From Negro to Black to African American: The Power of Names and Naming

BEN L. MARTIN

In a December 1988 news conference at Chicago's Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, where leaders of seventy-five black groups met to discuss a new national black agenda, Jesse Jackson announced that members of their race preferred to be called "African-American." The campaign he then led to replace the term "black" met immediate success among African American opinion makers and more gradual acceptance in the national press. Jackson's cultural offensive proposed an ethnic reference for a racial one, aiming thereby to help create as much as express a sense of ethnic identity among black Americans. It recalled the successful imposition of "black" over "Negro" twenty years earlier and renewed other themes of the Black Power movement of the late 1960s.

Names can be more than tags; they can convey powerful imagery. So naming — proposing, imposing, and accepting names — can be a political exercise. And the call for blacks to be called African Americans was for more than a manner of speaking. "To be called African-Americans has cultural integrity," Jackson said. "It puts us in our proper historical context. Every ethnic group in this country has a reference to some land base, some historical cultural base. African-Americans have hit that level of cultural maturity. There are Armenian-Americans and Jewish-Americans and Arab-Americans and Italian-Americans; and with a degree of accepted and reasonable pride, they connect their heritage to their mother country and where they are now."[1]

[1] "Leaders Say Blacks Want To Be Called 'African-Americans,'" Associated Press, 21 December 1988, PM cycle.

BEN L. MARTIN teaches politics at the University of Missouri–Kansas City.

REVIVING BLACK POWER PLURALISM

Jesse Jackson's proposal to conceive race relations as multiethnic pluralism was not entirely new. He himself called for ethnic consciousness twenty years earlier: "The other American ethnic groups . . . maintain their national styles, live in the same neighborhoods, visit the old country, have ethnic holidays. The continuity between the roots and the fruits of those ethnic groups remains. But the continuity between our root in Africa and our fruit in America has been broken. . . ."[2] As the civil rights ideal of individual integration was being displaced by Black Power separatism, there was a brief period when Black Power advocates explained it as conventional pressure-group tactics. From May 1966 to January 1967, Stokely Carmichael paradoxically combined a rejection of American institutions with an appeal to interest group pluralism before progressing to advocacy of armed struggle.[3]

In the group model of politics, public policy is the result of competition among organized interests in the political arena.[4] Individuals' interests are represented in group activity, and the primary function of government is distribution (or redistribution) of rewards for successful group competitors. The contemporary welfare state is generally responsive to ethnic claims because of elites' commitment to the values of democracy, self-determination, egalitarianism, antiracism, and, increasingly, cultural pluralism.[5] Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan described the apparent ease with which modern government uses ethnic categories as a basis for distributing its rewards.[6]

The phrase "Black Power" had been used by Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Adam Clayton Powell in earlier decades, but apart from racial assertiveness and rejection of assimilative integration, the slogan revived by Stokely Carmichael in 1966 never had an agreed precise meaning for its advocates.[7] NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins consistently condemned it as anti-white separatism, and Martin Luther King said the phrase "falls on the ear as racism in reverse."[8] King called instead for the sharing of power with white people, and this benign interpre-

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[2] "Identity Crisis," *Newsweek*, 30 June 1969, 26.

[3] Donald McCormack, "Stokely Carmichael and Pan-Africanism: Back to Black Power," *Journal of Politics* 35 (May 1973): 388.

[4] Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government* (San Antonio, Tex.: Principia Press, 1949), 208–209; David B. Truman, *The Governmental Process*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1971), 502.

[5] Ulf Bjorklund, "Ethnicity and the Welfare State," *International Social Science Journal* 39 (February 1987): 26.

[6] Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 10.

[7] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 209; Herbert H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954–1970* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 58; Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, "The Meanings of Black Power: A Comparison of White and Black Interpretations of a Political Slogan," *American Political Science Review* 64 (June 1970): 367–368.

[8] M.S. Handler, "Wilkins Says Black Power Leads Only to Black Death," *New York Times*, 6 July 1966; Gene Roberts, "Dr. King Declares Rights Movement is Close to a Split," *New York Times*, 9 July 1966.

tation of Black Power was accepted by most moderate white and black elites in the next two years.

Along with Stokely Carmichael in his brief pluralist period, Charles Hamilton codified this view of Black Power as pressure group tactics in the accepted tradition of the American political process, as well as a positive attempt to instill a sense of identity and pride in black people.[9] Carmichael and Hamilton rejected individual assimilation and integration as self-deceptive exploitation; only after group mobilization and assertion could blacks as a group demand their rightful share, a place at the table, and at that level of group interaction join (confront) whites. "Black people have not suffered as individuals but as members of a group; therefore, their liberation lies in group action."[10] Political strategy aimed then at developing a power base for a relatively autonomous black community rather than achieving civil rights for individuals or encouraging interracial contacts. Black Power leaders insisted that institutions serving blacks should be directed and staffed by blacks.[11] In black areas, it meant black control, and "where Negroes lack a majority, Black Power means proper representation and sharing of control."[12]

By 1967 white liberals were already accepting Black Power rejection of the traditional civil rights values of color blindness and assimilation.[13] They were willing to call separatism — as local control and assertion of black identity — a prelude to larger integration in a multicultural pluralist society and credit demands for redistribution as legitimate claims in interest group politics. By 1968, most federal policy elites, black elected officials, civil rights leaders, and influential media accepted Hamilton's interest group interpretation of black power as both reasonable and well within the framework of traditional American ethnic interest politics.[14]

Whitney M. Young, Jr. of the National Urban League criticized early Black Power extremism but endorsed the nonviolent, nonrevolutionary version that "emphasizes self-determination, pride, self-respect, and participation and control of one's destiny and community affairs."[15] Presidential candidate Richard Nixon explained that "what most militants want is not separation, but to be included in . . . to have a share of the wealth, and a piece of the action."[16] And the young Jesse Jackson — though he refused to criticize the Black Panthers — also employed this moderately separatist version of Black Power, calling for racial pride and redistribution. "It's nation time," he called to the national Black Political Convention

[9] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage, 1967); Charles V. Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 April 1968, 22ff.

[10] Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, 53–54.

[11] Paul E. Peterson, "Organizational Imperatives and Ideological Change," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 14 (June 1979): 475.

[12] Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want," *New York Review of Books*, 22 September 1966, 5.

[13] Gene Roberts, "A White Liberal Shift on Integration," *New York Times*, 17 December 1967.

[14] Robert C. Smith, "Black Power and the Transformation from Protest to Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (Fall 1981): 439.

[15] Earl Caldwell, "Young Embraces Black Power Idea," *New York Times*, 7 July 1968.

[16] "Nixon Urges 'Black Ownership' to Help Solve Racial Problems," *New York Times*, 26 April 1968.

in 1972. "Cut us in or cut us out."[17] Nearly twenty years later, his call for African Americans to be considered an ethnic group revived that pluralist imagery — along with other Black Power themes — in a 1980s political setting more crowded with claimants for status and benefits.

REASSERTING MORAL PRIMACY

The expansion in the scope of government in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s provoked a parallel growth in pressure groups formed around the new government programs. Many of these groups adopted the black model of organization, mobilization, media management, and lobbying as well as civil rights imagery (victimization by the majority, access denied, legitimate aspirations, pressing needs) to demand government benefits and preferences.[18] Between 1966 and 1972 many black interest organizations formed to take advantage of the new race-conscious definition of integration as group inclusion rather than individual access.[19]

One reason for the "new ethnicity" of the early 1980s was the "impetus to organize in order to get what the state is distributing — and to prevent others from getting it."[20] Many made claims as victims of society or of government, if possible. Native Americans won compensation for government seizure of tribal lands in the last century.[21] Affirmative action benefits were extended to several categories of claimants. Resentful members of white ethnic groups were less likely to reject the rush to redress history than to complain that their ancestors too had suffered discrimination. The Civil Liberties Act of 1988 provided reparations for some 60,000 survivors of the World War II removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans.

