



Voices From the Movement

Approaches to Multiraciality

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Not long ago, I spotted the latest issue of *Newsweek* on the newsstand and felt my stomach tie into knots. The cover was intriguing—a photograph made of 20 smaller photos of faces that vary dramatically in skin tone and facial feature and which, presumably, belong to people who are “African American.” Across the cover and the faces stood the question, “WHAT COLOR IS BLACK? Science, Politics, and Racial Identity.” Oh-oh, I said to myself. What are they going to say about multiraciality *this time*?

It seems like I’ve been experiencing this a lot lately; and not just on days when Sally Jessy Raphaël or Oprah talk to interracial couples or multiracial people, but every time I see a magazine or newspaper article on the U.S. Census, or the “scientific” aspects of race, or the changing ethnic demographics of America. My first reaction is always to worry that, again, we will be portrayed either as the final hope for assimilation

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(e.g., *Time* magazine's special issue, Fall 1993, on "The New Face of America") or as an evil force set out to destroy the gains made by people of color (Wright, 1994).

After this initial overreaction, I sometimes find that the topics of intermarriage and racially mixed people have been discussed fairly and with complexity, and that multiraciality was not used to bolster a particular political agenda. But sometimes I do not. The *Newsweek* issue, for example, places (strategically, I suspect) articles on the scientific and social meanings of race, the "one-drop rule," and biracialism alongside an article calling for "The End of Affirmative Action," featuring a large photo of an interracial couple asking to be judged by the quality of their work.

The dialogue on people of mixed race has recently been thrust into the arena of America's dominant cultural institutions and ideology. Beyond being a standard on television talk shows, issues of race mixture have now gained entry into the world of "legitimate" news and commentary such as *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and *Newsweek*.

This "mainstreaming" of multiraciality has developed alongside discussion of such critical and explosive racial/ethnic issues as affirmative action, multicultural education, welfare, immigration policy, and the "bell curve."

Concern over what role racially mixed people and the "multiracial movement" will play, and how they will be "played" in the larger race debates, has prompted me, along with many others, to think carefully about what it is that we are participating in. The following chapter grew out of my consideration of this issue, with the conclusion that our best hope and our biggest challenge lie in listening closely to all of the "voices" in the dialogue on multiraciality. Ⓐ

In the past 10 years or so, the United States has seen the growth of what many are calling a mixed-race "movement." This refers to the emergence of community organizations, campus groups, magazines and newsletters, academic research and writing, university courses, creative expression, and political activism—all created and done by mixed-race individuals and members of interracial families, with the purpose of voicing their own experiences, opinions, issues, and interests.

Within the mixed-race movement, as in any social movement, there are differing perspectives on and approaches to the various issues. How both to conceptualize and to assert an identity as a multiracial person in America are tasks not easily agreed upon. And, as in any social movement,

sometimes the differences cause tension. In examining the ideologies expressed in the dialogue on multiraciality, I have identified the following three approaches, or "voices" as dominating the discourse:

1. The struggle for inclusion and legitimacy in the "traditional" racial/ethnic communities
2. The shaping of a shared identity and common agenda among racially mixed people into a new multiracial community
3. The struggle to dismantle dominant racial ideology and group boundaries and to create connections across communities into a community of humanity

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss each of these approaches to and perspectives on multiraciality and to consider the ideological and practical issues and conflicts that have occurred or might occur between them. I will make the argument that each is legitimate, and in fact, central to the movement itself, and I will attempt to demonstrate how the three voices can be viewed as dimensions rather than divisions, both of the movement and of the experience of multiraciality. Finally, I will suggest that as dimensions, the three voices not only can peacefully coexist, but they can function to serve as a system of "checks and balances" in order to avoid what many consider to be potential dangers of the mixed-race movement (Daniel, 1992a; Njeri, 1991; Pagnozzi, 1991; Spencer, 1994; Thornton, 1992; Wright, 1994).

