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美国概况——美国社会、历史与文化

江宁康 主编

A Survey of the U.S.A: American Society, History & Culture

(本书被南京大学列为“建设世界高水平大学”教材建设项目)

东南大学出版社

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—*American Society, History & Culture*

美国概况

——美国社会、历史与文化

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PART ONE

A SOCIETY OF DIVERSITY

多元社会的美国

美国社会从立国之初就是一个多民族混合的形态,它包含了当地人和外来移民的各种成分,即使在欧洲移民中也有不同国家和地区的差别,所以说,美国是个多元化的社会。美国迄今所接受的移民总共有 5 000 多万人,约占其总人口的五分之一,而且现在每年仍要接纳数十万移民。在美国的中国移民曾对美国社会的发展作出过重要的贡献,如参加修筑大铁路等。美国式的价值观念和各移民群体的多种文化模式与语言在美国社会里都有着各自的地位。美国社会从传统的农业形态向工业形态的转变经历了一百多年的时间,而从工业形态转向信息形态只用了几十年。在这期间,美国的城市化运动使社会生活产生了很大的变化,同时,各种社会问题也在向人们发起挑战。

1492 年哥伦布在巴哈马群岛中的圣萨尔瓦多岛登陆时,美国大陆的土著美洲人(“印第安人”)已经约有 150 万人之多。在印第安人之中也有许多说不同方言的群落存在,所以美国有大量地名源自印第安语,如马萨诸塞、俄亥俄、密歇根、密西西比、密苏里和爱达荷。在随后的 300 年中,大量欧洲移民陆续来到了北美洲大陆,后来又有亚洲各国人的到来,再加上从非洲来的奴隶等,美国的族裔多元化就形成了。不过,移民社会的多元性并不能掩盖美国社会的主导特性,即“美国性”的存在。所有的移民在美国都会受到美国本土文化和生活模式的熏陶,接受一些共同的价值观和遵守共同的美国法律,所以,多元社会与“美国性”是相互依存的。

美国社会还存在着贫富阶层的差距,许多少数族裔的人们缺少相当的工作技能而陷入贫困,而受到良好教育和天赋较高的人经过奋斗会得到很好的物质生活条件,另外还有一些人由于家庭等原因而过着富裕的生活。美国社会在民主政体的规定下,具有大社会和小政府的特征。市民社会的形成在很大程度上决定了美国人在个人、家庭和社会之间的关系中保持着相对独立的自我。由于多年来的城市化运动,现在有大约 80% 的人居住在城市或城市近郊。美国社会的大都市、城市和小镇生活模式都有一些相同之处,特别是四通八达的高速公路、航空运输和电讯网络等让美国社会变得越来越小,社会流动变得越来越频繁。美国社会结构的一个重要特点是社区管理的自主性,教会和其他社会组织往往发挥了稳定社会的重要作用。

美国人极为推崇“自立自强”的精神,强调个人隐私的重要性,大多数美国人以能够自食其力为荣。但是,联邦政府和地方政府都对公民提供许多社会福利和医疗急救保障,这是美国社会能够长期保持稳定的一个重要原因。F. 罗斯福总统在 20 世纪 30 年代实行的“新政”给美国人民带来了一些重要的社会改革,如国家和政府的干预限制了工业巨头的垄断,为失业和贫穷的人提供社会福利帮助,建立社会保障体系为退休和患病的人提供经济

支持等等。美国对老弱病残的救助计划是每一届政府所关心的事,其中每年耗资约1500亿美元左右的医疗补助是最大的社会福利计划,而发放食品券的方式也帮助了许多失业者度过难关。美国的家庭经历了由传统型向现代型的转变,现在的家庭越来越小,还出现了许多单亲家庭,尤其是单身母亲的家庭。不过,由于美国社会中宗教的影响很大,遵守传统道德和重视家庭亲情仍被视为高尚和正派的生活作风。

