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Recommended Citation

Fred Siegel, *Multiculturalism and Other Mistakes*, 41 DePaul L. Rev. 1191 (1992)
Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/law-review/vol41/iss4/11>

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MULTICULTURALISM AND OTHER MISTAKES

*Fred Siegel**

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism begins with the unexceptionable premise that it is important to recognize and even celebrate the wide range of cultures that cohabit the United States. But if multiculturalism begins with what sounds like a call for mutual tolerance—in short a new version of America's time-honored pluralism—it quickly turns into the opposite. Driven by an evangelical fervor, its hard-liners damn as “racism” any attempt to draw new or marginal groups into a common and, thankfully, already hyphenated American culture. The object of the multiculturalist ire, it turns out, is not old-fashioned prejudice but rather the unavoidable tension many Americans carry within them as bearers of a dual identity. The hyphenation that allows us to be both particularist and public minded, both Latino and American, is denounced as a danger to racial and gendered authenticity. Tolerance is transmuted into intolerance. It is racist, I am told, to ask people to give up their “authentic,” that is biological identities.

The conflation of biology and culture, a “left-wing” version of “blood and soil” fascism, stands behind the celebration of the tribal truths that the multiculturalists, self-designated organic intellectuals toiling away in the meaning factories, see as appealing. This is an extraordinary reversal of the traditional liberal and left-wing commitment to “truths” that transcended local prejudice and parochialisms. In the new race/class/gender dispensation, (class being the least important of the three), the Enlightenment heritage of universality, however hedged by contingent conditions is replaced by, among other things, feminist science, Nubian numerals (as part of

* Fred Siegel, a historian and professor at the Cooper Union, New York City, writes extensively about American liberalism. Recently, he has written about ethnic antagonism and the decline of the American cities.

The author of *Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan*, his articles have appeared in *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic*, *Dissent*, *Tikkun*, *Commonweal*, and the *City Journal*.

an Afrocentric science), and what Marilyn Frankenstein of the University of Massachusetts-Boston describes as an "ethnomathematics,"¹ in which the cultural basis of counting comes to the fore. Can black gravity be far behind, asks Stanley Crouch, who fears that a new primitivism promises to reproduce the old parochialist poisons in avant-garde packaging.

I. AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Placed in the context of modern American history multiculturalism has been first and foremost an attack on pluralism, a movement not for inclusion but separatism. Initiated in its twentieth-century form by William James and John Dewey and carried on by the traditions of cultural anthropology, pluralism, the respect for a diversity of perspectives, has been an essential component of American intellectual life for three-quarters of a century.² Drawing on some of the thinkers just mentioned, modern political pluralism first achieved prominence in the late 1930s when, in the face of fascism, liberal reformers began to redefine what it means to be an American. Thanks to the efforts of individuals like Horace Kallen and organizations like the American Jewish Committee, Americanism was, for many, redefined in terms of tolerance.³

Politically the full triumph of pluralism—the ideology underlying the consensus that developed in the early 1960s for racial integration—was brief. Its moment of greatest success was in the interlude between Lyndon Johnson's smashing defeat of Barry Goldwater's culturally Anglo-conformist presidential campaign in 1964 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.⁴ But that period of a faith in pluralistic integration, the faith we associate with Martin Luther King, now much supplanted by the Afro-fascism of Malcolm X, had a very brief efflorescence. In racial terms, pluralistic integration, it turned out, was just a brief phase between the passage of the

1. Books such as Sandra G. Hardy's *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986) argue that the scientific drive to control nature was linked to male dominance and thus the suppression of women.

2. See JOHN DEWEY, *The Principle of Nationality*, in 10 *THE MIDDLE WORKS, 1899-1924* (John Boydston ed., 1980); WILLIAM JAMES, *PRAGMATISM: AND FOUR ESSAYS FROM THE MEANING OF TRUTH* (Ralph B. Perry ed., 1943).

3. Horace M. Kallen, *Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot: A Study of American Nationality*, *THE NATION*, Feb. 25, 1915, at 217; Richard W. Steele, *The War on Intolerance: The Reformulation of American Nationalism, 1939-1941*, *J. AM. ETHNIC HIST.*, Fall 1989, at 9.

4. 42 U.S.C. §§ 1973-1973bb-1 (1988).

Civil Rights Act of 1964⁵ and the onset of Black Nationalism signaled by riots both verbal and physical. In the words of the great historian and liberal critic of segregation C. Vann Woodward, we went quickly from "Jim Crowism to Crow Jimism."⁶ We went from "colored people" to "people of color," from "separate, but equal" to "equal but separate."