Before I begin to discuss the dominant voices of the mixed-race movement, I must mention that not everyone who expresses his or her experiences with multiraciality considers him- or herself to be part of the multiracial movement. But I believe that any discussion of the mixed-race experience that takes place today occurs within the context of the larger dialogue on multiraciality and both is affected by and affects this dialogue. Thus I am considering all of these individual expressions to be part of the dialogue on multiraciality, and, in this way, part of the mixed-race movement.

A PATTERN OF VOICES: THREE APPROACHES WITHIN "THE MOVEMENT"

Certain themes and issues seem to be central to the experiences of multiraciality, across racial/ethnic mix, geographical location, and time

period; for example, locating one's racial/ethnic identity in various contexts and at different life stages, being pressured to "choose" a monoracial identification by external forces, and questions and issues of group belongingness and loyalty (Anzaldúa, 1987; Chang, 1956; Far, 1909; Funderburg, 1994; C. C. I. Hall, 1992; Kich, 1992; Larsen, 1928/1986b; Root, 1994a; Tamagawa, 1932). Perhaps these can be considered parts of a "core" of the mixed-race experience, or perhaps simply a mixed-race version of the core of the human experience. But although there are important commonalities to being racially mixed in America, how individuals approach their multiraciality can vary dramatically—from person to person, and within a single person over time and place.

Within today's dialogue on mixed race, three dominant voices inform us on how to approach multiraciality. On the one hand, there is considerable overlap between the voices, to the point that many of us (myself included) subscribe to all three simultaneously. On the other hand, certain ideological incongruities exist, at least on the surface, that require sorting out. In order to begin this task, I want first to establish what the ideologies are.

The Struggle for Inclusion and Legitimacy in the Traditional Racial/Ethnic Communities

The struggle by mixed-race people for inclusion and legitimacy in the traditional racial/ethnic communities can take many different shapes; from people who want all of their racial/ethnic communities to accept mixed-race people as full members without erasing the differences of a multiracial experience, to people who want a specific racial/ethnic community to accept them as full members, without making issue of their multiracial background. Perhaps the most extreme form of the latter position would be to avoid the multiracial dialogue by "passing" as monoracial. But many people of mixed race, at least those whose parents are racially different from each other, are not willing or able to actively hide their heritage, and so they will very likely be forced to participate in the dialogue at some level—even if to say, "Well yes, my father is Irish, but I really identify as a Chicana" (Streeter, Chapter 19, this volume).

The struggle for inclusion and legitimacy in the traditional racial/ethnic communities can be expressed explicitly; this has occurred in many

Asian American communities, where mixed-race people have recently become active in demanding recognition and legitimacy (Fulbeck, 1994; Houston, 1991; King & DaCosta, Chapter 14, this volume). But more often the desire is expressed less explicitly, by exhibiting on the individual level one's ability to "fit in" to a community, thus "proving" that one's multiraciality does not preclude racial/ethnic authenticity.

One of the ways that racially mixed people might attempt to persuade others to believe in their authenticity is by the "badges" that they wear, such as clothing, hairstyle, speech patterns, mannerisms, name, and so on. Phil Tajitsu Nash, a man of Japanese/European American heritage, legally changed his middle name to his mother's Japanese maiden name when he was writing for Asian American newspapers (Lee, 1991-1992). Valur Edvardsson, who is Icelandic and African American, felt that he had to alter his speech and his behavior in order to prove his legitimacy among other African Americans (Funderburg, 1994). Norma Elena Soto (1994), a woman of Chinese, Mexican, Spanish, and French heritage, wondered which of her badges she might need on a given day in her poem, "Woman of Color":

But, should someone
see my white skin and
question my credentials,
how would I prove my qualifications?
I could smile
to slant my eyes,
speak Spanish and disclose
my Hispanic name . . .
maybe pick up an accent
and start bowing a lot. (pp. 5-6)

We also "prove" our racial/ethnic legitimacy through our associations with people—friends, lovers (Twine, Chapter 18, this volume), and even family members. Many of the multiracial people interviewed by Lise Funderburg (1994) discussed their awareness that their choice of friends, especially in their school years, made an enormous impact on how legitimate African Americans perceived them to be. Funderburg herself, who is European and African American, has discussed how people will automatically "dismiss" her because she looks "white"

and is married to a European American man (Jefferson, 1994). Several years ago, when I won a scholarship from a Japanese American organization, I was happy and relieved when my Grandma Nakashima volunteered to accompany me to meet the sponsoring family at their home, because I knew that her presence would testify to my "Japaneseness."

