger, 1972:29). Studies of discrimination emphasize that "racism" involves actions against identifiable categories of people and that such action is not necessarily accompanied by prejudicial attitudes.

One of the problems with relying on the concepts of prejudice and discrimination is that they can inadvertently lead to a concern with *individual* attitudes and acts of discrimination against *individual* members of minority categories. Furthermore, when an entire society is examined, attitudes and actions can be viewed as forming complex patterns transcending individual thoughts and actions. For indeed, millions of minority citizens are not kept in bondage by the prejudices and acts of a few individuals; rather, it is the cultural and institutional patterns of *an entire society* which must be analyzed if the true magnitude and dimensions of prejudice and discrimination in America are to be understood.

In our analysis racism is viewed as a general concept pertaining to the complex institutional and cultural processes in a society which create and maintain

the disadvantaged position of social categories which are defined by the majority as different not only in terms of culture but also in terms of biology. Such a perspective requires further elaboration.

Racism as a Cultural and Institutional Phenomenon

What is culture? What is a social institution? And how do these offer more insight into racism than the traditional concepts of "prejudice" and "discrimination"? Culture is a concept that focuses attention on patterns of ideas in society, such as values, beliefs, dogmas, and other symbolic systems which guide and direct human thought, perception, and action. Like all concepts, culture is an analytical artifact because it rips from a larger social context some things while ignoring others. At the same time, however, the concept is enormously useful because it gives analysts a way of visualizing "collective attitudes" of the individual actors in an entire society. When the individual is examined, only attitudes are evident; but when large numbers of individuals are studied as a group, then *patterns* of attitudes sometimes emerge. When such patterns do exist, it is useful to label them cultural beliefs and to study the consequences of the entire pattern on society.

Social institutions are the structural counterparts of culture in that they represent relatively stable and enduring *patterns* of social organization among human actors. To a great extent, institutions, such as the economy, government, education, and law, determine how, when and where humans will interact. Thus, to understand American society, it is necessary to comprehend the structure of those institutions guiding the actions of masses of Americans.

Culture and institutions reveal a complex, reciprocal relationship. On the one hand, the emergence and persistence of an institution creates certain ideas or systems of symbols which shape the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of those who must participate in the institution. On the other hand, because existing thoughts and perceptions shape social action, they can provide a source of resistance to institutional change and sometimes block the emergence of new institutions; or, if not actually blocking institutional change, they alter its course and shape the direction of its development.

The question of "which comes first, culture or institutions?" is not easily answered, nor is it always highly relevant. Changes in one can create pressures to change the other; and just which one changes first probably depends upon the institutional and cultural pattern in question and the unique historical circumstances of the change. What is critical in understanding a pervasive and enduring phenomenon such as racism is that cultural beliefs legitimize and justify institutional arrangements, while institutional patterns lend support and credence to existing cultural beliefs. At the individual level, prejudice justifies discrimination, while discrimination reinforces prejudices. Whether viewed at the individual level or at the societal level, the key point is that the reciprocity between cultural beliefs and structural arrangements provides both stability to existing arrangements and resistance to change in these arrangements.

To understand racism in America, it is necessary to analyze the reciprocal relationship between cultural beliefs and institutions. While the individual level of analysis can yield enormous insight into

the precise interactions between cognitive and behavioral components of racism, it deflects analysis away from the consequences of prejudice and discrimination for the lives of large numbers of individuals in American society. Thus, initially, it is perhaps best to take a broad perspective on racism and visualize it as an institutional phenomenon which is legitimized by, while at the same time reinforcing, certain pervasive beliefs among white members of the society.

INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL RACISM AGAINST BLACK AMERICANS

While racism has been perpetuated against a number of minority categories in America, nowhere are the cultural and institutional forces of racism more evident than in the treatment of black Americans. This takes on additional significance because of the large size of the black population, thus making racism one of the most conspicuous features of American society. White racism against black Americans is of critical significance in its own right, but the extreme cultural and institutional oppression of blacks can serve as a dramatic example of similar racist treatment of Chicanos, Native Americans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, and other oppressed minority groups.

The Culture of White Racism: An Historical Overview

In June, 1942, a national survey asked, "In general, do you think Negroes are as intelligent as white people; that is, can they learn just as well if they are given the same education (and training)?" The

responses reveal the scope of America's culture of racism at this time: 42 percent said "yes"; 48 percent said "no"; and 10 percent said they did not know (Simon, 1974:57). Over 200 years earlier, American colonists debated the issue of the capacity of black slaves to learn the principles of religion. The available evidence suggests that most believed blacks to be ignorant and unteachable (Jordan, 1968:187–190). This is not a case of history repeating itself, and the correspondence assumes heightened significance when we consider that the capacity for religious experience was extremely important in the eighteenth century, as innate intelligence is today. Indeed, the assumption of black "inferiority" has been a basic tenet of American culture for 350 years. Understanding its origin and tenacity means understanding the history of racial beliefs in America.

PRECOLONIAL ENGLISH BELIEFS   The culture of Elizabethan England formed the conceptions that shaped the early colonists' reactions to blacks. Winthrop Jordan (1968) identifies several aspects of this, beginning with English impressions of African "blackness." Early descriptions of Africans by travelers often began with their complexion, and the fact that the exaggerated term "black" was used suggests a powerful impact on English perceptions. The concept "blackness" at the time connoted baseness, evil, danger, and repulsion, whereas "whiteness" connoted such things as virtue, beneficence, peace, and beauty. Thus, Africans were identified in terms of a color that accentuated the Englishman's initial sense of his difference from Africans.

Religious speculations offered one way of "explaining" African blackness and inferiority. The adventurer George Best

gave biblical authority to negative assumptions about Africans by reference to the story in Genesis, chapters 9 and 10, in which Noah curses Canaan, the son of Ham, making him a "servant of servants." Although the tale says nothing about skin color, Best concluded that a curse of blackness on Ham's son and all his descendants accounted for the color of Negroes. Such a belief was buttressed by African heathenism, since Christianity occupied a central place in European society. Christians held other religions to be defective, and to the English, who identified Protestant Christianity with English nationalism, heathenism was not easily separable from other African attributes. As Jordan (1968:23) notes: "Being a Christian was not merely a matter of subscribing to certain doctrines; it was a quality inherent in oneself and in one's society. It was interconnected with all the other attributes of normal and proper men. . . ."

English ethnocentrism expressed itself in other ways as well. Travelers took an active interest in the details of purported savagery, and by English standards of clothing, housing, language, government, and morality, African culture was inevitably found uncivilized. African behavior was described as "bestial." As Jordan points out, the terms "bestial" and "beastly" had strong sexual connotations in Elizabethan England and such terms were used widely in English accounts of West Africa. In addition, the Englishman's introduction "to the anthropoid apes and to Negroes at the same time and in the same place," and the long-standing myths associating apes with the devil, evil, and sexual sin—and with blackness—caused much speculation about the relationship between apes and Negroes. Sexual union was thought to occur sometimes between apes and Negroes.

In short, virtually every African trait invited the English to make invidious distinctions, and the negative image produced was given legitimacy through the ethnocentric prism of English society. The impact of this image was to be profound, for as long as Africans were considered less than human, the moral precepts of Protestant religion were not violated and inhuman practices could be defined as humane. Such was the case as the English settled in America and the first Americans began to oppress blacks.

RACIAL BELIEFS IN COLONIAL AMERICA
The first 20 Africans to arrive in America were traded for food supplies by a Dutch man-o'-war that put into Jamestown in 1619. Although they were bound over for some form of servitude, the precise status of blacks in America is not known until "Negroes" were declared slaves by Virginia and Maryland statutes. So, whether prejudice made slavery possible, or whether slavery was produced by economic forces and then caused racism, has been hotly debated by historians. (See, for example, Degler, 1959; Fredrickson, 1971b; Handlin and Handlin, 1950; Jordan, 1962). The most sensible position is that slavery and prejudice were mutually reinforcing. It is difficult to see how racial slavery could have evolved if English colonists had not made invidious distinctions between themselves and Africans before their initial contact. It is also clear that the development of slavery reinforced prejudice and elaborated it into an extensive belief system.

English conceptions of various forms of servitude are central here. The colonists were familiar in 1619 with other types of bondage. Many early settlers paid

their passage with indentured servitude. Indentures were negotiable contracts that did not involve a complete loss of personal freedom, and were clearly differentiated from slavery. Slavery was a particularly degraded status, and "slave" was an epithet for the basest sort of person.