Multiculturalism—and in some sense it represents the full flowering of what Black Nationalism first represented—is the triumph of a separatist racial ideology consistent with almost everything the pluralist integrationists fought against. David Duke and Spike Lee by contrast are multiculturalists in good standing, both insisting on the unbridgeable boundaries between the races. The babble of "blood and soil" and campus leftists aside, the meaning of multiculturalism is brought down to earth in the form of the T-shirts whose bold letters announce: "It's A [fill in the blank] Thing. You Wouldn't Understand."

The separatism of the multiculturalists also represents a reaction to failure. Twenty-eight years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, people expected things to be very different. The word *underclass* has not been used in any of the essays in this symposium, but twenty-seven years after the historic Voting Rights Act of 1965 no one expected that a part of the population would be permanently mired in misery and dependence. Multiculturalism represents, in part, a way of avoiding the paradox of how it is that discrimination has by any measurable standard decreased drastically yet part of the African-American population is worse off than ever. By trying to sniff out more and more subtle forms of "discrimination," multiculturalism allows its adherents to stick to old-time religion—albeit garbed in new vestments—about how white discrimination alone is responsible for the plight of minorities.⁷

Multiculturalism is also, in part, a response to the collapse of Third-Worldism. In fact, it might be described as an imploded Third-Worldism as in the case of the pro-Saddam rally in New

5. Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241 (codified at scattered sections of U.S.C.).

6. C. Vann Woodward, *Address at Organization of American Historians* (1979); cf. C. VANN WOODWARD, *THE STRANGE CAREER OF JIM CROW* (3d rev. ed. 1974).

7. On the decline of prejudice, see HOWARD SCHUMAN ET AL., *RACIAL ATTITUDES IN AMERICA: TRENDS AND INTERPRETATIONS* (1986). The authors found that by 1974, support for nondiscrimination in employment was almost 100 percent. In the 1970s, half of the increase in poverty, according to William Julius Wilson, took place in two cities: Chicago and New York. Poverty, he says, has become more urban, more concentrated, and more firmly implanted in the large cities.

York during the Gulf war, in which a speaker called for "The U.S. out of Kuwait, The U.S. out of the Persian Gulf, the U.S. out of North America."⁸ For people finally forced to confront the fact that Castro was a ridiculous figure, or that the Palestinians cheering on the roofs of the West Bank as Saddam's SCUDs landed on civilians represented the true face of Third World "liberation," multiculturalism was a refuge, an attempt to reclaim the high ground wherein the evil West was once again responsible for the world's misery.

The United States has long been enormously diverse. In the nineteenth century, we had German-language schools—public schools—not officially German-language, but functionally German language. Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth spoke German to each other in the Yankee Club House. We had fights over the Catholic school system—tremendously bitter fights. People forget how recently those conflicts ended. In 1966, a new constitution proposed for New York State, which would have done much of what New York governor Mario Cuomo now wants in taking the Medicare burden off the back of New York City, was defeated over the issue of aid to parochial schools.⁹

Questions of diversity are not new. What is different is the transition from the notions of affirmative action, which were consistent with pluralistic integration, to notions of quotas,¹⁰ which are consistent with separatism. What we now have is a situation in which we are beginning to create a cradle-to-grave set of separate channels—separate tracks. So the kids will be able to go to Afrocentric schools, apply to college on an affirmative action basis, take a separate set of courses in college, and then go on to a separate job track.¹¹ The logic leads to affirmative action for exports, and that is exactly what President Bush did when he took his begging bowl to

8. Lynn Darling, *Organizing the Opposition*, NEWSDAY, Oct. 18, 1990, at 8.

9. See DIANE RAVITCH, *THE GREAT SCHOOL WARS: NEW YORK CITY, 1805-1973* (1974).

10. The issue of quotas dominated debate over passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. See Reginald C. Govan, *Framing Issues and Acquiring Codes: An Overview of the Legislative Sojourn of the Civil Rights Act of 1991*, 41 DEPAUL L. REV. 1057 (1992). For a concise historical perspective on multiculturalism, see ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR., *THE DISUNITING OF AMERICA* (1992).

11. Stephen Carter describes the negative consequences of this in the employment market as the "best black" syndrome, where blacks are hired not necessarily because they are the best qualified candidate for the job but because they are the best black available. STEPHEN L. CARTER, *REFLECTIONS OF AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BABY*, ch. 3 (1991).

