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TWO NATIONS

BLACK AND WHITE
SEPARATE, HOSTILE
UNEQUAL

EXPANDED
AND
UPDATED

Including a new chapter
in which the foremost expert
on race in America analyzes the
O. J. Simpson verdict.

ANDREW HACKER

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BALLANTINE BOOKS • NEW YORK

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 94-96245

ISBN: 0-345-40537-4

Cover design by Kristine Mills

Manufactured in the United States of America

Revised Edition: February 1995

Revised Edition: October 1995

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

For My Students and Colleagues,
Cornell University and Queens College

PREFACE

Every one of us could write a book about race. The text is already imprinted in our minds and reflects our moral character. Dividing people into races started as convenient categories. However, those divisions have taken on lives of their own, dominating our culture and consciousness, coloring passions and opinions, contorting facts and fantasies.

So race is more than simply a subject to be studied or an issue for debate. Given these conditions, objectivity is hardly possible. Which brings us back to the book that each of us might write. The volume in your hand offers one author's understanding of the role and meaning of race in the contemporary United States. Its title borrows from Benjamin Disraeli's remarks on the rich and poor of his Victorian England, and applies them to the two major races in America today: "Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets."

The subtitle, "Separate, Hostile, Unequal," has several sources. First, there has been the continuing debate in our courts and conversations over whether racially separated facilities can ever be equivalent in status and social worth. Another reflects the conclusion presented by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1968: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." Yet these two nations, these two separate societies, have existed from the start. And, to be utterly frank, their relations have never been amiable. Alexis de Tocqueville noted this hostility a century and a half ago. "The most formidable of all the ills that threaten the future of the Union arises from the

presence of a black population upon its territory," he observed during his visit to the United States. If he wrote these words during the days of slavery, they describe our racial reality today. Indeed, he could have been in our midst when he saw how "the danger of a conflict between the white and the black inhabitants perpetually haunts the imagination of the Americans, like a painful dream." We can benefit by returning to Tocqueville's analysis in the concluding chapter.

My early training was in philosophy, where I soon discovered that we should not expect a consensus on social and moral issues. Not the least reason is that we frequently disagree on what we feel are the facts. While research can be useful, past a certain point we must bring intuition and imagination to bear. On this premise, the first part of this book will expand on some personal impressions concerning race in our time. These chapters will include observations on how we define and divide people into races; on what it is like to be black in the United States; and why white Americans react as they do to people of African ancestry. So the reader should be forewarned: this section will rely on subjective interpretations, since statements about how we behave in the realm of race are seldom amenable to evidence, let alone conclusive proof.

At the same time, in treating these and other topics, I have tried to provide enough plausibility to keep the conversation going. While the reader will not be asked to agree at every stage, it may be hoped that he or she may say, "You could have a point; I'm still willing to listen." Some of what will be said may seem overly generalized or unwilling to admit of exceptions. Here, too, indulgence is asked. Race is a tense terrain, where we often try to hide crucial truths from ourselves. One way to bring these premises to the surface is by making them as vivid as possible.

Part II of *Two Nations* will focus more precisely on the role race plays in such spheres as education and family life, as well as the economy, politics, and crime. This section, too, reflects the author's outlook and interests. Much of my career has been spent as a social scientist, which carries a commitment to revealing how the world really works. One way to array information is in statistical form. While numbers in and of themselves cannot pronounce final truths,

they can offer insights and illumination if they are collated with care.

It is revealing that so much information about ourselves is classified according to race. We publish separate black and white breakdowns on whether mothers breast-feed their babies and on persons who have been arrested for embezzlement. The census even has separate racial columns for people who bicycle to work. But it would be a mistake to view such tabulations as depersonalized data. On the contrary, they can tell a very human story. And, as will be seen, statistics often surprise us with unexpected findings.

Nor will Part II rely entirely on tables. It will also offer a broader analysis of conditions impinging upon race. Thus the rise in fatherless households may emerge not as just one race's problem but as having larger social causes. In the same way, what we call crime can be explained in terms of class as well as race. Or, by exploring forces that run deeper, we may come closer to realizing why so many men commit the crime of rape. Also, any discussion of unequal education should be conjoined with at least a few comments on what we want our offspring to learn and why we place so much emphasis on multiple-choice tests. These chapters will also seek to explain why some conditions related to race have changed over time, while others manage to persist, and still others have become more painful and pronounced. Given the breadth of these issues, the reader should not be surprised if more than a few impressions find their way into these analytical chapters.

