“Tomorrow is right now.”
—CISCO MONTANEZ, A 15-YEAR-OLD DAIRY QUEEN EMPLOYEE IN ATLANTA

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SEPTEMBER 1967 morning in Palo Alto, California, where a wedding was taking place at the Stanford Union Memorial Church. Precisely at 11:00 A.M., the bride arrived, radiantly dressed in an empire gown of white peau de soie, with bodice and elbow-length sleeves of chantilly lace and a short tulle veil. Carrying a bouquet of roses and white daisies, the young lady walked down the aisle hand in hand with her father. The bride and groom had met three years earlier at Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., where they discovered their mutual interest in horseback riding. On this special day, they had the usual wedding jitters. Outside the church, a nervous groom struggled to put on his jacket. But he was not nervous merely because of the tension associated with the day; the couple’s future was very uncertain. The bride’s father worried that his 18-year-old daughter was too young to marry her 22-year-old sweetheart, a second lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve. The groom, proudly hailed by the bride’s uncle as “a real gung-ho type,” was about to be deployed to a war zone as a combat helicopter pilot. After leaving the chapel, the father of the bride, his anxieties now forever set aside, was photographed grinning from ear to ear and was overheard to say, “Just two young people in love.”
This particular love story was atypical for its time because the bride was white and the groom was black. Margaret Elizabeth Rusk was the daughter of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who hailed from Cherokee County, Georgia, and was the grandson of two Confederate soldiers, and Virginia Foisie Rusk, a homemaker. Guy Gibson Smith was the son of Clarence L. Smith, a chief analyst with the Army Correction Program, and Arlenia Gibson Smith, a public school guidance counselor. During the 1960s, such white-black weddings were both rare and extremely controversial. Shortly after Rusk and Smith tied the knot, the minister who married them told one of several reporters present, “I wanted to be sure they had thought about this. They had looked at it from every angle and had an awareness of the difficulties. If any couple can make it, this pair can, I believe.”

But that was easier said than done. Only nine years earlier in Caroline County, Virginia, another biracial couple, Richard and Mildred Loving, had been jolted out of bed at 2:00 a.m. by sheriff’s deputies, who had stormed into the home of Mildred’s parents, with whom the young couple resided. Shining flashlights into the Lovings’ eyes, the sheriff demanded of Richard Loving, who was white, “Who is this woman you’re sleeping with?” Mildred Loving, a woman of Native American and African descent, responded, “I’m his wife,” and her husband pointed to the wall, where the certificate attesting to their June 2, 1958, marriage in Washington, D.C., hung. Said the sheriff, “That’s no good here.” Next, Mildred Loving recalled, “They told us to get dressed. I couldn’t believe they were taking us to jail.” The sheriff advised the Lovings that they were being arrested for violating the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, a felony punishable by a year in prison. After pleading with her mother to make the police officers “go away,” Mildred and Richard Loving surrendered and were taken to a local jail. Following a brief trial, they were convicted and sentenced to a year in prison, with punishment suspended if they left Virginia and promised not to return to the state for twenty-five years. And if they returned to Virginia as a married couple after 1984, they would again be subject to prosecution. The judge told the Lovings that they would be known as felons for the rest of their lives and added a final condemnation: “Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay, and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that He separated the races shows He did not intend for the races to mix.”

Three months before Guy and Margaret Smith exited that Palo Alto
chapel, the U.S. Supreme Court had issued a decision overruling the ban against interracial marriages. Speaking for a unanimous court in *Loving v. Virginia*, Chief Justice Earl Warren declared, “The freedom to marry has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men.” The justices undoubtedly were moved by Richard Loving’s simple directive to his attorney: “Tell the court I love my wife, and it is just unfair that I can’t live with her in Virginia.” After hearing the decision, an overjoyed Mildred Loving told reporters, “I feel free now.” In August 1967, Leona Eve Boyd (white) and Romans Howard Johnson (black) became the first interracial couple to legally marry in Virginia.6

But the powerful language used by the Supreme Court and the Lovings did little to alter public opinion. Virginia had not been the only state to ban interracial marriages; in addition to all 11 states of the former Confederacy, miscegenation was prohibited in Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia.7 Asked in 1963 whether interracial marriage would eventually become widespread, former President Harry S. Truman bluntly responded, “I hope not. I don’t believe in it.”8 In an April 1968 poll, 53 percent of respondents believed that laws should prohibit black-white marriages, and in 1971, 51 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement, “Any white girl who goes out with a black man is going to ruin her reputation as far as I’m concerned.”9 President Barack Obama, the son of a black African man and white, native-born American woman, recalled that his parents’ 1960 decision to marry after learning that his mother was pregnant could have had life-threatening consequences: “In many parts of the South, my father could have been strung up from a tree for merely looking at my mother the wrong way; in the most sophisticated of northern cities, the hostile stares, the whispers, might have driven a woman in my mother’s predicament into a back-alley abortion—or at the very least to a distant convent that could arrange for adoption. Their very image together would have been considered lurid and perverse, a handy retort to the handful of softheaded liberals who supported a civil rights agenda.”10

Thus, it was not surprising that when the secretary of state and his daughter made their way into the Stanford Union Memorial Church, security was extraordinarily tight. An armada of State Department officers and campus police scrutinized the guests, each of whom carried an admission pass. Only 50 of the church’s 2,000 seats were filled, most of them with friends of the Rusk family. In fact, no blacks other than the groom and his
parents attended. The tension outside was just as palpable. On a tour of the Midwest, an anxious Lady Bird Johnson expressed the hope that “everything will go well.” Traveling with the First Lady, the wives of the vice president and secretary of agriculture also extended their best wishes. But the First Lady and everyone else in her party knew that the potential for violence was very real.

Behind his public display of bravado, Dean Rusk believed that his daughter’s marriage might mean that his tenure as secretary of state was at an end. Rusk telephoned President Lyndon B. Johnson to inform him of Margaret Rusk’s intentions and asked if the impending marriage would compromise the administration’s relations with Congress, especially with southern Dixiecrats. Johnson initially said no but later telephoned Georgia senator Richard Russell to confirm the assessment. Russell reassured the president, “It won’t make any difference at all.”

The Rusk-Smith nuptials did not stop the march of history, which, among other things, saw the unpopular Vietnam War result in Lyndon Johnson’s involuntary retirement. But on that late summer day in 1967, when the newlyweds descended the chapel steps to have their pictures taken, history paused when one of the photographs landed on the cover of *Time*. Inside the magazine, a grande dame at Florida’s Orlando Country Club delighted in the secretary of state’s public predicament: “It will serve the old goat right to have nigger grandbabies.” Rusk’s cousin, Ernest Stone, expressed a popular sentiment: “I think he should’ve done something about it, not let it get this far. He should’ve prevented it.” Many blacks were equally dismissive, and some, including Black Power activist Lincoln Lynch, saw a sinister motive: “I wonder to what lengths Dean Rusk has to go in order to gain support for his and Johnson’s war in Vietnam.” Only Martin Luther King Jr. captured the couple’s sentiments: “Individuals marry, not races.”

The wedding haunted Rusk for years. Following Johnson’s decision to abdicate the presidency in 1968, the former secretary of state returned to his native Georgia. There, regents at the state university named him to fill the newly created Samuel H. Sibley Professorship. But one board member, Roy Harris, who had served as the state chair of George Wallace’s 1968 presidential campaign and president of Georgia’s White Citizens’ Council, vociferously objected. As Rusk later recalled, Harris was outraged not by “policy like Vietnam, or U.S.-Soviet relations, or even my lack of a law degree or a Ph.D.”; rather, Harris apparently “objected to my appointment
because my daughter, Peggy, had married a black man.” The regents ignored Harris, voting nine to four to give Rusk the appointment. Harris responded by filing a bill in the state legislature reducing the university’s appropriation by the amount of Rusk’s salary. That gambit also failed and Rusk held onto his professorship until his death at age 85 in 1994.

Looking back at the 1967 brouhaha over the marriage of two people from different races is akin to perusing an old, sepia-toned photograph. American teenagers today strongly support interracial marriage, with 91 percent agreeing with Warren’s assertion that marriage is an essential right in the orderly pursuit of happiness. This endorsement is not surprising, given that 4 in 10 teens report dating someone of the opposite race and that 3 in 10 describe these as “serious” relationships. A survey of teenagers in the Washington, D.C., area confirms these findings: 97 percent have friends of different races; 45 percent say these friendships eventually turned into dating relationships; and 80 percent would consider marrying someone of a different race. South Korean–born Kristin Spring for one, says that race is no longer an issue: “Most people in this generation know that race does not matter. And we’ll pass [tolerance] on to our children.” Ricky Reiter, a 17-year-old Maryland high school senior, agrees. Reiter, who is white, dates only black women: “I prefer black girls, and don’t ask me why, ’cuz I don’t know why. I mean, how can you explain who you’re attracted to? You just are.” When Reiter was reminded about state laws that once banned interracial marriages, he exclaimed, “I can’t believe all of that actually happened.” Reiter’s 43-year-old mother noted that the dating scene is very different for her teenage son than it was for her: in the past, “the Italians stuck together . . . the Russians stuck together. It was very narrow-minded, what people believed in. The change has been just amazing—amazing.” Indeed. As recently as 1970, interracial marriages accounted for fewer than 1 percent of married couples (about 300,000 total). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the number of interracial marriages has climbed to 5.4 percent (more than 3 million couples).