美国社会中的一个重要力量就是大众媒体的作用,今日美国社会的信息畅通使人们每天要花七八个小时接触各种媒体的信息。由于政府对市民生活很少干预,而各种社会矛盾又总是不断地出现,所以大众媒体就担当了监督政府管理、揭露社会问题、维护社会安定以及报道和解说时事政策的重要任务。美国媒体的发展与技术革命和城市化运动是同步的,从1690年第一张报纸《海外与境内公共事件》出版到1820年,美国出现了大约25家日报和400多种周报。现在美国最大的5家日报为:《华尔街日报》、《今日美国报》、《纽约时报》、《洛杉矶时报》和《华盛顿邮报》。美国第一份大量发行的杂志是1893年出版的《时代周刊》,1993年后,这家杂志又发行了全国第一个网络版。到了2008年,美国每年出版杂志达到22000多份。美国还有13000多家广播电台和数百家电视台,但是占据主导地位的只有NBC全国广播公司、CBC哥伦比亚广播公司、ABC美国广播公司以及福克斯公司等少数几个大公司。美国媒体对社会的影响力甚至超过了许多政治家,左右着社会的风范和舆论。

美国也和其他各国一样,存在着许多的社会矛盾和社会问题,例如吸毒、家庭和街头暴力、性骚扰、种族歧视、赌博和城市流浪者等诸多问题。美国的吸毒问题从20世纪50年代以后日益严重,使用毒品的人各个阶层都有,但主要发生在年轻人中间。毒品带来了走私、抢劫和艾滋病等许多严重的社会问题,所以美国反毒品的法律十分严厉。家庭和街头暴力犯罪经常受到媒体的曝光,并会受到法律的制裁。但是,有些社会问题如性骚扰、家庭暴力和种族歧视等并不都是容易界定的,所以这些问题引起的矛盾更为深刻。美国的妇女运动和女权主义运动对减少社会性别歧视产生了很大的影响。美国社会有一个独特的问题是滥用枪支的问题,因为美国法律允许私人拥有枪支,全国有大约17万家枪店。近年来发生的好几起校园枪击案件就说明了事态的严重性。

文化和族裔多元性是美国社会的一个基本的特征,但是,随着少数族裔的兴起和全球化的扩展,美国社会的民族认同也在产生着新的变化。没有对民族文化的认同,就不会有统一和强大的民族国家的存在基础,美国也不例外。自从美国黑人民权运动遍及全国后,尤其是马丁·路德·金被暗杀以后,美国朝野上下都对族裔身份和民族认同等问题有了更多的共识。这些社会思想变化也对第一位非裔美国总统奥巴马的当选产生了相当的影响。在今日全球化的时代里,美国社会的许多矛盾和问题不仅是国内的也是国际的,如环境保护问题和网络空间扩展等问题。但是,美国民族的独特性和美国社会的多元性永远会形成一种富有张力的统一体;而美国社会在网络空间的覆盖下,也会越来越能够包容其他民族国家的社会文化因素与活力。

Unit One Immigrants, Ethnic and Social Groups

1. A Historical Perspective

The United States is a nation of diversity, culturally and socially, and the major body of its population consists of millions of immigrants and many ethnic groups. The earliest migration to the continent took place about 20,000 years ago but it is Christopher Columbus who first brought to the attention of Europeans the new world. Driven by the desire for seeking wealth and freedom, tens of thousands of immigrants moved from Europe to the rich land, establishing the base of a new civilization. Most of these immigrants landed at one of the five major American ports: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore^① and New Orleans^②. In 1776, Thomas Paine, an English immigrant, wrote a famous line; “Europe, not England, is the parent country to America.” Besides these European immigrants who came to the continent for pursuit of happiness and wealth, there was a large body of immigrants coming from Africa: the Africans were forced to move to the continent as slaves through slave trade. About 500,000 Africans were brought to the colonies as slaves between 1619 and 1808 and by the eve of the Civil War, there were more than one million slaves in the United States.



The Statue of Liberty — the Sign of Freedom for Millions of Immigrants

According to the first official census in 1790, almost half of the population, about 2,000,000 people, had English origin and the rest came from different origins such as Scots-Irish, German,

① Baltimore (巴尔的摩): a seaport in north Maryland.

② New Orleans (新奥尔良): a city and port in SE Louisiana, on the Mississippi.

Dutch, French, Swedish, Welsh and Finnish. These white Europeans were mostly Protestants, while one-fifth of the population was enslaved Africans. To accept more immigrants arriving in the new world, the American government chose Ellis Island^① in the late 1800s as a special port of entry into New York harbor, a port that has become a historical reputable place, for welcoming millions of immigrants. In 1886, France gave the United States the Statue of Liberty as a gesture of friendship, and since then the Statue, standing on an island near Ellis Island, has become a symbol of hope, lighting the way for new arrivals. Besides the early settlers and immigrants who took part in building the new nation in the 1700s and 1800s, more than 13 million immigrants came to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century.

