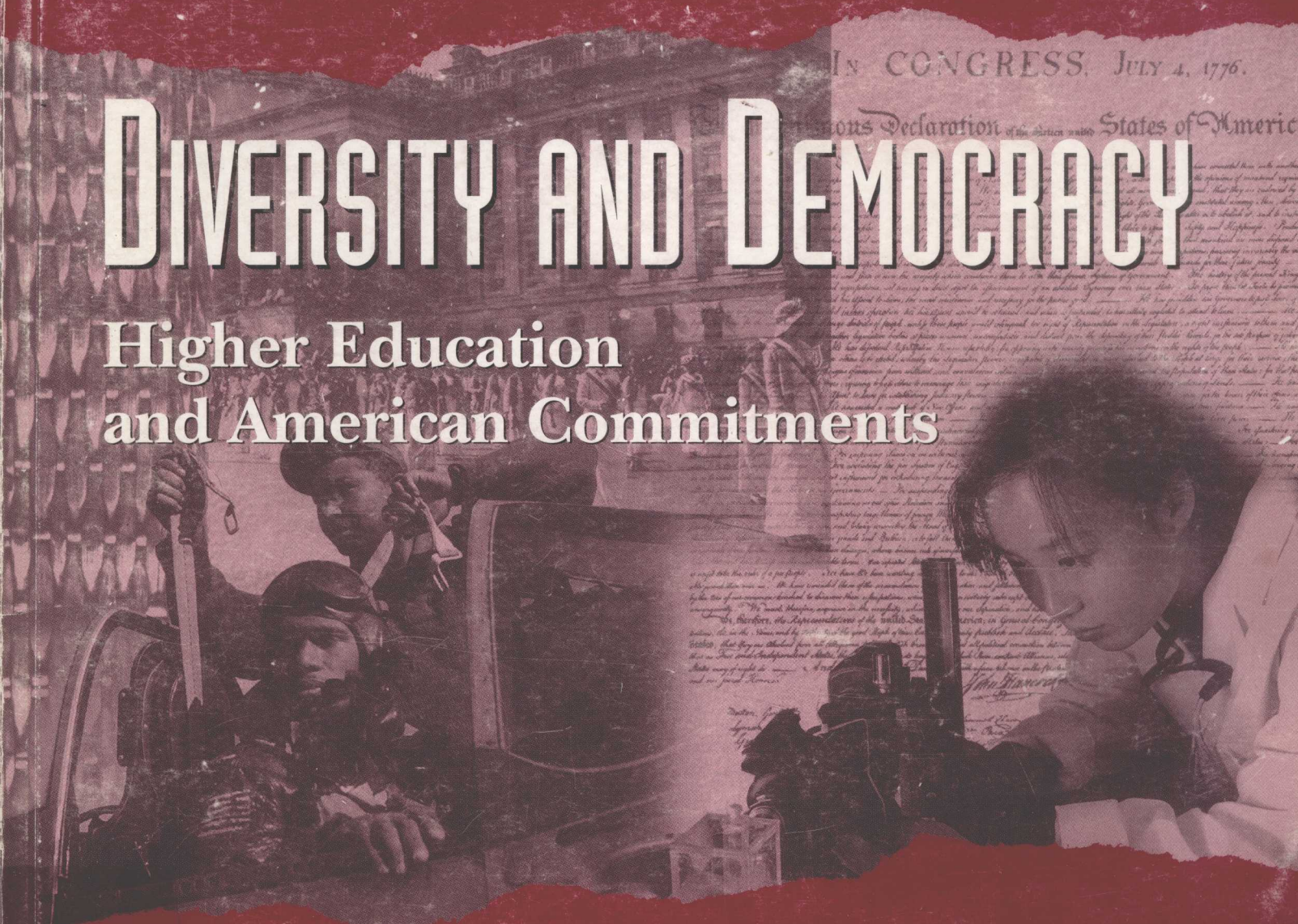


DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

ious Declaration of the thirteen united States of America



AMERICAN COMMITMENTS

**Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities**

AAC&U

**Advancing
Liberal
Learning**

THE DRAMA OF DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

HIGHER EDUCATION AND
AMERICAN COMMITMENTS

A REPORT PREPARED FOR
AMERICAN COMMITMENTS



A NATIONAL INITIATIVE OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES

THIS WORK WAS SUPPORTED BY A GRANT FROM THE
FORD FOUNDATION

Published by
Association of American Colleges and Universities
1818 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009