In part, the late-1988 announcement of African American ethnicity was a reassertion of the primacy of black moral claims on American society. In the election that year, Jesse Jackson spoke often of the political debt owed him and his constituency because of the votes they brought to the party; but after figuring only slightly in the election, that claim to political entitlement had to be set upon something more fundamental. After the demoralizing November vote, when the outcome of electoral democracy proved unsatisfactory, black leaders (especially unelected ones) sought to reassert the alternative model of pluralist democracy in which group interests are legitimate and group demands credited without careful regard to electoral strength.

When politics is viewed as the interaction of groups rather than individuals, the status of group leaders is enhanced, but at the same time the success of an ethnic organization and its leaders in a welfare state tends to be assessed primarily

[17] Jesse Jackson speech at the National Black Political Convention, Gary, Indiana, March 1972, broadcast in "Eyes on the Prize II," part 5, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 12 February 1990.

[18] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 288.

[19] Smith, "Black Power," 436.

[20] William Petersen, "Concepts of Ethnicity" in Stephen Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 240.

[21] Nathan Glazer, "Ethnicity — North, South, West," *Commentary*, May 1982, 74.

in terms of the recognition and concessions it can wring from the state.[22] "There are few things more valuable in the competition for government largess than the clearly perceived status of victim," and blacks have benefited from the widely held perception that their demands on the political system are a fundamental test of its fairness.[23] In the late 1960s, those demands were backed sometimes by more or less open threats of violence, but in recent years they have relied more on shame and guilt than fear. The call for recognition of an African American ethnicity restated the black claim to primacy among groups deserving redress from American society because of the special experience of slavery.

RESEARCHING AFRICAN ROOTS

The campaign for renewal of an African heritage recalled earlier searches among black intellectuals for African cultural achievements and survivals in the black diaspora, as well as disputes in the late 1960s over the meaning of blackness. Subsaharan Africa — like northwestern Europe for long periods — was isolated physically from the core areas in which the great early civilizations (developing metallurgy, writing, agriculture, and cities) maintained indirect contact with each other in an arc from Spain and Morocco to China.[24] Since there is no evidence of indigenous written languages among the hundreds of different societies appearing and disappearing over centuries across the vast heterogeneous area south of the Sahara, written records are few; and early histories relied on explorers' accounts and anthropological discoveries to describe nearly static traditional cultures.

> Attempts to reinterpret this data began with anticolonial propaganda by African nationalists in alliance with Africans of the diaspora and radical Europeans. . . . Nationalist propagandists pointed to evidence of major empires . . . in the tradition of the golden remote past of heroic ancestors . . . and asserted that there was a basic unity of all African cultures that had long historical roots reaching back to a common source. . . ."[25]

French-speaking black intellectuals in the 1940s launched a search for *negritude* to refute the idea that Africa had made no great contributions to world civilization. At one extreme, to show the African as inherently gifted technically, writers held that black Africans first invented most of the achievements of civilization, from mathematics, arts, and science to writing, engineering, and architecture.[26]

[22] R. Fox, C. Aull, and L. Cimino, "Ethnic Nationalism and the Welfare State" in C. Keyes, ed., *Ethnic Change* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 206.

[23] Glenn C. Loury, "The Moral Quandry of the Black Community," *Public Interest* 79 (Spring 1985): 20.

[24] Paul Bohannan and Philip Curtin, *Africa and Africans*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1971), 226–227.

[25] J. F. Ade Ajayi and E. J. Alagoa, "Black Africa: The Historian's Perspective," *Daedalus* 103 (Spring 1974): 128.

[26] Cheikh-Anta Diop, *Nations Negres et Culture* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1954), 253.

But advocates of *negritude* also relied on the concept of cultural relativity to stress the validity of African cultural forms in their own right, though nontechnological.[27]

Black American elites have been drawn to similar themes, which incorporate resentment at colonialists' and slavers' despoilation as well as whites' distortion of the African heritage. In his *Autobiography*, Malcolm X presented Elijah Muhammad's white devil legend, which Malcolm later repudiated: "You are of a race of . . . ancient civilizations, and riches in gold and kings. You don't even know your true family name. . . . You have been cut off by the devil white man from all true knowledge of your own kind. You have been a victim of the evil of the devil white man ever since he murdered and raped and stole from your native land in the seeds of your forefathers. . . ."[28] Jesse Jackson holds that Jesus Christ was of African descent[29] and that "historians have distorted history by ignoring the African roots of Western civilization."[30] When black leaders call for renewed awareness of African history, they evoke as well these themes of exploitation and entitlement. Jackson said that slavery alienated black Americans from their African roots, and "today, the descendants of the slave-masters discourage any real study of ties between Africa and America."[31]

Creating "in the community an aroused and continuing Black consciousness that will provide the basis for political strength" was a major part of the Black Power movement, necessary because "from birth, Black people are told a set of lies about themselves."[32] The 1989 cultural offensive to build an African American identity renewed the attack on that lingering false consciousness embedded in a social structure of racial oppression. *Boston Globe* writer Derrick Z. Jackson welcomed the new phrase, because "it is a tribute to ourselves that we have sought to restore our cultural umbilical cord in the face of the persistence of white America to drum inferiority into us."[33]

Though references to African heritage have been common since even before the Black Power movement and were renewed in 1989, detailed descriptions of African survivals among contemporary black Americans are rare. One reason may be that although most of the Africans brought to North America were captured in upcountry tribal wars and raids within 500 miles of the West African coast before being sold to one of the major slave-marketing tribes — the Fanti, Ashanti, Yoruba, Dahomey, or Benin — which then traded the slaves to Europeans, the captives came

[27] Abiola Irele, "Negritude — Literature and Ideology," *Journal of Modern African Studies* (1965): 514; Edna Steeves, "Negritude and the Noble Savage," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11 (March 1973): 91–104.

[28] Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove, 1964), 161.

[29] United Press International, Chicago, 24 December 1988, BC cycle.

[30] Itabari Njeri, "What's In a Name? African-American is the Accurate Ethnic Label of the Past and the Future, Black Leaders Say," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 January 1989.

[31] "Jesse Jackson Gains Backers," *New York Times*, 12 January 1989.

[32] Carmichael, "What We Want," 6.

[33] Derrick Z. Jackson, "Term 'African-American' Has a Long and Honorable History," *Kansas City Times*, 23 January 1989.

from many ethnically distinct tribes.[34] Validating a "concrete" survival requires data on exact African origins, which is not usually available.[35] And so more scholarly claims have been made for abstract elements of West African cultures surviving for a time among slaves in America than for more tangible carry-overs.[36] Among the traits of contemporary Afro-Americans said to be African retentions are an emphasis on the spoken rather than the written word, "incessant African rhythms that came to the vocabulary of music with the concept of beat,"[37] a "riff-style flexibility and an open disposition toward the vernacular,"[38] emphasis on the "non-verbal, i.e., the non-conceptual,"[39] and some food staples like black-eye peas, okra, and yams.[40] The thinness of the empirical base for a powerful sense of ethnic identity may explain why the African cultural heritage is described far less often than it is evoked.