One or two more remarks should suffice. No one could possibly tally all the books and articles that have been written about race in America. A host of scholars, journalists, and commentators have produced an impressive literature. Prominent among these are authors who have actually lived on the nation's racial frontiers. J. Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground* about Boston; Elijah Anderson's *Streetwise* on Philadelphia; as well as Chicago as depicted in Nicholas Lemann's *The Promised Land* and Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here* have all added dimensions to our understanding that statistics can never satisfy. For this reason, each book on race should be seen as part of a collective enterprise. If each of us focuses on certain aspects and issues, and explains them in our own way, we are all dependent on what others have discovered and said.

So separate mention should be made of America's most notable book on race. It was a half century ago, in 1944, that Gunnar Myrdal published his classic study, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. By every measure, it was a masterful enterprise and one that can never be rivaled. If few people read him today, many of Myrdal's insights remain relevant and applicable. For example, he stressed the idea that race in America is essentially a caste condition, so that for all basic purposes, black people never escape their birth. And as his title made clear, Myrdal's central theme was that the United States was and is beset by an apparent paradox: the nation's commitments to universal justice and equality are contradicted by the way it treats its principal minority race. Myrdal, an eminent Swedish scholar, took seriously Americans' declarations about justice and equality. Perhaps, as a good guest, he did not want to accuse his hosts of hypocrisy.

As it happens, the pages that follow will contain relatively few citations or references. This should not be taken as suggesting that what others have written lacks significance. Rather, it is that too many allusions to fellow authors can end up as a book devoted to other books. Real issues like employment and welfare can become deflected into a debate over Charles Murray's formulations versus those of William Julius Wilson. Or questions of education and culture may become a battle of competing quotations from Diane Ravitch and Molefi Kete Asante. While this can often be a fruitful approach, especially for academic audiences, it has not been the one chosen here. References, listing source materials, have been gathered in a separate section.

The book's title might seem to intimate that a full portrait of America can be rendered in black and white. Obviously this is not the case. While persons we classify as black or white still comprise America's major races, they currently account for a smaller share of the population than at any time in our history. Since we want a full perspective, Asians and Hispanics and other ethnic groups will obviously appear on these pages. Still, *Two Nations* will adhere to its title by giving central attention to black and white Americans, and the reasons for this emphasis will be made evident. In many respects, other groups find themselves sitting as spectators, while the two promi-

nent players try to work out how or whether they can coexist with one another.

Two Nations will also seek to explain why so much behavior regarding race remains so obdurate and ingrained. Not the least of its conclusions will be that racial tensions serve too many important purposes to be easily ameliorated, let alone eliminated or replaced. The reader should be advised not to expect this book to end on an optimistic note. Nor should he or she look for a closing chapter with proposals for reducing discrimination and ending prejudice. *Two Nations* is not that kind of book. I leave it to others to mention measures they feel can break down racial barriers and bring more amity and equity to the racial sphere.

Of course, there are things that should be done, and some may be within the realm of possibility. At the same time, there is scant evidence that the majority of white Americans are ready to invest in redistributive programs, let alone give of themselves in more exacting ways. As will be shown, not only is the taxpaying electorate overwhelmingly white, but it is also middle-class, middle-aged, and—increasingly—ensconced in insulated suburbs. In short, our time is not one receptive to racial remedies. One aim of this book will be to show why this is the case.

Given the tempo of our times, a book on race must be kept up-to-date. This is all the more necessary for the classroom, where *Two Nations* has been especially successful, not least because it encourages debate and discussion. Hence this new edition, in which every chapter has been revised. There is new material on a spectrum of topics, ranging from racial intermarriage and black-owned businesses to teenage parenthood and the implications of O. J. Simpson's arrest. There is also an expanded section on "white crime," as well as new suggestions for understanding racism and the legacy of slavery. Updated statistics continue to tell a real story, in a format designed to make the figures come alive. The closing chapter, on politics, has been completely recast, ending with an analysis of racial attitudes and strategies of the Clinton administration and a Republican-controlled Congress.