Barack Obama describes miscegenation—that antiquated word once used to categorize interracial marriages—as being “humpbacked, ugly, portending a monstrous outcome: like ante bellum or octoroon, it evokes images of another era, a distant world of horsewhips and flames, dead magnolias and crumbling porticos.” Today, miscegenation has become a linguistic artifact whose meaning has been overwhelmed by a racial revolution with profound implications for the nation’s demographic and
political futures. Nowhere is this transformation more pronounced than in Georgia. Just seventy-one miles away from Rusk’s grave in Athens stands Atlanta, a city that is a thriving multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual metropolis and a symbol of the race revolution that has obliterated old patterns of thought.

Atlanta: A New South Meets the Newer South

The first signs of the new racial revolution appeared in 1970. That year, a peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, sought and won his state’s governorship. The soft-spoken Jimmy Carter appealed to whites and blacks alike based on their shared economic interests and conservative cultural values. In his Inaugural Address, Carter won instant acclaim by setting himself apart from his segregationist predecessors:

> At the end of a long campaign, I believe I know our people as well as anyone. Based on this knowledge of Georgians north and south, rural and urban, liberal and conservative, I say to you quite frankly that the time for racial discrimination is over. . . . No poor, rural, weak, or black person should ever have to bear the additional burden of being deprived of the opportunity of an education, a job, or simple justice.  

As governor, Carter removed Roy Harris from his post as a University of Georgia regent.

During the 1970s, a host of other southern progressives also won their state governorships, including Democrats Reuben Askew (Florida), John West (South Carolina), Dale Bumpers (Arkansas), and Bill Clinton (Arkansas) and Republican Linwood Holton (Virginia). All echoed Carter’s plea for racial tolerance. As Bumpers told Time, “My election and the victories of Governors Carter and Askew . . . weren’t coincidences. There has been a cry for new leadership in the South.” In 1978, Arkansans affirmed Bumper’s analysis by electing the 32-year-old Clinton as the youngest governor in the state’s history. In his 1979 Inaugural Address, Clinton echoed Carter’s call for racial justice: “For as long as I can remember, I have believed passionately in the cause of equal opportunity, and I will do what I can to advance it.” Clinton, Carter, and their fellow progressives helped the South turn away from the race-baiting politics of the past.

That politics had been especially vituperative. In 1966, Democrat
Lester Maddox won the Georgia governorship by decrying integration as “un-American, un-Godly, and even criminal.” Maddox first won statewide notice when three black activists attempted to desegregate his fried chicken restaurant and he chased them away with axe handles and a pistol, creating a memorable televised scene that established his political appeal. The protesters turned to the courts, which eventually ruled that Maddox had violated the public accommodations provision of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In response, Maddox closed his Atlanta chicken emporium and began campaigning for governor by giving axe handles to his many admirers. Although Maddox lost the popular vote, the state legislature chose him as governor.

More than four decades later, the Maddox saga has faded from memory. After serving one term, he was succeeded by his lieutenant governor, Jimmy Carter, and Maddox died, nearly forgotten, in 2003. But the racial politics Maddox espoused still echo in Dixie. In 2001, Mississippians voted to keep their state flag with its Confederate design rather than replace it with one without such an overt symbol of slavery. The following year, Georgians elected their first Republican governor, Sonny Perdue, after the incumbent Democrat eradicated the Confederate emblem from that state’s flag. Yet the winds of change are blowing. In 2000, the South Carolina legislature lowered the Confederate battle flag from its perch atop the statehouse, where it had flown for nearly 40 years after the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People began a boycott that cost the state $20 million. Speaking in favor of removing the offensive flag, Democratic state representative Todd Rutherford alluded to the Civil War and asked his recalcitrant colleagues, “I mean no disrespect, but isn’t that war over?”

As Rutherford’s query suggests, race-baiting politics is increasingly part of the nation’s past. During the 2008 campaign, surprisingly few Americans saw Barack Obama’s candidacy through the prism of race. In a remarkable speech at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Obama noted, “Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country.” One reason for race’s relative impotence in Dixie is that the faces of twenty-first-century southerners differ substantially from the black and white visages that dominated the region from the nation’s founding until very recently. One good place to see the area’s new racial complexion is Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, the world’s busiest, ac-
commodating more than 78 million passengers and 900,000 takeoffs and landings each year. The facility employs 44,800 people, many of them new immigrants to the United States.  

Adama Camara is one of them. An émigré from Mali, Camara arrived in the United States at age 19. In lilting English accented by his native French, Camara succinctly explained why he left Mali, “I fled a dictator.” For Camara, one of thirteen children, life in Atlanta began inauspiciously. He settled into the city and shared an apartment with a cousin, sleeping on the floor, as he had in Africa. He first found employment as a day laborer working alongside other immigrants, most of them Mexican, but got more steady work when he became a daytime custodian at one of Hartsfield-Jackson’s large concourses and a nighttime utility worker at the airport’s Budweiser Brew House.

Camara is part of a swelling migration of native Africans to metropolitan Atlanta. These African immigrants—the vast majority of them black—now constitute 2 percent of the region’s 4.1 million residents. By 2010, those numbers are expected to grow even more as refugees from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, Mali, and Sierra Leone flee hostile dictatorships, drought, famine, and economic deprivation for new lives in the United States. Most of these immigrants take whatever work is available: in Atlanta, for example, many drive taxicabs or work in fast food restaurants.

Yet even as the African newcomers quickly adapt to the popular culture, many—including Camara and his three Malian roommates—retain their strong Muslim religious beliefs. Atlanta has 23 mosques serving an estimated 32,469 Muslims. A 2003 study published by the Glenmary Research Center found that the city is the tenth-most religiously diverse metropolitan area in the United States, with 149 different religious organizations, 87 of which have established houses of worship. In 2005, the Catholic Church took note of the changing racial composition and named Wilton D. Gregory as the region’s first black bishop. One black Catholic exalted, “As an African-American, it’s great seeing other African-Americans in hierarchical positions within the church.”

Increased racial and religious diversity is a direct consequence of the more than 256,000 immigrants who have come to metropolitan Atlanta during the past decade. At the Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, the janitorial service is 70 percent foreign born, a stark contrast to the 1970s, when most of its employees were single African American women. Signs of the new immigrant presence have spread far beyond the airport’s boundaries. For
example, the drive down Buford Highway away from the airport and toward downtown Atlanta features road signs advertising the Pho 79 Restaurant, the Pho Bac Restaurant, and the Saigon Noodle House, all of which specialize in Vietnamese cuisine. Then there is the Havana, a Cuban-style establishment. Nearby is the Machu Picchu, featuring a Peruvian-based menu, while diners at the Abbay can savor Ethiopian food. Adding to the diverse culinary palate are Pancho’s and the Mariscolandia Seafood House, both featuring Mexican cuisine; the Phuket, a Thai restaurant; the Peking and Red China; and Lawrence’s Café, which trades in Lebanese food. Even fast food restaurants are not exempt. One Sikh-owned former Baskin-Robbins ice cream store has been renamed the Basket Rabbit.40 Of course, other restaurants associated with traditional southern cuisine remain, including Folks, which features southern soul food. Likewise, the Atlanta Diner and Chicago Sports Bar and Grill are conventional meat-and-potatoes establishments. But the smorgasbord of ethnic eateries is a sure sign that the market for such fare is increasing. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution has taken note: on Wednesdays, it publishes a special “Cab Market” section that spotlights foods and recipes from around the world.