Along with the rapid growth of American economy after the Civil War, the demand for more immigrants, most of whom were cheap labors, also increased and this demand was fulfilled by endless flow of immigrants from Europe tormented^② by famine and wars. When cottage industries finally gave way to the process of the Industrial Revolution on both sides of the Atlantic, more people came in search of new chances for survival. In the mid-1840s, Chinese immigrants, most from impoverished^③ Southeastern China, began to immigrate to the west coast areas near San Francisco and Los Angeles. Faced with the increasing number of immigrants, American citizens and the government felt the pressure of living conditions and job market, so they began to ask for restricting the acceptance of unlimited numbers of immigrants. To put their demand to action, some citizens organized themselves on racial or religious ground for the purpose of rejecting immigrants, and the Ku Klux Klan and the Immigration Restriction League were the most notorious^④. In 1882, for example, the United States banned most Chinese immigration and tremendously reduced the entry of other Asian immigrants. In 1924, Congress passed the Reed-Johnson Immigration Act, setting limits on the influx^⑤ of newcomers with quotas calculated on nation of origin, which means the number of legible people of a country was based on the number of people from that country already living in the US. Throughout the postwar decades, the policy of nationally based quotas remained effective and the structure of American population considerably reflects this Act even today.

There are two large bodies of immigrants that reflect the particularity of US immigration policy: refugees and illegal immigrants, whose size continues to grow till now. In 1959 and 1980, for instance, the United States first accepted about 700,000 Cuban refugees and then a group of more than 110,000 Cuban refugees in boats. After the end of the Vietnam War, the United States

① Ellis Island (埃利斯岛): an island in the bay of New York that from 1892 until 1954 served as an entry point for immigrants to the US, and later (until 1954) as a detention center for people awaiting deportation.

② torment (折磨): to cause to suffer great pain in mind or body.

③ impoverished (穷困的): poor.

④ notorious (声名狼藉的): famous or widely known for something bad.

⑤ influx (流入): sudden arrival of large numbers or quantities.

accepted about 750,000 refugees from Indo-China^① areas. As to the illegal immigrants, the United States has more than 4 million people living in the country without legal permission, and many of the illegal immigrants have Mexican origin because of historical reasons and the common border with the country. In 1990, about 880,000 people gained legal status and more than 2.5 million people were waiting for being legalized.

In 1965, a new law was signed to ignore immigrants' country of origin and immigration patterns thus changed as the United States accepted immigrants on the basis of who applies first within overall annual limits. This change brought about the changed nature of the American population. Today, Black Americans compose about 12 percent of the total population and there are more than 18 million Hispanic^② people. The diversity of population has greatly changed people's old concept of "melting-pot" because different groups of people like to live in distinctive communities such as "Chinatown" and "Little Italy" although these people are also bound by the same "American culture".

Specifically, ethnic minorities in the United States demonstrate their cultural traits^③ prominently, and in a sense successfully in recent years. African Americans, for example, have contributed to the forming of American culture, which is typically exemplified in the success of Toni Morrison's literary career. To list some major ethnic groups, we can find the Black people the largest race and the Spanish-speaking people another rapidly growing ethnic group; while Asian Americans including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Indians, make important contributions to the prosperity of American economy. At the same time, however, white immigrants from both western and eastern European countries, such as Poland and Germany, continue to make their appearance in the United States. According to the 1990 census, about 13 percent of US population had English origin, while about 23.2 percent had German origin and 15.5 percent Irish roots. According to the Harvard Encyclopedia^④ of American Ethnic Groups, there are 106 major groups in the United States today, including Native Americans, Mexicans, Afro-Americans, Arabs, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Eskimos, Filipinos, Greeks, Irish, Italians, Jews, Polish, and Russians. Within these categories, however, there are many sub-ethnic groups, such as 170 different Native American tribes and diverse Arabic groups including Syrians, Jordanians, Egyptians, and Palestinians.

In recent decades, some important legislative documents have remapped^⑤ the order of

① Indo-China (印度支那半岛): the peninsula of SE Asia containing Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Malaya, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam; especially the part of this area consisting of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, which was a French dependency from 1862 to 1954.

② Hispanic (西班牙的): of or relating to Spain or to Spanish-speaking countries, especially those of Central and Southern America.

③ trait (显著的特点): particular quality, esp. of a person.