Long before 1619, the English had some knowledge, albeit imprecise, of the slave trade conducted by the Spanish and Portuguese. They knew that blacks, allegedly captured in tribal wars, were being transported to New World settlements for enslavement. More importantly, they tended to associate the slavery practiced in these settlements with the hereditary, lifetime service forced on Africans. The English clearly had in mind the sorts of distinctions that fostered racial slavery from the time of their first contact with Africans, and it is easy to see how this, added to the need for labor and the vulnerability of Africans dislodged from their homeland, made possible the evolution of black slavery in colonial America.

Soon after the statutory recognition of slavery, a series of laws, or slave codes, were passed stripping blacks of their rights until, by the early 1700s, they were no longer defined legally as persons but as chattel property. Once the cycle of interaction between slavery and supporting beliefs was set in motion, strong as the established forces were, it was to require constant revision and elaboration as slaveholders faced a host of problems and challenges.

The church continued to have a significant though paradoxical effect on racial attitudes during this period. African heathenism was contrasted with Christianity, although the church with its universalistic, proselytizing nature and its assumptions of spiritual equality, could have had a salutory influence. Among the reasons it did not was the fact that many of the clergy endorsed slavery. More important were the infrequent conversions. In New England where the church was strong, there were few blacks, and the exclusionist strain in Puritanism tended to circumvent the process of conversion. In the South, where the church was less central to day-to-day affairs, the failure to convert was probably due in part to the practical problem of the instruction required for conversion. Some Southerners believed that conversion would make blacks worse slaves, and others contended that blacks did not have the capacity for religious experience, as we have noted.

This situation continued until about 1740 when a wave of religious revivals created a radical shift in church policy, and blacks entered the church in increasing numbers. The admission of spiritual equality eventually joined hands with secular beliefs about liberty to create a dilemma that was a source of heated controversy from the revolutionary era to the Civil War. However, physical distinctions had assumed central importance by the time religious equality arrived, enabling whites to justify continued enslavement of their "Christian brothers."

This is partly revealed by a shift in terminology. The distinction between "Negro" and "Christian" became a distinction between "Negro" and "English." Then, the latter term became interchangeable with "free" and "white" until, after 1700, the term "white" was adopted to unmistakably designate the racial distinction. For the most part, however, these distinctions preceeded nineteenth- and twentieth-century "scientific" racism, which began with speculations that grew out of the Linnean system of classification and the hierarchy imposed

on the species, with several scholars theorizing about the varieties of men.

Interracial sex was the subject of eventually complex attitudes among the colonists. In the 1700s miscegenation was both common practice (especially in the South where there were fewer white women than white men) and a perceived threat to morality and to cultural integrity. Miscegenation was outlawed in Virginia and Maryland at about the same time slavery was instituted; and by 1776 all of the colonies had prohibited interracial sexual relations and marriages. This created a strong sense of guilt about the continued sexual exploitation of black women, expressed in beliefs about lascivious black women and well-endowed, sexually aggressive black men. Indeed, the fear that black men lust after white women persists to this day.

Attitudes about interracial sex revealingly express the colonists' sense of guilt about their enslavement of blacks. Such fears were further manifested in the elaborate slave codes erected to control the influx of black slaves in the first half of the eighteenth century. The colonists seemed to play the role of what Jordan (1968) calls "anxious oppressors," showing ambivalence about converting slaves to Christianity, and then emphasizing racial characteristics in order, it seems, to create a new justification for slavery.

CONFLICTING BELIEFS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA   Until the middle 1700s, most opposition to slavery and to racism came from the Quakers. Their strong sense of religious equalitarianism led them to object both to the treatment of slaves and to hereditary, lifetime servitude until, in the 1750s, two Quaker writers, Anthony Benezet and John Woolman, led an intensified attack which con-

demned slavery for its effects on the enslaved and for its corruption of white men.

These views became commonplace in the revolutionary era as abolitionists began to invoke the environmentalists' theory of human differences and the natural-rights philosophy which held that human nature is the same everywhere, but that character is subject to environmental forces. Thus, the purported ignorance and immorality of Negroes in America were due to their enslavement, and social conditions in Africa were similarly traceable to climate and natural environment. The most prevalent and influential abolitionist argument, however, was that of the inconsistency between slavery and the revolutionary principle that proclaimed the natural right of all men to freedom.

The basic natural right to private property, sacred goal of the Revolution, was the strongest antiemancipation argument. All but three of the Northern states that eventually abolished slavery adopted programs allowing for the gradual emancipation of *future* generations of Negroes, since the present generation was deemed unfit for freedom, and unable to support themselves. Finally, there were fears of inevitable miscegenation and outright revolt against whites (see Zilversmit, 1967).

Assuredly, a capital investment in slavery is here rationalized, but deep-rooted prejudice was an equally important impediment. Slavery was challenged often, black inferiority rarely. Indeed, the most popular abolitionist spokesman of the time, Thomas Jefferson, detested slavery because it violated natural law, but suggested biological inferiority and argued that natural differences produced inevitable and permanent white prejudice that would not allow blacks to be incorporated into white society on equal

terms. The only practical program of freedom he could envision was the colonization of blacks in Africa or the West. The same proposal was justified later on the basis that inferiority was not inherent, but that white racial bias was (Fredrickson, 1971a). But in either case, the idea of colonization stemmed from an intolerance of blacks that precluded thought of assimilation.

Although limited, the antislavery campaign was not ineffectual. Much gross mistreatment of slaves was eliminated, importation was prohibited, and slavery was abolished in the North. Still, the congressional act that ended the slave trade in 1808 marks the effective closing of the first phase of antislavery attacks. By that time the sectional division was well defined. While gradual emancipation was underway in every state north of Maryland, the South was hardening its proslavery position and imposing greater restraints on free Negroes.

Whereas the North could not reconcile the practice of slavery with the revolutionary ideology, the South saw the "peculiar institution" as a practical economic necessity. In the North, the acceptance of black inferiority was to justify exclusion and racial discrimination following the demise of slavery.

IDEOLOGICAL RACISM IN THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD   After a lull in the slavery debate, proslavery advocates were awakened in the 1820s by the resurgence of the colonization movement and the fight over the admission of Missouri to the Union. The earliest responses were traditional, with the Southerners apologetic about social and economic necessities and defending slavery in Congress on legalistic and constitutional grounds. For example, the argument of states' rights was

used to oppose a federally subsidized colonization program. Toward the end of the 1820s, however, proslavery expression began to take on a more aggressive, self-righteous tone that forbode a particularly violent form of ideological racism.

The new defense of slavery came from the rebirth of the abolitionist movement in the North, where the phlegmatic opposition of the colonizationists gave way to the fervor of figures like William Lloyd Garrison. Morally outraged, they regarded slavery as an individual sin, demanded immediate freedom for slaves, and said that prejudice could be eradicated. This stimulated a defense during the next three decades that held that slavery was not a "necessary evil" but a "positive good."

The doctrine based itself on the permanent, biologically rooted inferiority of Negroes. This was not a novel assertion, but it had lacked respectability prior to the 1830s and had rarely been presented by articulate whites. Now, in the wake of the abolitionist attack, apologists brought "previously unarticulated assumptions" of white superiority "to the level of defensive ideological consciousness" (Fredrickson, 1971a:48).

The view that predominated defined the South as a Herrenvolk democracy in which democracy is reserved for the master race and tyranny for subordinated groups (Fredrickson, 1971a). A stereotype evolved to support the contentions of the slavery apologists which depicted slaves as happy, contented, and respectfully obedient to their enlightened, humane masters. Blacks were said to be better off in slavery than they had been in Africa, where, freed, they degenerated to their naturally savage natures. Such notions countered the abolitionist image of the wretched slave, assured Southerners that

slavery was moral, and slavemasters fearful of rebellion that their slaves were controlled and contented (Fredrickson, 1971a; Takaki, 1970).

The case for white supremacy and slavery absorbed Southerners, and books, newspapers, periodicals, sermons, and lectures served to refine and invigorate traditional arguments (see Jenkins, 1935). The argument that the blacks had failed to develop a civilized way of life in Africa, the Biblical story of the curse of Canaan, the contention that abolition led to miscegenation, and biological arguments were all summoned to support slavery. However, the accepted opinion in scientific circles in the 1840s and 1850s, that blacks were a separate species, was probably peripheral to the defense of slavery since ethnological theories were beyond the ken of most laymen, conflicted with religious beliefs, and were generally not politicized by American scientists (Stanton, 1960).