Jesse Jackson said "every ethnic group in this country has a reference to some land base, some historical, cultural base. African-Americans have hit that level of cultural maturity."[41] But black Americans are not tied to a specific homeland by an identifiable culture, language, church, history, or by family traditions like Greeks, Jews, Irish, Italians, or Armenians. Few American blacks know from which African state, ancient or modern, their ancestors came. Most, except for a few intellectuals, feel little affinity for or loyalty toward any country other than the United States.[42]

Declining the African American label, Phillip Gay argues that the descendants of Africans brought to the United States have long since created a unique culture virtually unrelated to Africa. Its elements include: "a distinctly Black American cuisine of low-cost edibles more indigenous to Europe and the New World than to Africa, a distinctly Black American patois firmly rooted in the English language, relatively distinct Black American patterns of familial organization and . . . religious practices grounded in Christianity, a non-African religion." Gay observes that "the overwhelming majority of black Americans are at least six or seven generations culturally removed from Africa. They speak no African language. . . . They have no relatives in Africa, and they have never themselves been to

[34] Donald L. Wiedner, *A History of Africa* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 55–70; Russell Warren Howe, *Black Africa* (New York: Walker, 1966), I: 98–107.

[35] Gerald Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion, Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 174.

[36] Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976), 285ff; R. L. Watson, "American Scholars and the Continuity of African Culture in the United States," *Journal of Negro History* 63 (Fall 1978): 384.

[37] Molefi Kete Asante, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 192.

[38] Albert Murray, "African Culture and Black Identity," *Current* 121 (September 1970): 27.

[39] Julius Lester, *Look Out, Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama!* (New York: Dial Press, 1968).

[40] Alene Barnes-Harden, "Cross-Cultural Understanding Among Peoples of African Descent," *Journal of Black Studies* 15 (September 1984): 35.

[41] John Camper, "Jackson: I'll Push Economic Boycotts," *Chicago Tribune*, 20 December 1988.

[42] Kenneth Longmyer, "Black American Demands," *Foreign Policy* 60 (Fall 1985): 7.

Africa."[43] The term African American can provide then only an artificial sense of homeland or nationality, for Africa is not a nation but a huge heterogeneous continent.

Of course, nationalisms are inherently more or less artificial, based on "invented traditions . . . establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or group membership, real or artificial communities," including sometimes "an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity."[44] If a nation is an "imagined political community" to which an "image of antiquity" is central,[45] nationalism is a "past-oriented group identification emphasizing origins" or belief in common descent which "if not readily demonstrable, may be shored up by myths or a partly fictitious history."[46] The "new ethnicity" of the 1970s often focused less on original immigrant cultures than on the "reconstructed ethnicity" of later generations' adaptations to the American environment.[47]

The elusiveness of tangible African ties may not matter then, if the purpose of the African American cultural offensive was less to discover discrete African sources of cultural unity than to create a stronger sense of group identity. One common function of ethnic leadership is "the codification of idioms: the selection of signals for identity and the assertion of value for these cultural diacritica. . . . [A] great amount of attention may be paid to the revival of select traditional culture traits, and to the establishment of historical traditions to justify and glorify the idioms and the identity."[48] The scarcity of traceable ties to Africa does underscore the political nature of the campaign for African American in the test of credulity it poses, though that campaign has not attempted the open intimidation of the demands for Black twenty years earlier.

RAISING RACE/LOWERING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Until the late 1960s, black was an insult for many Negroes, and the nationalist/separatists' campaign for the term posed a test for conformity for both Negroes and whites. In addition to imposing new language on whites, it aimed at black mobilization and self-assertion. Black was starkly confrontational and militant, and imposing it on Negroes forced them not only to accept but to embrace there-

[43] Phillip T. Gay, "A Vote Against Use of 'African-American,'" *Los Angeles Times*, 2 April 1989.

[44] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 7, 9.

[45] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 15, 47.

[46] Anya Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 24–25.

[47] Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 51, 60; Micaela di Leonardo, *The Varieties of Ethnic Experience* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), 134.

[48] F. Barth, "Introduction" in F. Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 35.

tofore undesirable racial qualities. This is the power of naming, and the public success and private partial failure of the idea that black is beautiful illustrate both the reach and limitations of the 1960s separatists' cultural revolution. After twenty years, tension between lighter- and darker-skinned blacks still surfaces sometimes, and standards of beauty have still not been dominated uniformly by an African ideal.

Jesse Jackson now rejects the term black because it is inaccurate: "Black does not describe our situation. In my household there are seven people and none of us have the same complexion. We are of African American heritage."[49] Now in another test of the power of naming, black leaders have proposed another nearly artificial, mostly symbolic attribute — African heritage — instead of blackness as the key to group identity. Such "invented traditions" often are "unspecific and vague as to the nature of the values, rights and obligations of the group membership they inculcate."[50] Africanness as essence is no more carefully defined than blackness. But the function of relabeling is clear: to strengthen group loyalty by renewing a sense of differences from and grievances toward outsiders. "Labeling, from within or without, of particular populations as somehow different from the majority, and of their members as genealogically related to one another . . . is crucial to the construction of ethnicity," and "labeling [them] a community confers upon it a hoped-for alliance of interests, solidity, tradition."[51] A sense of identity is built by contrasting oneself with others, and relabeling urges upon African Americans newly "contrastive" roles and representations that have a "separating function" within society.[52]

Creating myths of shared origins and destinies is an important part of ethnogenesis — the process whereby ethnic groups come into being[53] — especially "the autochthonous myths of human origin from a given sacred place . . . [which] buttress a conviction that one's group arrived 'here' from elsewhere."[54] Black leaders refer to Africa to raise racial consciousness and redefine it as ethnic identity. "Revivalist movements and legends of ordeal are an affirmation of the state of affairs that existed before a traumatic defeat which has marked a people," and "in claiming group origin prior to defeat or degradation, the individual is asserting that defeat is temporary and one must create a new dignity by re-establishing the status that was disturbed."[55] "We are not descended from slaves, nor up from slavery," Jesse

[49] Bob Merrifield, "Jackson Urges American Blacks to Rediscover Ties to Africa," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 December 1988.

[50] Hobsbawm, *Invention of Tradition*, 10.

[51] di Leonardo, *Varieties of Ethnic Experience*, 22–23, 134.

[52] George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, "Ethnicity: Vessel of Meaning and Emblem of Contrast," in George De Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross, eds., *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 368.

[53] Lester Singer, "Ethnogenesis and Negro-Americans Today," *Social Research* 29 (Winter 1962): 419–432.

[54] De Vos and Romanucci-Ross, "Ethnicity," 364.

[55] Ibid., 366.

Jackson told African American activists in April 1989, "but rather Africans who were enslaved."[56] Africa appealed to militant blacks in the 1960s and earlier for the same reasons — "a pristine paradise which could be as glorious as the imagination could make it. One could become a Pan-Africanist and find respite in contemplating one's supposed descent from splendid African nobility rather than from despised American slaves."[57]

The African American campaign to raise race consciousness by redefining it as ethnicity resembles, but is not exactly the same as, white ethnics' remanufacturing ethnic feeling because their original cultures have been so eroded by generations of adaptation to the American setting. For one thing, blacks' collective self-confidence and sense of soul and of racial differences from whites are more robust than ever, though black leaders may fear decay. For another, the campaign for African American stresses African over American and sets the two apart and against each other more than the other "hyphenated ethnicities," which stress the compatibility of their slightly mixed loyalties. "Africans in America" would probably be the first choice of most people leading the campaign for African American. Of the combination American names, only the African American is as negative as it is positive, an accusatory reminder of past wrongs and pending debts. Only the African American is loaded with political resentment — an implicit indictment and demand for restitution. Not even descendants of late-arriving immigrants are free from racial debt. As Orlando Patterson put it, "If the present descendants of postemancipation immigrants wish to be relieved of the moral burden of slavery, they had better stop cheering on the Fourth of July."[58]

The call for African American seeks to renew group solidarity by recreating a sense of shared disadvantage that can mute class and other differences among blacks. It recalls the antibourgeois animus of the Black Power movement that rejected middle-class civil rights organizations committed to integration like the NAACP and the National Urban League. Black was given political content and reserved for "Black brothers and sisters who are emancipating themselves," while Negro was applied contemptuously to those "still in Whitey's bag and who still speak and think of themselves as Negroes."[59] Within little more than a year of Stokely Carmichael's calls for Black Power in mid-1966, young blacks — especially in the urban North — stopped using Negro, except in ridicule. Black was associated with youth, unity, militancy, and pride, while Negro increasingly connoted middle age, complacency, and the status quo. Among nationally prominent blacks, only Roy Wilkins and Bayard Rustin consistently condemned the Black Power radicals' anti-white racism and separatism. Martin Luther King and Wilkins were heckled and denounced for using Negro,[60] though the 1967 Southern Christian Leader-

[56] "Jackson Speech," *Kansas City Star*, 23 April 1989.