④ encyclopedia (百科全书): a book or a set of books dealing with every branch of knowledge, or with one particular branch, usu. in an alphabetical order.

⑤ remap (再规划): to assign a function to a different format.

American immigration policies. The first is the Immigration Act of 1965 that gave the priority to the applicants for family reunification, and since then the number of Asian immigrants has increased rapidly. In 1980, the Refugee Act presented a new refugee policy by lifting over a world limit of 270,000 persons per year. In 1990, the Immigration Act increased the number of employment-based immigrants. Some changes took place in 1996 when the Illegal Immigration Act restricted the aid to the illegal immigrants and tightened the border control. After the September 11, 2001, the immigration policy was once again tightened and on October 26, 2001, President Bush signed the final bill, the USA Patriot Act, into law. The Act retains provisions appreciably expanding government investigative authority, especially with respect to the Internet. Some local governments complained about the Act, such as New York City Council that passed a resolution against the Act for the law's infringement^① on privacy rights in 2004. Despite this negative response, the Patriotic Act enhanced a sense of patriotism, leaving far-reaching influence in the issues like immigration policy.

2. *Ethnic Diversity and Social Mobility*

There is no denying that ethnic groups have maintained their cultural values and patterns in one way or another but some basic American values, such as individualism and enterprising spirit, remain influential in shaping these ethnic groups' thinking about the world. This reshaping is particularly true to the second and third generations of immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds. The loss of ethnic distinctiveness is also diverse as some European ethnic people can speak only English, while many Asian Americans can be effectively bilingual. In terms of the social mobility of these ethnic groups, members of most ethnic groups are full participants in American life and social mobility, as many ethnic minority people, such Jewish and Latino people, have moved in actuality into many important political and economic sectors. In recent years, some Chinese-Americans have been promoted into the federal government in charge of some departments and agencies.

Compared with this up-ward social mobility, an up-down mobility also takes place everyday as some ethnic groups suffer disadvantages and setbacks in their pursuit of American dreams. One of the most important reasons is their lack of interest in negotiating their own culture with mainstream values if racial discrimination has been accounted on. Consequently, poverty and all other difficulties often make it more difficult for black Americans and Mexicans to acquire the social and educational skills for better and desirable social positions. Although many institutions, such as universities and diverse governments, make clear of their equal-opportunity policies, racial prejudice and discrimination against blacks, Chinese and Hispanics blockade^② many members of

① infringement (侵害): infringe, to go against (a law, etc.) or take over (the right of another person).

② blockade (封锁): the surrounding of a place by warships or soldiers to prevent people or goods from coming in or going out.

these groups from moving upward in society and business circles. They have to live and work in limited sectors of American society with fewer chances than others in getting into some crucial positions. At present, about one of every five Americans is a member of such a group suffering economic and social disadvantages because of racial barriers that are confronting them. The case that a Chinese-American scientist Wen Ho Lee was involved in 1999 is a typical example in this regard. Besides the colored people who have these problems of racial prejudice, some Irish, Italians and German people, or the Catholics and the Jews, may face certain degree of hostility^① and discrimination which severely restricted their opportunities for social and academic mobility. As to those illegal immigrants, their conditions are even worse in their encountering racial and ethnic discrimination.

The ethnic issue has had a long history ever since the founding of the United States, or even before that time. The first settlers living in Virginia (1607) and Massachusetts (1620) brought to this new world the issue of ethnic groups as they had to first of all make adjustments to their relationships with the Native and local Americans. At that time, a prominent factor that posed enduring influence on local society was the successful transplanting of the English language and laws, Protestant ethics, social customs, and economic mechanism. Faced with the dominance of English culture, in a sense, all other groups had to adjust themselves with these “indigenous” standards although they simultaneously^② retained their own cultural and social norms^③ to a degree. After the founding of a new nation, tens of thousands of immigrants had also to follow the new standards based on the values that American founding fathers had advocated in Constitutions and other law documents. This is the basic reason for the tension between different ethnic groups, especially between the people of Anglo-American^④ origin and other ethnic groups. The tension between these ethnic groups, major or minor, became worse as the relationship between white and the Natives moved into conflicts that were often settled by force of arms on the one hand; and on the other hand, the issue of slavery deteriorated^⑤ the situation as some Europeans considered Indians and blacks inferior in their civilization and just suitable for humble works and positions. This kind of racist ideas may still linger^⑥ in some people’s mind and must be criticized today.

