

White Nationalism Revisited: Demographic Dystopia and White Identity Politics¹

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Two stimuli, both dating to 2002, drove me to write this paper. The first (and by far the more visceral) was my attendance at the biannual conference of *American Renaissance* (AR)—the flagship publication of the sector of the American far right considered herein. The conference was held in the Washington, D.C. suburb of Herndon, Virginia, and it reflected this demographic. It was attended by some 250 mostly well-dressed, mostly middle-aged white men—along with a smattering of women—a number of whom held advanced degrees of one flavor or another. There is nothing too surprising in this: the ignorant redneck stereotype of the racist right has always been more hopeful polemic than reality. Unfortunately, doctrinaire racists come in all income and education brackets. If bigots with Ph.D.s are nothing new, I still walked away from the conference convinced that I had seen an important new trend in what I will call American white nationalism.

The second (and more academic) of the two stimuli driving me to write this paper was the publication of Carol M. Swain's book *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration* (2002). The first book-length scholarly work to deal with the American racist right *as a whole* to be published in many seasons, Swain's is an important if a deeply flawed text. In this work Swain (correctly) points out that there is something *new* about the contemporary racist right. She also cogently warns the American political mainstream, conservative and liberal, that the phenomenon both refer to as white nationalism "has the potential for considerable expansion beyond its present scope and threatens to disrupt the fragile racial situation in America" (Swain 2002, 1).

In my view, however, Swain's argument suffers from a myopic focus on affirmative action. In many respects, *The New White Nationalism* is a book about affirmative action onto which an argument about white nationalism has been grafted. "A disproportionate amount of attention is devoted to affirmative action policy," Swain writes, "because I believe that within its politics lie the seeds of increased racial hostility" (Swain 2002, 5).

Swain's own data—her in-depth interviews with white nationalist leaders—do not support her thesis that affirmative action drives white

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nationalism as such. She makes a stronger case for the importance of the opportunistic *use* of affirmative action by white nationalists as a way to attract a broader constituency. Even here, however, the consistent implication of her argument is that affirmative action policies create recruits to white nationalism and that *therefore* (among other reasons) affirmative action should be reformed or eliminated. I find the prospect of formulating public policy to appease white nationalists—or to reduce the number of recruits to their movement—to be on the shakiest possible ground. Whatever reasonable arguments may exist for reforming affirmative action policy, surely making ideologically committed bigots happier cannot be one of them. Further, and more to the current point, by imagining an affirmative action tail wagging a white nationalist dog, Swain has misrepresented contemporary white nationalism in a way that undermines our understanding.

My goal in the pages that follow is to *re-present* the white nationalist movement in a way that (1) highlights its ideological core, (2) explores its strategic orientation, and (3) addresses its current prospects for success. I will also (4) make some tentative suggestions for what I see as effective responses to this movement in the context of the public sphere and public policy in the United States.

I. WHITE NATIONALISM AS IDEOLOGY

As old-fashioned investigative reporters have always known, the place to get a feel for what conference attendees are actually thinking is the hotel bar. In whatever ways they may differ from those who hold mainstream political opinions, white nationalists also gather post-plenary to lubricate their imaginations and talk trash. The hot topic at *American Renaissance* 2002 was Pat Buchanan's book du jour, *The Death of the West* (2001). There was consensus amongst this set that it was Buchanan's best, meaning his most *racial*, book. There was, nonetheless, a good bit of disappointment with it. Rather than coming right out and saying what most of the *AR* crowd agreed he really meant—that is, that biological race is the determining factor in the destiny of human civilizations—Buchanan had once again side-stepped this all-important white nationalist issue in favor of cultural and religious explanations for invidious intergroup comparisons.

The gist of this bar talk, which closely paralleled opinions proffered at a conference-concluding panel on Buchanan's book, can be summarized as a short dialogue in two voices:

First voice: If it's all really religion and culture, then why *shouldn't* we let the Mexicans in? They're Christians. They've got family values.

Second voice: But he doesn't really *mean* it.

Which is just the point for white nationalists: they do mean it—where

it means the valorization of biological race as the key determinant of both human social organization and individual capacity. In this context one of the key weaknesses of Swain's book is that she fails to define, explicitly, what she means by white nationalism. Without such a definition it becomes difficult to identify how the current movement differs from previous incarnations with any degree of consistency. Worse, without such a definition, both the internal complexity of the movement and its relationship to the larger realm of American culture and politics are obscured.

There is, however, an implicit and potentially powerful definition of white nationalism that emerges from a close reading of Swain's text. Given that this implicit definition tends to push affirmative action to the periphery, it is perhaps not surprising that she chooses not to formalize it. The definitional criteria that are consistent with Swain's data are that white nationalism is a movement that is characterized by three features:

(1) It is informed by a core belief in genetically inherited, *biologically determined* and race-linked differences in intelligence, criminality, self-control, and creative initiative;

(2) It has a specifically *nationalist* orientation for its politics, arguing—per point one—for a biological notion of race that delimits a national essence which is considered the only proper basis for an authentic national identity;

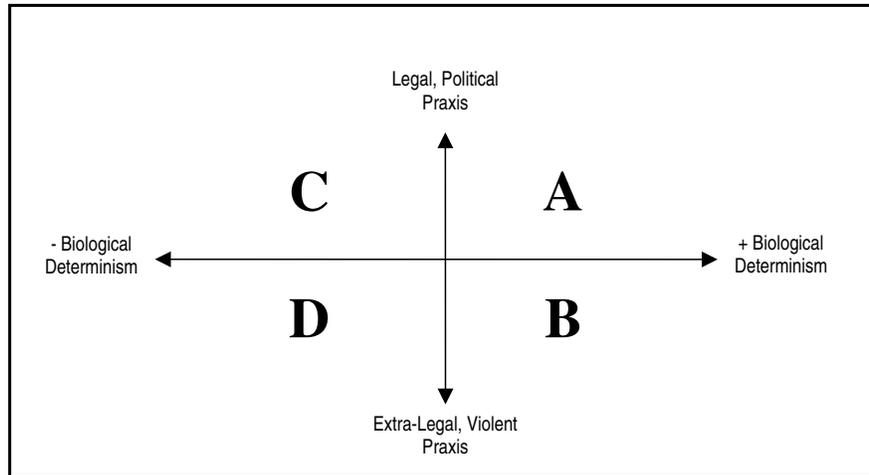
(3) It is in some sense a *new* phenomenon, albeit with roots in racist organizations past, that is qualitatively different from the older organizations of white supremacy and white nativism.

Expanding on Swain's implicit criteria, I offer the following explicit definition of white nationalism in the early twenty-first century American context: *White nationalism is a secular political orientation, grounded in an ideology of biologically determined racial hierarchy and the presumption of a necessary link between race and nation, and a praxis that includes, but is not limited to, pragmatic engagement with electoral and pressure group activity on the model of identity politics.*

This definition lays the ground for a theoretical perspective informed by social movement theory. Under its rubric we can find room for old-style neo-Nazi and white supremacist leaders such as Matthew Hale (the imprisoned leader of the Creativity Movement) and William Pierce (the recently deceased leader of the National Alliance), liminal (and marginal) figures such as Don Black and David Duke, and well-connected, theoretically sophisticated individuals such as Jared Taylor and Michael Levin. However, because the criteria of inclusion are explicit, this definition also invites us to disaggregate these movement factions and identify their intra-movement divisions and extra-movement alliances. In other words, we can ask

ourselves what groups, and what projects, are central to this movement, and which are peripheral at best.