[57] Jennifer Jordan, "Cultural Nationalism in the 1960s: Politics and Poetry" in Adolph Reed, Jr., ed., *Race, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 34.

[58] Orlando Patterson, "Toward A Study of Black America," *Dissent*, Fall 1989, 485.

[59] Lerone Bennett, Jr., "What's in a Name?" *Ebony*, November 1967, 46.

[60] John Leo, "Militants Object to 'Negro' Usage," *New York Times*, 26 February 1968.

ship Conference (SCLC) convention joined in the black consciousness drive with "Black is beautiful" placards and frequent mention of *negritude* and Afro-American unity.[61] Pressure came also from Black Muslims and earlier from Malcolm X, who referred routinely to the "so-called Negro."

The Black Power movement condemned racial assimilation and the embourgeoisement of upwardly mobile blacks as self-denial and shame. It demanded cultivation and celebration of racial differences before allowing the possibility of peaceful coexistence between races at the group level to be negotiated by black leaders. Black Power rejected color blindness at the individual level as cultural suicide, demanding race consciousness as self-acceptance. Mixing race, class, and culture, radicals condemned middle-class blacks committed to integration as traitors to the community and to their own true selves. "To be 'integrated' it was necessary to deny one's heritage, one's own culture, to be ashamed of one's Black skin, thick lips and kinky hair."[62] "Black SNCC [Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] workers who had white friends or who were too light-skinned or too imbued with 'white' cultural values became targets for criticism. . . ."[63] Before mounting a racial revolution against whites, Black Power advocates posed a class and cultural confrontation against middle-class blacks to force on them the Black Power definition of group identity.

In that antibourgeois cultural offensive of the late 1960s, middle-class Negroes were required to adopt cultural values of lower-class urban blacks as marks of racial loyalty. "Black Power, as an ideology, resonated with the values and life styles of ghetto dwellers."[64] Rap Brown urged black college students to "identify with the brothers in the street."[65] Emphasizing racial unity, the Black Power movement sought to collapse class differences, and by early 1968 there was increasing evidence that middle-class Negroes were conforming by identifying more with the black community.[66]

By the summer of 1968, black was displacing Negro in the pages of *Ebony*, though Afro-American appeared occasionally as well. While a few staunch integrationists like Roy Wilkins insisted on Negro, many moderates — like Whitney Young and Ralph Bunche — adopted both terms; and most white liberals — like New York Mayor John Lindsay — switched to black by 1968.[67] By October, when James Brown's "Say It Loud — I'm Black and I'm Proud" made the Top Ten hit list, black was well on its way to becoming the preferred term in major media and polite society.[68] Radical white organizations — like the National Student Association in 1967 — were the

[61] Gene Roberts, "Dr. King Stresses Pride in His Race," *New York Times*, 19 August 1967.

[62] Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power Defines It," 80.

[63] Carson, *In Struggle*, 238.

[64] Peterson, "Organizational Imperatives," 470.

[65] Carson, *In Struggle*, 252.

[66] Roger Beardwood, "The New Negro Mood," *Fortune*, January 1968, 151.

[67] John Leo, "Militants Object to 'Negro' Usage," *New York Times*, 26 February 1968.

[68] Clarence Page, "African American or Black? Pride Comes with Label," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 December 1988.

first to endorse Black Power imagery and vocabulary, but presidential candidate Nixon used the term in his campaign and pledged in his inaugural speech to make freedom real for both black and white. Depending on the ideological setting, saying Negro continued to be socially acceptable for whites in public for several more years, and it was not until the early 1970s that the term disappeared from the national press.

The Negro mass public yielded to black elite leadership for the new term only gradually — more gradually than white opinion makers yielded, in most cases. In June 1968, 69 percent of Negroes favored Negro compared to less than 6 percent choosing black; in fact, 15 percent picked Afro-American as the best name then.[69] A *Newsweek* poll in 1969 found twice as many Negroes still favored that name as those who chose black; in fact, as many still favored colored as made black their first choice as late as 1969.[70] It was not until 1974 that polls found solid majorities of blacks finally accepting elite usage in names.[71]

The twenty-year effort of black leaders to build racial unity succeeded also in overcoming class differences on most issues; the social and political attitudes of higher- and lower-status blacks vary little.[72] Moreover, that conformity has been achieved at the lowest social denominator; middle-class blacks have identified with lower-status blacks and share a sense of grievance and entitlement. Upper-status blacks have accepted a Black Power-defined political community of all social classes, including a set of beliefs and a mood of protest shared with lower-status segments.[73]

National black elites have tended to portray blacks as uniformly disadvantaged in socioeconomic status, contributing to stereotyping as poor, uneducated, unemployed, and dependent, despite a large majority living above the poverty line.[74] Jesse Jackson's assessment in 1988 was normal: "These are very tough times for black people no matter who you are and how well you are doing."[75] This identification of blacks with the poor has been accepted by blacks and whites as well, to a lesser extent. Half the white respondents in a 1985 poll overestimated the proportion of the poor who are black, as did two-thirds of blacks. Black respondents were ten times more likely to overestimate than underestimate the percent of poor who are black, while whites were more than twice as likely to overestimate than

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[69] Gallup Poll, June 1968, USAIP068-0763.Q107, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[70] "Angry — But They Still Have a Dream," *Newsweek*, 30 June 1969, 20.

[71] Roper Poll, June 1974, USRPRR.7406.Q40, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[72] Diane Colasanto and Linda Williams, "The Changing Dynamics of Race and Class," *Public Opinion* 9 (January–February 1987): 53; Franklin Gilliam, Jr., "Black America: Divided by Class?" *Public Opinion* 8 (February–March 1986): 57.

[73] Aberbach and Walker, "Meanings of Black Power," 380.

[74] Louis Henri Boke III and Susan H. Gray, "Blacks, Whites and 'Race Politics,'" *The Public Interest* 54 (Winter 1979): 73; Martin Kilson, "Problems of Black Politics," *Dissent*, Fall 1989, 526.

[75] Juan Williams, "How Reagan and Jackson Managed to Isolate Blacks," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 28 November–4 December 1988.

underestimate that share.[76] Those misperceptions are functional: "The suffering of the poorest Blacks creates . . . a fund of political capital upon which all members of the group can draw when pressing racially-based claims."[77]

MINORITY OR MASSES

The call for African American ethnic consciousness also revived others of the twenty-year-old postintegration images used by black leaders to portray their community in American society. As soon as the civil rights revolution established color blindness and equality of individual opportunity as political and social norms (denying the importance of group membership for individual status and achievement), Black Power advocates moved on to substitute race consciousness and equality of group conditions socially and economically. The accompanying pluralist imagery—revived twenty years later in the calls for African American—featured blacks as a specially deserving group among groups and demanded redistribution, local control of black areas, and assured access elsewhere.