The early process of industrialization demanded for more cheap labor forces, thereby facilitating^⑦ the acceptance of more immigrants to the United States. Many Chinese workers, for example, came to help build canals and cross-continental railroads, contributing enormously to the completion of American modernization. Until the end of WWII, however, many non-European

① hostility (敌意): a state of extreme unfriendliness.

② simultaneously (同时地): adv. of simultaneous, happening or done at exactly the same time.

③ norm (规范): a standard e. g. of behavior or ability, that is regarded as average or generally acceptable.

④ Anglo-American (英裔美国人): an American, esp. of the US, who is descended from a British family.

⑤ deteriorate (恶化): to become worse.

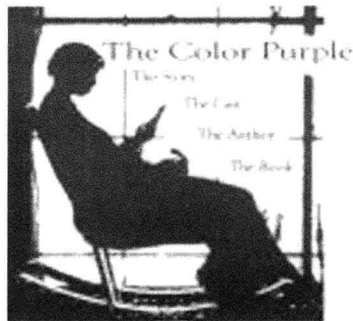
⑥ linger (逗留): to remain for a time instead of going, esp. because one does not wish to leave.

⑦ facilitate (使容易): to make easy or easier; help.

ethnic groups had found themselves on the bottom of the social and economic scale, and this minority status remained especially true to Afro-Americans and the Native Americans. This situation changed during the 1960s as the Civil Movement considerably changed the public opinions and the mind of lawmakers. The changed attitude towards ethnic minorities came from not only the struggles for their civil rights but also had roots in the central theme of *the Declaration of Independence* (1776). That document declared each citizen having natural rights to the security of life, the exercise of social and political liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness.



Alice Walker, author of
the Novel *The Color Purple* (1982)



The Cover Page of *The Color Purple*

3. Different People and Diverse Groups

Although it remains an incomplete ideal to make all men equal in society, the democratic ideal and the lasting struggles for emancipating^① of all ethnic groups have taken roots in American peoples' mind. Consequently, the struggle for raising their economic and political status has its enduring momentum, overt^② and covert^③, in the remaking of American society. To be more specific, indeed, we need to recognize some inside stories about the conflicts between and even within diverse ethnic groups. From a historical perspective, the Germans were the largest 19th century immigrant group, who had diverse class backgrounds, from farmers to professionals, and had either Protestant or Catholic faith. In contrast, the three million Irish, who came in the mid-1850s, were poor peasants with Catholic belief. At that time, the combination of poverty, Catholicism and economic tension with other groups led to the hostile isolation of the Irish, which may still be felt to a certain degree to date.

In the United States, the spread of ethnic groups has certain geographical traits, which originated from the moving of immigrants and former slaves. A well-known social conflict occurred because of the tension and confrontation between the South and the North, a national rivalry^④ between the agricultural, slavery South and the industrializing North. After the Civil

① emancipate (解放): to make free socially, politically, or legally.

② overt (公然的): of beliefs or actions in public; not secret.

③ covert (隐蔽的): secret or hidden; not openly shown or admitted.

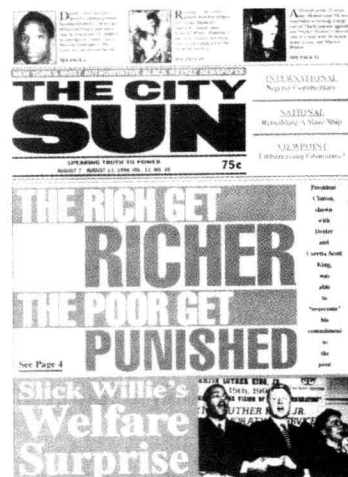
④ rivalry (竞争, 敌对): competition.

War, for example, many freed slaves moved to Northern cities, as did many white rural dwellers. Accordingly, a kind of implicit^① tension, cultural or social, has remained in some social and economic areas as the persistence of southern racism and the agricultural values made some people uncomfortable in comparison with the northern areas.

With regard to other groups, Asian immigrants first settled down mainly in the western coast areas, while Italians and East European Jews went to the Northeast cities, and many members of Asian ethnic groups later moved to the northeastern areas. In the 19th century, a second largest group of immigrants next to Italians used to be the body of about two million Jews from several countries of Eastern Europe, most of them moved to New York. A successful ethnic group, many Jewish families built up a solid foundation in the middle class through two or three generations of hard work. In recent years, about three million poor Mexicans and other Hispanics have entered the southern part of the country, working as low-paid workers, and the Spanish-speaking people are now the fastest growing minority group.