—ANDREW HACKER
November 1994

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
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PART I

1. Dividing American Society	3
2. Race and Racism: Inferiority or Equality?	20
3. Being Black in America	35
4. White Responses: Right and Left, Guilt and Sex	55

PART II

5. Parents and Children: Do the Races Really Differ?	73
6. The Racial Income Gap: How Much Is Due to Bias?	99
7. Equity in Employment: Qualifications and Quotas	112
8. Education: Ethnicity and Achievement	139
9. Segregated Schooling: Voluntary and Imposed	152
10. What's Best for Black Children?	166
11. Crime: The Role Race Plays	184
12. Two Nations, Two Verdicts: The O. J. Simpson Trial	207
13. The Politics of Race	223

PART III

Statistical Sources	249
References	263
Acknowledgments	272
Index	273

PART I



CHAPTER ONE

DIVIDING AMERICAN SOCIETY

RACE HAS BEEN an American obsession since the first Europeans sighted "savages" on these shores. In time, those original inhabitants would be subdued or slaughtered and finally sequestered out of view. But race in America took on a deeper and more disturbing meaning with the importation of Africans as slaves. Bondage would later be condemned as an awful injustice and the nation's shame, even as we have come to acknowledge the stamina and skill it took to survive in a system where humans could be bought and sold and punished like animals. Nor are these antecedents buried away in the past. That Americans of African origin once wore the chains of chattels remains alive in the memory of both races and continues to separate them.

Black Americans are Americans, yet they still subsist as aliens in the only land they know. Other groups may remain outside the mainstream—some religious sects, for example—but they do so voluntarily. In contrast, blacks must endure a segregation that is far from freely chosen. So America may be seen as two separate nations.

Of course, there are places where the races mingle. Yet in most significant respects, the separation is pervasive and penetrating. As a social and human division, it surpasses all others—even gender—in intensity and subordination.

If white Americans regard the United States as their nation, they also see it beset with racial problems they feel are not of their making. Some contrast current conditions with earlier times, when blacks appeared more willing to accept a subordinate status. Most whites will protest that they bear neither responsibility nor blame for the conditions blacks face. Neither they nor their forebears ever owned slaves, nor can they see themselves as having held anyone back or down. Most white Americans believe that for at least the last generation, blacks have been given more than a fair chance and at least equal opportunity, if not outright advantages. Moreover, few white Americans feel obliged to ponder how membership in the major race gives them powers and privileges.

America is inherently a "white" country: in character, in structure, in culture. Needless to say, black Americans create lives of their own. Yet, as a people, they face boundaries and constrictions set by the white majority. America's version of apartheid, while lacking overt legal sanction, comes closest to the system even now being overturned in the land of its invention.

That racial tensions cast a pall upon this country can hardly be denied. People now vent feelings of hostility and anger that in the past they repressed. Race has become a national staple for private conversation and public controversy. So it becomes necessary to ask what in recent decades has brought the issue and reality of race to the center of the stage.

The idea of "race" is a human creation. People have given names to their varied strains since physical differences first began to appear. Nor are there signs that racial lines have grown dimmer in modern times. On the contrary, race continues to preoccupy the public mind, a reminder of a past that cannot be willed away.

Since race is part of common parlance, people have used the term in many ways. Little will be gained by asking for clear-cut definitions or, for that matter, by trying to decide exactly how many different races occupy this planet. Anthropologists have their lists, but even they disagree on criteria and classifications. Still, some major group-

ings recur: Negroid, Mongoloid, Australoid, Caucasoid, and Indic, with American Indians and Pacific Islanders added as two encompassing categories. But there are also finer racial divisions, such as Aryans and Semites and Dravidians. Tribes like the Watusi and the Navajo have also been given racial designations. Indeed, since there is no consensus when it comes to defining "race," the term has been applied to a diversity of groups. The Irish have been called a race in their own right, as have Jews and Hindus. Many find these ambiguities unsettling, but then so is much of life. In the United States, what people mean by "race" is usually straightforward and clear, given the principal division into black and white. Yet, as it happens, not all Americans fit into "racial" designations.

In theory, Native Americans taken together belong to what most anthropologists would call a basic race. Yet, on the whole, they tend to be a loose residue of tribes rather than a racial entity. A single primal consciousness cannot be said to bind the aspirations and interests of Chippewas and Seminoles and Aleuts. As it happens, the Native American population has undergone an unusual increase. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of persons claiming tribal antecedents rose from 827,268 to 1,516,540, which works out to more than three times the growth rate for the nation as a whole. The chief reason is that a lot of people who had concealed their native origins are now reclaiming them as their primary identity. As it happens, another group can claim an even firmer racial cohesion. It consists of descendants of Hawaii's original inhabitants, most of whom have Polynesian origins. Their growth has mirrored the Native American model, doubling from 100,179 in 1970 to 210,907 in 1990.