Similarly, the desire for inclusion in a racial/ethnic community can be expressed by which badges and which associations we choose not to call attention to; so that a mixed-race male college student might hesitate to hug a white female friend in the company of an African American female friend (Courtney, 1995), or a mixed-race actress, trying out for an "Asian" role, might wear a wig to hide her very curly hair (McCunn, 1988). Some multiracial people are critical of this process of proving their authenticity, even as they participate in it. Kip Fulbeck (1994), a Chinese/European American artist, wrote in "anger and frustration" of how mixed-race Asian Americans "come in bright-eyed and hopeful to a place that could be home and find we have to change our names or adopt Asian ones to pass on paper" (p. 8).

Another way for mixed-race people to struggle for inclusion and legitimacy in the traditional racial/ethnic communities is by proving their knowledge of and attachment to the culture, history, and/or political interests of that group. Velina Hasu Houston (1991) has argued that Amerasians like herself, who have a parent who is directly from Asia, are "more richly grounded in Asian culture and custom" than many of the "pure-blooded" Asian Americans who define themselves as "real" Asians whereas mixed-race people are not (pp. 54-55). As Larene LaSonde, who is African American, Russian, Jewish, Scot-Irish and Cherokee, said, among other African Americans, "My politics had to be better than anybody else's, [and] my ethics had to be in place because I was never trusted. I had to be surer of my facts than anybody else" (quoted in Funderburg, 1994, page 334). The mixed-race writer Lisa Jones (1994b) recently took this method one step further in the African American magazine *Essence*, presenting her European American Jewish mother's knowledge and commitment to African American historical, cultural, and political issues.

The ways that mixed-race people struggle for inclusion and legitimacy vary, both by what kind of inclusion and legitimacy each individual wants from a community and by what each racial/ethnic community requires of the individual (Root, 1994a, pp. 465-466). In many Asian American communities, physical appearance plays a very impor-

tant role in the level of acceptance a mixed-race person experiences. Also, having an Asian surname, which suggests patrilineal Asian heredity, seems to be an advantage. In many Latino communities, where racial phenotype varies greatly, language is considered an important indicator of legitimacy. In the African American community, which also claims a wide range of physical types, a person's lifestyle and cultural behavior are given considerable weight. Each of these communities' criteria for belonging have arisen out of specific historical, cultural, and political contexts and continue to change as conditions change (King & DaCosta, Chapter 14, this volume).

I have purposefully avoided, until now, the situation of mixed-race people struggling for inclusion and legitimacy in the European American "community" because of the complexity of comparing the dominant society with nondominant racial/ethnic groups. The desire for inclusion and legitimacy in the dominant society is wrapped up in issues of power, access to resources, standards of beauty, and so on—something that monoracial people of color experience similarly to mixed-race people. There is probably an important distinction between the kind of legitimacy sought by a mixed-race person with European American family ties, compared to a person of color without those connections, but I have not explored this issue enough to consider it here.

In the case of mixed-race people who are struggling for legitimacy in a specific European American ethnic group, (e.g., the Italian American community), issues of belonging are more like those of the racial/ethnic groups that we have been looking at—for example, language, cultural behavior, name, and certainly physical appearance. Physical appearance is perhaps the most important badge of whiteness in contemporary society, although heredity (i.e., the one-drop rule) is still significant (Omi & Winant, 1986).

The Shaping of a Shared Identity and Common Agenda Among Racially Mixed People Into a New Multiracial Community

The developing of a mixed-race community is what people generally envision when they talk about "the multiracial movement." The theory underlying this approach is that the experience of being racially/ethnically mixed has enough common themes to make people of mixed-race a meaningful reference group (Weisman, Chapter 10, this volume).