Abolitionists, rather than basing their case on moral and intellectual equality, acknowledged vast racial differences and developed a distinctive conception of the Negro character. The "romantic racialists," as Fredrickson (1971a) describes them, simply interpreted differently the proslavery, paternalist image of "childlike simplicity," seeing the traits of meekness, affection, and loyalty as being the highest Christian virtues. The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did much to popularize this benign image. The glorification of the Negro's superior aptitude for Christianity, as a function of permanent racial differences (implying the greater energy and intellectual superiority of whites) weakened moral objections to slavery and discrimination. Moreover, although abolitionists of this stripe were active and articulate, their demands for immediate emancipa-

tion and equal treatment of free blacks never won wide acceptance north or south of the Mason-Dixon line.

Abolitionists who demanded complete equality were actually a small "radical" minority in the anti-slavery coalition of the 1840s and 1850s. The majority were white nationalists who believed in manifest destiny and the desirability of a racially homogeneous society. This segment was motivated by practical aims rather than moral repulsion. They were both antislavery and anti-Negro. A few managed to uphold equal rights for blacks, but most did not. Concerned about racial purity and the competition of black labor in the western states and territories, white nationalists simultaneously demanded the prohibition of slavery and the exclusion of free Negroes from these areas (see Berwanger, 1967). They also endorsed the idea of repatriation. Abraham Lincoln himself reflected the public mind on questions of race. Indeed, if he had not, as Litwack (1961:276) notes, "his nomination and election would have been problematical." Lincoln vehemently opposed the expansion of slavery, but also vigorously denied opponents' claims that he favored full political and social equality; and he believed that colonization offered the only hope of solving the racial problem.

Northerners, rationalizing like Southerners, maintained that their own system of racial segregation and discrimination was the consequence of black inferiority. The comparatively less offensive nature of Northern racism never required the hard-core defenses constructed by Southern slaveholders. Still, scientific and Biblical explanations of the Negro's subordination were widely accepted in the North, with the threat of racial amalgamation supporting segregation, especially in

schools. The press, black minstrels, and politicians pandering to insecure white psyches also popularized a stereotype of clownish, immature, lazy, immoral, and ignorant Negroes. As always, such racist beliefs interacted with repressive measures, each shaping and reinforcing the other.

By the dawn of the Civil War the inferiority of blacks was widely accepted, even among most abolitionists, in both the North and the South. Earlier ideas of black "bestiality" had been softened, but replaced by an equally damaging set of beliefs. Gentle, "Samboish" blacks had to be excluded from "adult" white society. In altered form, beliefs on black inferiority were to shape the institutionalization of discrimination in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although the Civil War brought about the demise of slavery and the extension of rights to blacks throughout the states, these were not the aims of the North at the outset of the war. Only a small minority of whites still clamored for emancipation, and among the latter, hardly anyone countenanced the idea of full equality. The Republican platform on which Lincoln ran pledged to protect the institution of slavery where it already existed. When war broke out, the immediate aim was preservation of the Union. As the conflict grew, slavery came to be understood as the root issue of the war, and it was believed that the North and South would be drawn into conflict again if slavery did not die with the Confederacy. The idea of a "new birth of liberty" evolved, providing Northerners with "an unclouded vision of the war that could engage their feelings and profoundest ideals" (Kincaid, 1970:53). Such beliefs paved the way for the Emancipation Proclamation and consequently the Thir-

teenth Amendment, which permanently abolished slavery throughout the Union.

RACIAL EXTREMISM IN THE POST-CIVIL WAR PERIOD   The nationalism thus stimulated did not eliminate the strong sense of racial differences. Unity and progress were associated with racial homogeneity, and the most liberal thought still tended to regard blacks as "temporary and inferior sojourners in a white America" (Fredrickson, 1971a:164). There were fantastic speculations about the future of blacks in America, many predicting their disappearance. The extinction of blacks as the result of "natural processes" was foretold, and Lincoln himself made several abortive attempts to establish black colonies. Northern fears of a massive northern migration of exslaves were allayed by the assertion that exslaves would prefer the more congenial climate of the South.

Emancipation and Reconstruction did nothing to change the caste status of Southern blacks; black laborers were as dependent as black slaves had been. Whites were the substantial majority in all but three states; they possessed nearly all of the money, land, education, social prestige, and political experience. Without full-scale revolution, it was inevitable that white Southerners would control the South. Northern protection was essential to preserve the newly acquired rights of blacks. During the period of Radical Reconstruction, Northern troops were stationed in the South, but in 1877, when its own ends were no longer served by protecting black suffrage, the North abandoned the South and left the freemen to shift for themselves.

Northern abandonment of the South was rationalized by beliefs such as "equality before the law" and the dominant

laissez-faire ideology. The staunchest promoters of black rights felt that blacks must make it on their own once they were extended basic rights, but this very idea suggests that blacks as a group were to find their social niche rather than being fully integrated (Fredrickson, 1971a: 179). The fact that blacks entered Reconstruction at a severe disadvantage did not seriously challenge the "equal opportunity" doctrine, because the failure of blacks was predicted by the prevailing belief in inferiority. By 1877 most Americans were willing to believe that blacks had been given their fair chance and had shown that they deserved their inferior status (see Fredrickson, 1971a:175–186).

In the South, Radical Reconstruction ultimately fostered the most extreme form of "Negrophobia" yet witnessed in America. Several factors contributed (Kincaid, 1970). First, blacks became the objects of the hatred and frustration defeated Southerners felt toward the North. Blacks were blamed for every imaginable ill, from the corruption of Reconstruction government (blacks being susceptible to demagoguery) to the failure of Southern agriculture (black labor being inefficient). The sudden collapse of the old social order with its traditional restraints on black people also rekindled racial fears and prejudices. Laws could not undo the 200-year-old image of black child-savages who, without the control of slavery, threatened life and civilization. Southerners, anxious at the thought of black men as free citizens, sought to reaffirm their supremacy through new forms of racial subordination. Finally, political competition between blacks and whites had two unfortunate effects: (1) it provided fuel to Southern fire-breathing politicians, and (2) it led supporters of the Confederacy · who were denied the right to vote during Radical Reconstruction to resort to extralegal means to intimidate blacks, especially black voters and officeholders.

The South's new structure of white dominance consisted of the social and economic separation of the races. Segregation was rationalized by a new doctrine which differed from the proslavery argument mainly in a new undisguised hatred of the Negro. The benign "Uncle Tom" image formed no part of the segregationist dogma. According to this doctrine (see Johnson, 1949): racial segregation is natural and instinctive, for the good of and desired by both races; by virtue of superior intelligence and wealth, whites should hold the political power and blacks should not be granted suffrage; blacks are permanently inferior beings necessitating segregation to control their criminality and inordinate sexual passion and to guard against amalgamation or intermarriage which is sinful, unnatural and begets hybrid monstrocities.

In the 1890s the most extreme racism occurred. The decline of Southern agriculture and the political successes of Southern conservative extremists led to the complete disenfranchisement of blacks, legal codification of the system of racial segregation, and increasing lynching and other brutalities, to keep the Negro in his place (Gossett, 1963; Woodward, 1966). Racist beliefs also reached the nadir, perhaps in part to remove "the intolerable burden of guilt for perpetrating or tolerating the most horrendous cruelties and injustices" (Fredrickson, 1971a: 283). One popular view held that blacks had degenerated as freedmen, having retrogressed to their natural shiftless and licentious state. Lynching was an unfortunate practice necessitated by the beastly, brutal black nature. Such beliefs

originated in the proslavery conception of the dual nature of blacks—childlike and docile when enslaved, but savage and criminal when free. Indeed, racist imagination at the turn of the century differed from that of the antebellum South only in its unrestrained expression.

"Social Darwinism" provided a powerful rationale for racist beliefs during the late nineteenth century.[1] The "failure" of blacks during Reconstruction, after Northern intervention on their behalf, "demonstrated" the futility of interfering with the natural forces of evolution. If blacks were a degenerating race with no future, the urgent need was to segregate them in order not to endanger or contaminate the white race (see Fredrickson, 1971a: Ch. 8; Gossett, 1963: Ch. 7).

Social Darwinism was attacked around the turn of the century by reformers and social scientists who argued for social progress based on regulation and cooperation. Because this group did not challenge some of the most basic racist assumptions, however, they had little effect on racial extremism in the South and little effect upon the development of "scientific" racism. Many "moderate" racists accepted the permanent inferiority of blacks, and most said that racial purity and the instinct of race prejudice demanded segregation. The essence of their

[1] Acceptance of the Darwinian theory of evolution at this time led to the notion of "evolving" groups and societies. The idea of varieties and species progressing to higher forms of life through a competitive process of natural selection was translated to a struggle between individual members of society and between different human groups. When applied to different races, the "survival of the fittest" could only mean the superior white race. And since the biological struggle for existence was nature's indispensable method for human progress, races should be left free to compete for the limited resources. On this basis, race theorists justified policies of neglect and repression.

argument for tolerant benevolence was that blacks, as a "child race," were naturally docile and kindly and could become useful, peaceful citizens, through white guidance and self-help. Since the Negro race was less advanced evolutionarily, the "wheels of progress" needed to be oiled by providing education, industrial training, and moral uplift. The model for racial moderates was Booker T. Washington, the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, who advocated self-help, industrial education, and black accomodation to racial segregation.