Until just a decade or so ago, Americans spoke of "Orientals," and the individuals so described are certainly members of what the anthropologists call the "Mongoloid" race. However, these terms—along with "yellow"—are now hardly ever heard. For one thing, many of those subsumed under the "Oriental" rubric never liked that designation. After all, it was invented and imposed by Europeans, who saw their own continent as the center of civilization and relegated the "Orient" to Europe's eastern horizon.

Today, we have the generic term "Asian," which includes not only Japanese and Chinese and Koreans, but also Indonesians and Indians along with Burmese and Thais, plus Filipinos and Pakistanis. Geographically speaking, Asia extends from the Kuril Islands to Istanbul

and Israel. In fact, "Asian Americans" did not choose this title for themselves. Rather, the larger society has found it convenient to collect them into a single category that mingles racial and national origins. For this reason, obviously, "Asian" itself cannot be a race, since it embraces not only persons once described as "Mongoloid," but also Indics and Dravidians and Caucasians. Even the Koreans and Chinese and Japanese, who belong to the common "Mongoloid" race, seldom mix with one another and have few activities or interests in common. Rather than racial, their images of their identities are almost wholly national. So, although in textbook terms most Americans of Asian origin have specific racial origins, in social and political terms those identities have only a residual significance. In 1970, the census counted 1,438,544 people in what is now the Asian category. By 1990, due mainly to immigration, that group had grown fivefold, to 7,273,662. (See the table on page 18.)

Nor can it be contended that Americans of Hispanic—or Chicano or Latino—heritage comprise a race. On the contrary, among their numbers can be found persons of almost pure European ancestry, as well as some of partial but visible African origin, along with individuals of unblemished Indian descent. One has only to recall that the founder of modern Chile was named Bernardo O'Higgins, while the current president of Peru, Alberto Fujimori, is of Japanese ancestry. But far outnumbering these individuals and groups are people of such varied parentages as to render any talk of race impossible. Since 1970, the Hispanic group has increased from 9,072,602 to 22,354,059, almost three times the rate for the population as a whole.

In fact, the "nonracial" character of Hispanics has been reflected in recent census reports, where individuals are allowed to describe themselves as they choose. Accordingly, in one census question, individuals may indicate that they are Latin or Hispanic. In another place, they may also fill in a race. Thus in 1990, the census located 7,687,938 residents of California who selected the Latin or Hispanic designation. Within this group, just under half—49.5 percent—chose to say that they also had a race: black or white or, in a few cases, Asian or Native American. However, the other 50.5 percent told the census that in their own view, they had no "race" at all. For them, to be Hispanic was a sole and sufficient identity. (The same es-

chewal of "race" may be observed among Islamic immigrants from the Middle East.)

So it would seem that the country's fastest-growing groups prefer to emphasize their cultural and national identities rather than traits associated with race. However, the same cannot be said for the rest of the nation, which remains either black or white.

To give the names "black" and "white" to races might seem, on its face, quite ludicrous. Clearly, no human beings have skins of either color. Indeed, very few come even close to those tones. But then "white" and "black" stand for much more than the shades of epidermal coverings. To start, they refer to the "Caucasian" and "Negroid" races, whose facial appearances differ as prominently as their colors.

But more is involved than color or facial features or skeletal structure. The terms also carry cultural connotations. In its basic meaning, "white" denotes European antecedents, while "black" stands for Africa. Since the human species began in Africa, we can say that black people are those whose ancestors remained on that continent, while whites descend from those who embarked on migrations to cooler climates. This has led some to the presumption that the races are at different levels of evolutionary development. For at least half a dozen centuries, and possibly longer, "white" has implied a higher civilization based on a superior inheritance.

Europeans who colonized the Western Hemisphere sought to recreate it in their image and to transform North and South America into "white" continents. With conquest comes the power to impose your ways on territories you have subdued. The treatment of the Native Americans simply ratified that view. (In some places, the native populations remained large enough to exert a reciprocal influence, as in India and most of Africa. This was not to be the case in the United States.) Still, something can be learned by looking at how "white" was originally conceived, and the changes it has undergone.

From the colonial period through the Jacksonian era, most white Americans were of English ancestry. Alexis de Tocqueville, during his visit in the 1830s, felt he could characterize the country and its people as "Anglo-Americans."

Given the changes in the population, this epithet could not last.