

RACE TRAITOR

Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity



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Number 1

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Editors: John Garvey, Noel Ignatiev

Contributing editors: Theodore W. Allen, Christopher Day, James W. Fraser, Carolyn L. Karcher, Louis Kushnick, Theresa Perry, Rev. Eugene Rivers, Vron Ware

Production Assistant: Brenda Coughlin

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Editorial: Abolish the white race - by any means necessary

The white race is a historically constructed social formation - *historically* constructed because (like royalty) it is a product of some people's responses to historical circumstances; a *social* formation because it is a fact of society corresponding to no classification recognized by natural science.

The white race cuts across ethnic and class lines. It is not coextensive with that portion of the population of European descent, since many of those classified as "colored" can trace some of their ancestry to Europe, while African, Asian, or American Indian blood flows through the veins of many considered white. Nor does membership in the white race imply wealth, since there are plenty of poor whites, as well as some people of wealth and comfort who are not white.

The white race consists of those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share, in certain respects, a status higher than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to the system that degrades them.

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race. Until that task is accomplished, there can be no universal reform, and even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue in U.S. society, whether domestic or foreign.

Advocating the abolition of the white race is distinct from what is called "anti-racism." The term "racism" has come to be applied to a variety of attitudes, some of which are mutually incompatible, and has been devalued to mean little more than a tendency to dislike some people for the color of their skin. Moreover, anti-racism admits the natural existence of "races" even while opposing social distinctions among them. The abolitionists maintain, on the contrary, that people were not favored socially because they were white; rather they were

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defined as "white" because they were favored. Race itself is a product of social discrimination; so long as the white race exists, all movements against racism are doomed to fail.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a determinant of behavior will set off tremors that will lead to its collapse.

Race Traitor aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those which promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, *Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity*.

Dissolve the club

The white race is a club, which enrolls certain people at birth, without their consent, and brings them up according to its rules. For the most part the members go through life accepting the benefits of membership, without thinking about the costs. When individuals question the rules, the officers are quick to remind them of all they owe to the club, and warn them of the dangers they will face if they leave it.

Race Traitor aims to dissolve the club, to break it apart, to explode it. Some people who sympathize with our aim have asked us how we intend to win over the majority of so-called whites to anti-racism. Others, usually less friendly, have asked if we plan to exterminate physically millions, perhaps hundreds of millions of people. Neither of these plans is what we have in mind. The weak point of the club is its need for unanimity. Just as the South, on launching the Civil War, declared that it needed its entire territory and would have it, the white race must have the support of all those it has designated as its constituency, or it ceases to

exist.

Elsewhere in this number, readers will find an account of John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry and some of the events it set in motion. Before the Civil War, the leading spokesmen for the slaveholders acknowledged that the majority of white northerners, swayed above all by the presence of the fugitive slave, considered slavery unjust. The Southerners also understood that the opposition was ineffective; however much the white people of the north disapproved of the slave system, the majority went along with it rather than risk the ordinary comforts of their lives, meager as they were in many cases.

When John Brown attacked Harpers Ferry, Southern pro-slavery leaders reacted with fury: they imposed a boycott on northern manufactures, demanded new concessions from the government in Washington, and began to prepare for war. When they sought to portray John Brown as a representative of northern opinion, Southern leaders were wrong; he represented only a small and isolated minority. But they were also right, for he expressed the hopes that still persisted, dimly perceived, in the northern population despite decades of cringing before the slaveholders. Virginia did not fear John Brown and his small band of followers, but his soul that would go marching on, though his body lay a-mould'rin' in the grave.

When the South, in retaliation for Harpers Ferry, sought further to bully northern opinion, it did so not out of paranoia but out of the realistic assessment that only a renewal of the national pro-slavery vows could save a system whose proud facade concealed a fragile foundation. By the arrogance of their demands, the Southern leaders compelled the people of the north to resist. Not ideas but events were in command. Each step led inexorably to the next: Southern land-greed, Lincoln's victory, secession, war, blacks as laborers, soldiers, citizens, voters. And so the war that began with not one person in a hundred foreseeing the end of slavery was transformed within two years into an anti-slavery war.

It is our faith - and with those who do not share it we shall not argue - that the majority of so-called whites in this

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country are neither deeply nor consciously committed to white supremacy; like most human beings in most times and places, they would do the right thing if it were convenient. As did their counterparts before the Civil War, most go along with a system that disturbs them, because the consequences of challenging it are terrifying. They close their eyes to what is happening around them, because it is easier not to know.

At rare moments their nervous peace is shattered, their certainty is shaken, and they are compelled to question the common sense by which they normally live. One such moment was in the days immediately following the Rodney King verdict, when a majority of white Americans were willing to admit to polltakers that black people had good reasons to rebel, and some joined them. Ordinarily the moments are brief, as the guns and reform programs (both of which are aimed at whites as well as blacks - the guns as a warning and the reform programs as a salve to their consciences) are moved up to restore order and, more important, the confidence that matters are in good hands and they can go back to sleep.