SCIENCE AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY RACIAL BELIEFS At the start of the twentieth century, racist thought was respectable among all social classes and in all sections of the country. The South, defending its efforts to disenfranchise and segregate blacks, was inundating the nation with a mass of anti-Negro literature. The North, concerned with the nation's imperialistic ventures and channeling its reformist energies into other areas, mounted no serious challenge to Southern race polices. During the first quarter of the century, sociologists, psychologists, and biologists, among others, developed a comprehensive science of race which placed a stigma of inferiority on blacks more damaging and humiliating than slavery, and from which blacks still suffer (Newby, 1965:21).

The source of racism in biology was the science of heredity, whose task it was to explain the mechanisms underlying evolution. Experiments with plant genetics and hybridization were believed to demonstrate the overwhelming importance of heredity in determining human characteristics, supporting the notion of innate black inferiority. Eugenicists warned that racial intermixture led to biological ab-

normalities, and biologists who did not accept the idea of "abnormalities" reasoned that crosses between inferior and superior races produced mediocre offspring (Gossett, 1963).

In psychology there was a parallel development in the assessment of mental and emotional differences between the races, and the development of intelligence testing, which originated in France in 1905 and developed rapidly, placed a powerful tool in the hands of racists when blacks' scores turned out to be lower than whites' on the average. Racists would argue that black inferiority was an established scientific fact.

Sociologists also contributed to scientific racism. The famous University of Chicago sociologist William I. Thomas (1904:610) maintained that race prejudice was an instinct originating in the need for group solidarity and that it would "probably never disappear completely." Others argued that differences between the races fostered a "caste feeling" and "consciousness of kind" which was strongest in the "superior" white race. Finally, Robert Park (1918) celebrated the black artistic achievements during the "Harlem renaissance" of the 1920s as an expression of the black's superior emotionalism and sensuality.

Although many of these scientists maintained a purely academic interest in the subject of race, and argued against the use of their ideas to justify discriminatory policies toward blacks, their ideas became the foundation of sophisticated inequality.

Popular writers such as Lothrop Stoddard, who felt that as a "scientific humanist" he was morally obligated to warn the nation about the perils of race, made the "new 'truths' of science concerning race available to great numbers of people" (Gossett, 1963:390), and against the backdrop of the events of this period, these "truths" gained heightened significance.

The mass migration of Southern blacks to the North during World War I had great impact. This movement caused deep resentment among the working-class members with whom blacks competed for jobs, resulting in the outbreak of several race riots in 1919. The great wave of foreign immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century made restrictive immigration legislation the chief political objective of racists in the 1920s. In the end, such events were to make the problem of black-white relations national in scope and to cause reflective people in the sciences to question the scientific truths to which racists appealed.

The scientific backing which racists had long received was finally revoked in the 1920s and 1930s. There had always been a few whites who were able to see through racism, but not until the anthropologist Franz Boas led the attack in the 1920s did the opponents of racism gain a sizeable following. Boas forcefully exposed the mass of contradictory evidence, errors of judgment, and faulty generalizations associated with studies of race, while offering his own well-reasoned cultural explanation of why races all over the world reveal diversity.

By the late 1920s, the tide had turned against racism in all the sciences. Psychologists disclosed the biases inherent in mental tests, and careful analysis of the results of these tests clearly demonstrated the powerful effects of the environment, leading to the conclusion that there was no evidence of inherent racial differences in intelligence. Among biologists, arguments against the harmful effects of mis-

cegenation gained force as did the idea that both heredity and environment collectively determine the traits of an organism. In a similar vein, sociologists shifted their emphasis from the biological, instinctive basis of human relationships to a social background, social process analysis, with the result that racial prejudice was no longer understood as an innate aversion but as a consequence of social conflict and tension (see Gossett, 1963: Ch. 16; Rose, 1968).

From these scientific developments there emerged a new enlightened perspective in white racial thinking which Fredrickson (1971a) has labeled "liberal environmentalism." The major tenet of this view is that all apparent social, cultural, and intellectual differences between the races are the product of environment.

By World War II such thinking completely dominated the fields of sociology and anthropology and was becoming increasingly influential among the liberal public. Adding force to this perspective was the growth of socialist thinking in the 1930s which recognized the harmful effects of economic and social deprivation, and the emergence of black political power as evidenced by the shift of black voters to the Democratic Party in the election of 1936 and the threatened March on Washington in 1942. During World War II, when the horrors of Nazi racism were revealed and the democratic-equalitarian ideology of the "American creed" was once again called forth, the liberal environmentalist doctrine finally triumphed as the respectable thought in intellectual and academic circles.

The importance of this triumph for race relations in America is inestimable. The new egalitarian doctrine provided the theoretical basis of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and

was influential in the legislative and court decisions that this movement produced. Moreover, it offered the first serious challenge to the most fundamental racist belief in America—that blacks are inherently inferior to whites. Although millions of Americans still associate race with character, intelligence, and human worth, blatant racist beliefs are no longer respectable, and racists have found it increasingly difficult to invoke the authority of science to support their views.[2]

Still, there are other less hopeful portents. Efforts to remove inequality are still seen as a threat to white dominance and still meet strong opposition. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Southern resistance to desegregation and Northern resistance to busing to achieve racially integrated schools have required federal intervention. Furthermore, many Americans who deny a belief in inherent racial inequality nonetheless endorse beliefs which have racist consequences. The majority of Americans now feel that blacks have been duly compensated for the injustices they suffered, that blacks are treated fairly, and that blacks themselves are to blame for the conditions in which they live (Simon,

[2] With respect to the concept of race, scientists now agree that: (1) All races belong to the same species—Homo sapiens; (2) Races are not discrete, stable units; that is, there are no "pure" races; (3) Races represent populations of people who share a common gene pool, or set of characteristics; (4) Thus, racial differences involve the relative frequency of genes, or traits, rather than absolute, mutually exclusive distinctions; and (5) Race as a scientific concept has proven useless for the analysis of most human differences. In the few instances where racial differences have been tied to different distributions of genes, such as in the analysis of blood types, the findings have underscored the adaptability and unity of mankind. For indeed, all races have demonstrated an equal potential for intelligence, an equal capacity to learn anything produced by any other race, and an equal capacity to adapt to the environment in which they live (see, for example, Osborne, 1971).

1974; Ch. 3). In addition, there is evidence of a "backlash" of prejudice among whites who are disturbed by the pace of change in race relations and who believe that current antidiscrimination policies have given blacks unfair advantages (Campbell, 1971). Such ideas reflect the latent interracial hostility that over 350 years of racism has imbued in American culture; and as long as this hostility persists among whites and manifests itself in sporadic flashes of racial violence, it will continue to threaten America's commitment to racial equality.

The Structure of White Racism: An Historical Overview

Cultural beliefs do not emerge and persist in a vacuum. White racism against blacks in America must be viewed as a changing sequence of oppressive institutional arrangements which have interacted with changing beliefs to perpetuate the disadvantaged status of blacks.

Economic Racism   Prior to the Civil War, the economic organization of the South became heavily dependent upon a large slave population. While the historical record is vague on just when slavery was first institutionalized, it is clear that by 1670 most blacks in America found themselves, and their offspring, forced into life-long servitude. Slavery became rapidly institutionalized because of the agricultural economy emerging in the South. In contrast to the North which was beginning to industrialize and urbanize by the time of the American Revolution, the South was to remain heavily agricultural, relying on the export of cotton, tobacco, hemp, rice, wheat, and sugar. While different states tended to specialize in only some of these crops, they all had one feature in common: the reliance upon an inexpensive and relatively large labor pool to cultivate large tracts of land. It is not clear whether or not slavery was the most efficient form of agricultural organization (see Fogel and Engerman, 1974; Genovese, 1965), but the shortage of labor and the abundance of land in the Southern colonies placed a high value on involuntary labor. As a result, slaves were used to initiate the plantation system, and once initiated, the system was used to "keep in line" a large and potentially revolutionary population.

The initial importation and enslavement of blacks in the seventeenth century was facilitated by the cultural beliefs which dominated precolonial America. Whether these beliefs made emerging slavery more palatable or were in fact the actual cause of slavery can never be known. But it is clear that the interaction between these beliefs and the economic imperatives of Southern agriculture of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries accelerated the pace of enslavement, while making Southern institutions highly resistant to change.