Japan.¹² He was in practice asking for quotas for the United States. The logical outcome of this kind of separatism is a confessional state in which an individual's future will be tied to his or her "official identity."

There is something truly perverse in the attempt to establish multiculturalism in the United States when multicultural societies all over the world are breaking apart. Mayor David Dinkins likes to talk about New York City as a mosaic.¹³ But the country on New York State's northern border, Canada, has long prided itself on being a mosaic, a society without a strong, unifying element, and Canada is breaking apart. In what was Yugoslavia, Croats and Serbs—people who have a similar physiognomy and a considerable commonality of culture—are torn apart by the endless nurturing of historical grievances. Despite their shared skin color, Serbs and Croats speak and think of each other as separate races, each assuming often in bloody fashion that the other is somewhat less than human. That is what a confessional state can breed.

Black separatists in the United States are engaged in one-way thinking on a two-way street. They speak as if white society is frightened by their calls to stand apart when in fact much of white society is delighted at the prospect. One of the things I discover when I interview suburban New Jerseyans is that when I ask, Are you a Republican, or are you a Democrat? they answer, I am not a New Yorker. They define themselves in opposition to the city, which in turn is defined by the malignancies associated with the underclass. This, by the way, goes across class lines and, to some extent, even across racial lines. The New Jersey suburbs are only too happy to secede from the problems of the inner city.¹⁴

II. MULTICULTURALISM IN EDUCATION

What you cannot have with multiculturalism is a public school system. Nor can you have an extensive welfare state. People are not willing to transfer money to those with whom they feel but a scant sense of shared identity.

12. See, e.g., Michael Wines, *Bush in Japan; Bush Reaches Pact with Japan, But Automakers Renounce It*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 10, 1992, at A1.

13. See, e.g., Joelle Attinger, *A Nice Guy Finishes First*, TIME, Nov. 20, 1989, at 60 (stating that Dinkins drew support from what he referred to as a "gorgeous mosaic" of voters).

14. These interviews were conducted to gauge the state political temperature in the aftermath of Governor James Florio's record-breaking 1989 tax increases.

If we leave aside the unwillingness of others to pay for a public school system parochialized along racial lines, there is the question of whether multiculturalism will in fact raise the achievement levels of black children. One way to answer that question is to look at what happened in Brooklyn's Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district. In the late 1960s, an attempt by Black Nationalists to take over the Ocean Hill schools precipitated a fight between liberals and radicals that proved to be one of the defining moments in the decline of American liberalism. Separatism partly succeeded, partly failed, but what is now called an Afrocentric curriculum was largely instituted.¹⁵ Despite, or perhaps because of, that curriculum Ocean Hill students have continued to slide down the path to academic marginality. Nor has Afrocentrism been confined to Ocean Hill. Multiculturalism has long been de rigueur in the trendy public schools of Manhattan's West Side. I had the following conversation with the ten-year-old son of a friend who attends an Upper West Side public school. I asked him what he thought of George Washington—he was a fifth-grader at the time. “Oh, you mean George Washington Carver.” He had never learned about George Washington in his school. He had a multicultural curriculum.

To listen to the Catherine Stimpsons and Leonard Jeffries' of the world, you would think that until the day just before yesterday, until, that is, the multiculturalists arose, college curricula were a hotbed of racist and sexist dogma. In fact, and this was much to the country's benefit, the curricula that are coming under attack today are those that were long-ago revised by the academic revolution of the 1960s, a revolution that fortunately broadened the variety of sources students studied. When I was writing an article for *The New Republic* on multiculturalism,¹⁶ I discovered that of the many proponents I spoke to, none could name a single history text in use at a major college that failed to give a marked pride of place to black and women's history. In New York State, the new multiculturalist curriculum championed by the likes of the Afrofacists Leonard Jeffries and State Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol was replacing not the hidebound product of 1950s reactionaries, but a

15. Cf. Julie Johnson, *Curriculum Seeks to Lift Blacks' Self-Image*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 8, 1989, at A1 (noting that after the controversy in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools in the late 1960s, schools, parents, and educators first demanded a multicultural curriculum).

16. Fred Siegel, *The Cult of Multiculturalism: How Orthodoxy Speaks Power to the Truth*, THE NEW REPUBLIC, Feb. 18, 1991, at 34.