There are two "sites" where mixed racial/ethnic community building generally takes place:

1. Within a specific racial/ethnic community or communities (e.g., organizations that have been geared to specific racial/ethnic "mixtures," such as African/European American or Asian/non-Asian American, and their specific set of issues)
2. Across racial/ethnic communities with the goal of pan-multiracialism (e.g., organizations, such as the Association for Multiethnic Americans [AMEA], which unite around the more general issues of racially mixed people)

It could be argued that the first kind of mixed-race community building, which takes place within a specific racial/ethnic community, is ideologically and strategically located somewhere between the first and second voices because of the importance that it puts on the traditional racial/ethnic communities.

One of the more obvious expressions of mixed-race community building is, as I mentioned above, the many organizations that have formed across the country for interracial families and racially mixed individuals (Brown & Douglass, Chapter 20, this volume). Most of these groups function primarily as social and support groups, publishing newsletters that provide resources and information for mixed-race families (e.g. lists of children's books with positive multiracial characters). But some of the multiracial organizations have been formed with the goal of mobilizing around a common political need or issue, such as racial classification or Amerasian immigration and resettlement (Brown & Douglass, Chapter 20, this volume).

Another overt example of community building is the existence of magazines—namely, *Interrace*, *New People*, and *Biracial Child*—that feature articles by and about interracial couples, mixed-race children, families with transracially adopted children, and multiracial adults. *Interrace* presents articles that speak to a mixed-race "community" on issues such as "Best and Worst Cities for Interracial Couples, Families and Multiracial People to Live," (Grosz, 1993) and "Popular Myths About Interracial Couples" (Mills, 1992). The magazine regularly features celebrities who are either involved in an interracial relationship or who are racially mixed themselves, in very much the same way that the traditional racial/ethnic communities feature their "own" celebrities.

A very recent phenomenon that reflects the growth of the idea of a multiracial community is the existence of books and films on the mixed-race experience, published and produced for a popular audience. There have been at least two anthologies of writings by people of mixed heritage in the past few years (Camper, 1994; Glancy & Truesdale, 1994). In each of these books, the introduction talks about the common themes, experiences, and yearnings of the writers, who, while culturally diverse, share a status as mixed. There has also been a deluge of nonfictional storytelling by people who are multiracial (Alexander, 1991; Haizlip, 1994; Jones, 1994a; Khanga, 1993; McAuliffe, 1994; Nunez, 1995; Scales-Trent, 1995; See, 1995; Williams, 1995). These personal histories, although perhaps not explicitly asserting a desire to build a mixed-race community, are certainly written and published in the context of the growing dialogue on multiraciality, and thus they reflect the idea that the mixed-race experience is both common enough and special enough to warrant published accounts.

Similarly, Funderburg's (1994) book, *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk About Race and Identity*, presents to the public the experiences and opinions of an impressive number of mixed-race people, all of whom are African/European American (although several mention additional race/ethnicities as well). She organized the book by topics but allowed her interviewees to speak for themselves, which highlights both the similarities and the differences within the mixed-race experience. Funderburg also acknowledged the mixed-race movement and asked the interviewees questions specifically on the issue of a multiracial community. The answers she received varied from

For me, the same way black people have a sisterhood or a brotherhood, that's something that I felt toward this mixed guy who worked at the same restaurant I did—that we had this connection just because of who we were. (p. 319)

to

I don't feel the compulsion to join (an organization), even though I like finding people with whom I share that background. (p. 341)

to

Start a little club? No, I don't think so. What do they do? Does everybody just sit around? (p. 321)

But regardless of the range of opinions and experiences within the book, its very existence expresses and contributes to some feeling of community between mixed-race people. Consider the quote by Mindy Thompson Fullilove, M.D., on the book jacket:

At last, the voices of my kind. Those of us who match each other but not our relatives, who live in a one-person demilitarized zone, who create a patchwork of self out of mismatched bits of group hate and individual love. At last to hear in these voices the first echo of my life. At last to be among, rather than between. This book is for us, and all who love us. Parents, friends, teachers, students—read and know us.