The distribution of slaves in the South reflected the economic priorities and power relations of the South (Stampp, 1956; Starobin, 1970:5). By 1860 there were about four million slaves in the South, but over 50 percent of them were owned by only 12 percent of the slaveowners who held the large tracts of fertile land which formed the base of the Southern economy. Slavery emerged and persisted largely because a small group of politically powerful landowners required cheap labor and made slavery acceptable in the agricultural sector of the economy, and then over time, in the industrial sector. Thus, by the dawn of the Civil War, every phase of the Southern

economy had come to rely upon slave labor. It is such complete institutionalization of slavery into the Southern economy, plus fear of violence by oppressed blacks, which partially accounts for the resistance of this "peculiar institution" to change (Stampp, 1956).

The abolitionist attacks on the use of slaves in the Southern economy were countered by a further codification of antebellum beliefs emphasizing the "Sambo" stereotype. Even radical abolitionists acknowledged the intellectual inferiority of blacks. Differences in the Northern and Southern belief systems no doubt reflected the respective economic dependency of the Northern and Southern economies on slave labor. There were few blacks in the North, with the result that the economies of Northern states would remain unaffected by abolition or the colonization of the black population, whereas the loss of slave labor would cause widespread disruption of the Southern economy and lifestyle.

Only a war between the states was to penetrate the culturally legitimized economic system of the South. During the brief period of "Radical Reconstruction," large numbers of blacks gained access to many skilled trades and began to assume ownership of farms. But in 1877 Congress had a change of mind in matters of race. For thirty years thereafter the economic situation of blacks worsened as they were systematically excluded from skilled nonfarm occupations and thrust into tenant farming or low-wage labor for white landholders or into menial labor and domestic work in both rural and urban areas. Such a dramatic reversal of the economic policies of Radical Reconstruction was legitimized by a limited conception of "equality," by the then dominant laissez-faire ideology and by the

Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century.

By the turn of the century, 90 percent of all blacks still resided in the South, with 75 percent living under oppressive conditions in rural areas. For a number of reasons, the plight of blacks, especially those in rural areas, worsened dramatically during the early years of this century (Hamilton, 1964): (1) The high birth rates of rural families began to exceed their ability to secure sufficient income in the depressed economy of the rural South. (2) The nature of agriculture changed dramatically with mechanization and the consequent displacement of black labor. (3) The cotton industry on which many blacks depended for survival became at first devastated by the boll weevil and then began to move to the Southwest. There were many "push" factors disposing blacks to migrate out of the South and into the urban areas of the North. By 1914, these "push factors" were combined with "pull factors" from Northern cities as the onset of World War I cut off European migrations while rapidly expanding the very industrial production which had for decades drawn European migrants to American cities. Suddenly, there were economic opportunities for blacks in Northern cities, with the result that between 1914 and 1920, nearly one million blacks migrated to urban areas in the industrial North. This migration was to be the first of a series of large-scale shifts in the black population, for by 1960 over three-fourths of the black population resided in cities, with only one-half still living in the South. Economic racism became an urban, as opposed to rural, and a national, in contrast to regional, phenomenon.

Many of the early migrants to Northern cities initially found jobs during the

peak of wartime production, but they also encountered white discrimination and violence. Blacks were commonly forced into segregated tenements which early European migrants were abandoning because of their dilapidated and unsafe condition; and when blacks ventured into white neighborhoods and into certain occupations, acts of violence frequently occurred. There were, for example, 25 "race riots" in America between June and October of 1919. With the end of wartime production and the onset of the Depression, the economic situation of blacks worsened once again. Unemployment and hunger increased, and even welfare allocations were differentially bestowed on blacks and whites (Pinkney, 1969:33–34). The New Deal ushered in some changes, but the capacity of the then incipient civil rights groups to generate change was limited. Wage and job discrimination and exclusion from unions continued until well after World War II.

World War II, like World War I, caused a massive migration to urban areas in both the North and South. As blacks became concentrated in key wartime industries in urban areas, they began to exert some political pressure, forcing President Roosevelt to ban discrimination in wartime industries and pressuring the Congress of Industrial Organizations to allow some blacks into the union ranks.

The post-World War II period has seen many "apparent" improvements in economic racism, but much of this change is illusory. Blacks are still overrepresented in farm and service occupations; they are underrepresented in professional and managerial occupations; black unemployment is typically twice that of whites; black pay scales are still lower than whites; college educated blacks, on the average, still earn only a little more than high school educated whites; and black income as a percentage of white income actually declined between 1969 and 1973. The disadvantaged position of black workers in contemporary America cannot be explained as simply a lag phenomenon. Economic discrimination remains built into America's major economic institutions.

An examination of the three most general economic channels—(1) opportunities for running a business, (2) opportunities for securing jobs and promotions in the open job market, and (3) opportunities within union job markets to find work and be promoted—reveals that even in the face of clear civil rights laws, much discrimination can be found. This present discrimination will continue to maintain the disadvantaged position of blacks for some time in the future.

Business opportunities. For many white Americans, owning and running a business has been one path to affluence. For blacks, however, this path is hazardous; and even when blacks do own businesses, they tend to be labor-intensive proprietorships which are economically marginal. There are only 50,000 black businesses in America, a figure which would reach 500,000 if blacks owned businesses in proportion to their numbers. The absolute number of black businesses appears to be declining (Brimmer, 1966). Several obstacles hinder black businesses. It is more difficult for blacks than whites to secure credit, since the criteria used by lending agencies favor those with "white credentials" such as education, current collateral, high credit ratings, and white shopping center clientele. While all small businesses are high risk ventures, there is no evidence that black businesses in ghetto neighborhoods are any more risky

than white ventures in white neighborhoods. For example, in 1964 the Small Business Administration began extending loans in terms of criteria other than credit history and collateral. Ninety-eight of 219 loans issued that year went to blacks, and, surprisingly, only 8 of all 219 loans became delinquent and none were liquidated (Foley, 1966; Knowles and Prewitt, 1969:17).

The barriers to black participation in the business sector have far-reaching consequences for the plight of blacks in other sectors of the economy. One of the most important consequences is for black Americans to become highly dependent upon employment in white-dominated organizations where, as the historical record shows, they are subject to intense discrimination. Such discrimination is reflected in the fact that since 1954 the black unemployment rate has consistently exceeded the 6 percent level which, in terms of conventional economic "wisdom," signals serious difficulties for the white work force. But equally important is the *under*employment of blacks who are able to find jobs, for as the Kerner Commission reported in 1966 figures, an additional $4.8 billion in income would be produced for blacks if their employment were upgraded to a level proportionate to whites with similar skills and credentials (Knowles and Prewitt, 1969:20).

The open job market. A number of structural forces have operated to economically oppress black Americans in the open job market. First, unskilled rural blacks migrated to the cities at just the time in America's economic development when large pools of unskilled industrial labor were decreasingly necessary. The black migrants' lack of skill was, of course, a result of *de jure* policies of

whites in the South, and the result was inevitably devastating. Secondly, just as blacks migrated to the deteriorating cores of America's cities the economic and demographic trend in America was in the direction of suburbanization. Thus, industry and commerce began to move out of the city, drawing with it the white population, at the very time that blacks were moving into the cities in search of new economic opportunities. Because of housing discrimination in the suburbs, blacks could not move with whites to the emerging suburban industries; and because mass transit systems began to deteriorate with America's growing dependency on the automobile, blacks could not easily commute to suburban jobs. Thirdly, black Americans became an industrial labor pool *after* trade and industrial unions had become organized and had begun to exclude both white and black members.

Dominant beliefs of the late nineteenth century focused attention on the character flaws of blacks who again "exposed" their inability to "take advantage of opportunities and compete successfully against whites." In turn, such beliefs could be used to systematically exclude blacks from full economic participation. In the private job market, this racism involved outright rejection of black applications for jobs in both blue- and white-collar occupations. The discriminatory practices of private business have been compounded by the policies of state and private employment agencies, as a number of studies have revealed (Turner, 1972:119).

Beyond such open racism is a subtle, and yet profoundly important, institutional racism in the job market: the biasing of criteria for what constitutes a good worker in favor of cultural traits of

whites. For example, since written tests for jobs are constructed by whites, they discriminate against those of a different cultural background. Or, to take another example, white speech styles and personal demeanor which, in reality, are seldom related to actual job performance, are considered "appropriate" in certain jobs. Even the over-use of formal educational credentials discriminates against blacks and other groups who cannot afford higher education. Thus, there is an invidious racism built into the hiring practices of American economic organizations —a racism which perpetuates the disadvantaged position of black Americans.