Recently, one of our editors, unfamiliar with New York City traffic laws, made an illegal right turn there on a red light. He was stopped by two cops in a patrol car. After examining his licence, they released him with a courteous admonition. Had he been black, they probably would have ticketed him, and might even have taken him down to the station. A lot of history was embodied in that small exchange: the cops treated the miscreant leniently at least in part because they assumed, looking at him, that he was white and therefore loyal. Their courtesy was a habit meant both to reward good conduct and induce future cooperation.

Had the driver cursed them, or displayed a bumper sticker that said, "Avenge Rodney King," the cops might have reacted differently. We admit that neither gesture on the part of a single individual would in all likelihood be of much consequence. But if enough of those who looked white broke the rules of the club to make the cops doubt their ability to recognize a white person merely by looking at him or her,

how would it affect the cops' behavior? And if the police, the courts, and the authorities in general were to start spreading around indiscriminately the treatment they normally reserve for people of color, how would the rest of the so-called whites react?

How many dissident so-called whites would it take to unsettle the nerves of the white executive board? It is impossible to know. One John Brown - against a background of slave resistance - was enough for Virginia. Yet it was not the abolitionists, not even the transcendent John Brown, who brought about the mass shifts in consciousness of the Civil War period. At most, their heroic deeds were part of a chain of events that involved mutual actions and reactions on a scale beyond anything they could have anticipated - until a war that began with both sides fighting for slavery (the South to take it out of the Union, the north to keep it in) ended with a great army marching through the land singing, "As He died to make men holy, let us fight to make men free."

The moments when the routine assumptions of race break down are the seismic promise that somewhere in the tectonic flow a new fault is building up pressure, a new Harpers Ferry is being prepared. Its nature and timing cannot be predicted, but of its coming we have no doubt. When it comes, it will set off a series of tremors that will lead to the disintegration of the white race. We want to be ready, walking in Jerusalem just like John.

What kind of journal is this?

Race Traitor exists, not to make converts, but to reach out to those who are dissatisfied with the terms of membership in the white club. Its primary intended audience will be those people commonly called whites who, in one way or another, understand whiteness to be a problem that perpetuates injustice and prevents even the well-disposed among them from joining unequivocally in the struggle for human freedom. By engaging these dissidents in a journey of discovery into whiteness and its discontents, we hope to take

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part, together with others, in the process of defining a new human community.

Really, there are two questions - who are our readers and who are our writers? We imagine that both will be quite diverse. We expect to be read by educators, by clergy, by scholars, by parents, by teenagers - in short, by many people for whom the willingness to question their membership in the white club might be the only thing they hold in common. We anticipate that if we are successful, those individuals will come to have a great deal more in common.

About our writers: several months ago, we sent out a letter and brochure, mostly to people we knew, either personally or by reputation, and asked them to consider submitting articles for the premier issue of *Race Traitor*. We were delighted at the response and we hope that you share our enthusiasm. In addition to the articles included here, we have already received some that we will be publishing in our next issue.

At the time of the initial request, we provided some clues about the type of articles we hoped to receive but made it clear that we were willing to consider all submissions. We remain willing to do so and encourage all our readers to submit material.

You may wonder what kind of articles we want. We want to chronicle and analyze the making, re-making and un-making of whiteness. We wish neither to minimize the complicity of even the most downtrodden of whites with the system of white supremacy nor to exaggerate the significance of momentary departures from white rules. We want to get it right. With this, our first issue, we think we have barely made a beginning. Here are some topics we would like to have investigated and written about:

Movies - reviews of films such as *The Commitments*, *Q & A*, the newly released *Zebrahead*, and *Malcolm X*;

Sports - articles examining the ways in which the participation and interest in organized sports affects notions of

excellence and ability;

Schools - a look at the California social studies text book controversy and the issue of multi-culturalism.

Political Representation - an article on the recent redistricting of the New York City Council which drew race lines all across the city in order to promote the goal of group representativeness among local legislators;

Unions - an article on the contrast between the public posture of most of the trade unions, which stresses their support for civil rights and equality, and their everyday practices which continue to provide preferential treatment for whites, usually men;

Young People - articles not only about, but by, young people - about their schools, their neighborhoods, their friends, their conflicts (and their alliances) with their parents;

Political Philosophy - an article exploring the issue of responsibility. Who is responsible for things going on the way they do? How important is intent?

Literature - both original fiction and poetry and interpretive essays, especially on American writers;

Graphics - photographs and art work. To do so, we need artistic and technical assistance from our readers.

Debate - criticism and discussion through letters.

Music - of course.

These are only ideas. We are sure that our readers will have many more of their own - stories to tell, questions to ask. Please do not be shy. If you are not sure, write us and tell us about your ideas and we will respond.

We should say that there are some articles we are not interested in publishing. Since we are not seeking converts, we probably will not publish articles which lecture various organizations about their racial opportunism. Also, we

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probably will not publish articles promoting inter-racial harmony, because that approach too often leaves intact differential treatment of whites and blacks and provides subtle confirmation of the idea that different races exist independently of social distinctions.

Finally, a note about tone and style: we want well-written articles, and are willing to work with contributors on revisions we think necessary. We want the journal to be accessible to a wide audience. We welcome scholarly articles, but we may ask the authors to include more background explanation than they would for a professional journal.

In the original film version of *Robin Hood* (starring Errol Flynn), the Sheriff of Nottingham says to Robin, "You speak treason." Robin replies, "Fluently." We hope to do the same.