More important than changing menus and restaurant names are the stories of their patrons and owners. One of the most compelling is that of Nallely Ortiz, who on one Fourth of July was discovered by a Washington Post reporter eating hot wings under the watchful eyes of the Confederate faces carved into Stone Mountain, Georgia. Born in Mexico and just six years old when she arrived in the United States in 1991, Ortiz and her family were lured to Atlanta by the construction boom associated with the 1996 Olympics. As another Hispanic man who came to the city at the time recalled, “Only I know Georgia for Atlanta, the Olympic games. Maybe this city is more rich. People is rich.”41 Although the Ortizes arrived on a tourist visa, sightseeing was hardly their reason for coming. Making money and a better life for themselves were, and to that end, Ortiz’s father got a job working in a restaurant, while her mother operated a snack stand.42

But life in their newly adopted country proved difficult. By the time Ortiz reached fifth grade, her parents had divorced. Money, which had been an overriding family objective, became even more scarce. On the best days, the snack stand brought in $75, hardly enough to support Nallely and her five siblings. With her father gone, her brother, Reuben, became the primary breadwinner, working as a full-time restaurant cook. Reuben eventually graduated from high school with a technical degree in the culi-
nary arts. Even so, money remained elusive, and when it appeared, the coveted dollars were stuffed into envelopes and even into bras, meticulously (and reluctantly) doled out when the rent and other bills came due.43

Nallely Ortiz’s story is hardly unique. The South’s estimated Hispanic population grew from 562,663 in 1990 to 2,400,000 in 2005. In Georgia alone, 20 percent of the population is Hispanic, and estimates show that between 350,000 and 450,000 illegal immigrants—including Ortiz and her family—reside in the Peach State.44 Ortiz’s life changed dramatically in 2002, when she received U.S. citizenship. One reason for her altered status was the birth of her son, Sebastian, which reflected another twenty-first-century trend: from 1990 to 2000, Georgia’s teenage birth rate increased 50 percent among Latinos, 30 percent among blacks, and 1 percent among whites. Born out of wedlock, Sebastian lives with his parents in an apartment they share with another unmarried Hispanic couple and their child. To make ends meet, Ortiz’s boyfriend, Eduardo, works as a prep cook, while she holds several part-time, minimum-wage jobs, including one at a sandwich shop and another as a supermarket cashier. They get by on their meager salaries and assistance from the federal and state governments. Because Sebastian is a U.S. citizen by birth, he is eligible for nine cans of government-subsidized milk each month. The State of Georgia also offers health care to low-income children through Peach Care for Kids. But Ortiz has one asset that most illegal Hispanic immigrants lack: she finished high school; half of the Latinos who enroll in Georgia’s high schools do not graduate.45

Variations on Nallely Ortiz’s story are replayed in a thousand other locations across Atlanta. At a Dairy Queen 14 miles south of Hartsfield-Jackson Airport, a Porsche is parked outside while its owner, Rizwan Momin, counts the day’s receipts inside the restaurant. Momin arrived in Atlanta in 1985 from the Indian state of Gujarat with only $310 in his pocket. He quickly found employment after his uncle purchased a white-owned Dairy Queen in a mostly black neighborhood. Mopping and sweeping the floors, Momin pocketed most of his take-home salary by living frugally, including sleeping on the floor. By 2002, Momin owned nine Dairy Queens in the greater Atlanta area and was one of the company’s largest franchise owners in the southeastern United States. He is hardly alone: Indian immigrants own 60 of Georgia’s 208 Dairy Queens. According to Momin, his employees, most of whom are Indian immigrants, are inspired to re-create his version of the American Dream: “Indians are gonna work for you. At the be-
ginning, they work for minimum wage. Then little raise, little raise, slowly, slowly. Everyone live together; they are saving money, six people in household working, they bank 80 percent of their money and use 20 percent for expenses. They don’t drink, no clubs, no fancy clothes. Suddenly, they have $60,000 in the bank. Then they will buy the Subway or the Blimpie.”

In 2002, Momin expanded his holdings by opening a chain of As Seen on TV stores; they have become a shopping-mall staple. Inside, customers can purchase a Flowbee Haircutting System, a Bug Wand, Bye-Bye Blemish, or a Juice Man II—products often spotlighted on late-night cable television infomercials. Momin is one of thousands of Indians who have achieved the American Dream. According to one estimate, 300,000 Indians work in California’s Silicon Valley, earning a median income of $200,000 per year; another figure estimates that Indians own 30 percent of the nation’s hotels and motels. Commenting on the fact that Indian Americans are the fastest growing minority in his adopted home state of Delaware, Vice President Joseph Biden observed, “You cannot go into a 7-11 or a Dunkin’ Donuts unless you have a slight Indian accent.”

The racial transformation of Atlanta into a southern-style Los Angeles has not been without tension. William Morton, a 38-year-old white kitchen worker in Gainesville, Georgia, says, “This country’s not right.” Even some black Georgians are disturbed by the changing demography. In Atkinson County, where Hispanics outnumber blacks 21 percent to 19 percent, black county commissioner Jimmy Roberts Jr. finds the immigrant presence disconcerting: “They done took over the population. I don’t think it’s right.” Yet the faces of the twenty-first century are not those of these Georgia stalwarts but those of Adama Camara, Nallely Ortiz, and Rizwan Momin. They represent a Newer South that is standing alongside the black-white New South of old that spawned the likes of Carter, Clinton, and other racial progressives. In 2008, Obama overwhelmed John McCain in the metropolitan Atlanta area, winning 68 percent of the vote in Fulton County (which includes part of Atlanta) and 79 percent support in De Kalb County (which also includes part of Atlanta). As one of Momin’s Dairy Queen employees, 15-year-old Cisco Montanez, succinctly put it, “Tomorrow is right now.”

Another sign of the changing times came in 2000 when the Census Bureau relented in the face of growing public pressure and agreed to list 21 different racial categories on its forms. This push for a more realistic racial count began a dozen years earlier when the Association for Multi-
Ethnic Americans lobbied to have multiracial categories listed on all government documents. Soon, other like-minded organizations—including Project RACE (Reclassify All Children Equally) and A Place for Us—took up the cause. In 1997, these groups won powerful backing from speaker of the U.S. House Newt Gingrich, who endorsed “phasing out the outdated, divisive, and rigid classification of Americans.” Thanks to Gingrich’s support, the Office of Management and Budget mandated that people be allowed to mark more than one race on all federal forms. After the new rules were promulgated, Census director Kenneth Prewitt noted that the millennial count “will go down in history as the event that began to redefine race in American society.” Other government agencies are playing catch-up. In 2006, for example, the Department of Education finally allowed students to circle more than one racial category on its surveys.

For some of Atlanta’s immigrants, racial self-identification is a matter of argument. Montanez, for example, is the son of a single Puerto Rican mother and black father who left shortly after Montanez was born in the racially troubled Bronx, New York. His mother believed that the South would be a “gentler” experience for her young child, so they moved to Atlanta. But Atlanta proved to be no panacea. Montanez was suspended from eighth grade and went to work in the fast food industry, telling friends, “I like ice cream.” After quarreling with his mother about his use of language and culture, he has become fully black-identified. He tells his mother to use the word sausage, not chorizo. His erratic work habits ultimately got him fired from the Dairy Queen, and he returned to high school. But Adama Camara, Nallely Ortiz, Rizwan Momin, and Cisco Montanez are a part of the Newer South.

“The Third Great Revolution”

Speaking at the 1998 commencement exercises at Portland State University, Bill Clinton cast his eye toward the impending new century and saw a nation transformed. The president told the student body that the nation was experiencing a “third great revolution,” one as powerful as the American Revolution, which gave birth to the democratic ideas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and as imposing as the civil rights and women’s rights revolutions that broadened the definition of personal liberties in the late twentieth century. According to Clinton, this gathering revolution was being fought by an army of immigrants: “Today, largely because of immi-
gration, there is no majority race in Hawaii or Houston or New York City. Within five years there will be no majority race in our largest state, California. In a little more than fifty years, there will be no majority race in the United States.” Hearing this, the crowd of mostly white students applauded.58

The facts bear out Clinton’s argument. When Richard M. Nixon took the presidential oath in 1969, there were approximately 9.6 million foreign-born persons residing in the United States. Thirty-two years later, when George W. Bush raised his hand to repeat the same oath, that figure had grown to 28.4 million.59 During the 1970s, approximately 400,000 persons entered the United States each year; a decade later, the number was 800,000; by the end of the twentieth century, it topped 1 million.60 Today, there are more foreign-born people living in California (8.4 million) than there are people residing in all of New Jersey, and New York state has more foreign-born people than there are in the entire population of South Carolina.61 Many of these arrivals are nonwhite. A 2005 Zogby International poll provides one small shard of evidence that the United States is inexorably moving toward a new multiracial, multiethnic society: 75 percent of respondents said that a person of a different race lived within one block of their home; 91 percent had invited a person of another race to a dinner or a party; and 78 percent had close friendships with someone outside of work or school who did not share their racial background.62 In another sign of the times, 36 percent of those surveyed told the Gallup Organization in 2006 that they had personal contact with recent immigrants whom they either know or suspected were illegal.63

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks hardly slowed the immigration tide. In fact, the number of immigrants subsequently has increased rapidly. In 2006, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, the United States had 37 million resident immigrants, of which 11.1 million were illegal, 1.3 million were temporary legal residents, 2.6 million were refugees, 11.5 million were naturalized citizens, and 10.5 million were legal permanent residents.64 This proliferation of immigrants even extends to the U.S. military. Today, 69,300 soldiers are foreign-born, including 33,000 non-U.S. citizens who are on active duty.65 Their names often appear on roll calls of the dead in Afghanistan and Iraq—Falaniko, Valdez, Perez, Ramos, and Le.66

Army private first-class Diego Rincon is one. Rincon was only 19 years old when he was assassinated in 2003 by a suicide bomber on the streets of
Baghdad. A native of Colombia, Rincon fled a country torn apart by drug warlords in 1989, arriving in the United States with his family when he was only 5 years old. After September 11, Diego and his father, Jorge, impulsively entered an army recruiter’s office. The army rejected 40-year-old Jorge but immediately signed up 18-year-old Diego, even though he was not a U.S. citizen. After his death, Jorge Rincon lobbied Congress to pass legislation granting citizenship to his dead son. Congress obliged, approving a measure that granted preferred status in obtaining citizenship to the foreign-born parents of any immigrant killed in combat. Today, Diego Rincon’s framed citizenship papers are prominently displayed on a wall of remembrance at the family home in Conyers, Georgia.