In terms of social stratifications^② or the class issue, economic status matters considerably regardless of a good welfare system in the United States. Those who would feel mostly frustrated are the people working with low wages for long hours in unpleasant surroundings, and some of them are new immigrants, ethnic minorities, and the insufficiently educated people. The so-called “glass-ceiling,” a barrier against professional peoples’ promotion to high ranks of positions, may be the common situation for some non-white ethnic groups. The obvious contrast between the millionaires and the poor people, white or ethnic minorities, often causes tensions between different groups and classes. In this respect, economic situation is important in deciding the status of different groups and classes, which can be felt in the themes of 20th century literature, such as the novels by Theodore Dreiser^③ and Toni Morrison^④.

In reality, there were more than 4,000 millionaires by the end of the 19th century and according to *Forbes*, there were about 130 American individuals or families who had owned the property worth at least one trillion US dollars. According to the book *Who Rules America?* there are several standards that can show an individual’s up-class status in society, and they are 1) his name is on the list of the Social Registers; 2) he has completed private preparatory school education; 3) he owns



A cover page of the newspaper
The City Sun

① implicit (含蓄的): implied or understood though not directly expressed.

② stratification (分层): the act of stratifying or state of being stratified.

③ Theodore Dreiser (德莱塞, 1871—1945): American novelist. His first novel, *Sister Carrie* (1900), caused controversy for its frank treatment of the heroine’s sexuality and ambition.

④ Toni Morrison (托尼·莫里森, 1931—): an African American writer who won the Noble Prize in 1993 for her novels describing life of Black Americans.

membership of a VIP club; 4) his family members should have prestigious family history or celebrity^① relatives. In the United States, the minimum hourly income in 2002 was about 5.25 dollars that is usually paid for part time employers such as waitresses, cleaning workers, and house painters. In contrast, however, the hourly income could be about \$100 for managers and lawyers, about \$16 for social workers, and about \$30 for engineers. In the United States a doctor or a university president can earn about 200,000 dollars annually and some stars, such as Tom Hanks (1956 ~) and Michael Jordan (1963 ~), could earn the annual income of more than 30 million dollars. According to a recent national census, in 2003 there were 35.8 million Americans living below the property line, about 12.5 percent of the total population, and 45 million Americans did not have any medical insurances. The striking contrast between the rich and the poor could be a potential factor that may cause some social tensions.

In the United States, however, the federal as well as state governments took practical actions to improve the economic and social conditions of the ethnic minorities and the poor people. In addition to the powerful welfare system and social security program, American presidents often considered the economic issue the first priority on their agendas. For example, President Truman^②'s integration of the black with other servicemen in the late 1940s was an important step towards alleviating^③ the tension between ethnic groups and different stratifications. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that "Separate educational facilities are inherently^④ unequal. People cannot be deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Constitution." In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson^⑤ declared a "war on poverty" as his administration's response to a wide protest movement demanding for blacks' and other discriminated groups' civil rights. These official measures and rules alleviated to a degree the tension between ethnic groups and diverse social levels. The strong evidence supportive of this improvement can be seen in some black people being promoted to the leading body of the federal government and in some sports stars and black writers with international fame. The improving condition of black Americans is by no means the elimination of all kinds of discrimination based on ethnicity, and the Rodney King Case, which happened on March 31, 1991, is the most demonstrative in this regard. As to other social issues such as gender^⑥ and age discriminations, certain groups of people from feminist activists^⑦ to the retired organization have waged continuous struggles for gaining their rights such as the full range

① celebrity (名流): a famous person, esp. in the business of entertainment.

② Truman (杜鲁门, 1884—1972): American Democratic statesman, 33rd President of the US 1945—1953.

③ alleviate (减轻): to reduce (pain, suffering, difficulties, etc.), esp. for a short time.

④ inherently (天性地): by its or one's nature.

⑤ Lyndon Johnson (林登·约翰逊, 1908—1975): American Democratic statesman, the 36th President of the US 1963—1969.

⑥ gender (社会性别): the division into male or female; sex.

⑦ activist (积极分子): a person taking a very active part, esp. in a political movement.

of jobs and equal payment, continuous work against mandatory^① retirement rules. Recently, people who are homosexual-oriented are making efforts to win the support in their claim to homosexual marriage, and anti-abortion protests also took place in some major cities. Envisaging^② the future, Bruce Oatman, a scholar of ethnic issues, thoughtfully points out: “The social drama of the struggle for equality and acceptance will continue, as it has for over 300 years. As always, the leading roles in this drama will be played by ethnic groups, old and new.”