This pluralist, minority-among-minorities view then joined the more traditional black-white, minority-majority imagery with its flashbacks to slavery and segregation. The African American campaign since 1988 has been less successful in finding African roots than reminders of slavery in the New World. Like other national black leaders, Jesse Jackson refers often to slavery,[78] inviting unified resentment from blacks (and guilt from whites) able to imagine racial oppression more than a century removed.

Minorities can claim sympathy and entitlement, but the most powerful moral claims are wielded by groups who see themselves as the many exploited by a few. The African American campaign renewed the nearly one hundred-year-old effort of Pan-Africanists from W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey to the Black Muslims to persuade black Americans to consider themselves Africans wrongfully separated from their motherland. Ramona Edelin, who persuaded the Chicago meeting of black leaders in 1988 to pursue the African American offensive, said: "We want African people throughout the world to refer to ourselves as Africans wherever we are in the Diaspora. This is our proper geopolitical identification."[79] The campaign for African American renewed explicitly also the efforts of anti-apartheid lobbying staffs like TransAfrica to persuade black Americans to identity with South Africans and to consider apartheid an analogy for the exploitation of black masses elsewhere by the white global minority. Claiming implicitly for African Americans by long distance some of the sympathy due South African blacks is the same as borrowing it from the past with reminders of segregation and slavery.

[76] *Los Angeles Times* Poll, April 1985, USLAT.96.R085, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[77] Loury, "Moral Quandry," 20.

[78] Gwen Ifill, "Action Jackson," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition,* 4–10 April 1989.

[79] Benjamin Hooks, "African American or Black: What's in a Name?" *Ebony,* July 1989, 76.

It is when African Americans are identified not just with other Africans but with the entire Third World, however, that they are associated with the broadest masses of victims of western imperialism. "For a century," Stokely Carmichael wrote, "this nation has been like an octopus of exploitation . . . stretching from Mississippi and Harlem to South America . . . and Vietnam . . . a powerful few have been maintained and enriched at the expense of the poor and voiceless colored masses."[80] Infusing class analysis with racial content — identifying imperialism with racism — was an accomplishment of the New Left and black revolutionaries of the late 1960s that has endured among many intellectuals and black political elites. It encourages African Americans to identify and ally with other exploited masses in a nonracial united front. The Poor People's March on Washington in 1968 was offered as a mass movement not limited to blacks, and Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition was also cast as a quilt of many colors of the dispossessed, not limited to the African American patch.

Jackson refers to himself as having grown up as a "Third World resident in the first world" and of having been "born in occupied territory, having lived for all of my developing years under apartheid" (in Greenville, South Carolina).[81] Several activists have found the choice of revolutionary constituencies and alliances, ideology and tactics difficult since the 1960s. After late-1967 Stokely Carmichael stressed ties between the black liberation struggle in the United States and Third World liberation everywhere, but he broke with the Panthers in 1969 because of their willingness to ally with white radicals like the Weathermen for broader class struggle against American imperialism. Malcolm X, on the other hand, became less interested in a separate Afro-American nation than in revolutionary internationalism after he broke with Elijah Muhammad.[82] Similarly, the writer Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) worked for nationalist mobilization of urban blacks until 1976, when he renounced separatism and its black aesthetic movement, calling them racist and reactionary, and returned to Marxism.[83]

Jesse Jackson has refused to choose from starkly opposed radical models, and in his calls for an African American ethnicity he has combined race and class consciousness in what might be called a late-Malcolm X formula: first, ethnic unity; then multiethnic and revolutionary internationalism. But Jackson has also explained African American cultural nationalism in an early Stokely Carmichael style, alternating a colonial (black colony in the United States) analogy with the model of open pluralism. One element of the Black Power movement — threats of violence — has been missing entirely from the African American offensive. But in each of the portrayals of African Americans offered on behalf of the phrase — whether minority or masses, the many or the few — blacks are victims entitled to restitution.

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[80] Carmichael, "What We Want," 6.

[81] Arch Puddington, "Jesse Jackson, the Blacks and American Foreign Policy," *Commentary*, April 1984, 20.

[82] Theodore Draper, "The Fantasy of Black Nationalism," *Commentary*, September 1969, 40.

[83] Martin Kilson, "Politics and Identity among Black Intellectuals," *Dissent*, Summer 1981, 340.

Reparation and Separation

The themes of the African American campaign resonated through many black issues in 1989, including the demands for reparations, for Afrocentric curricula in schools, for an African American museum in Washington, D.C., and for D.C. statehood. The December 1988 Chicago meeting of heads of dozens of black organizations (after which Jesse Jackson announced that blacks wanted to be called African Americans) led to a gathering of a thousand activists at an African American Summit in New Orleans the next April. The summit meeting to set a black agenda for the 1990s was intended to be a strategic planning session on the scale of the first National Black Political Convention in March 1972 in Gary, Indiana.

As before, the 1989 African American Summit was dominated by activists of the protest wing of black elites, and the warmest applause was reserved for Angela Davis (of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression), Lenora Fulani (of the New Alliance Party), and Louis Farrakhan (of the Nation of Islam).[84] Most of the 4,000 invited did not attend, including the heads of mainstream organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League, all but three members of the congressional Black Caucus, and mayors from big cities, except for New Orleans. But the organizers from the December Chicago meeting were there, along with Coretta Scott King, SCLC President Joseph Lowery, and Democratic Party National Chairman Ron Brown. Among the speakers, Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson stressed most heavily the need for renewed awareness of African heritage. Updating 1960s charges of black genocide that underlined most heavily the common view of blacks as victims of manipulation and exploitation, Farrakhan warned of secret U.S. government policies to perpetuate poverty and drug abuse in the black community; his demands for reparations drew standing ovations.[85]

"We call for reparations," the summit resolution declared. "If they are good enough for the Japanese Americans, and native Americans, they are good for those of us who worked for hundreds of years unpaid, and who now need that capital that was used to build America and Europe, for our own development in this country."[86] Gathering concisely most of the premises of the African American movement—and those of its late 1960s Black Power predecessor—this resolution expressed as well the movement's primary policy implication: racial reparations. It recalled the reparations demands in 1969 of SNCC's James Forman for $500 million (later raised to $3 billion) from white churches and of the Council on Racial Equality's (CORE) Roy Innis for $6 billion from the banking industry as compensation for centuries of racist and imperialist oppression.[87] Except for Bayard Rustin (who called Forman's demands another form of "hustle"), both moderate

[84] Gwen Ifill and Thomas Edsall, "Infighting Mars Black Activists' Summit," *Washington Post*, 23 April 1989.

[85] Kevin McGill, "Farrakhan Brings Fiery Close to Meeting of Blacks," The Associated Press, 23 April 1989, AM Cycle.

[86] "Race: The Price of Penance," *Time*, 8 May 1989, 33.

[87] Stephen C. Rose, "Putting It to the Churches," *New Republic*, 21 June 1969, 20.

and radical black leaders endorsed the reparations goal.[88] For example, even moderate Whitney M. Young, Jr. declared to the 1968 CORE convention that black people had given their sweat and tears in the development of this country and they "have a claim to every acre and institution."[89] It was not, however, a mass movement; a majority of blacks opposed the demand for reparations from churches in 1969.[90]

The twenty-year-old claim to reparations underscored several premises widely accepted among black elites, including a view of capital as treasure to be held, seized, or shared. Redistribution through politics then has been seen as the key to economic development, as in Stokely Carmichael's call for empowerment and self-reliance: "Black people must do things for themselves; they must get poverty money they will control and spend themselves. . . ."[91] African American political elites have tended to share Third World socialists' view of wealth as something acquired at the expense of the poor and economic development as something wrested from others.