FIGURE 1: IDEOLOGY AND PRAXIS + BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM



As Figure 1 suggests, both white nationalists and their potential allies on any particular issue can be charted on an intersecting continuum of legal vs. extra-legal praxis (the vertical axis) and the degree to which they explicitly espouse an ideology of race-based biological determinism (the horizontal axis). According to the definition given above, white nationalists proper will fall into sectors A and B. The most influential white nationalist organizations, such as *American Renaissance* and the Council of Conservative Citizens, fall solidly into sector A. Certain neo-Nazi skinhead groups, the so-called Creativity movement, and old-fashioned Klan organizations that rely primarily on a politics of threat and intimidation (even when not directly engaged in violence) tend toward, or fall within, sector B. To the left of the vertical center line fall organizations that support policies—immigration restriction for example—that white nationalists enthusiastically support without themselves *explicitly* endorsing race-based justifications for their positions. As in all social movements, the dividing lines are fuzzy and indicate tendencies, not neat boxes. There are individuals, Pat Buchanan for example, who consistently straddle the line, as indicated by his ambivalent celebration in the *American Renaissance* crowd. There are also organizations, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) for example, that in their push for mainstream acceptance vehemently deny racist motivations, even while playing to racialized fears and allying themselves with doctrinaire white nationalists. Finally, there are

mainstream individuals with solid establishment credentials—for example Samuel Huntington and Peter Brimelow—who talk a line that differs from the avowed white nationalists mostly in the prestige of their publishers and their skill with euphemism and innuendo.

It is important both politically and intellectually to distinguish between sector A white nationalists and sector B white nationalists *not* because the line between them is particularly inviolable, but because the sector A actors are beginning to build substantive, issue-based alliances with the more mainstream sector C actors. It should not be supposed that this is simply because these new white nationalists have agreed to play by the rules of the American political game—though that is certainly part of it. A tactical orientation that favors ballots over bullets is nothing new on the landscape of the racist right. David Duke, among others, pioneered such a strategy in the post-Civil Rights era. But David Duke is to the new breed of white nationalists as a traveling snake oil salesman is to a pharmaceutical company executive: They may be in the same line of business, but the former is liable to be run out of town on a rail, while the latter takes up residence and gets invited to the best symposia.

The new white nationalists themselves are eager to draw a dividing line between their ideas and praxis and those of organizations that celebrate violence, beat their anti-Semitic drums too openly, or fall too hard for the wide range of conspiracy theories long popular with the American far right. Groups like the National Alliance and the Creativity Movement (formerly the World Church of the Creator) certainly *aspire* to join the new white nationalist club. However, their open admiration for Hitler and the Nazis, for programmatic anti-Semitism, and especially for violence and its rhetoric (Hale is currently serving a prison term for soliciting the murder of a judge and Pierce wrote the infamous white supremacist novel the *Turner Diaries*) make these organizations and persons marginal to white nationalism as I understand it.

Of course in the push-pull of social movement politics, marginal movement factions often play an important role in shaping movement dynamics (Foss and Larkin 1986). It is on the margins that true believers, relatively unconstrained by pragmatic politics, generate the ideas later appropriated by movement figures positioned closer to the mainstream. It was, for example, old-school white supremacists David Duke and Tom Metzger who first staged protests along the U.S.-Mexican border, claiming, much like today's Minutemen, that America was being invaded. Also like the Minutemen, Duke and Metzger claimed they were forced by a corrupt and incompetent federal government to take border patrol duties into their own hands. Duke and Metzger first went to the border in 1977.

Despite Duke's best efforts, and even despite his brief election to the

Louisiana State Legislature in 1989, neither he nor any of his erstwhile Klan colleagues have had the ability to mainstream themselves to a degree that would make them acceptable partners to the sector C political actors. Instead Duke and his cohort, replicating a pattern found in many social movements of recent decades, played the role of the intra-movement other. In effect, sector A white nationalists end up positioning themselves as “not Duke,” as “not the Klan.” Of course this tactic works only to the extent that sector C actors are willing, and to an extent eager, to work with sector A actors possessing a patina of respectability.

The struggle over who is in and who is out was readily apparent at the 2002 *American Renaissance* convention I described in my introduction—as were the difficulties faced by any social movement attempting to establish orthodoxy. National Alliance members were present at the conference and hung about the edges of the meeting in much the same way that sectarian communist organizers often hung about the fringes of peace movement events in previous decades. Their outsider status was clearly marked. Younger, beefier, and clearly uncomfortable in the sport jackets required by conference organizers, they neither looked like nor interacted easily with the middle-class academics, professionals, and entrepreneurs who dominated the event. When keynote speaker Nick Griffin of the British National Party proclaimed that white nationalists need to move from being “booted parties” to being “suited parties,” an audience member asked him explicitly where he thought National Alliance fell on that spectrum. “Booted,” Griffin replied. He received a round of applause.

II. WHITE NATIONALIST STRATEGY: IMMIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DYSTOPIA

Unlike ideologically similar incarnations of the racist right in the post-Civil Rights era, the core of the new white nationalism is neither traditionalist nor utopian in orientation. It seeks neither to recreate the racial order of Jim Crow, nor to carve out a brave new Aryan homeland in the mountains of the Pacific Northwest. Rather, the primary goal of contemporary white nationalists is to preserve (and ideally expand) the white racial majority in the United States.

There is considerable debate within the movement about exactly how best to go about achieving this demographic aim. Nevertheless, virtually all of the major sector A movement organizations agree that halting the influx of non-white immigrants is the most urgent goal. This focus was strongly in evidence at the *American Renaissance* conference previously discussed. The bulk of issue and idea presentations at this particular conference addressed either race and human ability (the central ideological focus of the

movement) or immigration (the movement's most important policy focus). This emphasis is confirmed by examination of all *American Renaissance* conference presentations from 1994-2004. Using both conference notes and a review of event audio and video tapes (available from AR), I sorted fifty-nine documented presentations into five categories: (1) race and I.Q., (2) ethnic conflict, (3) race and nation, (4) immigration, and (5) all others, as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

1) Race & I.Q.	2) Ethnic Conflict	3) Race & Nation/Culture	4) Immigration	5) All Others	Total
11	3	8	9	28	59

By way of explanation, the first category, race and I.Q., also includes material that has to do with biological determinism and race-linked human capacities more generally. These presentations constituted eleven of fifty-nine, or about 18.5 percent, and tended to be delivered by professional academics such as J. Phillippe Rushton (University of Western Ontario) and Michael Levin (City College of New York). In category two, ethnic conflict, I include themes related to the "Balkanization" of America, explained as the result of an increasingly diverse population profile. Three of the presentations, or about 5 percent, fell into this category. In category three, race and nation/culture, I include presentations that focused primarily on the link between biological race and the constitution of a viable national identity or political nation. I found eight presentations in this category, or about 13.5 percent of those considered. Category four presentations, about 15.25 percent of the total, dealt exclusively with immigration and its negative impacts on American society. Finally, the fifth catchall category, composing some 47.5 percent of the presentations, included either content that was *not* focused narrowly on policy or ideology—such as skill-building sessions, self-critique, and critique of non-racist parts of the political right—or which included numerous topics and issues, such as international reports. Also included here were a few instances of policy sessions that had only one example, such as the one presentation on affirmative action and equal opportunity policy.