The government sector of the economy has been almost as discriminatory as the private job sector. One form of discrimination has been the failure of government to enforce civil rights codes even for organizations doing contract business with the government. More directly, while blacks are slightly overrepresented in government jobs, blacks are highly underrepresented in the better paying managerial positions (Pinkney, 1969:80).

The union job market. Because unions are the only avenue for entry into most skilled blue-collar jobs and many unskilled occupations, racial discrimination in this sector of the economy has profound consequences. The fact that of the over 11 million black workers, less than 20 percent are members of trade unions documents the extent of union discrimination, especially when it is recognized that the vast majority of the black work force is blue-collar.

While the general policies of national labor organizations such as the AFL and CIO are antidiscriminatory, these policies are frequently ignored by union locals. Craft and trade unions, which have the strongest local structure, are the most discriminatory, with few blacks involved in trades as plumbers, carpenters, electricians, printers, metal workers, and machinists (Schaffler et al., 1970:44). The two most prevalent strategies for discrimination against blacks are: exclusion from apprenticeship programs and extracting from economic organizations the right of the union to employ, hire, fire, and promote.

Because industrial unions such as the United Automobile Workers organize all workers on an industry-wide basis and have a strong central administration and because much of the work performed involves no apprenticeship, many blacks have been able to join industrial unions and get jobs. However, the apprenticeship programs of these industrial unions which lead to higher paying, skilled jobs are often discriminatory. Thus, even in "liberal" industrial unions where blacks are union members, they are more likely than whites to be kept at the lower-paying positions.

In sum, these obstacles represent a massive form of institutional racism. Cut off from the normal channels of economic participation, blacks are often forced to take menial and seasonal work which offers only the minimal wage and few, if any, fringe benefits. Current beliefs in America support this situation, for "equal opportunity" beliefs, coupled with widespread "backlash" attitudes, allow employers, unions, and credit agencies to discriminate because blacks do not meet *the* criteria for economic participation. Equal opportunity has thus become a belief justifying "equal" and "even handed" treatment of blacks and whites in terms of criteria which favor whites. While dominant beliefs have become less

severe and blatant, they still operate in a subtle and profound way to legitimize institutional arrangements which impede the full participation of blacks in the economy.

POLITICAL RACISM Despite the size of the black population, its capacity to generate political influence in America has been limited. The reasons for this are a reflection of historical political processes that have created a political system which is unresponsive to the plight of the poor in general and to the black in particular.

To understand just how this racism operates at both the local and national level of political organization requires, first of all, an understanding of a few historical facts:

(1) Prior to the Civil War, blacks held the right to vote or hold office in only five states (all Northern with very small black populations).

(2) In the last century, only during the brief period of Radical Reconstruction in the post-Civil War period did blacks vote and hold office in significant numbers.

(3) In the 1870s, however, Congressional commitment to Reconstruction waned, and when the presidential election of 1876 became deadlocked and was thrown into Congress, Republicans abandoned all Reconstruction in order to "buy" Southern votes. The result was for blacks to be systematically excluded from the polls, with virtually complete disenfranchisement in the South by 1895.

(4) Through a variety of tactics—from poll taxes to threats of violence—blacks in the South remained politically excluded until well into the 1960s (Daniel, 1972). Urban blacks in both the North and South had somewhat more voting power, but a number of tactics have kept large numbers of urban blacks disenfranchised, while mitigating the power of those who have participated in local and national elections.

The legacy of the political past, coupled with the present unresponsiveness of the political system to all categories of poor, limits the exercise of black power.

At the national level black powerlessness is largely a result of the long history of political disenfranchisement. This continued with strategies such as the poll tax and the "literacy test" and "constitution test" which were differentially enforced for blacks and poor whites. When these measures were declared illegal, administrative obstruction—long lines, much paper work, elaborate documentation of residents, and so forth—effectively kept blacks from registering to vote. Underlying these techniques was the frequently implemented threat of white violence.

It was not until the mid-1960s that many of these exclusionary tactics were declared unconstitutional. The removal of these roadblocks and growing black political consciousness caused racist political strategy to be shifted from denying the vote to diluting the impact of black voting power frequently by means of gerrymandering Congressional districts in order to break up the ghetto and spread its votes into two or more districts where whites could be assured of outnumbering the divided black vote. In this way, very few black congressmen have been elected to the House of Representatives, and it is only in the last decade that representation has even begun to reflect the actual proportion of blacks. In senatorial and presidential races, white votes can always

outnumber black votes, creating a situation where Congress has represented the will of whites and their interest groups—labor unions, trade associations, and large corporations.

In spite of signs of growing black power, the effects of nearly 200 years of exclusion from national politics cannot be easily undone. For example, how can new programs change the apartheid between urban and suburban areas? How can the effects of 40 years of union, employment, and business discrimination be undone as black representation becomes more proportionate? How is schooling to be made more equal in the face of rigid residential segregation and unequal tax assessments to finance schools? Only a massive financial and political commitment could eliminate the cumulative legacy of past disenfranchisement. Such a commitment, however, is unlikely because of the present structure of political decision-making in America.

Two general features typify this structure: (1) An inability to reorder national priorities, and (2) a difficulty in establishing and implementing effective national and change-oriented programs. In a *de facto* sense, the national political system is racist because it perpetuates the existing structural patterns which have for so long discriminated against black Americans.

Within the congressional branch of national government, at least four structural features preclude a reordering of priorities and the enactment of effective national legislation. First, despite "reforms" in the post-Watergate era, the election process in America will continue to be expensive, creating a situation in which elected officials are dependent upon the money of well-organized and financed interests, which are resistant to a reordering of na-

tional priorities. Secondly, Congress is also vulnerable to lobbying activities of any well-organized and financed group, regardless of whether or not it has helped finance a campaign. Labor unions, trade associations, large corporations, and departments of the executive branch (such as the Pentagon) are able to exert disproportionate influence.

A third structural feature of Congress is the seniority system which, despite some recent rule changes in the Senate, places the chair of key committees in the hands of those with the most seniority. The result is for many essential committees to be controlled by a chairperson who is from a stable constituency—typically rural with a South and Midwestern bias. A final obstacle inheres in the structure of representative government in a heterogeneous society: *any* new, expensive, change-oriented national program will threaten coalitions of interests which may have conflicts of interests among themselves, but which for any piece of comprehensive, national, and change-oriented legislation will perceive a threat to their position. For example, a national program to increase economic equality will threaten, for different reasons, the Defense Department (fear of losing money in support budget), labor unions (fear of losing jobs for current members), and business (fear of government interference in their affairs and profits). Similarly, a majority of white Americans of different backgrounds may exert influence to prevent drastic changes in priorities and to impede national programs.

The executive branch of government is subject to the same four pressures and has the power of enforcing court orders and of implementing congressional legislation, so that even if sound laws of national scope are ordered by the courts or

enacted by Congress, enforcement and effective implementation may be blocked. Again and again, laws pertaining to school desegregation, housing, discrimination, fair employment, and job and union opportunities have only been partially acted upon by the Justice Department.

Thus, in looking at the structure of national decision-making, racism is clearly evident. This racism may not be related to prejudicial attitudes and bigotry, but its consequences for the lives of black Americans are no less profound.

At the local community level, similar patterns can be observed. While federal policies do indeed affect local political patterns, community political systems have exerted a parallel but autonomous form of racism. In the rural South, the same forces—disenfranchisement, poll taxes, eligibility tests, and violence—which kept blacks out of national politics operated even more effectively at the community level, since the local white power structure could exert immediate pressure on black residents.

When the numbers of blacks in cities began to increase to a point where old gerrymandering techniques would no longer work, a large "black ward" with one representative was sometimes established, with the result that black representatives could consistently be out-voted by the larger number of white representatives from smaller white wards. Thus, black representatives have been forced to make extensive compromises with the white majority in order to help their communities. Such compromising techniques often bring justified charges of "Uncle Tomism," but equally often, there has been no choice for black representatives.

Blacks have encountered even more problems in penetrating the nonelective civil service and patronage positions of local government where much of the actual decision-making occurs. One reason is the timing of black migration into the cities. Previous generations of Europeans had used the city political machines not only to secure benefits but also as a path of upward occupational mobility. But by the time blacks began to migrate to the cities, the patronage system had become closed, or, this system had been replaced by a civil service bureaucracy dominated by educated whites. In contrast to the political machines, this bureaucracy has been less corrupt, but it became more detached from the people it serves.