In academia, there has also been a recent explosion in interest on multiraciality (in this volume: Twine, Chapter 18; Williams et al., Chapter 22). Although scholarly research has historically treated people of mixed race as a population for the purpose of study, there tends to be a much greater level of sophistication in more recent research, extending the idea of a mixed-race population beyond the simple facts of heredity to encompass the common themes of the multiracial experience. This is reflected in Root's (1992b) edited volume, *Racially Mixed People in America*, and in Zack's (1995a) edited volume *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*. It is also the basis for many contemporary university courses on multiraciality (Williams et al., Chapter 22, this volume). For example, in a course on people of mixed race, literature that is normally looked at in the context of a traditional racial/ethnic group's literature might be viewed alongside other works by people of mixed race—such as Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929/1986a) and *Quick-sand* (1928/1986b) with Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and Diana Chang's *Frontiers of Love* (1956).

**The Struggle to Dismantle Dominant Racial Ideology
and Group Boundaries and to Create Connections
Across Communities Into a Community of Humanity**

The third approach to multiraciality is perhaps the most difficult to define because it comes in the greatest variety of forms. The central

ideology is that binary thinking and the boundaries that it facilitates must be destroyed in order to destroy oppressions based on race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and so on (in this volume: Graham, Chapter 3; Wardle, Chapter 23). Mixed-race people, who do not completely "fit in" to any of the racial/ethnic groups but who frequently have ties to more than one, should use their neither/both positionality to resist and destroy the dominant racial/ethnic structure—to be, as Weisman (Chapter 10, this volume) calls it, "supraracial."

This ideology is clearly articulated in Zack's concept of *deracination*, which is aimed at mixed-race people but can hypothetically be adopted by anyone. Deracination refers to an "antirace" racial identity, similar to having no religious affiliation. As Zack (1992) put it,

The concept of race is an oppressive cultural invention and convention, and I refuse to have anything to do with it. . . . Therefore I have no racial affiliation and will accept no racial designations. If more people joined me in refusing to play the unfair game of race, fewer injustices based on the concept of race would be perpetrated. (p. 9)

Although deracination might seem exotic, it is essentially the same as the philosophies on race that are expressed in certain religious theologies, such as that of the Baha'i; and in the frequent testimonies of mixed-race people whose parents told them to write in "human race" rather than to check any of the race/ethnicity boxes (Funderburg, 1994; Weisman, Chapter 10, this volume).

The other dimension to resisting racial ideology is the proactive building of connections and communication across racial/ethnic groups. Seeing mixed-race people as a "bridge" between cultures has been a common theme, both in recent discussions of people of mixed race (Kingston, 1989; Sperber, 1991) and in creative expression by people of mixed race. In an essay entitled, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," published in 1909, writer Sui Sin Far discussed, among other things, her role as a "defender" of the Chinese in America. Her essay concluded, "I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant 'connecting link.' And that's all" (p. 132). European/Native American writers Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris (1991) made a similar statement about what they refer to as "the lost tribe of mixed

bloods": "As the hooks and eyes that connect one core to the other we have our roles to play. 'Caught between two worlds,' is the way we're often characterized, but I'd put it differently. We are the *catch*" (pp. 123-124). At Stanford University, a group largely composed of people of mixed race formed a group called Cross Cultures that "focuses on uniting students of different cultures in a comfortable, nonthreatening atmosphere" ("Stanford Group," 1994, p. 16).

Since the late 1960s, American society has toyed with the idea of people of mixed race as the "children of the future." In the past decade, multiculturalism, which places a high value on a society's diversity, has made the valuing of a mixed-race person's "microdiversity" (Zack, 1995a) all the more obvious (Weisman, Chapter 10, this volume). At the same time, the ideas of *multiple positionalities* and *transgressing boundaries*, which have come out of postmodern and deconstructionist dialogues on culture, have functioned to shift the emphasis away from the disadvantaged and "marginal" aspects of being neither/both to the advantaged and liminal aspects (Weisman, Chapter 10, this volume). Mixed-race people are viewed as a form of the "citizen of the world" model, along with others who are transnational, multilingual, multicultural, transgendered, and so on; they move back and forth across the various borders, existing above the limitations of having only one culture or language or government or gender. The titles of two recent conferences at the University of California, Berkeley—"Displacing Borders" and "Boundaries in Question"—give an idea of how multiracial people are being resituated by the contemporary intellectual community.

Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) developed the idea of the border crosser in her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. She described a "mestiza consciousness" that tolerates contradictions and ambiguities:

That focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. That third element is a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness. (pp. 79-80)

Anzaldúa's mestiza is anyone who defies categories—racial/ethnic, gender, sexual, or national. Similarly, Judy Scales-Trent wrote about her

experiences as a "white black woman," and about how, although her mixed-race heritage makes her "different" from so many others, her difference has revealed the similarities between herself and so many others. Scales-Trent (1990) wondered

why the system of dualism is so important: What is there about a continuum that is unsatisfying? frightening? . . . It is this system of rigid dualism that fosters so much anxiety when people don't fit into the categories neatly, when people "transgress boundaries." (p. 324)

Exposing the fallacy of race and group boundaries is something that multiracial people frequently engage in, perhaps especially those who have positive relationships with family members who are racially different from each other. At a panel discussion on the future of the African American community, one mixed-race panelist surprised the audience by shifting the discussion away from issues such as media images of African Americans and the development of black-owned businesses to a consideration of the experiences that we, as humans, share across race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality—experiences such as birth, death, love, hate, fear, sex, illness, family. The panelist made the point that although the categories we "belong to" shape our lives in important ways, we also belong to the human experience, and what is essential about the human experience is also important.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES, DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: DISSENT IN THE MOVEMENT?

Should [biracial people] unite to carve out a separate territory on the racial map? The very idea draws criticism from myriad corners: from Blacks . . . from Whites . . . and from biracial people who simply want to exist in one camp or the other without fanfare, or who have decided, because of their experience, that all ideas of race are fallacious. (Funderburg, 1994, pp. 321-322)

The mixed-race movement, as well as mixed-race individuals, is sometimes accused of sending out mixed messages about race and ethnicity. For example, do mixed-race people think that they are "like"

people in the traditional racial/ethnic groups, or that they are different from them? Do they think that race is important, or that it is not important? These are questions that are asked of multiracial people not only by monoracial people, but by other multiracial people, and by themselves. I will now discuss some of the points of contention that can and do occur between the three dominant voices in the dialogue on multiraciality.

Many mixed-race people who assert a monoracial identity are suspicious of the motivations behind asserting a multiracial identity and worry about the potential damage that the movement might have on a specific racial/ethnic community (Funderburg, 1994; Jones, 1994a). Some feel threatened by the idea of a mixed-race identity and community, because an emphasis on what is common among mixed people might be interpreted as an emphasis on what is different between themselves and those who are "full-blooded." As one of Funderburg's (1994) interviewees said about the mixed-race movement:

Somebody said "mixed" once, as in a race separate from Blacks and Whites. I was just like, "Excuse me? We have enough races as it is. . . . I have no desire to be put on a little pedestal . . . I don't need any more separation in my life. (pp. 320-321)

Also, mixed-race people who identify with one of their racial/ethnic communities to the exclusion of other communities have said that the mixed-race movement holds a bias toward identifying as multiracial and pathologizes those who do not identify this way (Chuan, 1993; Funderburg, 1994, p. 323; Jones, 1994a). Chuan referred to "interracial populism" and criticized *Interrace* magazine as "clearly not designed to encourage either dialogue or self-determination—on the contrary, it is trying to tell interracial people what they can and can't be" (p. 93). Similarly, Jones (1994a) critiques those who she calls the "interracial/biracial nationalists," and asks "Is there now to be a biracial party line to tow and a biracial lifestyle to upkeep?" (p. 59).