Categories one, two, and three form the ideological core of *American Renaissance*—which, I argue, is the paradigmatic white nationalist organization. These categories speak to the ideological links between genetically determined race and I.Q. (and other socially important capacities) on the one hand and specific, hierarchically ranked races and nations/cultures on

the other. Category four, immigration, was by far the largest *policy area* represented; moreover, many of the presentations in other areas (especially categories two and three) referenced or strongly overlapped with immigration.

Though these results are preliminary and take into account only one white nationalist organization, they are nonetheless suggestive. Having combined them with a thorough reading of hundreds of white nationalist publications and over fifteen years of experience observing the movement, I am comfortable making the claim that immigration is by far the most important policy issue on the white nationalist agenda. This makes sense, granted my understanding of white nationalism, both ideologically and pragmatically. As noted above—and supported by the parsing of AR conference topics—the core beliefs of white nationalism link race, thought of as a genetic essence, to differential human capacities on the one hand, and to the possibility of coherent, peaceful national existence on the other. Non-white immigration, from the white nationalist perspective, is the chief threat to both. In the words of movement activist Louis T. March:

The most serious flaws of current immigration policy are its lax enforcement and anti-European bias, which have allowed a peaceful penetration of the U.S. from throughout the world. Most of the incoming peoples have little in common with the host population. And while Americans already pride themselves on their “individuality,” the settlement of large numbers of racially “group conscious” people in our nation has brought about all variety of conflicting interests and even more enduring conflicts of values. (March 1999, vii-ix)

White nationalists, taking race as a biological given, see the projections of the United States Census Bureau (those indicating that sometime in the middle of the twenty-first century “white people” will become a minority, mostly because of the effects of immigration) as a catastrophe in the making.² The chimerical nature of the object of which they make a fetish—race itself—if anything only makes the emergent politics of white racial identity all the more fervent (Allen 1994; Dyson 1998).

From the pragmatic side, white nationalists use immigration—their most important issue in any case—as a link to the broader anti-immigration movement. Thereby they bring a white nationalist agenda into coalition with, and often into leadership positions within, groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the various state level anti-immigration political campaigns such as those in California and Arizona. Combining an ideologically-driven white identity politics with more pragmatic efforts to curb immigration multiplies the efficacy of the white

nationalist agenda by greatly increasing the reach of the movement and its impact on mainstream politics.

For the intellectual theorists of white nationalism—for example Wayne Lutton, Michael Levin, and the late Sam Francis—the enemy is embodied in the inferior but fecund black and brown-skinned peoples of the southern hemisphere and given aid via the wrong-headed, self-serving policies of the liberal elites who placate the demands of business for cheap labor and pander for minority votes. The results, in white nationalist terms, are the disintegration of American national unity and the dilution of the precious white gene pool.

In rhetoric typical of the movement, Louis T. March of the Council of Conservative Citizens and Brent Nelson of American Immigration Reform write that the “Third World colonization of the U.S. is well under way” (1995, 64). Their view is echoed by Wayne Lutton, one of the figures who bridges the gap between the openly white nationalist organizations and the mainstream of the anti-immigration movement. Lutton told the 1994 *American Renaissance* conference:

There is no escaping the conclusion that thanks to a massive influx of Third World people over the past thirty years, with their large numbers of American born descendents, what was a Black-White problem has now become a multiracial problem. We simply compounded our previous situation. And I don't think it's unfair to say on Memorial Day 1994 that the United States really is no longer a nation but is simply a collection of diverse peoples spiritually sundered by barriers of nationality, language, culture and religion. (Lutton 1994)

The reference to the fractioning of the nation is not accidental. “Balkanization” is a key rhetorical trope in the white nationalist toolkit. Though the mainstream scholarship on nations and nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1990) has long discredited the essentialist notion of nations as primordial extended families grounded in a culture that flows from the genes, white nationalists take such beliefs as given. Recently deceased syndicated columnist and white nationalist Sam Francis put it like this: “Like the real France, the real America is also a ‘country of a common blood’ (Jefferson used that very phrase in the original Declaration, as well as appeals to a ‘common kindred’ and ‘consanguinity’). In fact, every real nation is a country of a common blood. The only nations that claim to be defined by creeds are—come to think of it—totalitarian states” (Francis 2004).

Brent Nelson offers his version of *national* identity as follows: “If a nation is to endure, it must be based upon something more vital, and less ephemeral, than lines drawn upon a map. The annals of history and the new

science of sociobiology both indicate that nationhood is sustained by a continuity of ethnic descent, and the sense of fellow-feeling arising therefrom, which cannot be conjured into being by the mere will of politicians” (Nelson 1994, viii).

Perhaps the best known public figure embraced by white nationalists is journalist and erstwhile presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan. In *The Death of the West*, Buchanan walks the movement line almost without resorting to euphemism. He writes:

If tens of millions of American girls and young women are determined not to have children, or to have no more than one, America either accepts mass immigration or the fate of Japan and Europe. But America has time to act. If Americans wish to preserve their civilization and culture, American women must have more children. While there is no guarantee that government incentives can change the mind-set of women, a pro-family, pro-child bias can be built back into national policy. For what is more important than the permanence of the American nation and people? (Buchanan 2001, 232)

Buchanan substitutes the more palatable words “culture” and “civilization” for race, but his *meaning* is clear enough: An America not demographically dominated by the children of current (majority white) Americans means the end of America as such.

III. EXPLICITLY WHITE, OR IDENTITY POLITICS COMES FULL CIRCLE

The shape of American racial politics developed in a historical context of labor and regional conflict (Allen 1994, Marx 1998). The white vs. black dynamic was by no means inevitable, however, even in the aftermath of slavery. Northern whites could conceivably have allied themselves politically with Southern blacks to form a viable governing coalition. In fact, something of this sort did occur, however briefly, during the radical phase of Reconstruction.

However, as Anthony Marx argues, the needs of nation building and economic unification eventually outweighed either liberal promises to enfranchise former slaves or party political efforts to woo black voters. In the wake of the massive rupture that culminated in the Civil War, Southern whites had to be bribed back to nationalist loyalty—precisely because they had proved themselves capable of disrupting the union on a massive scale. The coin of this bribe was white solidarity, grounded in a taken-for-granted white superiority. The consequence was the introduction of *de jure* segregation in the South, matched by continued *de facto* segregation in the North (Marx 1998).

The white coalition that emerged after the Civil War was underwritten by the potent combination of the presumptive whiteness of Americans and the largely invisible but very real privileges that accrued to whites as such. In the post-bellum period, whiteness became what Linda Waugh (1982) has referred to as an “unmarked” category in a presumptively biracial economy of discourse and of politics. In this economy, “race” came to equal “black” (Hartigan 1999). In myriad symbolic ways, whiteness became the unstated, invisible pole of a white-black binary wherein white was counted equivalent to the universal and positive, and black to the negative and particular (Dyson 1999, 220).