Stories like Rincon’s are altering stereotypes about ethnic enclaves and the people who populate them. For example, in Boston, the home of the Kennedy dynasty, nonwhite immigrants populate the once Irish-dominated neighborhoods. For the first time since 1790, whites are now a minority group in the old colonial city: 297,850 Bostonians list themselves as either minority or multiracial, whereas only 291,561 are white. According to Cheng Imm Tann, director of the Mayor’s Office of New Bostonians, “In the beginning here, the people of color—the Native Americans—were in the majority. Now the people of color are again the majority. The diversity is amazing.” Nowhere is that diversity more apparent than in the city’s Jamaica Plain section, where Spanish is replacing the Irish brogue. One reason is that two-thirds of the families in Miraflores, a small Dominican Republic village with a population of 4,000, have relatives living in Jamaica Plain. Author Peggy Levitt characterizes the two-way communication that occurs between these once-distant lands: “Because someone is always traveling between Boston and the island, there is a continuous, circular flow of goods, news, and information. Thus, when someone is ill, cheating on his or her spouse, or finally granted a visa, the news spreads as quickly in Jamaica Plain as it does on the streets of Miraflores.”

The ethnic recasting of Boston has found its way into the voting booths. In 2005, Sam Yoon, a Korean immigrant, ran for an at-large seat on the city council. Locating his headquarters near Fields Corner, an area heavily populated by immigrants from Vietnam, Cape Verde, and elsewhere, Yoon developed a Web site that was a virtual Tower of Babel, with portions translated into Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, and Cape Verdean Creole. Thanks to the strong support he received from Boston’s immigrant newcomers, Yoon became the first Asian
American to sit on the city council. Basking in victory, he acknowledged various Asian American groups: “This is for the Chinese Americans! This is for the Japanese-Americans!”

Yoon’s win, along with that of Puerto Rican–born city council member Felix Arroyo, underscores the city’s metamorphosis. Arroyo’s triumph was particularly impressive, as he garnered enough votes to finish near the top of the ticket, losing to incumbent council president Michael Flaherty, an old-time Irish Democrat, by a mere 5,700 votes.

Other cities have witnessed similar transformations in their immigrant populations and politics. Cook County, Illinois, which encompasses the city of Chicago and is home to Barack Obama, has more Hispanics than does Arizona, Colorado, or New Mexico. A similar phenomenon has occurred in Hartford, Connecticut. In 2003, more than 40 percent of that city’s population was Hispanic, outnumbering blacks (38 percent) for the first time. According to Hartford’s Puerto Rican–born mayor, Eddie Perez, “Hartford has become a Latin city, so to speak. It’s a sign of things to come.”

Perez’s personal story is illustrative. He came to Hartford in 1969 at age 12 from Corozol, Puerto Rico. Perez and his single mother, Felicita, and siblings William, Orlando, Wilfredo, Moses, Nelson, Ruben, Noel, and Jeanette moved from apartment to apartment, searching for a safe neighborhood. The Hartford Courant described this 10-member family as a “living metaphor for survival, continually evolving.” Perez fell into a street gang before coming under the positive influence of a Catholic priest, Father Thomas Goekler, and joining Goekler’s Sacred Heart Church Youth Group. Goekler eventually became president of Trinity College, where he hired Perez as director of community relations. In 2001, Perez left that job to become Hartford’s first Hispanic mayor, and he has held the office ever since. As chief executive of an increasingly multiracial city, Perez “danc[es] between worlds, pretending it ain’t nothing to be forever negotiating among white, black, and Puerto Rican—rich and poor, landlord and tenant.”

Unlike the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when immigrants often settled in the major ports of call, today’s migrants are found not only in “traditional” urban settings (often displacing older white ethnics) but also in the formerly white-dominated suburbs. David Brooks writes that when he once opened a local newspaper in Loudoun County, Virginia, National Scholar Award winners announced included Kawi Cheung, Anastasia Cis-
In fact, from 1990 to 2005, enrollment in the county’s public schools tripled from 14,633 to 47,361, while the number of Asian students increased by a factor of 12 and the number of Hispanics grew by a factor of 17.

The same phenomena are replicated in many other suburban communities. For example, Marshalltown, Iowa (population 30,000), has seen natives from Villachuato, Mexico (population 15,000) hold 900 of the 1,600 jobs in the Swift and Company meatpacking plant, the town’s largest employer. Similarly, in Saline County, Kansas, the Hispanic population has grown by 20 percent between 2000 and 2008. Hispanics in this rural area work at Tony’s Pizza, the frozen food plant, the Exide Technologies battery plant, and the Phillips Lighting plant. County clerk Dan Merriman credits Hispanics with saving his community: “A lot of local companies either wouldn’t be here or wouldn’t have expanded the way they have. Phillips Lighting would’ve gone overseas. It’s that [Hispanic] labor force. If we didn’t have that here, they could pull that thing and take it wherever.”

Today, the immigrant march into unexpected places continues: from 2000 to 2005, the number of immigrants living in Indiana rose 34 percent; in South Dakota, 44 percent; in Delaware, 32 percent; in Missouri, 31 percent; in Colorado, 28 percent; and in New Hampshire, 26 percent. And Obama won four of these six states, in part because of their enhanced immigrant presence.

A Bilingual (and Bifurcated) Nation

Everywhere one looks, the evidence overwhelmingly shows that the United States is rapidly becoming a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual polity. Los Angeles County, to cite one instance, provided special ballots in 2008 for its Latino, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese voters. But this new cultural diversity hardly signifies an ethnic “melting pot.” In the twenty-first century, two distinct Americas are coming into focus: one is mostly white and English speaking, while the other is mostly Hispanic and Spanish speaking. Nationwide, 47 million Americans speak a language other than English, with 26 million conversing in Spanish. Of these 47 million foreign-tongued speakers, 21.3 million claim to know English less than “very well.” In some states, the demand to learn English is acute: in Massachusetts, 460,000 people (7.7 percent of the
population) are not conversant in English, and entry into English as second language courses can take as long as two or three years. Yet that Hispanic and Spanish-speaking portion of the populace will dominate twenty-first-century politics. During the 1990s, an estimated 2,249,000 Mexicans came to the United States, 3.5 times the number who came during the 1970s. By 2006, the Census Bureau reported that Latinos totaled a record 44.3 million. For the first time in U.S. history, Latinos outnumber blacks (population 36.7 million), making Hispanics the nation’s number one minority group. Latinos are predicted to account for 60 percent of the U.S. population growth between 2005 and 2050, and in 2008, the Census Bureau issued a bulletin stating that by 2042 (eight years earlier than previously anticipated), whites will be the nation’s new minority. Thus, as the twenty-first century progresses, the binary white-black racial politics of the past will become increasingly obsolete as the term minority will stop meaning “black” and instead come to be associated with “white.”

As always, children are harbingers of the future. According to the Census Bureau, 70 percent of the population increase among children aged five and younger is Hispanic. California is a trendsetter. In 2002, Hispanics constituted 71.9 percent of the students in the Los Angeles Unified School District, while just 9.4 percent of students were white. One year later, in another historic first, a majority of all California newborns were Hispanic. Nationwide, the 2002 fertility rates were estimated at 1.8 for whites, 2.1 for blacks, and 3.0 for Hispanics. In light of such numbers, it is not surprising that José has replaced Michael as the most popular name for baby boys.

Should present trends continue, Hispanics will approach 29 percent of the total population in 2050 and could even reach 33 percent by 2100.

