

Race and Class in Progressive Politics

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I. Introduction

Race and class impact the development of and support for a sustainable, progressive movement. This is clear from a review of the history of the racial dimension of class in the United States and the importance of race in coalition building. Since the early days of the Republic, the development of “race” concealed the social and economic interests many Whites shared with Blacks.¹ In the co-development of racial and class consciousness in the United States, class tensions have consistently been relieved through racial baiting. At times, Whites have benefited, such as when Whites were given suffrage rights. The stigmatization of blackness provided a referent point of comparative superiority in the early years of the republic. The inferiority narrative has impacted the strength and potential of the union movement, reduced the scope and impact of the New Deal, and engenders White opposition to universal social safety net programs.

The legacy of government policies and behaviors codified racial disparities and stigmatization of Blacks that remain with us today. These disparities limit the possibility of progressive change by obscuring common interests between Blacks and Whites. Residential segregation expanded with policies that drove White suburbanization and further eroded opportunities for cross-racial class collaboration. Class-based programs are fundamentally conservative because they reaffirm the institutional arrangements that support existing class relations by attempting to advance particular individuals to the status of middle class without demanding institutional change.

Progressives can only realize their agenda with the support of multi-racial coalitions. Our challenge is to integrate the interests of people of color with those of the White working and middle classes without losing sight of race—a misstep that would enable conservatives and Whites to use it as a weapon against progressive efforts. We can learn from successful multi-racial coalitions. Although race can be divisive, we can also use it in a transformative manner both as a diagnostic and bridging tool. It can signal what is threatening in our society and move those threatened from a “race versus class” reality toward a “race and class” one. The goal must be to cement momentary convergences of interests and expand the pie for everyone. A progressive politics, therefore, must include both race and class as critical points of inclusion; not as opposing or competing structures. It must also include a multi-layered strategy.

Importantly, progressives have been focusing on the next set of Congressional and Presidential elections. But the development of a progressive movement requires more. Durable multi-racial coalition building must include communities of color and account

¹ Lani Guinier, *From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy: Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Divergence Dilemma*, J. OF AM. HIST., June 2004, at 113.

for the role that race has played in group-based identity formation, political ideology and policy formation. We call this approach “targeted universalism.” Political transformation occurs when we change asymmetrical power relationships, rather than merely struggle for the right to participate in them.² To build a sustainable, progressive majority, there must therefore be a focus on building conditions for shared struggles for change, rather than just on advancing individuals to the status of the middle class.

II. Race and the Progressive Challenge

A progressive agenda requires an effective national government that is responsive to all its members and to the environment. It must be adequately resourced through appropriate fiscal policies because it must facilitate and support the well-being of its members. This includes what we need to survive, but also what we need to participate effectively in civic and economic society. A progressive agenda must recognize that even as individuals, we have linked fates and responsibilities and a role for government in mediating between the market, groups, and individuals. Government is an important mechanism through which we direct our national future and meet our shared responsibilities.

One of the challenges that progressives and indeed the entire society fumbles over is the recognition of linked fates across racial lines. Class and economic issues are important in building a progressive agenda and a fair society. However, Americans are resistant to organizing themselves or issues in terms of class. All but the wealthiest and most impoverished Americans consider themselves middle class. An agenda focusing on race-neutral issues that engages constituents on the basis of self-interest cannot create and sustain a national policy of permanent progressivism. Today, many understand racial justice work primarily as a call for the redistribution of resources. This understanding makes racial justice appear to be a special pleader for people of color to get some of the resources of Whites -- a zero sum game in which Whites appear to lose something to people of color. Thus, Whites resist this type of racial justice discourse and multi-racial coalitions or alliances.

Race and class, while different, are interrelated in the United States and racial meaning, identity and practices have constrained and helped shape and limit our class consciousness. We might think that race can be solved through class. This is both an analytical position as well as a strategic position, but this is analytically, historically and strategically wrong. We cannot avoid the discussion of race, because we have it in coded ways everyday. Conservatives are using color blind racism through symbolic appeals and coded meanings to undermine progressive efforts in America. It is not whether race will be used, but how. The strategy must include using race transformatively. This may not always require “leading” with race, but must be part of an analytic foundation of our strategy.

² LANI GUINIER AND GERALD TORRES, *THE MINER’S CANARY* 147 (2002).

A. The Racial Dimension of Class in the United States

Race has left a heavy footprint, too often unobserved or ignored, in the history of American class relations. Class and race are not natural facts, but changeable. They are not comprehensible outside of that development. They acquire meaning in the context of historical development and existing race and class relations.³ Progressives need to understand the historical development, as well as the present day context of the meaning of race and class, to formulate a successful agenda.

1. Race and Class at the Revolution

Since the American Revolution, we have used race to mute and conceal class tensions, undermine recognition of shared interests and the benefits of mutual support, and limit the potential of progressive movements. White freedom came to be defined in opposition to Black non-freedom despite the fact that many Whites were oppressed as Blacks were. Many could not vote and were indentured servants, comprising a major part of the non-slave labor force.⁴ Indentured servants often worked in the fields alongside slaves. Like slaves, servants could be bought and sold and were subject to corporal punishment.⁵ For a time, White and Black shared interests and close proximity appeared to threaten the continued existence of slavery.⁶ But while European slavery could be overcome, powerful economic and political interests protected African slavery.