This economy of race was not limited to the symbolic dimension. Political subjects in America were presumptively constructed as white. Only whites could be true political subjects and, by extension, real Americans. It was whites who embodied the universal, and therefore lacked the particularistic, group-based interests of non-whites (Goldberg 1993). Thus, whatever the guarantees of the Constitution, the actual price of admission to full American citizenship was whiteness (Hurtado 1998).

The racialized barriers to meaningful political participation led to an array of white privileges rarely acknowledged as such. George Lipsitz (1995) documents a range of such “race-neutral” benefits—from federally subsidized low-interest home loans to “urban renewal” projects that gut black neighborhoods to create upscale shopping districts for white suburban commuters—that continue to accrue in the post-Civil Rights era. The economic value of such benefits to whites exceeds the cost of affirmative action and related programs by orders of magnitude. Combine these positive benefits with the relative freedom from negative state-sponsored scrutiny (police harassment, for example) enjoyed by those who can pass as white, and the privileges that accrue to whites as a group, however unevenly distributed to white individuals, are vast indeed.

These benefits, however, historically have remained below the level of white consciousness—despite being obvious to those who do not enjoy them—because of the invisibility of whiteness as such and because of the radical “inadequacy of the language of liberal individualism to describe collective experience” (Lipsitz 1995, 381). Most white privilege is thus doubly invisible. This invisibility has allowed for what might be called a politics of non-identity by whites. On this view the North-South reconciliation via the establishment of passive white privilege became the model for assimilating European immigrants. The usually unspoken proviso was that European ancestry is the necessary (though not sufficient) prerequisite to becoming American in the sense of a “real American.”

White privilege, however, is never *completely* invisible. Under threat, for example from intra-white conflict, or in localities where non-white

majorities emerge, whiteness appears as a distinct and identifying category (Hurtado 1998, 228; Fine 1997, 63). The Civil War was certainly such a context. The aftermath spurred the new intra-white coalition, the visible residue of which was Jim Crow. The unintended consequence of the Jim Crow system was that the very laws designed to guarantee white privilege also made it visible. De jure segregation offered a plausible initial focus for the Civil Rights Movement—a focus that drew on the discourse of liberalism and the rights of American citizens even while recruiting blacks to a race-based identity politics.

Identity formation, at least in the sense of group self-consciousness, is the indispensable prerequisite for group mobilization. Identity flows from two sources. The first is an *awareness* of in-group social substitutability (Kelly 2000). Social substitutability means recognizing that for specific purposes one is interchangeable with some people and not with others (e.g. *any* black man on the wrong street is potentially subject to police harassment). The second is the proximity of an out-group, the members of which are socially substitutable for each other, but for whom no member of one's own group is substitutable as such. But even here it is important to remember that whiteness itself is a situationally revocable status—as the rare cases of the lynching of ostensibly white individuals indicate. Invariably the individuals lynched had forfeited their white privilege through actions that were seen to take civil rights too seriously. Taking this stand made these individuals race traitors in the eyes of those attempting to preserve institutions of white supremacy.

On the horizon of identity politics is the ability to recruit a socially significant number of categorical group members to join or support identity-based social movement organizations. African Americans pioneered the twentieth-century form of identity politics in the United States in response to Jim Crow—drawing on *both* the discourse of individual rights *and* an appeal to blacks based on a common experience of racialized oppression. If a shared experience of ex officio violence was the substrate of black experience, the hope of changing segregation laws in the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education* became the rallying point for mobilization. The visibility and success of desegregation efforts in turn became the basis for the construction of a wider African American identity.

But the ironies of identity are many. Even as the very laws intended to cement white solidarity and insure white privilege became the visible targets for civil rights activism and black identity politics, black identity politics, once constituted, became a highly visible and morally salient model for political mobilization of all sorts. Politics, as Benedict Anderson (1983) has argued with respect to the spread of the nation-state as an idealized political form, is modular. Once a particular form is seen to succeed, it

becomes susceptible to imitation. The identity politics that emerged in the United States in response to a shared (if never identical) experience of racism became the prototype for the so-called new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Larana, Johnston and Gusfield 1994)—as well as for many less acknowledged social movements of the right, including the Christian right and what I refer to as white nationalism (Foss and Larkin 1986; Diamond 1989, 1995; Berlet and Lyons 2000).

These new movements recruited activists through appeals to a shared experience of oppression and attempted to exert moral and legal pressure on the larger society by agitating for fair treatment and increasingly for the *sine qua non* of identity politics as such—recognition. Far from being a simple prop to battered egos, recognition is the key to ongoing participation in a particular kind of politics—the kind that depends upon predictable constituencies making relatively predictable claims on the state. To a certain extent this politics of group recognition has reorganized the social and legal policy structures of the United States, supplementing legal rights accorded to individuals and corporate entities with collective entitlements based on categorical membership.

By any aggregate measure, the actual value—economic, social, or political—of these collective entitlements as currently constituted, for example affirmative action, equal pay and non-discrimination laws, hate crimes statutes, and official “recognition” events such as Black History Month, have been relatively slight compared with the structural advantages accorded by white privilege. Though symbolically important—and not trivial in consequences for the specific individuals who have benefited—these entitlements certainly have not been sufficient to redress the actual lived experience of racism, were such a thing even possible, on a *quid pro quo* basis. They are, however, important in creating and maintaining constituencies that can be counted as predictable voting and advocacy blocs, potentially in support of a wider political agenda. The price of course is that these collective entitlements become a visible target for both individualist and white nationalist counter-organizing.

As noted above, white privilege under most circumstances remains invisible to whites. Furthermore, it has been argued that the mere existence of collective entitlements has generated deep resentments in the majority white population, both because such entitlements are seen as a departure from a liberal/individualistic tradition of fairness and meritocracy, and because white people typically have an unrealistic assessment of such collective entitlements. Carol Swain argues that “the actual harm done to nonminorities by affirmative action is small, yet the policy causes great anxiety among whites, who have an exaggerated fear that they may become its victims” (Swain 2002, 136). Borrowing a finance metaphor, she

describes such anxieties among whites as “highly leveraged.” Hugh Graham (2001) implicitly reveals similar concerns when he carefully calculates the value of affirmative action programs, such as minority set-asides, but makes no attempt to compare the cost of such programs with that of exponentially more lucrative programs (e.g. low-interest home loans, freeway construction, and urban development) that continue to privilege white Americans as a group (Lipsitz 1995). These taxpayer-funded benefits are rhetorically constructed as being for the “common good,” and whites as just happening to benefit disproportionately from them.

Assessments such as Swain’s and Graham’s suffer from either a structural naiveté concerning the real benefits of whiteness and/or an undue reliance on the opportunistic arguments of white nationalists. Point in evidence: both Swain and Graham reference bestselling movement author Peter Brimelow without contextualizing his ideological proximity to white nationalism. Swain writes, “Even Peter Brimelow, a senior editor at *Forbes* magazine, has stated that ‘the most amazing thing about current immigration policy is that it serves no economic purpose. It does nothing for Americans they could not do themselves.’ Thus, even some of America’s current and future elite agree with white nationalist leaders that immigration into the United States should be stopped” (Swain 2002, 103).