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ISBN 0-911696-64-4
Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 95-80683

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Association of American Colleges and Universities extends warm thanks to the Ford Foundation which provided grant support that enabled AAC&U to launch the American Commitments initiative and the work of the National Panel. We are especially grateful to Edgar Beckham, program officer in education and culture at the Ford Foundation, whose vision and commitment have helped hundreds of colleges and universities develop productive ways to educate students for the diversities and possibilities of the world they inherit. We also extend our thanks to Alison Bernstein, director of education and culture at the Ford Foundation, for her continuing confidence in AAC&U's work on equity and diversity. In addition, we thank the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) which has also supported the American Commitments initiative.

Thanks are due as well to Paula Brownlee, president of AAC&U, for her support of this initiative and for constructive readings of the Panel reports.

AAC&U owes an enormous debt of appreciation to the members of the National Panel who developed these papers and who have guided the American Commitments projects. Their creative collaboration and dedication set a high standard for any collective enterprise while their insight and understanding helped define an educational direction that will take colleges and universities well into the new century. All members of the Panel gave ten times as much time and energy to this work as AAC&U described for them at the outset, participating both in the many extended dialogues that generated this report and in the detailed revisions of successive drafts.

The analyses presented in this report were developed in a series of small group meetings involving members of the National Panel. Frank F. Wong, chair of the Panel, initially served as scribe for this report and wrote three earlier versions. Johnnella Butler, Ramón Gutiérrez, Caryn McTighe Musil, and Lee Knefelkamp contributed text that significantly extended the argument of these early drafts. When Frank Wong became too ill to complete the final revision of *The Drama of Diversity and Democracy*, these and other Panel members gave extensive advice and assistance to Carol Schneider, who put the report together. Troy Duster provided data on the racial recomposition of U.S. cities described in the Foreword. We also thank Gwen Dungy, senior fellow at AAC&U on the American Commitments initiative, for helpful contributions to this and other Panel reports.

Drafts of this paper were discussed with academic administrators and faculty members at several dozen small group sessions at two AAC&U annual meetings, in Washington, D.C., in January 1994, and in San Francisco in January 1995, and at institutes sponsored by the American Commitments initiative with NEH support at Williams College in August 1994 and July 1995. Presidents and trustees also commented on earlier drafts of this paper in discussions in American Commitments institutes held at Georgetown University in September 1993 and again in July 1994. We extend our thanks to all those who gave us helpful suggestions as we worked through the analyses of the relations among diversity, democracy, and community presented in these pages.

All members of the Panel owe great thanks to Maureen McNulty, who as a special assistant to the Panel has contributed editorial skill, bibliographical zeal, and organizational devotion to the Panel's work. While Maureen McNulty was on maternity leave, Charlotte Hogsett ably served as editor-advisor to the project. In addition, we thank Kathleen Connelly, Kevin Hovland, Debra Humphreys, and Suzanne Hyers, all members of the American Commitments staff who have done an outstanding job in collectively organizing the institutes at which Panel reports were discussed.

Finally, we acknowledge the commitment, competence, and support of AAC&U's communications department, which prepared this report for publication. Joann Stevens, vice president for communications, helped develop the format for the reports, worked on the selection of photographs, and developed the captions. Cindy Olson brought creativity, skill, and wonderful patience in creating the design for a report that remained in dialogue almost to the moment of publication. Thanks also to Amy Wajda and Heather Collins for their proofreading and copyediting.