Today, the nation’s skin complexion is rapidly changing from white to a shade of beige. As whites decline in population—thanks to what Ben J. Wattenberg describes as a “birth dearth”—racial intermixing will only increase. According to Peter Brimelow of Forbes magazine, the proportion of whites nationwide could fall to an all-time low of 61 percent by 2020. In some places, the decline has been striking. California, for example, saw its Anglo population fall by nearly 500,000 during the 1990s as a consequence of low birth rates and a white exodus, even as the total statewide population increased by 3,000,000, mostly Hispanics. Today, only 46.7 percent of Californians are white, while 32.4 percent are Hispanic. California’s new demography helped give Barack Obama a solid victory
in the Golden State in 2008. Whites constituted just 63 percent of the Californians casting ballots, and they were tepid in their support for Obama, giving him just 52 percent of their votes. But nonwhites made up for Obama’s relative lack of support among whites: blacks constituted 10 percent of the total vote, and 95 percent of them backed Obama; Hispanics were 18 percent of the total vote, and 74 percent of them supported Obama; Asians comprised 6 percent of the votes cast, and 64 percent of them backed Obama; and those of some other race were 3 percent of the vote and named Obama on 55 percent of their ballots. Thanks to such overwhelming nonwhite backing, Obama overwhelmed McCain statewide, 61 percent to 37 percent. With each election, the number of whites casting ballots in California will decline. Unless Republicans find a way to compete with this demographic reality, California will remain a Democratic bastion in presidential politics and will provide the party with a crucial bloc of electoral votes.

Los Angeles has become a microcosm of the changes taking place in California politics. Today, 44.6 percent of Los Angeles County residents are Hispanic, a figure that is getting ever closer to the 48.7 percent who are white. The city of Los Angeles is already “majority-minority”: 48 percent of its residents are Latino, 11 percent are Asian, and 10 percent are black, while just 31 percent are white. Writer Joan Didion observed some years ago that for many Los Angeles Anglos, Spanish had become “part of the ambient noise, the language spoken by the people who worked in the car wash and came to trim the trees and cleared the tables in restaurants.” That “ambient noise” has now reached a crescendo as Hispanics not only grow in numbers but acquire both cultural and political power. In 2005, Antonio Villaraigosa became the city’s first Latino mayor since Cristol Aguilar left that office in 1872. Villaraigosa, the Mexican American son of a single mother, handily defeated white incumbent James Hahn, 59 percent to 41 percent. Villaraigosa won 86 percent of the Hispanic vote and 77 percent of the votes from people aged 18 to 29 but only 48 percent of the votes from whites residing in the suburban middle-class enclave of the San Fernando Valley. Leaving the polls, 26 percent of Villaraigosa supporters said they liked their candidate because he “understands multi-cultural Los Angeles.” Striding to the microphone on election night, the new mayor thrilled the crowd by shouting, “Si, se puede! [Yes, we can!]” Villaraigosa’s victory made him an instant celebrity, as witnessed by the attendance of former vice president Al Gore and California governor Arnold
Schwarzenegger at his inauguration. In 2008, Obama found gold in Los Angeles County’s changing demography, swamping McCain 69 percent to 29 percent.

Australian writer and critic Clive James has said, “Call Los Angeles any dirty name you like. . . . The fact remains that you are already living in it before you get there.” Today, James’s observation holds special resonance. In the nation’s 20 fastest-growing cities during the past decade, the proportion of blacks has risen 23 percent, while the proportion of Asians has jumped 69 percent and that of Hispanics has grown by 72 percent. In some areas, the increase has become an explosion. In Loudoun County, Virginia, one of the many suburbs that ring Washington, D.C., the Hispanic population rose an astounding 368 percent from 1990 to 2000. Neighboring Fairfax County also saw a rapid rise in its Hispanic numbers, and 27 percent of the county’s residents are now foreign born, while the number of Hispanics in Prince William County doubled from 2000 to 2006. Obama’s win in Virginia was fueled by the solid support he received in all three of these counties: 54 percent in Loudoun, 60 percent in Fairfax, and 58 percent in Prince William. Virginia’s new demography enabled the Democratic presidential candidate to carry the Old Dominion for the first time since 1964.

Politics is not the only venue in which the increased Hispanic presence is making itself felt. On a cold January day in 2005, Washington, D.C., radio station WHFS-FM, an alternative rock outlet featuring songs from the White Stripes, Green Day, and Jet, played Jeff Buckley’s “Last Goodbye” and abruptly switched to a Spanish-language pop music format. After 36 years of airing rock and roll, the first words broadcast on the new El Zol were “WHFS transmitiendo desde la ciudad capital de America: Esta! Es! Tu! Nueva! Radio! [Transmitting from America’s Capital City: This! Is! Your! New! Radio!]”. Longtime listeners were stunned: one told the Washington Post, “This is the end of an era. I feel like I just lost my parents.” But the demographics motivating the change were obvious: from 1998 to 2005, the audience for Spanish-language radio stations jumped 37 percent. As for WHFS, the audience grew by an astounding 69 percent in the first three months after the switch, lifting the station into a tie for twelfth place in the city’s Arbitron ratings.

Other cities have witnessed similar changes. In New York, La Mega (WSKQ-FM), a Spanish-language station, regularly beat shock jock Howard Stern in the competition for listeners. Sensing that the world
had changed, Stern abandoned commercial radio in 2006 and moved his racy program to Sirius, a satellite operation modeled after pay-cable television. Meanwhile, the number of Spanish stations on traditional broadcast dials continued to grow, from 297 in 1990 to 686 in 2005. One Hispanic host explained the newfound popularity of an old medium: “Recent immigrants use radio as their principal source of information. It is a forum that people are familiar with from back home.”

The proliferation of Spanish stations has helped boost record sales by popular Hispanic artists including Ricky Martin, Marc Anthony, Gloria Estefan, Julio and Enrique Iglesias, Selena, Juan Luis Guerra, and Victor Manuelle. Their success has resulted primarily from their young listeners and their ever-expanding pocketbooks. In 2003, Hispanic purchasing power totaled $580 billion, of which $249.5 million went to record purchases. By 2010, Hispanics will spend an estimated $900 billion.

Young people not only like music but watch lots of television, a fact that in 2003 led Spanish-language cable television company Univision to launch TeleFutura, a cable outlet aimed exclusively at young Hispanics. That year, TeleFutura had the youngest audience of any 24-hour broadcast network, with half its viewers aged between 12 and 34. Nationwide, Univision reports that in the top three television markets—New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago—Spanish-speaking local news broadcasts outscore their English competitors among the key demographic of adults between 18 and 49. Keeping tabs on these trends, NBC bought the Spanish-language cable network Telemundo in 2002 for a record $2.7 billion. Every major U.S. market now has at least two Spanish-language radio and television stations.

Hispanics and many other Americans also eat lots of Mexican fast food. One of the most popular restaurants, Taco Bell, has more than 6,500 franchises serving 35 million customers each week. In 2003, the company generated sales of $5.4 billion. Taco Bell’s success has not been lost on its competitors. Hamburger giant McDonald’s acquired Chipotle, a Mexican-style fast food restaurant. The lunchtime crowd at the Chipotle on Manhattan’s 34th Street—the company’s 419th franchise, opened in 2005—includes not only hungry Latinos but also whites and members of other races. There are now more than 500 Chipotle franchises.

Nowhere is the changing face of the United States more evident than in Miami. As early as 1987, Didion wrote that “an entrepreneur who spoke no English could still, in Miami, buy, sell, negotiate, leverage assets, float
bonds, and if he were so inclined, attend galas twice a week in black tie.”

By 1999, the chieftains of the city’s largest bank, real estate development company, and law firm were Hispanic, and this economic status has translated into substantial amounts of both cultural and political power. In 1998, a Spanish television station became the city’s most-watched channel, the first time a foreign-language station achieved such prominence there. The same year, Alberto Ibarguen became the first Hispanic publisher of the Miami Herald, a post he held until 2005. A native of Puerto Rico, Ibarguen had previously held the top job at the Herald’s sister newspaper, El Nuevo Herald, which has 227,000 daily and 289,000 Sunday subscribers. Simply put, Miami is the de facto economic, social, and political capital of Latin America. As political scientist Michael Jones-Correa observes, Miami, New York, and Los Angeles are “required campaign stops for politicians in national and even state and local campaigns across Latin America.”

But the infusion of Hispanics has produced a powerful political backlash. A white Miami resident unable to communicate with government bureaucrats exclaimed, “My God, this is what it’s like to be the minority.” In California, author Dale Maharidge interviewed several whites who described their fear of living in a state with a population that is mostly minority:

Whites are scared. The depth of white fear is understood and misunderstood by progressive thinkers and the media. Whites dread the unknown and not-so-distant tomorrow when a statistical turning point will be reached that could have very bad consequences for them. They fear the change that seems to be transforming their state into something different from the rest of the United States. They fear losing not only their jobs but also their culture. Some feel that California will become a version of South Africa, in which whites will lose power when minorities are the majority.

Campaigning for president on the Reform Party ticket in 2000, Patrick J. Buchanan reported that many voters approached him and said, “Pat, we’re losing the country we grew up in.” In Gainesville, Georgia, described as the Poultry Capital of the World, longtime resident Joe Merck describes his city as being “overrun” with Hispanics: “I don’t blame ’em coming up here, but half of ’em are illegal. We’re taking care of ’em.
They’re having all these babies one right after another. You can go buy your credentials. It’s a known fact, but nobody does anything about it. We need to send ’em back home.”