It seems not to occur to Swain that Brimelow could be both a respected journalist writing for an elite economic publication and a supporter of white nationalism. Though he denies the label for himself, Brimelow certainly considers the white nationalist viewpoint as part of legitimate political discourse—as he has made explicit on his V-Dare website (Brimelow 2004).

While collective entitlements like affirmative action may well be seen to supply white nationalists with rhetorical ammunition, the essence of white nationalist politics is found elsewhere. Swain at least is well aware of this. She elegantly summarizes the basic philosophy of white nationalism as follows:

The main reason black people today are plagued by such high incidence of criminal violence, out-of-wedlock births, poor school performance, and AIDS is rooted in their differential genetic endowment. The process of human evolution, as it has adapted to different ecological circumstances, has produced, they contend, a distinct racial hierarchy in terms of innate intelligence, the ability to delay gratification, to control emotions, and to plan for the future. (Swain 2002, 18)

This view, so evident at the American Renaissance meeting described above, has been well developed by movement-friendly scholars, some tenured at prestigious institutions. Two of these are City University of New York Professor of Philosophy Michael Levin (see, for example, Levin

1998) and J. Philippe Rushton, a psychology professor at the University of Western Ontario (e.g. Rushton 1995). Since 2002, Rushton has also been president of the controversial Pioneer Fund. Notorious for its Nazi-era funding of eugenics research, Pioneer maintains close ties with both contemporary racial science and anti-immigration cum white nationalist organizations in the U.S. (Tucker 2002). For example, Pioneer has provided funding to the sector C organization Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the largest anti-immigration group in the country (Center for New Community 2004a, 3-4).

Contrary to Swain, and based on the sheer weight that white nationalists give to issues in their conferences and publication, they are not *primarily* upset because they think they are being treated unfairly, but at the prospect of the loss of a white majority and the civilization they believe to be tied ineluctably to it. While arguments about “reverse discrimination” are deployed for mainstream appeal, the core ideology of the white nationalist movement is not *directly* derived from concern over the fairly minor impacts of affirmative action—except in the sense that the politics of affirmative action do threaten to expose white privilege as such.

There is, however, an element of identity politics which *has* been particularly energizing to white nationalists and which, along with the changing demographics, is driving the emergence of a new politics of white identity. That element is not, as Swain would have it, primarily concentrated in resentment at collective entitlements. Nor is it grounded in a simple perception of direct economic “threat”—for example, from labor competition with newly-arrived brown-skinned immigrants—as common sense assumes and anti-immigration groups like Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) argue (Alvarez and Butterfield 2000; Hood and Morris 2000; Eatwell 2000). Rather, the principal connection of black and other minority group identity politics to the emergence of white identity politics has been (1) modular, as a political and cultural form to be imitated, and (2) the visible political target for a white backlash.

IV. CURRENT PROSPECTS: WHITHER NOW FOR WHITE NATIONALISM?

“Suppose,” wrote Peter Brimelow in the preface to a second edition of his controversial bestseller *Alien Nation*, “I had proposed more immigrants who look like me. So what? As late as 1950 somewhere up to nine out of ten Americans looked like me. . . . In those days, they had another name for this thing dismissed so contemptuously as ‘the racial hegemony of white Americans.’ They called it ‘America.’” (Brimelow 1996, 59). In rhetoric of this type the white nationalist movement makes the *presumptive* (but invisible) whiteness of America visible.

Especially since the Civil Rights Movement made old-fashioned white supremacy a losing proposition, whiteness as such has been most formidable as a social force not when embodied in cross-burning Klansmen, but in appeals to colorblind values and liberal individualism. White privilege has been largely invisible since the mid-1960s and vehemently denied by whites during moments of racial confrontation such as the O.J. Simpson trial, the L.A. riots, and the Willie Horton campaign advertisements. In the face of both the demographic transition to minority status and the identity-based mobilization of blacks and other non-white minorities, *white nationalists are choosing to risk the exposure of white privilege in order to construct an explicitly white identity politics*. For committed white nationalists the exposure is a necessary risk, calculated to use the extant state institutions as a means to preserve white privilege and halt the demographic transition. Even solidly mainstream figures such as Brimelow and celebrated political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (about whom, more below) have embraced positions on immigration virtually identical to those found among open white nationalists.

In analyzing the prospects for white nationalist influence on immigration policy, it is instructive to briefly consider the impact movement ideas have had on the politics of affirmative action and other collective entitlements. American courts in recent years, for example in the Bakke, Croson, and Wygant cases, have tended to rule that all such programs potentially amount to unconstitutional affronts to the individual rights of whites, even while acknowledging the structural divide in terms of wealth and other privileges between whites and others (Lipsitz 1995, 383). These rulings suggest that the divide between explicit white identity politics and liberal individualism as embodied in rights-based political claims does not necessarily translate into divergent political outcomes (or policy). No matter how much mainstream liberal individualists and white nationalists may claim to loathe each other, their positions are not necessarily at odds on practical matters. In fact it is safe to say that at key moments of threat to white privilege, a usually invisible white identity tends to manifest not as a displacement of liberal individualism, but as a supplement that explicitly rejects white nationalist arguments even while creating and enforcing policies in accord with white nationalist goals.

This brings me back to the number one policy area of the white nationalist movement: immigration. Predicting the likely shape of future politics is an exercise in prognostication, not social analysis. Nevertheless, certain trends can be identified and certain possibilities identified. As Samuel P. Huntington, the chair of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, put it in a recent article: "Actual and perceived losses in power and status by any social, ethnic, racial, or economic group almost always pro-

duce efforts to reverse those losses” (2004, 41). Though this basic idea is a truism in social theory, and surely correct, Huntington manages to radically decontextualize it in his article and invite inappropriate comparisons.

“In 1961,” Huntington continues, “the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina was 43 percent Serb and 26 percent Muslim. In 1991, it was 31 percent Serb and 44 percent Muslim. The Serbs reacted with ethnic cleansing. In 1990, the population of California was 57 percent non-Hispanic white and 26 percent Hispanic. By 2040, it is predicted to be 31 percent non-Hispanic white and 48 percent Hispanic. The chance that California whites will react like Bosnian Serbs is about zero. The chance that they will not react at all is also about zero” (2004, 31).

But if the chance of Californians reacting “like Bosnian Serbs” is negligible, then why bring ethnic cleansing into the argument? Rhetorically the reason is clear enough: Huntington is very concerned about “Hispanic immigration” and wants his readers to take the situation seriously. Yet even the comparison, implying as it does that ethnic cleansing somehow followed inevitably from the brute demographics in the former Yugoslavia, is simply wrong. Ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, as in other parts of the former Yugoslavia, was driven by the nationalist posturing of competing political factions, each trying to out-jingo their competitors with essentialist propaganda and stir up passions with atrocity stories (Bowman 1994). Only an anti-realist mentality, seeking to wish away demographic truths—the way that Huntington seems to want to wish away the United States’ border with Mexico—would reduce the situation to demographics alone. I refer to this as *demographic dystopia*, a situation wherein social constructs like “white Anglo-Protestant” and “Hispanic” are essentialized and reified as a basis for fear mongering. This can lead to a truly bizarre style of thinking, for example when Huntington complains, apparently with a straight face, that “In Miami, one study found, families that spoke only Spanish had average incomes of \$18,000; English-only families had average incomes of \$32,000; and bilingual families averaged more than \$50,000” (2004, 39).