THE AMERICAN COMMITMENTS NATIONAL PANEL

Suzanne Benally
Project Director,
The Institute on Ethnic Diversity,
Western Interstate Commission
for Higher Education

Alfred H. Bloom
President,
Swarthmore College

Johnnella Butler
Professor of American
Ethnic Studies,
University of Washington

Carlos Cortés
Professor of History,
University of California–Riverside

Bonnie Thornton Dill
Professor of Women's Studies,
University of Maryland

Troy Duster
Professor of Sociology,
University of California–Berkeley

Ramón Gutiérrez
Chair, Ethnic Studies Department,
University of California–San Diego

Patrick J. Hill
Professor of Interdisciplinary Study,
Evergreen State College

Harry H. Kitano
Professor of Social Welfare
and Sociology,
University of California–
Los Angeles

Lee Knefelkamp
Professor of Higher and Adult
Education,
Teachers College,
Columbia University

Elizabeth K. Minnich
Professor of Philosophy,
The Union Institute

Caryn McTighe Musil
Senior Research Associate,
Association of American Colleges
and Universities

Gayle Pemberton
Professor of African American
Studies,
Wesleyan University

Carol Schneider, ex officio
Executive Vice President, AAC&U,
Director, American Commitments
Initiative

Uri Treisman
Professor of Mathematics,
University of Texas–Austin

Frank Wong
Provost and Vice President
for Academic Affairs,
University of Redlands
*Frank Wong served as chair of the
National Panel until his untimely
death in April 1995.*



From Many Shores: In the New York Narrows early in the century, transatlantic steamers anchored at Quarantine while inspectors and immigration officials boarded to survey the latest arrivals. Most immigrating passengers—those in third and fourth class and steerage—were put on barges there or at receiving piers upstream, and ferried to the U.S. immigration station at Ellis Island.

No name is more closely linked with massive American immigration than Ellis Island. For three decades—1892 to 1924—the greatest human tide in the nation's history swept through this narrow portal in Upper New York Bay. Until its closing in 1954, more than 17 million newcomers arrived at Ellis Island. Today almost half of all living Americans can trace their heritage to one or more family members who first stepped onto American soil at Ellis Island.

For 80 percent of the immigrants, the average stay on Ellis Island was only three to five hours. Twenty percent were detained for either a medical or legal reason. Between 1892 and 1924 only 2 percent—approximately 250,000 people among the many millions processed—were excluded from admission to the United States.

Until the 1880s, the individual states exercised what little control of immigration was necessary. A vast underpopulated country held open the door to foreigners. Notwithstanding the swell of Irish immigration in the 1840s and 1850s as a result of the potato famine, the status quo—state control—remained until the 1870s. But in that decade, as the number of newcomers began to spiral and the economy contracted, fear and concern about the social and economic effects of the country's long-standing open door policy also began to rise. In the 1870s, without catastrophe elsewhere contributing, more than 280,000 immigrants a year were streaming into the country.

America's open door on immigration was closed. Yielding to constituent demands, successive Congresses enacted more regulations and restrictions. Not only individuals but percentages of nationalities were regulated.

(Photo: Ellis Island, 1912. Text reference: The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc., Office of Public Affairs.)

FOREWORD

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF AMERICAN PLURALISM

At the founding of this nation, proponents and opponents of the new Constitution engaged in a vigorous debate about the effects of societal diversity on the new political experiment. Speaking for the traditional view that successful republics must be small and homogeneous, the antifederalist Brutus argued, "In a republic, the manners, sentiments, and interests of the people should be similar. If this be not the case, there will be a constant clashing of opinions; and the representatives of one part will be continually striving against those of the other."

Against this conventional understanding of the prerequisites for a successful civic republic, the federalists argued that size and its resulting heterogeneity would prove a productive force in the vitality of the new republic. As Hamilton put it, the clash of contending views could strengthen the quality of public consideration and judgment (1982). The federalists won the argument and the nation embarked on a pathbreaking experiment in both diversity and republican self-government (Sunstein 1992).

This historic wager on the civic value of deliberation across difference led the framers to refuse constitutional proposals that representatives come to the Congress "instructed" on specific decisions by their respective constituencies. The insights to be gained through processes of dialogue and debate should not, they insisted, be impeded by prior restraints. Madison called for a "yielding and accommodating spirit," a willingness to change one's mind in the context of persuasive discussion. The First Amendment's protections for free speech both asserted and sought to assure the centrality of a vibrant public dialogue in the life of the young nation (Sunstein 1993).