1987 curriculum put together by a diverse group of left-liberal, albeit firmly rationalist, scholars.¹⁷

The assumption behind the multiculturalist curriculum is that there is “no nature of things,” that there are no “facts” but only power. It implicitly denigrates the importance of shared reasoning and debate as the mechanisms that make society work. The multiculturalist fascination with power as the source of truth has a dual and dishonorable lineage. It is a mix of the Leninist fascination with sheer power and the fascist fascination with myth as an alternative source of truth. Neither of these tendencies are compatible with the skeptical and empirical attitudes that contribute to both science and self-government. Multiculturalists of both the Afrocentric and feminist variety argue with all sincerity that Western science is a subtle form of white male domination rather than a reasonably accurate picture of part of why the physical world works as it does. It is, they argue, power imposing itself on truth.¹⁸ But sometimes it is the other way around. In mathematics, as with what was Soviet Lysenkoism, it has been truth that has imposed itself on power. In Eastern Europe similarly it was—even if this hasn’t been discovered in many American universities—truth, the truth of Soviet failure that imposed itself on the commissars’ power.

Academia has been taking it on the chin lately. For all of academia’s moral pretense, the country has been exposed to a good deal of old-fashioned greed in the form, for instance, of money swiped from the federal government. Stanford paid for luxury yachts out of “research overhead,”¹⁹ while at the University of Pitts-

17. Catharine Stimpson, an educational bureaucrat at Rutgers, has been a leading multiculturalist. See, e.g., Catharine R. Stimpson, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, THE NATION, Sept. 30, 1991, at 378. Leonard Jeffries, until recently Chairman of the City College of New York’s Black Studies program, is perhaps most famous for asserting that the sun people (blacks) are superior to the ice people (whites).

To take but one field, there has been since the mid-1960s literal transformation of African-American history. Studies by Eric Foner, John Hope Franklin, Eugene Genovese, and Herbert Gutman almost totally revised earlier notions that saw slaves as the merely passive recipients of white culture. E.g., ERIC FONER, *RECONSTRUCTION: AMERICA’S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION, 1863-1877* (Henry S. Commager & Richard B. Morris eds., 1988); JOHN H. FRANKLIN, *FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM* (1988); EUGENE D. GENOVESE, *ROLL JORDAN ROLL: THE WORLD THE SLAVES MADE* (1974); HERBERT G. GUTMAN, *THE BLACK FAMILY IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM, 1750-1925* (1976).

18. For a full-fledged attack on Western science as simply another form of imperialism, see PAUL FEYERABEND, *FAREWELL TO REASON* (1987).

19. See Claudia H. Deutsch, *Academia Fails the Ethics Test*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 3, 1991, § 4a, at 26.

burgh people were stunned to learn that the retiring president, Wesley Posvar, was given a \$3.3 million retirement package.²⁰ It was the kind of golden parachute usually reserved for vulgar businessmen. The governor of Pennsylvania has in turn proposed a sharp cut in Pitt's subsidy.²¹

Academia's loss of prestige is really quite extraordinary. Neither academia nor academics are given the respect and standing they were once accustomed to. If you spend time in Washington, as I do, and you talk to people in government, the derogatory jokes about academia are almost as numerous as the jokes about lawyers. Except the lawyers have a lot more money to lobby with. Similarly in the state legislatures, academia outside the sciences is often seen as a kind of intellectual backwater, which indeed it is.

Louis Menand, writing in *Harper's*, has put forth this defense to explain the academy's loss of standing and prestige. Unintentionally writing from the tradition of what Dwight Macdonald called academic leaf raking, Menand argued that literature classes at least do no harm.²² In Menand's hands, the defense of the humanities turns into an argument for universities as public works programs for otherwise unemployable *luftmenschen*.

Part of the reason multiculturalism could succeed is that so much of the university had already been hollowed out. You ask, What was the curriculum like at a typical college before the advent of multiculturalism? The curriculum was made up the same way Congress makes up the budget: on the basis of pork barrelling and log rolling. You, over there in philosophy, you will get four courses. We will take care of you. And you, over there, you will get your three courses. There was no attempt at intellectual coherence.

The notion that a canon, a word imported by our "advanced thinkers" to connote the religious veneration attached to Western culture, was being imposed on the students is wildly wide of the mark. But then most deconstructionists and their ilk have difficulty distinguishing between the French academic models attacked by their favorite Parisian intellectuals and the schools they actually at-

20. Cf. USA TODAY, June 10, 1991, (News), at 6A (stating that Pennsylvania's state auditor revealed plans to audit Pres. Posvar's retirement package after requests from trustees and faculty).