Respondents in numerous national polls echo these sentiments:

- 83 percent want federal authorities to crack down hard on noncitizens by using fingerprinting and random interviewing;
- 81 percent believe illegal immigration is out of control;
- 74 percent agree it is either extremely or very important to halt the flow of illegal immigrants;
- 66 percent say illegal immigrants cost taxpayers too much;
- 58 percent maintain that immigrants contribute to a worsening crime situation;
- 56 percent oppose new laws making it easier for illegal immigrants to become legal workers;
- 52 percent believe immigration hurts the nation;
- 46 percent agree that immigration is contributing to a worsening economy;
- 37 percent believe immigrants are making social and moral values worse.

In many communities, the immigrant backlash has become a springboard for aspiring politicians. In 2006, the mayors of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, and Avon Park, Florida, supported legislation that would fine landlords $1,000 for every illegal tenant. The mayors, both of them Republicans who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, speak wistfully of the days when traditional nuclear families occupied single-family homes, all residents paid their taxes, and English was the only language heard on the streets. In 2008, Hazelton’s mayor lost his bid for the U.S. House of Representatives seat held by Democrat Paul Kanjorski. Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Republican congressman whose anti-immigrant views briefly propelled him into the 2008 presidential contest, believes that illegal immigrants are “a scourge that threatens the very future of our nation.” In a television commercial promoting his presidential candidacy, Tancredo linked the flow of illegal aliens to the terrorist threat:
Hi, I’m Tom Tancredo, and I approve this message because someone needs to say it. There are consequences to open borders beyond the twenty million aliens who have come to take our jobs. Islamic terrorists now freely roam U.S. soil, jihadists who froth with hate, here to do as they have in London, Spain, Russia. [This is] the price we pay for spineless politicians who refuse to defend our borders against those who come to kill.

The ad concludes with a loud explosion and the tag line, “Tancredo—before it’s too late.”

Anti-immigration measures have increasingly frequently won approval on state ballots. In 2004, 56 percent of Arizonans supported Proposition 200, which required proof of citizenship to vote and receive public benefits, despite public opposition from two of that state’s top officials, Democratic governor Janet Napolitano and Republican U.S. senator John McCain. Phoenix mayor Phil Gordon believes the measure creates “the equivalent of a police state” where citizenship papers could be required at public parks and bus stops to obtain police and other local services. But Republican state representative John Allen emphatically disagrees: “The question is when do we stop this activity of illegal immigration? Right now, it’s like Groundhog Day. You wake up every day and there’s more of them. It will be this way until we have a closed border.”

Other xenophobic initiatives that have won widespread support have made English the official state language. By 2005, 27 states had approved so-called English-only laws buoyed by such sentiments as, “We have to go to the bank, and it says do you want this in English or Spanish? Well, phooey. This is America, you want to live here, you speak the language.” In one 2004 poll, 82 percent of respondents—including 76 percent of Democrats, 92 percent of Republicans, and 76 percent of independents—said that they wanted a nationwide English-only law.

The backlash against Hispanic immigrants is so great that some social commentators have questioned whether the newcomers have a greater loyalty to their birthplaces than to their newly adopted homeland. Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington describes Hispanics as “sojourners,” coming to the United States to work for a few years before returning home. Even some Hispanics claim that they do not feel comfortable even after years of residing in the United States. Olga Contreras-Martinez was 12
years old when she and her family illegally migrated from Mexico to Florida, where Contreras-Martinez picked fruits and vegetables. Despite having obtained a college degree and U.S. citizenship and despite her current position as a teacher in Georgia, Contreras-Martinez does not feel especially welcome: “I call [Georgia] home, but I know I’m not welcome in my own home. Maybe that feeling of home will be something that will always be missing for me.”

While the backlash against immigrants is considerable, it is slowly bending to present-day realities. Many politicians realize that they must adapt to the inevitable changes that will be coming. In 2001, George W. Bush became the first president to utter a few Spanish words before a joint session of Congress. Pleading for support of his domestic agenda, Bush told lawmakers, “Juntos podemos [Together we can].” A few months later, he paid tribute to the Mexican holiday Cinco de Mayo by becoming the first president to broadcast his weekly radio address in both English and Spanish. Later that year, the White House Web site was modified to include Spanish translations of the administration’s press briefings, biographies of the president and First Lady, and Bush’s radio addresses. Accepting renomination at the Republican National Convention Bush referred in Spanish to his signature educational reform: “No dejaremos a ningún nino atras! [We will leave no child behind!]

Bush backed these symbolic gestures by proposing policy changes designed to benefit Hispanics and foster a Republican realignment that would renew the GOP majority. In May 2006, he endorsed an overhaul of the nation’s immigration laws, championing a plan offered by John McCain and Edward M. Kennedy that tightened border restrictions and offered a path to citizenship for the 11 million illegal aliens residing in the United States. In a nationally televised address, Bush pleaded with recalcitrant House Republicans and GOP voters to forgo their misgivings and embrace the future:

There is a rational middle ground between granting an automatic path to citizenship for every illegal immigrant and a program of mass deportation. That middle ground recognizes there are differences between an illegal immigrant who crossed the border recently, and someone who has worked here for many years, and has a home, a family, and an otherwise clean record.

I believe that illegal immigrants who have roots in our country and
want to stay should have to pay a meaningful penalty for breaking the
law, to pay their taxes, to learn English, and to work in a job for a num-
ber of years. People who meet these conditions should be able to apply
for citizenship, but approval would not be automatic, and they will have
to wait in line behind those who played by the rules and followed the
law. What I’ve just described is not amnesty; it is a way for those who
have broken the law to pay their debt to society, and demonstrate the
character that makes a good citizen.151

Bush’s appeal was prompted in part by outcries from immigrants (both
legal and illegal) who suddenly found their collective voices. Arturo Her-
nandez, an illegal immigrant from Mexico, was one. He and a half million
others took to the streets of Los Angeles to support citizenship for illegal
migrants. For Hernandez, it was a seminal moment: “I have lived for
fifteen years in America. All that time I have lived with my head down, you
know. [At the protest], all these people were telling me to put my head
up.”152 As the protests multiplied, organizers proclaimed May 1, 2006, “A
Day without Immigrants.” Over one 24-hour period, millions of immi-
grants left work or school. At Chicago’s Benito Juarez High School, for ex-
ample, just 17 percent of the student body showed up. In California and
Arizona, scores of lettuce, tomato, and grape growers gave their workers a
day off. Tyson Foods closed several of its plants because of the lack of em-
ployees. In Phoenix, 150,000 people waved signs that read “Somos Amer-
ica [We Are America].”153

The demonstrations were sparked by the 2005 passage of a Republican-
sponsored measure that made assisting illegal immigrants a felony. José
Martinez, a 43-year-old illegal immigrant from El Salvador, retorted, “A
criminal is a person who kills or steals. If I had come here to kill, I would
understand. But I came to work.”154 Marcella Calderon, an 18-year-old
Mexican migrant, agreed: “I want people to know we’re not criminals.
We’re here to work. We’re coming here to make the American Dream.”155

Adelina Nicholls, an organizer of a massive demonstration in Atlanta, ac-
nowledged that the bill “was the ignition that is giving fuel to all commu-
nity and grassroots groups.” Illegal immigrants, Nicholls declared, had
“decided not to be invisible anymore.”156 Another illegal migrant, march-
ing with 4,000 others in tiny Lake Worth, Florida, held a sign that read
“Let Me Love Your Country.”157 Other signs captured the coming of a new
revolution: “Immigrant Nation”; “I’m an Immigrant and I Vote”; “Brown
and Proud.” Crowds chanted, “Hoy, marchamos; mañana, votamos [Today, we march; tomorrow, we vote].”

But the Republican-controlled 109th Congress ignored the marchers and passed the Secure Fence Act, creating a 700-mile, double-layered fence stretching along the United States–Mexico border from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego, California. The legislation also authorized the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, ground-based sensors, satellites, radar, and an array of security cameras at a cost of $1.2 billion. The bill won overwhelming approval from congressional Republicans, who seemed intent on thwarting the rising tide of immigrants by yelling, “Stop!” California representative Dana Rohrabacher, for one, vividly described his opposition to the McCain–Kennedy immigration reform bill: “I would hope the American people are smart enough to smell the foul odor that’s coming out of the United States Senate. . . . Those people in the Senate who are looking out for the interests of somebody else other than the American people will have to pay the political price and I’m sure Senator McCain, when he runs for president, will find that out.”

An Arizona Republican state legislator was even more emphatic, labeling McCain “treacherous” and “treasonous” for even suggesting such legislation.

Although the racial revolution received the attention of a war-weary White House as Bush’s stay there drew to a close, the president’s inability to sign comprehensive reform delayed the day of reckoning when policymakers will have to bring immigration laws in line with present-day realities. Bush was unable to either capture or control a central demographic reality of his time.

