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Introduction

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Introduction

By James Jennings

The particular relationships between communities of color in the United States could very well be *the* political issue for urban America in the next century, with profound racial, cultural, and economic implications for all Americans. This issue of the *Trotter Review* focuses on various aspects of relations between communities of color.

Juanita Tamayo Lott points out how the issue of "race" must be discussed within a new context, due to the increasing ethnic differentiation within communities of color. In other words, "black" now means more than simply "African American," as is the case with such broad categories as "Asian" or "Latino." Karen Umemoto notes how the ignorance of the mainstream media has contributed to tensions between blacks and Koreans in Los Angeles. Claire Jean Kim also examines the politics of black-Korean conflict, but she emphasizes the ideology of Black Nationalism as a factor that can lead to both conflict and consensus.

Sonia M. Pérez, a senior policy analyst for the National Council of La Raza, shows how socioeconomic conditions are similar for young Puerto Rican and African-American males. She argues that there are potential common public policy strategies that can be pursued in response to the problems of these youth. Louis Kushnick's essay reminds us that the topic of relations between people of color is not unique to the United States. He touches upon similar racial and ethnic dynamics in England and Europe.

Vivian Wu Wong's fascinating essay shows how the Chinese community in Mississippi had to deal with and respond to America's racial hierarchy and the question of whether to choose "white" or "black" in describing themselves. Wong argues that Asian Americans have encountered an invisible racial barrier. Similarly, Lucas Rivera's essay also touches upon a topic that has been taboo in the Latino community for a very long time: racism among Latinos. It has been too easy for Latinos with African blood to deny their African ancestry, according to Rivera, while at the same time, some blacks have denied that there are Puerto Ricans with ties to Africa, leading to tensions between the two groups.

Juan Flores in his essay, which I found to be one of the most enjoyable I have ever read, shows how true it is, that *el que no tiene Dinga, tiene Mandinga!* (If you don't have African blood from one tribe, you have it from another). Blacks and Puerto Ricans, in particular, must start acknowledging the many commonalities in their cultures, music, and history. Due to these cultural commonalities, blacks and Puerto Ricans may, in fact, have a special responsibility to build models of cooperation and collaboration for other groups.

Rev. Cheng Imm Tan shows clearly that women of color have faced a dual oppression in terms of race or ethnicity, and gender. She urges women of color to talk to each other, and to build programs and strategies of intergroup solidarity. As she writes so eloquently, "To reclaim our power, we need to peel away the different layers of oppression . . . "

The last essay in this collection represents a conversation between the Trotter Institute, the Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, and the Asian-American Institute of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. These institutes are particularly proud of their record of trying to work and struggle together. They realize that in a society characterized by entrenched racial hierarchy, communities of color need to work together. Harold Horton uses this dialogue to comment briefly on the need to develop and support common political agendas.

Communication and collaboration between communities of color are vitally important today for the maintenance and expansion of democracy and social justice in the United States. We hope this issue of the *Trotter Review* will contribute to improving relations between communities of color.

James Jennings is director of the Trotter Institute and professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts at Boston. He is the author of a number of books including *The Politics of Black Empowerment: The Transformation of Black Activism in Urban America.*