21. See Pat Bart, *Universities Brace for Casey's Budget Cuts*, PITT. BUS. TIMES & J., Jan. 21, 1991, § 1, at 2.

22. Louis Menand, *What Are Universities For: The Real Crisis on Campus Is one of Identity*, HARPER'S, Dec. 1991, at 47.

tended. Most students going through state universities have no coherence to their curriculum. There is no canon being imposed. Seventy percent of them never have had a Western Civilization course. Most university curricula are organized cafeteria-style, so that students are free to choose whatever mix of courses they like within the frameworks of schools' administrative, not intellectual, needs.

The primary concern of many schools is how to bring in the bodies to fill the many slots established during the heyday of university expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. Stuck now with a huge investment in plant equipment and staff they need bodies to fill their FTE requirements. Where colleges once selected students, they now recruit them. Many have dropped their admission standards dramatically to ensure the continuing flow of dollars. Now that attending college has been made a virtual entitlement, the effect has been to undermine the high schools, which no longer need to prepare students for stringent college entrance requirements.

The decline in college admission standards has set a vicious cycle into motion. When the poorly prepared high school students first began arriving in college, they were treated with kid gloves for fear that too many failures would create morale problems as well as scare away future recruits. The net effect was to lower the standards of the college. This further reduced the pressure on the high schools to prepare students while setting in motion a continuous downward spiral of American higher education, until many colleges at this point are really just glorified high schools. Increasingly the focus of these post-secondary social institutions, as with the high schools proper, is the therapeutic curriculum that downgrades competence and core knowledge in favor of "healing" and self-esteem.²³

There was a little statistic in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* a couple of years ago. It is hard to estimate exactly, but the increase in the number of administrative personnel in the universities in the 1980s was between 500 and 800 percent.²⁴ They are part of something new in academia: people who are making a career of academic administration. There have always been full-time administrators, but they usually worked alongside working scholars; they were people deeply involved in their schools who had taken time off from

23. For a discussion of how this has played out in New Jersey, see Robert Braun, *Freshmen Show a Sharp Decline in Skill Scores*, NEWARK STAR LEDGER, Mar. 15, 1992, § 1, at 1.

24. Karen Grassmuck, *Big Increases in Academic-Support Staff: Growing Concerns on Campuses*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Mar. 28, 1990, at A1.

their intellectual pursuits to work as managers of sorts. What is new is that there is now a large cadre of full time academic administrators who define themselves as separate and distinct from faculty. What are these people doing? Well, one of the many therapeutic programs they are pushing is multiculturalism. It provides a career path for administrators looking not so much to improve a campus—they are likely to be there only briefly—but to make a name for themselves.²⁵

At times, when I visit some of the more politically correct campuses I feel like the people who in the late 1950s stumbled onto Japanese soldiers holding out on isolated islands, who had not yet heard that they had lost the war. The meaning if not the news of the Berlin Wall's fall just has not reached some of our "vanguard" academics.

Many "advanced" thinkers, dismayed to find that the term *political correctness* has been turned against them, now assume that the term they once championed was an invention of diabolically clever right-wingers. Not at all; the term has a history. I first heard the term when I was a small boy, sitting in my living room listening to my grandfather and his friends, veterans of the 1930s labor movement, discussing Stalinism. These grizzled veterans, some of them Menshevik and Bundist escapees from Czarist prisons, were most definitely not PC; they refused to adopt the Stalinist standard of political correctness—they insisted on the need for socialism to be democratic, a most incorrect view at the time. The term reappeared in the early 1980s, used by earnest students who had no idea of its previous history but who managed to recapture some of the old attitudes. To be politically correct was to be progressive and forward-looking and all those good things. Only later was there a kind of moral jujitsu. The term was turned around as a kind of knife—a knife thrust back into the heart of the people who initially used it.

Both the 1930s and 1980s version of political correctness are part of the long history of a left-wing tendency of intolerance. In the 1930s, it took a Marxist form. Scientific materialism was indubitably true, and therefore all those people who held up the revolution

25. According to a recent report by the American Association of University Professors, after the rapid rise in managerial hiring during the 1980s, United States colleges spent 45 cents on administration for every dollar spent on teaching. In the 1950s, the comparable figure was 27 cents. For a summary of the report, see Lucy Hodges, *US 'Spending 45 Cents A Dollar on Admin'*, THE TIMES HIGHER EDUC. SUPP., Mar. 27, 1992, at 9.