A Blurred Future

In 1992, several hundred self-described multiracialists gathered in Bethesda, Maryland, for the first national gathering of the multiracial community. The Loving Conference, named in honor of the Supreme Court’s decision in Loving v. Virginia, marked the beginning of a potent political movement. Mildred Loving, the widow whose marriage spawned the Supreme Court decision, said, “Since the older generation is dying, the younger ones . . . realize that if someone loves someone they have a right to marry.” Four years later, the first “multiracial solidarity march” was held on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

The movement spawned by the Loving Conference owed its potency to
the ever-larger number of children living in interracial families, a number that quadrupled from 900,000 in 1967 (when *Loving v. Virginia* was decided) to more than 3,000,000 in 2007. Mildred and Richard Loving’s grandchildren were among them. Peggy, the youngest and fairest of the Loving children, married someone of “mixed race” and classifies herself as such. Donald, the middle child, married a white woman, and their children are seemingly white in appearance. Sidney, the oldest and darkest of the Loving children, whose color most resembles her mother’s, lives as a self-identified black. In reality, all of the Loving children are part white, part black, and part Native American. The removal of racial restrictions on the right to marry has put an end to the binary black-white world view of the 1960s and has created a contemporary rainbow of people whose racial origins and skin tones form a multitude of colors.

One effect of more interracial marriages is the growing number of offspring who have trouble labeling their racial backgrounds. Pattia Rodriguez, the light-skinned 31-year-old sales director for a New York–based woman’s magazine, does not think of herself as either black or white: “I acknowledge that I have both black and white ancestry in me, but I choose to label myself in nonracial terms: Latina. Hispanic. Puerto Rican. Nuyorican. I feel that being Latina implies mixed racial heritage, and I wish more people knew that. Why should I have to choose? White means mostly privilege and black means overcoming obstacles, a history of civil rights. As a Latina, I don’t try to claim one of these [for myself].”

Rodriquez is hardly alone. When asked to complete the 2000 census form, 42 percent of Hispanics checked the box labeled “some other race,” while 48 percent marked “white.” Kathia Mendez, a migrant from the Dominican Republic, explained that she chose “some other race” because “I am not black and I am not white. We don’t define ourselves that way.” When asked to identify themselves in a 2002 survey, 30 percent of those of Latin American descent chose “Hispanic,” 12 percent selected “Latino” or “Latina,” 5 percent opted for “Mexican,” another 5 percent selected “Mexican American,” 5 percent simply said “American,” 4 percent chose “brown,” 1 percent “mestizo” or “mestiza” (mixed race), another 1 percent answered “human being” or “universal race,” 1 percent chose “Puerto Rican,” 1 percent selected “Latin American,” 5 percent listed no category, and 2 percent had no reply.

With the dawn of the twenty-first century, defining the term *race* is a linguistic challenge. Eduardo Díaz, a social service administrator, finds la-
bels imposed by others especially demeaning: “There is no place called Hispanica. I think its degrading to be called something that doesn’t exist. Even Latino is a misnomer. We don’t speak Latin.” One Mexican American office worker says that when she is called a “Latina,” it makes her think “about some kind of island.” The complexity of racial self-identification prompted Ellis Cose, author of Color Blind: Seeing beyond Race in a Race-Obsessed World, to observe, “Tomorrow’s multiracial people could just as easily become the next decade’s something else. A name, in the end, is just a name. The problem is that we want those names to mean so much—even if the only result is a perpetuation of an ever-more-refined kind of racial madness.”

Cose’s observation has special resonance for the Goderich family. Mario Goderich is a Miami police officer with light brown hair, green eyes, and the white skin of his Puerto Rican mother. When filling out the 2000 census form, Goderich checked the boxes labeled “Hispanic” and “white.” His father, Rene, a refugee from Santiago, Cuba, made a different choice, describing himself as “white.” Rene Goderich explained that in Cuba he would be called a jabao (a light-skinned mulatto): “Over here there’s no ‘jabao’ or ‘mulatto,’ so I say white. We are all mixed.” Letvia Arza-Goderich, a Los Angeles lawyer and Mario Goderich’s cousin, has likewise lived along the edge of the racial divide. After fleeing Fidel Castro’s Cuba in the late 1960s, Arza-Goderich grew up in white-dominated Wisconsin. Although she thought of herself as white, her neighbors did not, as she remembers: “We were Cubans, and that wasn’t white. My answer was ‘Not that it matters, but I’m white just like you because the people I come from were from Spain.’ They’d look at you in disbelief. If you’re Latino, you’re not white-white in the eyes of white Americans.” Arza-Goderich married a Cuban; she and her husband never discuss race with their three teenage sons because they believe it is no longer relevant. Her 16-year-old son, Ray, has had Vietnamese, Indian, Chicano, white, and black girlfriends as a consequence of his intense interest in the hip-hop culture. Rodolfo de la Garza, a political science professor at Columbia University, marvels at what Arza-Goderich and her children now take for granted: “Interracial, interethnic dating isn’t even a question. It’s hard for people over forty to really understand that. And people my age—I’m sixty—people were killed for that.” Today, there are 2,000,000 couples in which one partner is Hispanic while the other is of a different race.

Those numbers will steadily grow. A 1994 study provides important
clues to the racial future. While only 8 percent of first-generation Hispanics marry outside of their race, that figure increases to 26 percent among second-generation Hispanics and to 33 percent by the third generation. Further complicating the question of racial identity are the one-third of Asian marriages, 13 percent of black marriages, and 7 percent of white marriages that include partners of different races. Susan Fu, a white woman married to a Chinese American man, has fielded numerous queries about the mixed race of their three children. One person asked if her daughter was “one of the children of China,” while another wondered if the girl spoke English. Fu told one woman who asked where the children were from, “They’re mine.” The woman replied, “I know they are yours, but where did they come from?” prompting an exasperated Fu to nearly shout, “They’re from my uterus.”

The complexity of racial self-identification is clear in a 2001 poll: 9 percent of respondents reported using different terminology to describe their race in different social situations; 28 percent described themselves as being of mixed race; and 48 percent always self-identified with one race. As these results suggest, racial self-identification is both a semantic and emotional problem. In “High Yellow White Trash,” Lisa Page, whose father is black and mother is white, wrote, “There are a lot of names for people like me. Bright-skinned, mixed, café au lait, high yellow white trash. The last one I made up myself. It sums up for me what it is to be black yet aware of a white heritage. You get a double consciousness that never goes away. You are forever light-skinned, no matter how black you feel on the inside.” When Page was born in Chicago in 1956, her mother was situated in the white section of the hospital, but with the baby’s arrival, hospital officials moved her to the colored section, and Page’s “mother lost a piece of her identity that day; her status as a white woman, something she’d taken for granted all her life.” Later, when Page and her siblings visited relatives in Michigan, family members explained the children’s skin color by claiming their father was East Indian, and “during one family reunion, the pictures weren’t taken until my sister, brother, and I were out of the room.”

But times are changing. Patty Alexander is white; her husband, Todd, is black. They live in a suburban Baltimore subdivision with their two children. The Alexanders claim they encounter little if any racial discrimination. Says Todd, “We’re in the twenty-first century. And interracial relationships are just a fact.” Statistics confirm his argument: the number of black-white married couples rose from 51,000 in 1960 (when only 1.7 per-
cent of black Americans had white spouses) to 363,000 in 2000 (when 4.3 percent of blacks had white spouses). With that increase came a shift in racial attitudes, as Todd Alexander explains: “It’s about getting beyond race and looking at people for who they are inside. When I was young, I remember Martin Luther King, Jr. saying that it’s about the content of your character. That’s what it’s all about.” Perhaps not surprisingly, three of Todd’s four siblings have white spouses, and none of the nuptials brought the sort of controversy that attended Margaret Rusk’s 1967 wedding.

Yet racial self-identification remains an issue. When one of the Alexanders’ young sons asked his mother, “What is my skin color?” she replied, “It’s skin color.” But the questions kept coming until Patty finally responded, “What color do you see?” Recognizing that the lack of racial discrimination the couple encounters and what race may mean for their children are two different things, Todd points out, “I know what it is like to be a black man in America. Patty knows what it’s like to be a white woman in America. But neither of us knows what it is like to be biracial. When the kids come to me one day and say, ‘You don’t understand,’ I won’t be able to understand. But hopefully when they’re older, things will be different. That is a concern I have for their future—that they don’t get hurt or feel that they have to choose what race they are.”

But changing skin tones may give the Alexanders’ children more role models from which to choose. The Miss America Pageant illustrates what is coming. For more than 50 years after it began as a swimsuit contest in 1921, persons of color were not permitted to participate. In 1974, blacks were allowed to enter. A decade later, Vanessa Williams became the first black contestant to wear the crown. In 2000, Angela Perez Baraquino, the reigning Miss Hawaii, became the first Asian to win the title, beating out a black woman from Louisiana, a Vietnamese American contestant from California, and white women from Mississippi and Kentucky. Three years later, the pageant chose its first multiracial winner, Erika Harold, who is of black, American Indian, Russian, Greek, German, Welsh, and English descent.