In April 1989 the Detroit city council asked Congress to establish a $40 billion education fund for the descendants of slaves, and U.S. Representative John Conyers (D.–Mich.) introduced a bill in November for a commission to consider reparations.[92] "The passage of the Japanese World War II bill [providing $20,000 to each of the 60,000 surviving Japanese American internees] has rekindled sparks in the Black community," according to D.C. congressional delegate Walter Fauntroy, and a Massachusetts senate bill would require the commonwealth to negotiate with "legitimate representatives" of Africans' descendants born in the United States to consider claims like those filed by American Indians for compensation for lost land.[93]

In California at Berkeley, students are required to take a comparative course on American ethnic groups, focusing on three of five: African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, or European Americans.[94] In New York the State Board of Regents' report of a new "Curriculum of Inclusion" began by observing that "African Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Ricans/Latinos and Native Americans have all been victims of an intellectual and educational oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States and the European American world for centuries."[95] And in Washington, D.C., the school

[88] "Report from Black America," *Newsweek*, 30 June 1969, 31.

[89] Earl Caldwell, "Young Embraces Black Power Idea," *New York Times*, 7 July 1968.

[90] Gallup Poll, May 1969, USAIP069-0781.Q7, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[91] Carmichael, "What We Want," 6.

[92] "Race: The Price of Penance," *Time*, 8 May 1989, 33; "Paying for Sins of the Past," *Newsweek*, 22 May 1989, 44.

[93] Tracie Reddick, "Conyers Asks Study of Slave Reparations," *Washington Times*, 8 December 1989.

[94] Jennifer McNulty, "UC Faculty Approves Controversial Ethnic Studies Requirement," The Associated Press, 29 May 1989, PM cycle.

[95] Tony Snow, "Professor Nietzsche's Blackboard Jungle," *Washington Times*, 4 January 1990.

system received a $150,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to develop Afrocentric lesson plans and activities to replace its Eurocentric curriculum.[96]

Though there are more than one hundred black museums featuring black culture nationwide, none is seen as a national center; backers of a National African American Museum lobbied in 1989 for legislation to construct a free-standing building on the mall in Washington along the lines of plans for a National Museum of the American Indian pending in the House. Supporters of an African American museum rejected the idea of including it in the Smithsonian, insisting that the African American experience should not be assimilated into the rest of American history.[97]

The African American theme of separate representation appeared as well in calls for statehood for the District of Columbia, the "Nation's Last Colony," according to road signs posted by supporters. Jesse Jackson called the city "under occupation" and said he does "not rest easy with a Senate in 1989 that based upon this formula of exclusion has, you know, 100 white senators . . . and African Americans and Hispanics are locked out of the equation."[98] District statehood would virtually guarantee two African American seats in the U.S. Senate and achieve (though only symbolically) two goals of some black nationalists of the 1960s: self-determination and territorial separation from white America.

MOBILIZING BLACK OPINION — ELITES AND MASSES

Both the Black Power movement and its African American successor aimed at raising black consciousness and mobilizing black opinion, and the contours of that opinion indicate the success of those efforts as well as their limits. For twenty years black elites have encouraged their constituents to consider themselves victims of institutional racism. When polled in general terms, black respondents tend to agree that discrimination is widespread. Asked about the reasons for blacks' worse jobs, housing, and incomes, 69 percent agreed in September 1989 that it is mainly due to discrimination, and 67 percent agreed that it is because blacks lack the chance for an education.[99] Three-fourths agreed that blacks are not achieving equality because many whites do not want them to get ahead.[100] Asked in 1978 about discrimination against various groups in the United States, black respondents were

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[96] Jenice Armstrong, "Grant Furthers Afro-Centric Curriculum in D.C. Schools," *Washington Post*, 21 December 1989.

[97] Kara Swisher, "Black History Museum Plan Sparks Debate," *Washington Post*, 16 October 1989.

[98] R. H. Melton, "Jackson Decries 'Occupation': Mayoralty Without Statehood Said to Be Far Less Attractive," *Washington Post*, 6 December 1989.

[99] ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, September 1989, USABCWP.89RACE.R21AB, R21CB, R21DB, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[100] ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, September 1989, USABCWP.89RACE.R22CB, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

far more likely than nonblacks to perceive discrimination everywhere, against all other groups, though they saw themselves as the greatest victims.[101]

Middle-class blacks were a major target for racial mobilization by the Black Power movement, and that effort has generally succeeded. Blacks with college experience are more likely than others to perceive widespread discrimination and blame whites for blacks' circumstances. Some intraracial class differences remain, however. One recent study found higher-status blacks expressing less of a sense of black autonomy (separatism) and feeling less close than lower-status blacks to black masses and to black elites.[102]

But while blacks, especially those with some college, tend to agree that prejudice is widespread when asked about racism in general, they also report surprisingly few personal experiences with discrimination and display optimism about the future. In 1978 three-fourths of black respondents in large, northern industrial cities said that a young hard-working black "can usually get ahead in this country in spite of prejudice and discrimination."[103] And when asked in 1988 about the importance of several factors in getting ahead in life, 76 percent said that well-educated parents were very important or essential; 96 percent cited the importance of having a good education yourself; 94 percent cited the importance of hard work; but only 38 percent said that a person's race was similarly important in getting ahead in life.[104]

Accepting elites' portrayals of systemic racism, black respondents are generally more likely to say they see discrimination nationally than they find in their own areas. In 1980, 73 percent said there was very little or no tension between whites and blacks in their own area, and only 4 percent said those relations were worse than a couple of years before.[105] Ten years earlier, a Harris poll found more than two-thirds similarly reporting "pleasant and easy" personal relationships with whites.[106] In 1978, 66 percent said they had never been personally discriminated against for a job or promotion or in housing.[107] 72 percent of respondents in Watts in 1980 said they had experienced discrimination personally "not much" or "practically not at all."[108] In 1989, 74 percent of blacks said they had never or almost

[101] Roper Poll, February 1978, USRPSS7803.Q27, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[102] Richard L. Allen, Michael C. Dawson, and Ronald E. Brown, "A Schema-Based Approach to Modeling an African-American Racial Belief System," *American Political Science Review* 83 (June 1989): 433.

[103] CBS/*New York Times* Poll, February 1978, USCBSNYT78-FEB.Q34, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[104] Northwestern University Survey Laboratory, October 1988, USNWEST.88BLK.R08, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[105] Roper Poll, July 1980, USRPRR8007.Q10, 11, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[106] "The Black Mood: More Militant, More Hopeful, More Determined," *Time*, 6 April 1970, 29.