From the beginning then, the United States cast its lot both with heterogeneity as a defining characteristic and with dialogue and deliberation as democratic resources for the resolution of difference. Yet from the beginning as well, this historic commitment to a republic of reasoning was constrained and contradicted by the expectation that in this society founded on participatory citizenship, the citizens participating should be white and male.

The peoples who lived in the rapidly expanding United States were extraordinarily heterogeneous, culturally and racially. But from East to West, the nation's leaders acted assertively to restrict and control that diversity.

SOCIAL HIERARCHIES

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into the twentieth century,
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The Naturalization Act of 1790 enabled the extension of citizenship to immigrants, but restricted the privilege to persons who were white and male. American Indians were removed to special territories. Mexican Americans, following the conquest of their land, were politically and economically marginalized. The nation nearly sundered in its struggles over African American slavery and moved rapidly to isolate African Americans once they were freed. Chinese Americans were denied citizenship and the right to vote in California, a restraint that became federal law when Congress passed the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, making the Chinese "aliens ineligible for citizenship," and prohibiting nearly all Chinese immigration to the United States. Additional landholding restrictions were imposed on Japanese immigrants. By 1924, the Asian Exclusion Act barred all but a trickle of Asian immigration for permanent residence. The 1924 law remained in place until 1965 (Takaki 1993).

These legal constraints reflected views in the majority community and, from the founding until well into the twentieth century, United States historical records abound with racial stigmatizations against non-white groups. The definition of who counted as white was fluid, first excluding and later encompassing the Irish, southern and eastern Europeans and Jews. But the bias in favor of the United States as primarily a white nation was a constant, asserted by presidents, governors, editors, scholars, judges and countless ordinary citizens. Throughout this period, the white community made unremitting efforts, both legal and mob-driven, scientifically rationalized and emotional, to resist the dangers of racial intermarriage and consequent "mongrelization."

By the twentieth century, additional forms of segregation drew new divisions through the diverse communities that comprised the United States. As southern blacks began to move to northern cities in record numbers, these cities, through a combination of deliberate legal restraints, federal housing laws and personal intimidation, created huge neighborhoods that were exclusively African American in their composition. The South, where African Americans had typically lived side by side with whites, although subordinate to them, also moved toward new patterns of enforced residential segregation. As Massey and Denton (1993) observe in a powerful analysis of this construction of an "American Apartheid," the forms of twentieth-century segregation assigned to African Americans were different both in kind and in intensity from that experienced by other United States ethnic groups: "Even at the height of immigration from Europe, most Italians, Poles and Jews lived in neighborhoods where members of their own group did not predominate...In contrast, after the construction of the black ghetto the vast majority of blacks were forced to live in neighborhoods that were all black, yielding an extreme level of social isolation."

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE NATION'S RACIAL CONTRADICTIONS

Higher education is uniquely heir to both these dimensions of American pluralism—the commitment to deliberation across difference as the genius of our democratic praxis and the continuing costs and consequences of historic patterns of selective discrimination compounded by racial segregation.

United States colleges and universities from the beginning acknowledged and embraced a special responsibility to ensure that the nation's leaders would be well prepared, intellectually and morally, for their responsibilities in a republic founded on reasoning. Traditions of free speech and unfettered inquiry were woven into the very fabric of the American research university. Intellectual diversity, dialogue and deliberation constitute distinctive strengths of American higher education.

Yet the color lines that divided United States communities for most of its history bounded college campuses as well. Into the 1960s, the nation's system of higher education was *de facto* almost completely racially segregated, basically either all-white or all-black with at best a 1 to 2 percent variation at some major institutions. Colleges founded to serve the African-American community were at least 99 percent black, and it was the rare majority college that was less than 97 percent white. Overall, minority participation in higher education was strikingly limited. As late as the fall of 1970, nearly 87 percent of college students in the United States were white. Nine percent were black and the combined total of Asian Americans, American Indians, and others was a mere 2.2 percent (Karen 1991). The curriculum at majority institutions was as "white" as the student body. Few courses and no core curricula challenged students to confront and explore the inherent contradictions between the nation's aspirations to human worth and dignity for all people and the persistence of its divisions and hierarchies.