In the case of California, Huntington goes on to explain that there has already been a reaction to the changing demographic realities. That reaction, however, has not been ethnic cleansing, but anti-immigrant ballot measure initiatives, most famously 1994’s Proposition 187. Strongly supported by then-California Governor Pete Wilson and approved by 59 percent of all voters, Prop. 187 intended to deny most social welfare benefits, including access to public education and non-emergency medical care, to immigrants who lacked documentation.

Close analysis of exit poll data in a number of studies has suggested that the large margin of victory for Proposition 187 was in fact driven by exactly the sort of white backlash against Hispanic immigrants described by

Huntington. Though African Americans also supported the measure in significant numbers (44 percent), it was white Californians who, both in raw number of votes (about 80 percent of those actually voting) and proportion of yes votes (63 percent of white voters), led to the margin of victory (Weintraub 1994, A1). When questioned about their reasons for supporting the measure, white voters explained that it was not personal financial concerns that drove them, but concern for the financial health of the state as a whole and an unwillingness to contribute to a social safety net they feared was benefiting alien others (Alvarez & Butterfield 2000; Hood & Morris 2000).

Yet the results were ambivalent. Many voters cited a complex of reasons for the way they voted, including protest against the status quo and support for the rule of law. Huntington's alignment of the vote on Proposition 187 with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia is disturbing in that it makes both events seem like inevitabilities grounded in racial essence instead of the result of political maneuvering. Sam Francis, a kind of living weathervane for the white nationalist movement until his death in 2005, wrote of the California proposition: "That proposition was far more controversial than Ollie North or the role of the religious right, and unlike them, it will remain with us, shaping the practical politics and the impractical political conversation of the nation, for decades to come" (Francis 1997, 212).

Whatever Francis and other white nationalists might hope, it is a critical mistake to see the vote on Proposition 187 as a simple, unmediated reaction to changing demographics. Rather, it was a complex mixture of reaction and interpretation related to competing and contested stories about what it means to be American and Californian. Hardly a spontaneous uprising of the people of California, Proposition 187 was driven largely by funding and strategy provided by national anti-immigrant organizations. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)—a sector C organization which leans toward sector A white nationalism in both ideology and aspects of its leadership—poured \$150,000 into the Yes on 187 campaign in its final week and arranged for some 300 radio advertisements supporting the proposition (FAIR 1994, 1). Like ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, anti-immigrant ballot measures are driven by ideological posturing and selective interpretation of data as much as by brute demographic facts.

This is not, of course, to suggest that demographic facts are unimportant or infinitely malleable. Nor is it to argue that current immigration policy is optimal. Rather, it is to point out that neither demographic dystopia nor white nationalist-style essentialism is an automatic response to current patterns. Both can and should be contested (about which, more below) when they are manifest in efforts such as Arizona's Proposition 200, the Arizona Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act.

The first major anti-immigrant ballot measure initiative to pass since Proposition 187, 200 may well herald a wave of future state-level anti-immigration politics. Approved by about 56 percent of Arizona voters in 2004, 200, like 187, was strongly supported by both doctrinaire white nationalists and sector C anti-immigration groups. In fact a coalition of national anti-immigration groups, including FAIR, provided much of the funding to get Proposition 200 on the ballot (yesonprop200 2004). A veteran white nationalist ideologue, Dr. Virginia Abernethy, was chosen as the chair of the national advisory board of Protect Arizona Now, one of two rival pro-200 groups (Center for New Community 2004b). More Astroturf than grassroots, Arizona's Proposition 200 no more represented a spontaneous uprising of citizens than did California's 187—but obviously its message was one to which Arizona voters were at least somewhat receptive.

What Proposition 200 represents is a strategic refinement suggestive of where the anti-immigration movement, and with it white nationalism, is currently headed. As of autumn 2005, copycat initiatives are being pushed in Colorado and California, and a similar measure, I-343, is already on the ballot in Washington State. Other states including Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah are gearing up to put 200-style measures on the ballot, and several state legislatures may attempt to pass equivalent legislation.

Learning from Proposition 187, which included sweeping language suggesting that California had the right to deny public benefits to people based on their immigration status—language subsequently found not to pass Constitutional muster—, the new ballot measures aim to insist on the enforcement of existing federal law and to raise the bar for benefit eligibility. The pattern is similar to that found in anti-gay and lesbian politics. The new anti-immigrant propositions are more like the “defense of marriage” measures that have now passed in many states than like the sweeping condemnations of all things “homosexual” found in anti-gay and lesbian ballot measures pushed in Oregon and Colorado in the early 1990s. Like the defense of marriage laws, the aim of these initiative campaigns is to help build constituencies and to preempt the expansion of benefits for immigrants, not to substantively reform existing policy.

A realistic assessment of the status of white nationalism takes the politics embodied in the new ballot measure initiative seriously without falling prey to histrionics of the type used by Huntington. Despite some success with anti-immigrant ballot measures, and despite the fact that immigration policy is likely to be a significant point of fission in the Republican Party in years to come, white nationalists are obviously not in a position to seize significant state power. The prospect for white nationalists, as with social movements of all stripes in the United States in recent decades, is not

a triumphant sweep into office, but the infiltration of their ideas, particularly with respect to immigration policy, into the mainstream via their coalition partners. The fact that mainstream intellectuals like Huntington and Brimelow end up supporting key aspects of the anti-immigrant moment of white nationalism—and even critics like Carol Swain seem predisposed to placate rather than to challenge the assumptions of the movement—should signal that there are significant social forces at work here, the interpretation of which will ultimately be as much contested on the ground as inferred from available evidence.

V. THINKING CITIZENSHIP AND IDENTITY: TOWARD A RESPONSE TO WHITE NATIONALISM

Though other issues are important to understanding white nationalism, for example biological determinism of human capacity, immigration is the central *policy* and *organizing* issue for contemporary white nationalists. Thus any response to white nationalism must focus on immigration policy and the politics that surrounds it. Yet this presents a dilemma, for many of the tactics deployed in the past to address what are sometimes referred to as the politics of bigotry — (1) quarantine, (2) moral suasion, (3) mobilizing constituencies in “natural” opposition, and (4) peer-based organizing — are liable to fall flat when used to confront white nationalists in anti-immigration clothes.³ Though aspects of the tactics noted above may be viably adapted to confront white nationalists, the key will be a willingness to address basic issues linked to American identity and citizenship. In practical terms this means a mode of analysis that takes issues of identity and belonging—what it means to be a “real American”—seriously and a politics that aims at creating broad coalitions in favor of reforming institutions to better meet people’s needs. Below I will briefly address the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four models of opposition and how they can or cannot be made to speak to the challenge of white nationalism.