4. *Ethnic Perplexity: “Who Am I?”*

There was a nationwide census in 2000. In the Census, 94 percent of the total population selected one race while 6 percent, about 16.5 million people, chose two or more races. This situation caused a very perplex issue on ethnic identity: Who am I? Take Tiger Woods, the famous golfer, for example. When Tiger Woods was asked whether it bothered him to be called an African American, he replied, “It does. Growing up, I came up with this name: I’m a Cabalinasian,” which is a self-crafted acronym^③ to reflect that Tiger Woods is one-eighth Caucasian, one-fourth Black, one-eighth American Indian, one-fourth Thai, and one-fourth Chinese. Tiger Woods’ problem is really the challenge to a diverse society that continues to try putting people in a few socially constructed racial and ethnic boxes.

Today, the diversity of the United States has made it more difficult for many people to place themselves on the racial and ethnic landscape, for the landscape is constructed socially and subject to change and different interpretations. For instance, within little more than a generation, we have witnessed changes in labeling subordinate groups from Negroes to Blacks to African Americans, from American Indians to Native Americans or Native peoples. However, more Native Americans prefer the use of their tribal name, such as *Seminole*, instead of a collective label. But many people outside the group are unable or unwilling to recognize ethnic differences and prefer umbrella terms such as Asian Americans. So pan-ethnicity^④ has emerged in the United States and other multiracial, multiethnic societies. Pan-ethnicity is the development of solidarity between ethnic subgroups. The coalition of tribal groups as Native Americans or American Indians is one example of pan-ethnicity. Hispanics or Latinos and Asian Americans are other examples of pan-ethnicity. For small groups, it is a useful way to make themselves heard, but there is always a fear that their own distinctive culture will become submerged. However, the growth of a variety of pan-ethnic associations among many groups continued through the 1990s.

In this cultural mix, there are many peoples with clear social identities who are not yet generally recognized in the United States. For example, Arabs are a rapidly growing segment whose identity is heavily subject to stereotypes or, at best, is still ambiguous. Another challenge to

① mandatory (强制的): which must be done.

② envisage (正视): to see in the mind as a future possibility.

③ acronym(首字母缩略词): a word formed from the initial letters of a multi-word name.

④ Pan-ethnicity (泛族裔): the development of solidarity between ethnic subgroups.

identity is marginality. That means the status is between two cultures, as in case of a person whose mother is a Jew and whose father is a Christian. Incomplete assimilation by immigrants also results in marginality. For instance, a Filipino woman migrating to the United States may take on the characteristics of her new host society, but she may not be fully accepted and may therefore feel neither Filipino nor American. So the marginal person finds himself or herself being perceived differently in different environments, with varying expectations.

From the above we can see that, to understand diversity in the United States, we must be mindful that ethnic and racial labels have been socially constructed, and these social constructs can have a powerful impact, whether self-applied or applied by others, on the social order and ethos. As a result, there is a tendency of pan-ethnicity in the development of American multi-ethnic societies.

(Adapted from Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups*, 2006)

Questions for Discussion

1. According to the first official census in 1790, almost half of the population, about 2,000,000 people, had English origin and the rest came from different origins such as Scots-Irish, German, Dutch, French, Swedish, Welsh and Finnish. How to recognize the cultural and ethnic differences between these Europeans?

2. The ethnic issue has had a long history ever since the founding of the United States, or even before that time. For many outsiders, ethnic issues are one of the most important concerns as they first come to the US. How to understand this situation?

3. In the United States, the spread of ethnic groups has certain geographical traits, which originated from the moving of immigrants and former slaves. What do you know about the social tension between the South and the North immediately after the Civil War?

4. The so-called “glass-ceiling,” a barrier against professional peoples’ promotion to high ranks of positions, may be the common situation for some non-white ethnic groups. Do you agree with this statement?

5. In the United States the rich and the poor have some differences in their ways of life. But there are some other reasons for the people to drop into lower status except for working skills and educational backgrounds. What are they?

6. How to understand Bruce Oatman’s statement: “The social drama of the struggle for equality and acceptance will continue, as it has for over 300 years. As always, the leading roles in this drama will be played by ethnic groups, old and new?”