On the other hand, people involved in the building of a sense of community among racially mixed people have criticized those who struggle for acceptance in a traditional group for being "beggars," for being disloyal to family members, and for being dishonest about their

heredity. Jamoo (1993), a writer who has contributed regularly to *Interrace*, posed the question of whether or not mixed-race celebrities who "pass" as monoracial should be publicly "outed" so that they can serve as role models for the multiracial community. He concluded that they should not be outed, but:

It saddens me that the "closet" mixed-race people in Hollywood and elsewhere feel a need to pass as white to be accepted or that Pebbles has to pretend to be a black girl so she can sell more records. I guess they made their choices just as I made mine, the only difference is that I know I made the right one. (p. 83)

In this way, those who "deny" their multiraciality are held in suspicion very much as those who assert their multiraciality have always been.

Coming from the perspective that racial ideology is inherently oppressive and should be rejected in its entirety, the idea of mixed race is seen as a perpetuation and reification of something completely lacking in value. The use of *race* as a word and a concept is offensive in and of itself, and the desire for a multiracial community and identity is a dangerous step toward creating another racial and ethnic category, similar to the "Coloureds" of South Africa (Chuan, 1993; Spencer, 1994; Wright, 1994). In terms of postmodern thought, there is a concern with what is called the "elevation of hybridity"; in the context of race and ethnicity, that multiracials as a group are currently being culturally constructed and that they will not only join the other "groups" with their own set of boundaries and limitations, but that they might become the new ideal against which others will be degraded and oppressed. This concern was reflected in a keynote lecture given by a professor at a recent conference on cultural studies. The professor highlighted her point that scholarly fields such as women's and ethnic studies are problematic in their essentialism by disclosing that there has even been mention of creating a new field of multiracial studies.

If those who emphasize the destruction of racial categories find fault with the idea of a multiracial community, they also worry about those people of mixed race who struggle for inclusion in a traditional group. To them, this struggle is nothing more than an attempt to participate in a system that will inevitably oppress and degrade them. The only

worthwhile struggle is against race itself—as Rainier Spencer (1994) said, both the attempt to create a mixed-race classification and the adherence to hypodescent function to validate the “racial fantasy” and the “racial fallacy” that imprisons this society.

The response to these claims, both by those who emphasize a monoracial identity and by those who employ a multiracial identity, is that although dismantling the racial schema is, indeed, a nice idea, racial ideology is a central feature of our society and that exalting the struggle to dismantle it is impractical, utopian, and, as one of Funderburg's (1994) interviewees stated it, “cheesey” (p. 328; see Weisman, Chapter 10, this volume). Association of Multiracial Americans (AMEA) has said, “It might be argued that racial and ethnic classifications should be done away with entirely. But such a view is utopian and also distorts the reality of continuing communal divisions based on race and ethnicity” (Spencer, 1994, p. 22). In addition, critics of the “citizen of the world” approach point out that there is considerable real value to the ties that people have to their communit(ies), so the danger of destroying group boundaries is that we will destroy what is inside these boundaries, too.

Finally, many multiracial people feel that the assertion that mixed-race people are models of multiculturalism or bridges between groups is an unrealistic and unfair expectation and that it threatens to erase the significance of race and racial oppression in this society. It also contributes to a resentment toward multiracial people and the mixed-race movement by drawing attention away from persisting inequality and focusing instead on the feel-good idea of a raceless or color-blind future.

Perhaps the most concrete expression of the ideological differences that exist between the three voices of multiraciality involves the struggle to reform racial classification (i.e., the U.S. Census). The various racial classification models that have been proposed and the debates surrounding these models are both symptomatic and symbolic of the ideological and strategic differences that we have considered (in this volume: Fernández, Chapter 2; Graham, Chapter 3; Ramirez, Chapter 4). Whether mixed-race people should continue to check “just one” racial category, should demand the right to identify multiracially, or should refuse to participate in racial classification at all is a debate that has come to dominate the mixed-race movement (Mills, 1993; Spencer, 1994; Wright, 1994).

COMMON GROUND: POSSIBILITIES FOR AN INTEGRATED VOICE

Now that I have established the dominant three approaches to multiraciality and the ideological and practical conflicts that can and do grow out of differences between the approaches, I will argue that, as with the various races, there is nothing immutable that separates the voices from each other. In fact, each of the approaches is central to the experience of multiraciality, and many racially mixed people subscribe to all three simultaneously. Rather than viewing the three voices as ideological divisions in the mixed-race movement, they should be viewed as ideological dimensions of the movement.