by insisting on debate and discussion had to be pushed aside, at best, or liquidated where possible. In the 1960s, leftism was plagued by the Marcusean attack on free speech. Free speech, argued the great German guru, was merely a sneaky form of social control, a repressive tolerance that allowed clearly reactionary views to be expressed.²⁶ True to his view, Herbert Marcuse, it is now forgotten, was opposed to allowing blacks the vote if they failed to vote properly, that is, along progressive lines as defined by Marcuse's mulligan stew of Marx, Freud, and fantasy. Today the middle-aged academics who have passed from Marcuse's Freudo-Marxism to Michele Foucault are attracted to a new politically correct version of the attack on free speech. Today sophists like Stanley Fish, the anti-Havel who always insists on speaking power to truth, and the various outriders of the sensitivity police, insists that free speech is merely a strategy for mystification. The epistemology has changed, the politics have not.²⁷

When I read the works of the multicultural theorists and I go to conferences, I hear the term "racism" used and it is always a one-way street. There is only "white racism." By definition, I am told, nonwhites can not be racist. One example of this definitional dementia: On the campus of the University of Cincinnati during the Gulf War, a group of black and white students mocked and hassled a group of Arab students demonstrating—parading on behalf of Saddam Hussein. They were brought up on disciplinary procedures. But, the University decided they could only discipline the white students because the black students were by definition not capable of engaging in racist acts. It reminds me of the old argument that by definition the Soviet Union cannot be antisemitic. More immediately it strikes my New York ear as a perfect example of the sinister strategies that threaten to sunder the city from time to time.

In New York there is not only the white racism of Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, where the innocent Yusef Hawkins was wantonly slain, but also the black racism of Crown Heights, where, as Mayor Dinkins courageously put it, a young rabbinical student was "lynched" by a black mob.²⁸ What set the Crown Heights incident

26. See HERBERT MARCUSE ET AL., *CRITIQUE OF PURE TOLERANCE* (1965). On Marcuse and the black vote, see Leo Rosten, *To an Angry Old Man*, ENCOUNTER, July 1969, at 91, 92.

27. In the immortal words of Stanley Fish: Free speech. Tell me another one.

28. E.g., John Kifner, *A Boy's Death Ignites Clashes in Crown Heights*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 21, 1991, at B1; Felicia R. Lee, *Mayor Strongly Attacks Race Hatred*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 26, 1991, at B7 (quoting Mayor Dinkins as saying that "the man of God they lynched was . . . a Jewish

off was that a driver of a car, part of a Lubavitcher caravan accidentally killed Gavin Cato, a nine-year-old black boy. Sad and unfortunate as the incident was, there was no indication that the driver was drunk or that he tried to leave the scene of the accident. Roughly a year earlier, the situation was reversed: a Hasidic boy had been killed by a black driver, a driver with no license and no registration. Nothing happened. But when Cato was killed rumors of conspiracy spread like wildfire. They spread among those Black Nationalists who adulated the Afrofacist mythologies of City College of New York's Chair of Black Studies, Leonard Jeffries, who has become infamous for obiter dicta denouncing whites as racially inferior. According to Jeffries, a close epistemological kin of both deconstructionists and Oliver *JFK* Stone, ordinary white factual history is itself a racist plot against the black past. Now insofar as pace our fashionable sophists history and truth are merely successfully enacted rhetorics, the mob acted on the "truth" of the conspiracy that had been alleged. For half a week, mobs roamed the streets of Crown Heights attacking whites while the self-appointed leaders of the riot proclaimed in good Leonard Jeffries/Oliver Stone fashion the emotional if not factual truth of their account of a white conspiracy.²⁹

III. CONCLUSION

In the long run the victim of Crown Heights, as of multiculturalism, will be the black community. In the long run the nonwhite population of Crown Heights will leave the area behind just as students schooled not in multiculturalist approximation but in Western mathematical precision—the sciences have, mercifully, been largely spared the therapeutic turn—will leave their black counterparts behind. It is hard to imagine a better strategy to marginalize black America. Objectivity is in the long run the friend of those on the margins of society; it establishes a single standard to which all can, in principle at least, be held to account. That great relativist the Machiavellian Cardinal Richelieu understood this perfectly. "In matters of state," he explained, "the weakest are always wrong."

divinity student out for a quiet walk").

29. For a brief account of the Jeffries story and its relationship to the Crown Heights rioting and killing, see Philip Gourevitch, *The Jeffries Affair*, COMMENTARY, Mar. 1992, at 34; James Sleeper, *Demagoguery in America: Wrong Turns in the Politics of Race*, TIKKUN, Nov./Dec. 1991, at 43.