(1) The most centrist response to the politics of bigotry has been quarantine. The idea of political quarantine is to ignore events sponsored by bigoted organizations in the hope that without opposition such groups will be denied the element of spectacle that they depend on to attract media coverage and public interest. Always morally suspect in that this tactic leaves the most vulnerable populations to confront doctrinaire bigots without mainstream support, quarantine works best when the targeted group is small and isolated. It rarely succeeds in its primary objective of denying organized bigots media coverage because there will always be those who, for whatever reason, refuse to accept such tactics. This leaves a form of street theater in which often violent confrontations between neo-Nazis, for

example, and young anti-racists end up being presented to the public as an incomprehensible clash of extremists.

In the case of white nationalism embodied in its opposition to immigration, any simple form of quarantine is irrelevant. As the ability of sector C anti-immigration groups to raise millions of dollars annually and pass anti-immigration ballot measures indicates, this movement is neither small nor marginal, *even though those committed to an ideologically explicit form of white nationalism are a minority in the larger anti-immigrant movement*. Yet the allure of quarantine can be found even in the responses to anti-immigrant ballot measures.

The argument goes thus: Americans are allergic to any discussion of race or bigotry and tend to vote their pocketbooks. Hence, the best way to respond to anti-immigrant politics is by making strenuous claims that immigrants benefit the economy and are a net plus to America. This quasi-quarantine approach—responding to the anti-*immigration* campaign without responding to the subtext of racially charged anti-*immigrant* politics—ends up leaving the most emotionally powerful arguments of the white nationalists unchallenged. Worse, it allows people to vote in favor of anti-immigrant measures without engaging their own values with respect to democracy, fairness, and support for better institutions.

(2) Thus quarantine, even the quasi-quarantine of opposing white nationalist-inspired anti-immigrant politics, is liable to be ineffective. *Moral suasion*, the appeal to what is fair, right, and just, often embodied in campaigns that encourage people to “Say No to Hate,” is somewhat more promising. The basic difference between quarantine and moral suasion is that the former proposes a kind of conscious isolation, while the latter involves active efforts, usually non-confrontational, of denunciation. Campaigns grounded in tactics of moral suasion attempt to isolate targeted organizations not by ignoring them, but by recruiting both prominent public figures and large numbers of engaged citizens to take a public stand either through petitions, through symbolic acts such as wearing ribbons or putting up posters, or at public events.

Sometimes effective in opposing the most isolated and extreme groups, moral suasion is less effective when used to confront non-state sector C actors or even disciplined sector A actors. This can be seen in the history of the Civil Rights movement, in which activists used direct action in the South in an attempt to garner support in other parts of the country, inviting outsiders to join in the moral project of fighting for equal rights. However, the tactic depended on Southern authorities’ responding immoderately, meeting peaceful marchers with police dogs and fire hoses. Movement tactics were least effective in communities where local authorities

responded in restrained and minimal ways to civil rights activists—a case in which moral suasion as tactic was countered by quarantine.

Moral suasion as such is almost always less effective when applied by one political faction against another, rather than against entrenched state or local authorities. This is so for the simple reason that political factions, unlike states and localities, lack the resources to respond to adversarial provocations. The moral message usually works only if the targeted group already has a history of violence and/or intemperate rhetoric.

However, moral suasion *can* work in responding to the anti-immigration movement through demands that (supposedly) mainstream organizations reject appeals to fear of the Other *and* reject those doctrinaire white nationalists who have been central to organizing their movement and who are often centrally embedded in their organizations. Of course such demands must be factually accurate and backed by broad, centrist coalitions. They must also apply relentless pressure, making the implicit claims of sector C actors visible as a form of white identity politics by reference to the explicit rhetoric of sector A actors. Otherwise such efforts do no more than invite anti-immigration groups to hire better image consultants.

Further, opponents of white nationalist-inspired anti-immigrant organizing must be ready to step up and propose immigration reforms that strengthen American institutions while according new arrivals respect and dignity. This will mean pushing for controversial policies that have been made controversial largely through the xenophobic advocacy of white nationalists and their allies. The exact nature and extent of such policies is beyond the scope of the current discussion, but they must surely include such things as offering driver's licenses to—and requiring insurance compliance of—permanent residents regardless of immigration status, offering federal support for basic services in areas disproportionately impacted by high levels of immigration, and re-thinking affirmative action as it applies to immigrants in order to better target communities truly in need. Moreover, in the long run it will be vital to pursue policies that promote responsible economic development, the expansion of opportunity, and the enforcement of labor laws and environmental protection in Mexico and other immigrant-sending countries.

(3) Perhaps the most common tactic used in response to far-right electoral politics, mobilizing constituencies in *natural opposition* to a policy or ballot measure involves convincing a core of those who have the most to lose, or whose ideological position is most antithetical, to become actively involved in opposition. This tactic is almost always necessary, in that every political campaign needs a core of activists and volunteers, but it is also never sufficient. This tactic was used, for example, in organizing opposition to the anti-gay and lesbian ballot measures sponsored by the Oregon Citi-

zens Alliance (OCA) in the early to mid-1990s. Liberal Democrats, progressive religious organizations and, most of all, gays and lesbians themselves were recruited to do the footwork for these campaigns. In the case of anti-immigration policies and initiatives, the target populations in “natural opposition” are much the same. Immigrants rights groups and immigrants themselves—and those who might identify with recent immigrants or be affected by anti-immigrant politics such as Mexican-Americans—replace gays and lesbians on the front lines.

The limitations of this model of response are clear enough: by themselves these “natural opposition” populations rarely constitute a plurality, much less a majority. What is more, to the extent that such contests can be cast as anti-immigration extremists (or even white nationalists) on the one side and immigrants on the other, the campaign becomes entangled in arguments about opposing interests. These are usually cast in economic terms and tend to leave the deeper issues of identity and citizenship untouched. The economics of immigration is intrinsically a mixed bag. There are both losers and winners for any given locality or subset of the population, even when immigration tends to be a plus for the United States as a whole. Even if immigrants are a net benefit for the country at the national level, this does little to offset the real problems faced by localities struggling to provide public services to large numbers of newcomers. In order to form broad-based coalitions against anti-immigrant policies, key constituencies will have to address these local issues at the same time that they point out the white nationalist implications of the proposals stemming from most of the extant “immigration reform” organizations.

(4) Finally, there is what is called *peer-based organizing*. Whereas natural constituency organizing seeks to recruit those most impacted by white nationalist and other xenophobic or bigoted politics, peer organizing targets those in analogue organizations or social positions. Historical examples have included recruiting youth involved with the punk and ska music scenes to oppose neo-Nazi skinheads and mainline religious groups to fight the Christian right. The idea is that such peer groups have both a stake in getting involved and a viable position from which to intervene. Peer-based opponents are presumed to have credibility with constituencies that might be vulnerable to recruitment, either ideologically or because of social proximity.

In the case of the white nationalist and anti-immigrant movements, peer-based organizing is a potentially effective tactic. However, it will entail a huge amount of work because of the multifaceted nature of the movement. For example, a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers in North Carolina attempted to pass a modest institution-strengthening law to allow the children of undocumented immigrants who had attended high school for

four years in the state, graduated, and applied for legal immigration status, to pay in-state tuition rates at North Carolina colleges. The measure was stopped largely by political pressure emanating from a local organization, Americans for Legal Immigration, which models its rhetoric and tactics on those used by national organizations such as FAIR (Center for New Community 2005). In order to respond effectively to this one effort, peer organizers would have had to reach out to parents, students, administrators, and others concerned with higher education. And this instance was just one small battle in the current contention over immigration.