From the mid-1960s on, however, leaders in the higher education community sought to alter these inheritances. Simultaneously inspired by the civil rights movement and alarmed by the 1960s ghetto rebellions and the aftermath of the Martin Luther King assassination, campus leaders made a new commitment to the expansion of both equality and opportunity and to the dismantling of systemic discrimination against any group. The women's movement which emerged at the end of the 1960s adopted much of the civil rights movement's language and vision of inclusion, adding a new dynamic of commitment and energy to campus leadership for access and equity.

These efforts, reinforced by dramatic alterations in immigration patterns since 1965, have begun to change the color of higher education. Today, nearly one quarter of those participating in higher education are persons of color. Campuses located in states experiencing high levels of immigration have seen diversity increase exponentially. Others, especially in the heart-

*Almost all campuses
now see education
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land states, have had to work much harder to change the racial and ethnic composition of their student bodies. But almost all campuses now see education of a diverse citizenry as integral to their missions of public leadership and service.

The curriculum is changing too. Notwithstanding the vigorously expressed doubts of many traditionally educated faculty members and public leaders, scholars have made extraordinary progress in recovering histories and legacies once deemed irrelevant to higher learning. Hundreds of colleges and universities are now seeking ways to change course content and requirements so that the curriculum includes the myriad forms of American diversity. Some of them are also asking students to study the very legacies of hierarchy and exclusion that used to leave most of humankind out of the curriculum.

This record of progress notwithstanding, success in extending participation in higher education across communities of color remains uneven. African Americans constitute 12.3 percent of the population but only 8.7 percent of college students and 5.7 percent of college graduates. Hispanics, who comprise 7.7 percent of the population, make up 4.9 percent of higher education students and 2.7 percent of graduates (Justiz, Wilson, and Björk 1994). Hispanic rates of participation and attainment have been declining rather than improving, and Mexican Americans in particular are severely underrepresented among those enrolled in higher education. American Indians have increased their participation at all levels of higher education but experience significant problems with retention. American citizens of Asian, Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean heritage have higher-than-average percentages of both high school and college graduation. But members of more recent Asian immigrant groups—for example, the Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians—have educational profiles that resemble those of African Americans and American Indians (O'Brien 1995).

The perception of uneven participation is strengthened when we look at the question of where students of color have enrolled. Proportionately, their participation in community colleges is about the same as their participation in the population as a whole. But students of color constitute only 15 percent of enrollments in four year institutions, still a significant degree of underrepresentation.

Those who are unhappy with the magnitude and direction of change on campus and in society have attacked “diversity” as a spurious and even meaningless goal for higher education. It is important to remember that in higher education, the term “diversity” references a complex set of efforts to uproot the sources and legacies of a long history of societal hierarchy and educational apartheid. The academy is far from finished with this task.

United States colleges and universities are currently working on four distinct although interrelated dimensions of diversity, observes Daryl Smith of the Claremont Graduate School. "Representation" focuses on the absence of particular groups from the campus community and seeks ways to increase their numbers. "Campus Climate" recognizes the integral connections between institutional environment and educational attainment and seeks to change those aspects of campus climate that prove chilly for particular groups of students, whether members of designated groups, women, or the so-called "non-traditional" adults who are fast becoming a new majority in higher education. "Educational Mission" signals the realization that all students benefit from an education that fosters knowledge and competence for a multiracial, multiethnic, multiperspectival and gendered world. "Transformation" connects all the other dimensions of diversity in a fundamental reconsideration of the academy's organizing assumptions—societal, intellectual, educational and institutional (Smith 1995).

When the Association of American Colleges and Universities launched a national diversity initiative in 1993, our focus was on educational mission in its largest societal context: fostering social learning about United States diversity in relation to the nation's democratic aspiration and values. We titled this initiative American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Learning, and began a broad effort both to describe the knowledge participants need in this diverse democracy and to identify effective ways of fostering this learning in goals for liberal education and the curriculum, in institutional life and campus ethos, and in the classroom practices that comprise teaching and learning.