With growing numbers of blacks in large cities and with greater numbers of educated blacks who can meet civil service requirements, many of the historical obstacles to black participation in city governments have been surmounted. But again, timing appears to be operating against blacks, for just as blacks have achieved some degree of political power in the large core cities of metropolitan regions, there are pressures for regional and metropolitan governments. For increasingly, many of the patronage positions formerly run at the city level—planning, health, fire, sanitation, water, and so on—appear to be assumed by regional governmental bodies, with the result that they are more likely to be dominated by white suburbanites. The end result may be another form of *de facto* racism in which whites residing in the suburbs could conceivably control the fate of large black populations living in the core cities of metropolitan areas.

To the extent that blacks cannot have proportionate political power in the cities, a potential base of power in the national political arena is undermined. For the growing significance of the cities in

federal fiscal policies—from revenue sharing to mass transit systems—could signal a period of black participation in elective and nonelective bodies in federal, state, and community governments. Yet, such participation is far from proportionate today; and it is not clear that it will become so in the near future with the likely trend toward metropolitan governance.

In the last few decades, the prominence of some black leaders gives the illusion that black political power is proportionate to its size or needs. But as is evident, opportunities are not equal, and even if they suddenly became equal, the current political system reveals little capacity to redress the institutionalization of racism in the economy and educational process.

LEGALIZED RACISM Dominant values and beliefs usually become codified into laws. And so it was with beliefs about, and acts of discrimination against, blacks in America, with the result that an intricate web of racism was drawn tighter as blacks languished in poverty. However, this gives only a partial indicator of legal racism. For underlying and often defying the law are informal discriminatory practices and many *de facto* forms of discrimination which are not formalized into law. For example, housing discrimination is currently forbidden by law, but the economically depressed situation of blacks, coupled with their isolation in ghettos, leads inevitably to widespread exclusion of blacks from white suburban housing, even if it could be assumed that no informal discrimination in the housing industry currently occurs (a most tenuous assumption). Thus, laws can allow people to affirm current "liberal" beliefs, while participating in a set of racist institutional arrangements.

What is remarkable, however, is that the legal system has openly legitimized discrimination. Much of this has come from blatantly racist legal codes, but a considerable amount stems from the failure of legislators and enforcers of the law to move against openly discriminatory practices. The legal system has legitimized discrimination by both open support of and inattention to racist arrangements in such key institutional sectors as housing, jobs, education, politics, transportation, and recreation.

It is difficult to determine whether the first blacks in America were slaves or indentured servants; the historical record is not clear on this point (Jordan, 1962). By the 1650s, however, some colonies evidenced laws distinguishing white and black servants, with blacks and their offspring consigned to servitude for life. By the early eighteenth century, the broad legal framework of slavery in the South had become clearly codified (Stampp, 1956; Starobin, 1970:7):

(1) Blacks were to be slaves for life.
(2) Slaves were *both* property and persons, with owners holding title to blacks as property, but at the same time, having some responsibilities to blacks as persons.
(3) Children would inherit their mother's status.
(4) Christian baptism did not automatically lead to freedom.
(5) Marriages between blacks and whites were prohibited.
(6) Blacks could not acquire or inherit property.
(7) Blacks could not engage in litigation or enter into civil contracts; they could not testify against whites in courts, nor could they sit on juries.

Such codes reaffirmed beliefs about the "bestiality" of slaves, and legitimized the economic imperatives of slavery by mak-

ing it appear right and proper that all whites could buy slave labor. In the North, the laws were considerably more benign, but few questioned the biological inferiority of blacks or the necessity of economic, educational, and political discrimination (Litwack, 1961:30–38). With admission of border and Southern states to the union in the early 1800s, a considerable amount of debate in Congress ensued over the "legal rights" of blacks. The coexistence of free blacks in the North and enslaved blacks in Southern and border states presented a problem of how to define the constitutional rights of blacks in the growing Union. The problem was effectively avoided in 1821 when Missouri was admitted to the Union, for Congress enacted a vague platitude which allowed the states to legislate as they pleased, while giving the appearance that no citizens "shall be excluded from the enjoyment of any of the privileges and immunities to which such citizen is entitled under the Constitution of the United States." Thereafter, until the Civil War, Northern laws were increasingly relaxed, while Southern legislatures passed ever more restrictive laws.

Abolitionist pleas for at least "humane treatment" of the "inferior race" were beginning to have a small impact on public opinion, for those states having few black residents began to accord them broader citizenship rights. However, these formal laws contradicted informal Jim Crow practices of the North which, despite the lofty tenets of formal laws, prohibited access by most blacks to jobs, education, and housing.

It appears likely that the abolitionist ideology was used *ex post facto* to justify a massive Northern invasion of the South for economic and political reasons. Nevertheless, the War abolished forever the in-

stitution of slavery, and hence, the economic base of the South. In 1866, this was formally ratified in the Thirteenth Amendment.

In reaction, Southern states began to enact "black codes" restricting the rights of the now "free" slaves. The details of these codes varied but several restrictions were common to all Southern states: (1) blacks could not vote; (2) blacks could not serve on juries; (3) they could not testify against whites; (4) they could not carry arms; (5) depending upon the state, they could not enter certain occupations; and (6) black vagrants could be consigned to forced labor. Thus, after the Civil War, the South was unified in its attempts to impose new legal restrictions upon blacks.

In reaction to this and to Andrew Johnson's conciliatory approach, Radical Republicans in Congress began to assume control of Reconstruction. The Radicals in Congress assumed a two-front legal attack on racism in the South: (1) the division of the South into military districts and the enforcement of new constitutional conventions on each Southern state; and (2) the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments which were ratified by Northern and reconstituted Southern states in 1868 and 1870, respectively. The Fourteenth Amendment was an extension of an earlier Civil Rights Act (vetoed by Johnson, and then overridden by Congress) which was designed to overrule the emerging "black codes." The Fifteenth Amendment extended suffrage to blacks. Reforms in the South were soon followed by the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which outlawed Northern "Jim Crow" practices.

In this way, Congress forced the South, and to a lesser extent, the North, to accept black participation in key institu-

tional sectors. Had Radical Reconstruction been continued over several generations, institutional racism in America would have been markedly reduced. However, by 1880, the Radical Republicans had lost control of Congress and the presidency. In the 1890s, the Supreme Court legitimized the reemergence of Jim Crow practices. First, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act of 1875, thus condoning the denial of blacks' access to public conveyances and amusement facilities used by whites. Then, in 1896, the court ruled that segregated facilities for blacks and whites were not in violation of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution since, as the court declared: "If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution cannot put them on the same plane" (Pinkney, 1969:28).

Codifying exclusionary and segregationist practices in the highest laws of the land gave added support to the culture and structure of racism in America. Exclusion and segregation in housing, recreation, and transportation was easily extended informally to jobs and politics.

It was with this *national* legal legacy that black Americans entered the twentieth century. During this period, blacks became increasingly urban. But in the North, a myriad of discriminatory laws were to prevent black integration into white institutions and black participation in American affluence. Such laws were not considered illegal or immoral by many, as they were legitimized by the highest court in the land and reflected the post-Civil War belief that blacks had been given a chance and had demonstrated their inferiority. Even when these decisions were subsequently reversed, informal practices of discrimination in

housing, jobs, education, and other spheres were to persist. It is against not only the formal legal barriers but also the informal climate of discrimination created by the long tenure of these legal barriers and dominant beliefs that black Americans have fought in the twentieth century. This fight has been primarily against discriminatory laws in housing, jobs, politics, and education—the key institutional sectors blocking equal participation for blacks.

Legal barriers in attaining equal housing have had profound consequences for black Americans, since place of residence determines, to a very great extent, their access to jobs and schools. Housing discrimination in America has involved a complex pattern of *de facto* and *de jure* processes which periodically have become codified into law.

In this cultural and legal milieu, the first black migrants to Northern cities were forced not only by their meager resources, but also by threats of white violence and landlord policies, into the decaying cores of the cities. While the wartime industries of World War I provided many jobs, and while the geographical concentration of cities allowed easy access from the ghetto to work, a *pattern* of residential isolation of blacks had been initiated. This pattern was often formalized in communities by restrictive covenants which forbade integrated neighborhoods. During the 1930s, when economic opportunities vanished in the North and elsewhere, black migration to the cities waned. Yet, it is during this period that the federal government enacted highly discriminatory legislation which was to forge the current profile of urban America.