In order to use peer-based organizing, many peer groups will have to be mobilized, and often in unfamiliar ways. The ideological leadership of the key white nationalist organizations, for example, is largely composed of tenured academics on the one hand and scholar-journalists on the other. Peers in academia and at the elite levels of American journalism may be reluctant to respond, more or less unconsciously employing a quarantine strategy. Instead white nationalists, through their sector C connections, are attracting the support of mainstream figures—albeit those like Huntington who are prone to polarized thinking—and there is a certain bandwagon effect: witness the recent turn of former new leftist turned conservative David Horowitz to the cause (SPLC 2003).

In order to be effective, peer-based organizing has to target not *only* the immediate peer group, but also those positioned nearby. Thus anti-racist youth active in the punk and ska scene did not limit their organizing to others in these circles—that is, those who regularly came into contact with neo-Nazi skinheads. Instead they reached out to other youth through broad “rock against racism” efforts and invited mainstream bands and media outlets such as MTV to join in the fight. Similarly, academics and scholar journalists will have to respond within their own disciplines and sub-disciplines, as they are directly affected by white nationalist ideas *and* reach out to a larger audience of critically engaged citizens.

What holds true for journalists and scholars is equally true for other “peer” constituencies, including labor unions, teachers, hospital workers, police officers, and immigration enforcement officials, all of which are groups that have been targeted by the anti-immigration movement. Successful intervention in these groups will require organizers to be willing to propose realistic alternatives to the white nationalist message—that is, alternative ways to reform immigration—and to point out the basic injustice and unrealistic nature of current anti-immigration strategies.

At some point, however, the anti-immigration ballot measures target the American population as such, and in particular (though often only implicitly), white middle-class Americans, as well as those who identify with or aspire to such status. There is no simple peer or pressure group

corresponding to this constituency. To respond to messages at this level will require a sustained public campaign targeting white nationalist ideas, pointing up the racist underpinnings of much of current anti-immigration policy proposals, and a willingness to propose alternatives even if they upset the status quo. Yet without a sustained public debate on what it means to be American, white nationalist-sponsored initiatives re-inscribe whiteness upon American identity and citizenship. This politics of whiteness, both implicit and explicit, is liable to continue to seep into the political mainstream, following the sector A to sector C path to policy influence and rhetorical inclusion in the public sphere, unless vigorously countered by those concerned with issues of justice and democracy.

VI. CONCLUSIONS, OR REDUX WITHOUT REDUCTIONISM

Herein I have argued that a close study of white nationalism—a politics grounded *explicitly* in biological notions of white racial superiority—affords a unique and revelatory view of current tendencies in racial politics. While mainstream (which is to say, white-dominated) institutions tend to obscure the reality of white racial privilege behind a rhetorical wall of individual rights, white nationalists openly pursue an identity politics that makes white privilege visible. They do this precisely because they see white privilege, white culture, and white-controlled resources as being under attack, most ominously by the immigration-driven demographic trends that they fear will result in the end of a white majority.

Unlike many of the white racialist movements of recent decades, the new white nationalism pursues a realist politics via alliances with anti-immigration groups and makes *de facto* (and counter-intuitive) common cause with the very white liberalism it purports to despise. Racist movements of all types, contrary to their popular image, have always attracted individuals from all kinds of backgrounds. The new white nationalism, however, is remarkable for the number of well-positioned individuals it has attracted. These scholars and journalists support the white nationalist agenda through racial research and writing that lends the movement a patina of mainstream respectability.

Though the white nationalist movement itself is small, its obsession with changing demographics is potentially explosive. Note that the explosiveness of the issue is not proportionate to the actual threat to white privilege. Race is a biological essence only in white nationalist imaginings. Whiteness in the United States is a social status much like aristocracy: It has social importance only as it provides privilege, and an accepted claim to white privilege is tantamount to whiteness. As has happened many times in the past, for example with the Irish and Italians, new groups can be assim-

lated to the political category that is whiteness—at least as long as the basic dynamic of white racial status is available by contrast to structurally disadvantaged groups, classically blacks and increasingly also a segment of the recent immigrant population. Thus “whites” are likely to retain power and privilege even as a minority—as they do in many majority black areas, such as Mississippi. But the *threat* of demographic decline, refracted through racialized fears, is all too likely to matter for social movement mobilization and immigration policy. The possibility of further polarization in the United States, with geographic segmentation increasingly mapped as a racial divide between multiracial, multiethnic urban centers and a white heartland, is too real. White nationalists are even now attempting to exploit the ways in which we collectively imagine the changing demographics in furtherance of their agenda. The primary policy area in which these white nationalists attempt to have an effect, largely via alliances with mainstream groups, is immigration.

This policy focus allows a strategy of engagement with what I have referred to herein as sector C actors—those that approach issues of demographic change, privilege, identity, and particularly immigration through a politics that eschews explicit race-based rhetoric and pursues electoral and pressure-group tactics. The explicit white nationalists provide intellectual leadership and offer their willingness to say the things that more mainstream organizations like the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), will not. Mainstream organizations benefit in a double sense—by seeming moderate in comparison, and by bringing those individuals who are open to more explicitly racist views into the larger movement. Unlike sector B actors who either use or have been known to use violent tactics, such as the various incarnations of the Klan, and those that celebrate violence, such as the National Alliance, the new white nationalists make plausible allies for the mainstream actors, at least as relates to the key policy area of immigration.

White nationalists may not be in a position to seize state power, but their current politics are not oriented to this end. The new white nationalists have a non-utopian praxis aimed at preserving “white civilization” as guaranteed by the “white gene pool” by restricting non-white immigration. In effect they organize in the name of whiteness to preserve the power and privilege they already have. The wave of anti-immigration ballot measures positioned to roll through the states in the wake of Arizona’s Proposition 200 is testament to the potential impact of white nationalist ideas and organizing.

The success of these efforts remains to be seen, and as always will depend largely on the effectiveness of the response. I have briefly argued that traditional modes of response to the politics of bigotry—quarantine,

moral suasion, natural constituency organizing, and peer organizing—must be re-thought and expanded if they are to be effective in responding to white nationalism in its anti-immigration guise. This should be done with an eye toward producing a multi-level debate about what it means to be an American and what rights and responsibilities go with citizenship. I would add that a politics that backs away from addressing issues of identity on the one hand, or the real and widely disparate impacts of immigration on the other, is doomed to reinforce rather than refute white nationalist claims—regardless of its intentions.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented as a working paper at the Benjamin Hooks Institute at the University of Memphis, which provided generous support for this project.

2. See, e.g., Table 1a. Projected Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000 to 2050 (www.census.gov), derived from the U. S. Census Bureau's 2004 "U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin."

3. This typology of responses and the discussion that follows was developed in partnership with author-activist Leonard Zeskind and first presented in a workshop at the annual Community Strategic Training Initiative held in Portland, Oregon and sponsored by the Western States Center in July 2004.

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