The task, then, is to work on the construction of an integrated voice. This is not to say that diverse perspectives, on multiraciality or any other topic, is a thing to be overcome. Rather, the process of looking for a perspective that leaves room for diversity within is an exercise in *cognitive flexibility* (Kich, Chapter 16, this volume) and general tolerance. Also, in looking for a multiracial identity that allows for a variety of approaches, I believe that we might come across what lies at the heart of the multiracial movement.

The following is my attempt to construct a multiracial voice that integrates the three approaches discussed in this chapter: The ties that we have to our racial/ethnic communities matter to us, and we have the right to claim them and to have full access to them. But, we have other ties too, and the fact that we have multiple ties creates experiences that connect us to others who have multiple ties, contemporarily and historically, in the United States and abroad. This experience of having multiple ties simultaneously leads us to question group boundaries and to reject these boundaries as oppressive and false.

In viewing the voices as dimensions of a unified perspective, I want to consider the possibility that there is an element of process to the dimensions (Kich, 1992). *Perhaps people of mixed race shift their emphasis from one approach to another, in response to changes in their environment* (which can be related to age and development), and as they either find that certain of their needs have been met or have remained unmet by a specific approach. For example, a person who is biracial Japanese/European American might first explore his or her multiraciality in

terms of his or her membership in the Japanese American community. Then, upon feeling secure in this identification, he or she may begin to recognize and explore the commonalities between people of all racial/ ethnic mixtures. Through this exploration, he or she might learn that the concept of race is entirely dishonest and oppressive. At this point, he or she might begin to emphasize the task of "transgressing boundaries."

Although I believe that the processual movement through the voices would often occur in the order given in the example above—the emphasis first on the traditional communities, next on the multiracial community, and finally on a community of humanity—I can easily imagine the process operating in other orders. The process of movement through the dimensions is unlikely to be linear or with an ending point. But the dimensions are fluid to the extent that changing life circumstances can shift an individual's emphasis from one to another without signifying any core ideological change.

Implications of an Integrated Voice

Besides being an exercise in cognitive flexibility and tolerance, the integration of the three dominant voices in the dialogue on multiraciality has the potential to affect our work in multiple ways. Keeping in mind that each of the voices is valid and "normal" and that people of mixed race can identify with all three simultaneously can affect:

1. our research on and analysis of racially mixed people;
2. our agendas as activists in the multiracial movement; and
3. our understanding of ourselves and our needs as people of multiple communities and cultures.

A recognition of the centrality of all three voices might also serve as a system of checks and balances in order to avoid the potential "nightmares" (Wright, 1994) of the multiracial movement. By listening to the questions and the critiques that we pose to each other—Isn't the concept of mixed race an acceptance of the concept of race? Isn't a monoracial identification an internalization of the "one drop rule"? Do mixed race people have enough in common, experientially and culturally, to make "multiracial" a meaningful identity? Can a person of color survive in

America without a racial identity? What are the effects of multiracial identification on communities of color?—we can remain vigilant in steering the dialogue and the movement in the direction of destroying racial oppression.

In Chapter 10 of this volume, Weisman asks the question, "Is the identity "multiracial" a step in that direction, or a step toward the entrenchment of those racial categories that already exist? The answer that she gives is that it is both: Identification with other multiracial people can transcend and thus challenge traditional boundaries, but there is the danger of creating a whole new set of boundaries around what is multiracial and what is not.

In my opinion, we need to take "multiracial" in the direction of *supraracial*, without jeopardizing our communities of color and without giving up the connections that add value to our lives. Our best chance of achieving this is to enlist a variety of perspectives on what it is to be racially mixed in America. For many, being racially mixed means building connections between ourselves and our traditional communities. For many, it means building connections between people who are multiracial. For many, it means building connections with others on the basis of shared humanity. And for many, it means all of these things. Whether we are constructing a model of multiracial identity or a model of racial classification, we should recognize and reflect the diversity of voices that make up the multiracial movement.

The Multiracial Experience

Racial Borders as the New Frontier

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