[107] CBS/*New York Times* Poll, February 1978, USCBSNYT78-FEB.Q42A, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[108] *Los Angeles Times* Poll, July 1980, USLAT80-033.Q40, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

never encountered prejudice in their social lives; 76 percent said they encountered no prejudice in seeking housing; 68 percent said prejudice was only a minor factor or none at all in getting ahead in their jobs; and 77 percent said prejudice was similarly unimportant in trying to get a good education.[109]

Black elites have generally portrayed racial conditions in crisis and deteriorating steadily, but black respondents have felt differently. "Nationwide, blacks were most optimistic about the trend in patterns of discrimination, with 65 percent believing there was less discrimination in the 1979–1982 period than 20 years earlier. . .; 58 percent believing that there would be less discrimination 20 years later. . . ."[110] In 1981, 60 percent said that the quality of life for blacks in the United States had gotten better, and only 18 percent said it was worse than ten years before.[111] In 1987, only 12 percent of blacks said that racial relations were worse than ten years before.[112] In numerous polls, the proportion saying opportunities for blacks have gotten worse in the last few years rarely rises above 25 percent, and optimism for the future is also widespread, with twice as many blacks usually saying they expect improvement in opportunities and quality of life as predicting decline.[113]

Leaders of the campaign for African American have said that reemphasizing African heritage is important to instill a greater sense of racial and individual worth, especially among black youths. However, many studies have shown that blacks have self-esteem equal to or greater than whites.[114] In 1969, 75 percent said they thought most Negroes agreed that "Black is beautiful," while only 16 percent thought not.[115] Asked then if Negroes have a special soul that most whites have not experienced, 54 percent agreed and only 22 percent disagreed. When asked to describe that soul, more referred to qualities of musical (20 percent) and emotional (18.5 percent) expressiveness than to any others; and references to shared experiences of suffering (14.7 percent) were only the third most frequent response.[116] Unlike many elites, racial pride for most blacks has not required racial resentment. Similarly in 1980, 81 percent of black respondents said that most black people preferred being black.[117]

[109] Gordon Black/*USA Today*, August 1989, USGBUSA.893167.R08, 09, 02, 03, 04, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[110] Gerald David Jaynes and Robin M. Williams, Jr., eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1989), 132.

[111] ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, 1981, USABCWP.Q32A, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[112] Roper Poll, 1987, USRPRR8706.Q42Y, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[113] Gordon Black/*USA Today* Poll, August 1989, GBUSA.893167.QR19; ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, January 1986, USABCWP.213.R42, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[114] Michael Hughes and David Demo, "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy," *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (July 1989): 132.

[115] Gallup Poll, May 1969, USAIPOSPG069–6955.Q77, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[116] Gallup Poll, May 1969, USAIPOSPG069–6955.Q23A, Q23B, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[117] Dresner, Morris & Tortorello for Data Black Polls, January 1980, USTORTJAN80DABLK.Q37, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

Supporters of the African American cultural offensive said that the new term was necessary to encourage African Americans to identify with other Africans and develop a stronger sense of ethnic loyalty. But the 1979–1980 National Survey of Black Americans found twice as many saying that being black was more important to them than saying that being American was more important (though 71 percent rated both equally important); and more than twice as many said they felt closer to black people in Africa than said they felt closer to white people in America.[118]

Yet for twenty years, most black Americans have also resisted Black Power separatism. In 1969, 59 percent disagreed with the statement that "Negroes can get what they want only by banding together as Black people against the whites, because the whites will never help Negroes"; and 73 percent denied that "Negroes should give up working with whites and just depend on their own people."[119] Again in 1978, 93 percent disapproved of the idea that blacks should not have anything to do with whites if they can help it.[120] Blacks have also consistently favored racially mixed neighborhoods and workplaces by large margins.

Whether moderate or radical, most black leaders for decades have favored larger government income transfer programs. Black opinion, however, has been more ambivalent about government activism, welfare, and racial preferences. Blacks have generally favored government activism;[121] three times more agreed that government should do everything possible to improve living standards than felt that "people should take care of themselves" in 1988; and 71 percent said the federal government is doing too little to help blacks.[122] But black majorities have also sometimes been suspicious of government welfare programs, fearing that they create dependency for the poor; and blacks have responded variously as well to affirmative action preferences. In 1969, 85 percent rejected preferences over whites in hiring and college admissions, but reactions to questions about racial quotas and preferences since have been ambiguous depending on question wording.[123]

CHANGING NAMES — MEDIA AND MASSES

Blacks called themselves Africans until after 1816, when the American Colonization Society was founded to help them back to Africa; but neither then nor since

[118] Jaynes and Williams, eds., *Common Destiny*, 134.

[119] Gallup Poll, May 1969, USAIPOSPG069.Q78A, 18, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[120] CBS/*New York Times* Poll, February 1978, USCBSNYT78-FEB.Q35B, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[121] Jaynes and Williams, eds., *Common Destiny*, 212–214.

[122] Northwestern University Survey Laboratory Poll, October 1988, USNWEST.88BLK.R04, R05; Gallup/*Newsweek* Poll, February 1988, USGALNEW.030788.R11B, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[123] Gallup Poll, May 1969, USAIPOSPG069-6955.Q19, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

have very many black Americans been interested in Africa. However, several black organizations have retained the reference, for example, the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After the Civil War, freedman came into use, succeeded by Afro-American, even Afraamerican, tan, colored, negro, and Negro. Announcing the switch to African American, Jesse Jackson said, "Just as we were called colored, but were not that, and then Negro, but not that, to be called Black is just as baseless," though he led in establishing black two decades earlier.[124] To portray blacks again as objects of manipulation, he implied wrongly that earlier racial terms were imposed on his race by its oppressors. Each of the previous shifts from colored to Negro to black emerged from within the group and won gradual and often grudging acceptance in the larger society.[125] Colored was the preferred term when the NAACP was founded in 1909, but Negro became popular among avant-garde blacks in New York in the 1920s. These shifts in usage were accompanied by arguments over the ideological and political implications of names that reappeared later in the 1960s. Negro was opposed by militant radicals like Adam Clayton Powell and nationalists like Elijah Muhammad, who preferred black even then. But Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. DuBois used Negro, and DuBois defended the term against charges that it was a white man's word.[126] The *New York Times* agreed to capitalize Negro in 1930, and the term was common in polite society until radicals spread black in the 1960s. However, Afro-American and African American were also politically acceptable to Black Power militants and preferred by many separatists, as in Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity. Those terms had been used for decades, and their cultural nationalist flavor has continued to be favored especially in artistic, literary, and academic nomenclature.

Though the cultural offensive to use African American in 1989 revived many of the ideological themes of the Black Power movement, the latest effort has lacked the confrontational intensity, the intraracial class-based and generational hostility, and the intimidating tactics of the Black Power movement. Then black militants confronted Negroes and whites demanding new black names and organizations as marks of group loyalty or racial sensitivity, but in 1989 similar incidents were few. In 1972 the New York delegation to the National Black Political Convention barred white reporters from press conferences and issued rules for coverage of delegation activities, including using black "in referring to all people of African descent."[127] But in 1989 Jesse Jackson visited editorial boards of several major newspapers to try to persuade them to use African American.

Supporters of African American did not try immediately to make using black an ideological or social offense, and most black political and media elites quickly approved the term, though not necessarily its exclusive use. Perhaps remembering

[124] Page, "African American or Black?"
[125] Stephen Thernstrom, "Just Say Afro," *New Republic*, 23 January 1989, 10.
[126] W. E. B. DuBois, "The Name 'Negro,'" *The Crisis*, March 1928.
[127] "Nominee Doubted at Black Parley," *New York Times*, 8 March 1972.

earlier Black Power assaults on the NAACP, Executive Director Benjamin Hooks was one of the few to respond with reserve, and the organization refused either to endorse or oppose African American.[128] By the fall of 1989, Urban League documents included the new term. Senior columnist Carl T. Rowan demurred, saying it would be no help, but most responded as Clarence Page did, saying that although he had not been consulted on the name change, it was fine with him.[129]

As in the late 1960s, black mass opinion lagged behind elite mobilization. In June 1989 four times more black respondents preferred black than chose African American, but even more said the choice did not matter to them.[130] By late September, 68 percent said they had heard or read of the new term, though two-thirds still preferred black.[131] Many of the largest black-oriented newspapers and radio stations in major markets adopted the change, with disk jockeys' on-air use especially effective in reaching mass audiences. The Johnson publications (*Jet, Ebony*) accepted the new phrase (though black continued to appear far more often in those pages) along with the *Chicago Daily Defender* and the *Amsterdam News* in New York, joining the *Atlanta Voice* which had used the term for years.[132] The program director of Chicago's WOCI-AM said in April 1989 that listeners were already beginning to match their staffers' adoption of African American: "There are times when a person might quote unquote slip, but they correct themselves."[133]

Editorials and columnists in most major newspapers approved the new phrase, but editors on national desks were slower to change their style books. For example, African American was used only eight times by *New York Times* reporters from the national desk in 1989, though the phrase appeared 103 times in other news stories, another 103 times in quotations, 49 times in the titles of programs or organizations, and 61 times in editorials, letters, opinion columns, and book reviews that year—*not* counting the times the phrase appeared in references to the controversy over the term itself.