The most significant piece of legisla-

tion was the federal act creating the Federal Housing Authority and the FHA mortgage loan guarantee program. White Americans were enabled to purchase single family dwellings in the growing suburbs of large cities. So, in the post-World War II period, FHA (and the related VA) mortgage guarantee program stimulated the rapid flight of white Americans from the cities to the suburbs. Black Americans, however, were prevented from joining whites by the explicitly discriminatory administrative rules of the law. From 1950 to 1962, when President Kennedy finally issued an executive order to the contrary, the practice of providing FHA and VA loan guarantees primarily to white neighborhoods continued. Even after 1962, FHA policy was "ineffectively integrationist."

Industry and commerce began to follow the population to the suburbs; and eventually, industry began to pull residents out of the cities as assembly line production with its need for large tracts of land came to dominate sectors of the economy. As industry and workers moved out of the city, commerce and service industries followed. Some blacks could commute out to these jobs; but as mass transit services in America began to deteriorate in the post-World War II period, commuting became even more difficult. At the same time, the tax base for financing city schools vanished, with the result that schools with heavy concentrations of black students languished for lack of financial resources. Furthermore, large suburban communities began to exert enormous political power in metropolitan and state-wide governmental bodies. Thus, urban-suburban segregation, as created by FHA law, has had profound consequences for blocking the

black American's access to jobs, quality schools, and political power, and has forced blacks to live in urban squalor.

To cope with this squalor, other federal laws have been enacted, but they have not eliminated slum conditions, and, more importantly, they have exacerbated patterns of segregation. One of the key legislative acts of the New Deal initiated Public Housing which, by 1937, had acquired the social purpose of eliminating substandard housing. Unfortunately, changes in the law in the late 1930s turned Public Housing project administration over to the cities, with the result that housing projects were built in existing slum areas, thereby perpetuating black confinement to the core city. Urban renewal was another major attempt to revitalize slum areas to restore the decaying downtown areas of cities and to attract middle-class suburbanites back to the city. But the result of the program was to destroy slum housing and force the poor into Public Housing projects where few wished to live. Model Cities programs have done little better, because they do not attack the basic problem —urban-suburban segregation.

A recent Supreme Court decision has made even more difficult the breakdown of urban-suburban apartheid. In 1973 the Supreme Court ruled that suburban communities do have zoning control over patterns of land use in their communities. The result of this ruling is to allow local suburban governments to alter the zoning of land tracts in a way designed to keep public housing or federally subsidized home ownership programs for blacks out of the suburbs—thus perpetuating urban-suburban apartheid. Such "zoning-out" techniques have been common practices for a number of years, as

was the case in Milpitas, California, where the land for a union's black housing tract was suddenly rezoned "nonresidential," or as occurred in Deerfield, Illinois, where the land for an integrated housing project was condemned for park use. The recent Supreme Court ruling thus legitimizes these racist housing policies in much the same way as earlier Supreme Court rulings legitimized Jim Crow laws.

Important civil rights legislation of the 1960s has been ineffective in counteracting discrimination because: (1) It often goes unenforced since the civil rights division of the Justice Department is understaffed and underfinanced; and (2) It places the burden of litigation on the *individual* against whom discrimination has occurred—a personally and financially arduous process.

More fundamentally, it does not attack the problem—the need for *mass* migration of blacks to the suburbs (or vice versa). Of course, any such mass policy will encounter resistance of local communities which, under the 1973 Supreme Court ruling, can zone-out government-sponsored housing for blacks. One of the racist ironies of housing laws is that from the mid-1930s until the mid-1960s, whites were given mortgage subsidies (or welfare) by FHA and VA to move out into the suburbs en masse, whereas current laws prevent a similar mass exodus of blacks. Moreover, current Supreme Court rulings prevent massive federal programs of integration of blacks into suburban life, forcing integration of the suburbs to occur on a slow, individual by individual basis. Thus, current housing laws promote racism in housing. These laws further allow Americans to affirm "equal opportunity" beliefs which, in the context of housing, explain blacks' ab-

sence from the suburbs as a result of their failure to avail themselves of "equal" educational and economic opportunities that would allow them to buy a house there.

Legalization of discrimination in other institutional spheres has been prevalent, even without the exacerbating impact of residential segregation. In the economy, as already noted, discriminatory practices have blocked black occupational achievement. These practices were tacitly condoned by the absence of laws to the contrary, primarily because the Supreme Court decisions of the last century suspending the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments' rights of blacks created a legal climate of racism. In the 1930s, some of the discriminatory practices were eliminated under political pressure, but it was not until after World War II that clear and enforceable antidiscriminatory laws were enacted. Even these laws were not federal; some states such as New York enacted a tough Fair Employment Practices Law in 1945, but others failed to enact any antidiscriminatory laws whatsoever. In fact, it was only a little over a decade ago—just one year short of 100 years since the Civil War—that a strong Civil Rights Act on job discrimination was passed by Congress. While some enforcement and voluntary compliance to this law is now in evidence, much informal and illegal discrimination occurs. Furthermore, current fair employment laws do not significantly address the question of how to correct and compensate for over a century of legalized job discrimination.

In education, a similar form of legal neglect allowed segregation of blacks and whites in unequal schools. Such segregation was compounded by the fact that there were few federal education laws,

especially compulsory education codes; these matters were left to the states, with many states only recently enacting compulsory education laws. Thus, not only were blacks segregated by law, they were not even required by law to come to school, and, in fact, the laws often worked to discourage black school attendance.

Only with the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing *de jure* segregation of schools (the question of *de facto* segregation has yet to be completely resolved) did the federal government legally intervene in school system activities. As the post-1954 record reveals, even this Supreme Court decision has proven difficult to enforce. Just recently, in 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that only deliberate attempts to gerrymander school districts in metropolitan regions in order to achieve segregation came under the 1954 ruling. Since urban-suburban apartheid is so well institutionalized (by past *de jure* policies), this latest ruling is likely to forestall any future school integration within metropolitan regions. The irony is that *de jure* policies in one sector of the society (housing) have now become legally defined as a *de facto* situation in another sector (education)—a subtle form of legal racism which, coupled with legal inattention to the racism built into the internal structure of American schools themselves, will perpetuate the racist profile of American education.

In the political arena, similar legal inattention to informal and formal practices of black disenfranchisement and exclusion has existed. In fact, only in the late 1950s and 1960s was a significant legal assault made to give blacks full-fledged political rights. The Voting Rights Act of the 1960s was critical because it made illegal many of the tactics designed to keep blacks unregistered and hence disenfranchised. Somewhat earlier, the Supreme Court in its famous "one man, one vote" ruling struck a blow against blatant gerrymandering of Congressional districts along racial lines. But these laws and court decisions are now only a little over a decade old.

In sum, through existing statutes and statutory omissions, law legitimizes existing arrangements in a society. In the United States, a complex pattern of legitimization has occurred, but its overall profile is clear: Up until the last decades, laws tended to be explicitly racist in housing. In the political arena, state laws were indirectly racist by allowing differential enforcement of the supposedly universal voter eligibility requirements for blacks and whites, while the absence of federal laws sustained racist practices in the area of voter registration and political exclusion. In the job market, laws were racist by virtue of their absence in securing the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment rights for black Americans. In education, legal uninvolvement allowed for local discriminatory laws and informal practices to prevail; and in all institutional spheres, current congressional acts and Supreme Court decisions consistently encounter resistance as they seek to change prevailing institutional arrangements. Thus, legal neglect and inattention to the rights of blacks, as well as direct legal discrimination, have helped create institutions and living patterns in America that will not easily be legislated away.

There are several reasons for this impotency of current laws: (a) Institutions do not change easily because they embody the beliefs and traditional actions of the majority. (b) The laws are not always enforced because of meager en-

forcement resources. (c) The laws themselves do not always address the problem of past inequities, thrusting the burden of change on individual blacks who have now suddenly been given "equal opportunity." And so, current laws allow white Americans to reaffirm egalitarian values, while at the same time to avoid significantly altering the structural arrangements which violate these values.

Institutional Racism: An Overview

From our brief analysis, it is clear that racism in America involves complex, reciprocal relationships between cultural beliefs and social structural arrangements. While many idiosyncratic prejudices and discriminatory acts among individuals can be observed, the plight of any minority is best explained by the ways attitudes become crystallized into society-wide beliefs and by the patterning of discrimination in key institutional sectors of the society.

In this cursory analysis of white racism against blacks, we have endeavored to portray the present historical record from this unified viewpoint: Racism is an institutional force built into the dominant beliefs and structures of American society. While the specific historical beliefs and structural arrangements oppressing other minorities will differ somewhat from those evident in the case of black Americans, the institutionalization of oppression will still remain the most conspicuous feature of their plight. By exploring the reciprocal relations between cultural beliefs and social structures for Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Cubans, and Orientals, a picture of oppression will be evident at some, or as is the case with blacks, at *all*, periods of their history in America.

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