Over time we have come to see that the dialogue in which we are engaged is indeed, as Smith's analysis suggests, *transformational*. Our focus on links between this nation's diversity and its democratic values has pointed the American Commitments initiative inexorably toward unresolved issues that cut across campus and society: issues of communities and community; issues of the terms and tensions that frame connection among members of a democracy who, historically, have not been equal.

Framing the question this way, those participating in the American Commitments initiative have grown increasingly uncomfortable with the individualistic assumptions that permeate public discussion of higher education. Traditionally, the academy has emphasized the benefits of higher learning—both intellectual and economic—to each individual learner. But diversity and democracy together press educators to address the communal dimensions and consequences of higher learning. By highlighting the social nexus in which all learning occurs, the linkage between diversity and democratic society challenges us to think more deeply about what individuals

**AAC&U'S AMERICAN
COMMITMENTS INITIATIVE:
CONNECTING CAMPUS
PRACTICE AND
DEMOCRATIC PURPOSE**

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learn from their experience of campus ethos—and how that learning in turn constrains or enriches the quality and vitality of American communities.

To guide what has become an exploration of both educational and societal vision, AAC&U formed a distinguished National Panel of scholars and academic leaders, all significant contributors to contemporary understandings of diversity in higher education and United States society. Members of the Panel began an extraordinary series of dialogues, in the group as a whole, in smaller subsets of the Panel, and in discussions with higher education colleagues at a series of working conferences throughout the country. To these discussions, Panel members brought their own diversities—societal, experiential, intellectual—not as suppressed background but as the context for everything they know and value and work for as leaders in higher education.

Panel members also came to the American Commitments initiative ready to learn from one another; transformational learning has been the great product of these two years of dialogue and deliberation. Frank Wong, the deeply respected Panel chair, stood at the moral center of the group's dialogue until his death in the spring of 1995. Wong modeled for everyone else a paradigmatic process of Madison's "yielding and accommodating" spirit as he sought to understand challenges to his initial assumptions, weaving them into his own contributions to the Panel's collectively developed view.

Panel members' analyses of connection and commitment in American society, deepened, complicated and reconfigured through two years of internal and public discussions of several draft reports, culminate in the publication of the report in this volume and four others in this series. Together, these National Panel reports provide a comprehensive examination of higher education's missions of leadership and service in a society that is diverse, divided by legacies of social and gender hierarchy, and yet still embarked on a historic wager that democratic dialogue across difference can lead all participants toward achievement of a just and equitable society.

HIGHER EDUCATION AS A TESTING GROUND FOR AMERICAN PLURALISM

In presenting these reports, we urge our colleagues to recognize that higher education faces a distinctive challenge and an extraordinary opportunity at what we take to be a pivotal moment in the development of United States pluralism. Educators often assume that higher education's efforts to become both diverse and inclusive simply reflect and parallel comparable commitments and progress in the wider society. In fact, however, societal movement towards inclusion is marked by both progress and striking regression.

Campuses, workplaces and the military have indeed become increasingly diverse and newly conscious that inclusion encompasses more than physical presence. But these institutional changes are occurring in the context of

an increase, not a decrease, in the nation's racial and economic residential segregation.

This means that institutions which are meeting grounds for United States diversity assume the special responsibility of fostering capacities for and commitments to pluralism that are often not part of Americans' neighborhood experience. Attending a college or university may be the first experience of a notably diverse community many students have had. Participation in a community drawn from multiple cultures and experiences calls on an inclination to engage and learn across difference that many students have had no opportunity to achieve. It requires skills that have not been practiced—or valued.

Two-thirds of Americans now live in those combinations of cities and their surrounding suburbs that the Bureau of the Census designates as Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas. But whether we look at the distribution of population in these SMSAs as a whole or at the composition of the urban core within them, the striking demographic trend is the intensification, not the diminution, of racial residential segregation. Even as the nation's laws have pressed Americans toward new forms of equality and connection, Americans have not only resisted residential integration but compounded and consolidated earlier twentieth-century patterns of residential segregation.