The same pattern was apparent in the *Washington Post*, where the phrase appeared in 1989 only four times in the first section, six times in the metro section, but 96 times in quotations, 95 times in titles, and 119 times in editorials, letters, and the *Book World*—*not* counting references to the use of the term itself. African American also appeared in the *Washington Post* 104 times in 1989 in references to George Stallings's founding his Imani Temple to celebrate African American

[128] Hooks, "African American or Black," 78.

[129] Carl T. Rowan, "Another New Label Won't Help," *Kansas City Times*, 18 January 1989; Clarence Page, "Semantic Shift to 'African Americans' Makes Sense in Several Important Ways," *Kansas City Times*, 29 December 1988.

[130] *New York Times* Poll, June 1989, USNYT.89WMN1.R67A, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[131] ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, September 1989, USABCWP.89RACE.R30B, R31B, Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, Storrs, Conn.

[132] Isabel Wilkerson, "'African-American' Favored by Many of America's Blacks," *New York Times*, 31 January 1989.

[133] Paul Galloway, "African American or Black? A Poll of Cultural Identity," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 April 1989.

rites for his African American Catholic Congregation—a big Washington story carried nationally. In such stories and others about the campaign for African American itself, the phrase was virtually forced into news columns by controversy surrounding its partisans and began to seem increasingly familiar, despite news editors' caution and the larger number of keystrokes the new term required. This repeated the pattern of the late 1960s, when black references multiplied first in stories about Black Power militants, even though reporters still used Negro in news writing. At many publications then, white editors took their cue from black reporters until a policy decision was made to change usage.[134] "In 1967, a notice went up in the *Globe* newsroom that from then on, Negroes were Blacks," but most other papers took a year or longer to shift gradually.[135] In *Time* and *Newsweek*, black outnumbered Negro by late 1968, and in the next three years, Negro gradually disappeared there. African American appeared twenty times in the pages of *Time* in 1989 (including ten references in just one March story and four times in quotations) but only fourteen times in *Newsweek* that year (including seven times in quotations). Unless African American supporters make the phrase into a mark of racial sensitivity for whites and loyalty for blacks in the 1990s, it is unlikely to displace black quickly in the national press, despite its fast start in black media.

AFRICAN AMERICAN CAMPAIGNS

Finally, the campaign for African American had meaning for Jesse Jackson personally and his political constituency. In a note to his campaign workers in the summer of 1988, Jackson told them they had already accomplished a "literal miracle—you have helped me set the agenda" for November and "helped bring the civil rights movement to life as a force in national electoral politics."[136] But by the fall, he had been carefully relegated to a marginal role in the campaign which ended in the same unambiguous defeat as in 1984.

Within weeks of that earlier Reagan landslide, Jackson and other black activists mounted a media-oriented campaign against Reagan policy toward South Africa that reasserted the centrality of black issues on the national agenda and the importance of blacks in the Democratic party. Jesse Jackson did not dominate black leaders' participation in presidential politics in 1984. Many endorsed Walter Mondale, and a *Newsweek* poll found 51 percent of black Democrats choosing Mondale, compared to 38 percent for Jackson; and only 11 percent agreed that Jackson "represents Black Americans better than any one person."[137] His campaign that year was for status—among blacks, in the press, and in the party—as much as for the presidency. But by the summer it deteriorated into personal demands for patronage on Mondale's staff and for "respect" from Mondale publicly.

[134] "Identity Crisis," *Newsweek*, 30 June 1969, 62.

[135] Alan Lupo, "Sax-ual Encounters," *Boston Globe*, 28 December 1988.

[136] Philip Geyelin, "But He Still Has an Accommodating Streak," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 18–24 July 1988, 28.

[137] "What Jesse Jackson Wants," *Newsweek*, 7 May 1984, 42.

By 1988, however, Jesse Jackson did dominate black participation in the election, and he guarded that status carefully, demanding "sensitivity" from Michael Dukakis and complaining when Dukakis failed to consult him before speaking at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington.[138] Though Jackson did not control the postelection anti-apartheid campaign in 1984, he led from the beginning its 1988 counterpart, the campaign for African American, to reassert the primacy of black claims after the latest national electoral defeat. Jackson succeeded in becoming accepted (first in the national press by 1984 and then by a majority of blacks by 1988) as Martin Luther King's successor, but he failed in becoming accepted by electoral majorities as a national figure able to transcend his original constituency. He failed primarily as a candidate lacking government experience who was also to the left of all the liberal Democrats who lost national elections since 1968. But he also failed because the implicit themes in the black-oriented sector of his campaign could not be missed by white majorities.

There may be inherent tension for an explicitly racial candidate (even a progressive one who tries simultaneously for a class coalition of the dispossessed) that non-racial black candidates like Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, New York Mayor David Dinkins, or Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder do not face. The Jackson campaign aimed first at racial mobilization with race-based emotional appeals that worked. Yet in "following Jackson, Blacks voluntarily walked out of the American political mainstream," and he succeeded finally only in making blacks complicit in their own political segregation.[139] Jesse Jackson received more than 90 percent of black Democratic primary votes in 1988, along with 13 percent of white votes; but neither represented an underclass. Roughly half the black Jackson voters had attended college, and nearly half had annual family incomes of $25,000 or more. White Jackson voters were an even better educated and more upscale group; 70 percent had attended college.[140] Despite Jackson's attempt simultaneously to mobilize blacks stressing shared suffering and entitlement (symbolized later as African heritage) but to explain it as just celebrating pluralistic diversity, toleration, and sharing, most white voters in 1988 fled the underlying racial themes in his campaigns. So did most successful black candidates running nonracial campaigns in 1989, like the first black mayors elected in New Haven and Seattle, who avoided public closeness with Jackson.

Jesse Jackson strived for first and secured finally in 1988 his place as successor to Martin Luther King, Jr., a status he had sought for twenty years. With the campaign for African American he reaffirmed that role, taking the lead in reassuring his prime constituency while reasserting its importance in American politics and the legitimacy of its claims on American society in the postelection season. Testing the power of names and naming, the cultural offensive for African American suc-

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[138] "Notebook," *New Republic*, 26 September 1988, 18.

[139] Williams, "How Reagan and Jackson Managed to Isolate Blacks."

[140] Martin Plissner and Warren Mitofsky, "The Changing Jackson Voter," *Public Opinion* 11 (July-August 1988): 57.

ceeded in 1989 at a faster pace than the Black Power movement in its first year in persuading blacks (elites, quickly; others, more slowly) to redefine themselves and whites to comply in public usage. As the newly fashionable phrase continues to gain currency, it may begin to lose in common use some of the ideological undertones intended by the leaders of the African American campaign, just as black has lost some of its confrontational edge since the late 1960s. Just as likely, however, is that the smoldering imagery of collective innocence, grievance, shame, and guilt embedded in the expression will be widely and unconsciously accepted, latent in everyday use.