As the face of America turns from white to beige, more multiracial achievers are winning national acclaim. Golfer Tiger Woods has compared himself to a living United Nations, a concession to the fact that he is Thai, black, white, and American Indian. When the young Woods asked his father for advice on navigating among his many racial worlds, his black father responded, “When you’re in America, be black. When you’re in the
Orient, be Asian.” Woods has labeled himself a “Cablinasian,” a word he coined from the terms Caucasian, black, Indian, and Asian. Woods might have to invent another racial term for the children born to him and his wife, white, blonde-haired Swedish model Elin Nordegren. Like Woods, Barack Obama has siblings of various races, courtesy of his mother’s marriages to a black man and an Indonesian man. According to Obama, “I have got a sister who is half-Indonesian, who is married to a Chinese Canadian. I have got a niece who looks like, you know, she’s all mixed up. . . . I have got family members that look like Margaret Thatcher. I have got family members that look like Bernie Mac.”

Other prominent Americans of mixed race include actress Halle Berry, the child of a white mother and black father who in 2001 became the first person from a multiracial background to win an Oscar in seventy-four years. In her acceptance speech, Berry thanked Dorothy Dandridge, Lena Horne, Diahann Carroll, and Oprah Winfrey “for being the best role model[s] any girl can have.” Hollywood has increasingly acknowledged the talents of nonwhites. In 2005, a record five nonwhites—four blacks and one Colombian—received Oscar nominations. Morgan Freeman won Best Supporting Actor, and Jamie Foxx was named Best Actor, only the second time in seventy-seven years that blacks had captured two of the major awards. Accepting his prize, Freeman told reporters that his victory “means Hollywood is continuing to make history.” Foxx, who won for his portrayal of musician Ray Charles in Ray, believes that his honor “says to those kids in chocolate cities like Chi-Town and south Dallas that things are changing. Things are getting better. I was just in Washington, D.C., screening Ray for the Black Caucus, and afterward this young kid stands up—jersey on, with some bling—and he says, ‘Yo, Foxx, you think you might get a nod?’ He’s asking about an Oscar nod. That’s a beautiful thing.” The same year, the Oscar for Best Song went to “Al Otro Lado del Rio,” a Spanish tune from a movie The Motorcycle Diaries, about Che Guevara. A Spanish song had never before even been performed at the Oscars, much less won.

Two Marriages, Different Centuries

Just before 5:00 P.M. on a sunny August day in 2004, a bride entered a 100-year-old stone church to marry a man she met in a trial advocacy class in law school. The couple’s story was like many others—they had sat next to
each other and passed notes, and in one of them he asked her if she would like to play a round of golf. And as at so many other weddings, the newlyweds had their pictures taken before heading off to a reception under a tent pitched behind a local inn. This wedding was different, however, because of the presence of former president George H. W. Bush and his sons—Jeb Bush, the governor of Florida, and George W. Bush, the current president—as well as numerous Secret Service agents. Reporters commented on the attendance of so many political luminaries but did not mention the race of the bride, Amanda Williamson, a white woman, or the groom, George P. Bush, son of Jeb Bush and his Mexican-born wife, Columba.

George Prescott Bush’s Hispanic roots are well known, and within his family, he has come to symbolize the multiracial future. In 1988, George H. W. Bush referred to his grandson as one of the family’s “little brown ones,” a depiction Democrats criticized as racially insensitive. The Bush family later came to see George P. as a campaign asset, and he was dispatched to plead his father’s and uncle’s cases to Hispanic voters. Addressing the delegates at the Republican National Convention, George P. extolled George W. as “un hombre con grandes sentimientos . . . who really cares about those he was elected to serve, including those of us whose faces look different.” The same year, People magazine ranked the young Bush number 4 on its list of the 100 most eligible bachelors. USA Today noted the excitement he generated and dubbed him a hybrid of John F. Kennedy and Ricky Martin. Frank Guerra, whose Austin-based marketing company has worked for the Bush family, says of George P., “He is intelligent, he’s articulate, he’s handsome, he has a very clean, clear communication style, and he has the kind of charisma you can’t buy.” Angela Figueroa, managing editor of People en Espanol (the popular magazine’s Spanish-language version) concurs: “He just popped out of nowhere, and now it’s like, ‘Ooh, la-la!’ He’s hunky. There’s definitely a buzz.”

But on his wedding day, neither the mixed race of George P. Bush nor Amanda Williamson’s race was mentioned. Instead, reporters noted the couple’s impressive resumes. The Austin American-Statesman announcement was typical: “She works for the Jackson Walker law firm in Fort Worth. He works as an assistant to U.S. Judge Sidney Fitzwater in Dallas, but he plans to leave that post in the fall to work for the Dallas office of Akin, Gump, Strauss, Hauer, and Feld.” After the ceremony, a proud Jeb Bush echoed Dean Rusk’s sentiments decades earlier: “I am very happy for
my son. He is marrying a wonderful young woman. Life can’t get any better.”

For his part, George P. declared that he wanted to “start a family as soon as possible,” adding, “I want a lot of kids.”

One month later, the future manifested itself when the newlyweds campaigned—in Mexico—for the reelection of the groom’s uncle. As George P. explained to an accompanying reporter in Spanish, “It was a surprise for me [to learn] that there are over one million U.S. citizens living in Mexico, and that hundreds of thousands of them vote each election.” On Election Day, George W. Bush received an astonishing 44 percent of the Latino vote, giving him crucial margins in key states.

There are many differences between the weddings of Guy and Margaret Smith and George P. and Amanda Bush. Though both couples were harbingers of the future, the Smiths were ahead of their time while the Bushes were of it. The Bush-Williamson wedding did not make the cover of *Time* magazine; rather, it was just another noteworthy item (among many) mentioned in the celebrity gossip columns. Yet that union and others like it are sure to change American politics. Shortly after their nuptials in Kennebunkport, Maine, the *Portland Sunday Telegram* warned its readers to adopt a more cosmopolitan outlook, an admonition the paper described as especially pertinent in a place whose population is 97 percent white: “Imagine the white Maine kid growing up in an all-white community, going to a virtually all-white university or college, getting a job in an all-white establishment, and someday leaving the state to learn that most of the world is composed of people of color. . . . [T]he culture shock could be severe.”

That culture shock is already here. A changing racial makeup means that the definition of race itself is now in question, even as a growing number of people acknowledge the irrelevancies of past racial stereotypes. In a poll taken a few months prior to George P. Bush’s wedding, 83 percent of respondents said that they would not be concerned if their child were to marry someone of another race or religion. Thanks to the increased propensity of interracial marriages, Henry Pachon, president of the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute at the University of Southern California, says, “‘White’ is going to get darker over the coming decade. People will legitimately call themselves white, but they may be a shade darker, a café au lait sort of look.” As old racial stereotypes become obsolete, patterns of discrimination shift from skin tones to other attributes. For example, a 2003 survey of Hispanics who claimed to have experienced some form of dis-
crimination found that only 8 percent attributed their misfortune to skin color. Changing skin tones have also revolutionized the black-white racial politics of the past, and the only lagging indicators seem to be our language and political paradigms. The question of who we are will become an increasingly important matter of both private self-definition and public policy.

Signs of a new twenty-first century future are popping up everywhere. In 2005, the New York City police department had its first graduating class composed mostly of nonwhites: 18 percent of the recruits were black, 28 percent were Hispanic, and 8 percent were Asian American. These numbers have changed remarkably since 1979, when 87 percent of the force was white. This diversity reflects the promise of good pay and benefits, along with the sense of belonging to an institution that many immigrants (like their predecessors) find attractive. As Rafael Pineiro, the chief of police personnel, observed, “When I came on the job in 1970, there were only 300 Hispanics on the job.” Today, there are 8,000.

The changing makeup of the New York City police force reflects changes to the city as a whole: for the past 15 years, a majority of residents have been nonwhites. Today, 60 percent of New York City’s residents are foreign born, and the number of Mexicans living there has increased 36 percent since the turn of the twenty-first century. More than half the residents of Queens and the Bronx do not speak English at home. Police commissioner Raymond Kelley believes that the integrated, multiracial, and multilingual police force has improved police-community relations: “There is less tension in the streets and among the police than we have seen in my career.”

New York City has caught the wave of the future. So, too, did the United States itself in 2008, when Obama joined the parade of white-faced presidents. During the campaign, Obama half-jokingly said that he did not look like the presidents on the dollar bills. Indeed, he did not. But race did not become the issue in 2008 that old thinking about skin tones would have suggested. Like the Bush-Williamson wedding, Barack Obama is of his time, not ahead of it.