In the last quarter century, America's urban population has undergone the most dramatic racial recomposition in its entire history. Beginning in the 1970s, the urban core within each of ten major metropolitan areas experienced a precipitous decline in the proportion of its residents that are white. New York City dropped from 75 percent white in 1970 to 38 percent white in 1990. San Francisco has gone from 75 percent to 43 percent white while in Los Angeles, the drop is even greater, from 78 percent to 37 percent. There is a similar pattern for most major metropolitan areas in the nation. The whites who leave are moving to "vanilla" suburbs, communities where persons of color are strikingly underrepresented. Conversely, although persons of color are also moving to the suburbs, the suburbs too are now becoming dotted with segregated enclaves (Duster 1995).

As these changes are occurring, the intensity of racial segregation of the population within the city has been compounding. "In sixteen metropolitan areas that house one-third of the nation's black population," write Massey and Denton (1993), "racial separation is [now] so intense that it can only be described as hypersegregation." Especially for African Americans, patterns of racial residential separation hold at every income level, from the poorest to the most affluent. When they go home at night, blacks and whites in America go to entirely separate communities.

Other forms of societal division are also intensifying in the contemporary United States. As study after study reveals, patterns of economic inequal-

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ity—and the class-linked residential separations that mirror these patterns—are also compounding. The bottom three-fifths of the population are seeing their share of national income steadily decrease. The middle class feels increasingly pressed and increasingly dislocated. Statistically, it is shrinking. As the divide between well-off and extremely poor widens, the emergence of gated and often exclusive residential communities is a widely remarked social phenomenon.


In this era of increasing segregation and economic disequilibrium, the nation's long-standing legacies of racial antagonism are once again in play. Many see the efforts to reach out through affirmative action to bring disenfranchised minorities and women into institutions that excluded them as a crucial key to their own experience of economic "squeeze." Others, including many in communities of color, blame recently arrived immigrants, both legal and illegal, for closing off their own upward mobility. As in earlier periods when Americans felt economically threatened and therefore passed legislation hostile to immigrant groups, the country is again in the 1990s embarking on a new era of anti-immigrant feeling and policies.

In sum, as higher education moves forward to affirm and enact a commitment to equality, fairness, and inclusion, it does so in a context of increasing racial and class separations and antagonisms. The contemporary assault on affirmative action in higher education in California has shocked many educators for its astonishing presumption that in barely thirty years we have successfully resolved the nation's centuries of racial, ethnic, and gender contradictions. But this assault, certain to be imitated elsewhere, is symptomatic. Members of the academy who are leading diversity initiatives have been developing a knowledge of United States history that most of the country, educated on an abridged curriculum, does not possess. They are asserting the value of an engaged pluralism to which many Americans do not aspire.

HIGHER EDUCATION'S RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

In its commitment to diversity, higher education assumes, therefore, both a distinctive responsibility and a precedent-setting challenge. While other institutions in the society are also fostering diversity, higher education is uniquely positioned, by its mission, values, and dedication to learning, to foster and nourish the habits of heart and mind that Americans need to make diversity work in daily life. We have an opportunity to help our campuses experience engagement across difference as a value and a public good.

Our nation's campuses have become a highly visible stage on which the most fundamental questions about difference, equality, and community are being enacted. To this effort, filled with promise and fraught with difficulty, the academy brings indispensable resources: its commitments to the advancement of knowledge and its traditions of dialogue and deliberation across difference as keys to the increase of insight and understanding.



This report and the others in this series describe ways that higher education can respond to the challenge of this pivotal moment in the American drama. Formed as we are by the academy's strong traditions of intellectual and social pluralism, higher education faces a rich opportunity to put its own commitments to knowledge at the nation's service.

We urge our colleagues to engage the reflections on the American past and future offered in these pages and draw from them a heightened sense of responsibility and possibility for our nation's brave and risky wager that dialogue across diversity can, in the end, nourish wisdom, understanding and the increase of justice.

CAROL SCHNEIDER

Director, The American Commitments Initiative

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