During the American Revolution, liberty came to mean economic and political independence.⁷ The contradiction between the ideal of personal liberty and the existence of slavery was an uncomfortable ethical and philosophical tension.⁸ Race emerged as the justification for the existence of slavery.⁹ In the minds of working class Whites, who soon forgot their own sojourn in unpaid labor, the explanation for Black slavery became located in Blacks' inferiority. Whiteness was defined in opposition to blackness and the conditions of servitude that came to be associated with Blacks made it difficult for Whites to identify with Blacks.¹⁰

³ Martha Mahoney, *Whiteness and Remedy: Under-Ruling Civil Rights in Walker v. City of Mesquite*, 85 CORNELL L. REV. 1309, 1323 (2000).

⁴ ERIC FONER, *THE STORY OF AMERICAN FREEDOM* 10 (1998).

⁵ *Id.* at 12.

⁶ DAVID ROEDIGER, *THE WAGES OF WHITENESS* 30 (1999).

⁷ *Id.* at 56.

⁸ STEVE MARTINOT, *THE RULE OF RACIALIZATION* 83 (2003).

⁹ FONER, *supra* note 4, at 40.

¹⁰ ROEDIGER, *supra* note 6.

2. Industrialization and White Suffrage

American industrialization and the rise of wage labor created the commodification of free labor. This met with resistance¹¹ because dependant labor had come to mean unfreedom, servitude, and blackness.¹² Expanding suffrage to White males previously excluded from the vote helped to resolve this tension. A parallel movement to fully disenfranchise Blacks developed. Labor competition between northern Blacks and White workers motivated the newly enfranchised White workers to reject Black political participation.¹³

This history is unique to the United States. Chattel slavery did not exist in any other nation during the years of significant working-class formation. This legacy for White workers was relatively modest political freedom purchased at the expense of a cogent critique of wage work and Black oppression. Even when poor Whites have low economic and social status in comparison with other Whites, working class unity across races is limited by their racial status concerns. This reality has confounded class-based political organizing in the United States for more than two centuries.

3. Immigration, Class, and the Racial Bribe

As early as 1790, and for eight decades, citizenship was limited by race to White persons.¹⁴ But who was White? The answer to this question was not static. From 1820 to 1860, the United States experienced a massive influx of Irish immigrants. By 1860, there were 1.2 million Irish-born residents¹⁵ who came prepared by tradition and experience to empathize with Blacks. They were emerging directly from the historical struggle against racial oppression in their own country. Blacks and Irish often lived in close proximity, occupied the same low-wage jobs and were both vilified.¹⁶

For a time, the Irish recognized their shared lot with Blacks.¹⁷ Because of their huge numbers, the Democratic Party positioned itself to take advantage of the Irish vote by promoting a definition of whiteness that expansively included the Scotch, Irish, German, French, and Normans. This racial bribe was irresistible because it expanded job opportunities and allowed the Irish to distance themselves from slavery and the language of servitude. Thanks to the racial bribe,¹⁸ the Irish became staunchly opposed to Black

¹¹ FONER, *supra* note 4, at 60. Eric Foner recounts the essays of New England social philosopher Orestes A. Brownson, novelist Herman Melville, and demagogue politician Mike Walsh, who compared a wage system itself to slavery.

¹² ROEDIGER, *supra* note 6.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ FONER, *supra* note 4, at 39.

¹⁵ THEODORE W. ALLEN, *THE INVENTION OF THE WHITE RACE: VOLUME ONE* 168 (1994).

¹⁶ ROEDIGER, *supra* note 6, at 134.

¹⁷ *Id.* In 1842, 70,000 Irish in Ireland signed an antislavery address and petition.

¹⁸ See LANI GUINIER AND GERALD TORRES, *THE MINER'S CANARY*, 224-5 (2002). The authors discuss the dynamics of the racial bribe. They argue that two of the goals of the racial bribe are two “diffuse the previously marginalized group’s oppositional agenda... and to offer incentives that discourage the group from affiliating with black people.” Both of these motives are present at the moment of the Irish racial bribe.

liberty in America and Blacks' strongest opponents. For instance, Tammany Hall Democrats, swelling with Irish immigrants, in New York thwarted efforts to amend the state constitution to reinfranchise Blacks.¹⁹ Racial fences prevented understanding of common economic interests that might have formed the basis for coalitional action, which in turn undermined the economic progress of working Whites generally as well as Blacks.

B. Race, Class and the Welfare State

Class cannot foster racial equity because racial division prevent and trump class solidarity. Research on prejudice demonstrates that people are more likely to be hostile toward those perceived as members of an "out-group" on some salient dimension. What is salient is not natural but socially constructed and managed.

In the U.S., race and ethnicity is a salient dimension. Where the racial or ethnic minority is poor, racial and ethnic divisions reduce the ability to forge a common class-based identity.²⁰ The structure of U.S. political institutions, developed through a history of racism, accounts for about half of the gap in welfare spending between the U.S. and Europe.²¹ Before the Civil War, the three-fifths clause of the U.S. Constitution gave the South and pro-South candidates a substantial advantage in the electoral system. After the Civil War, these institutions continued to over-represent low-density, non-industrial states so the South dominated the Senate through the 1960s. Although Blacks were still excluded from full citizenship through various devices such as poll taxes, they did count for apportionment purposes. The Southern Congress possessed, in its 17 states and 34 Senators, legislative veto power over all social policy. Through seniority positions on key committees, and by taking advantage of the gap between the intensity of their feeling and the relative indifference of their fellow members of Congress, Southern legislators could protect the regions "social organization."²² The South dominated political institutions through the 1960s and set welfare payments much lower than in American states that have a higher proportion of minorities.²³

The Populist movement in the late 19th century was the first political party whose focus was the redistribution of wealth. The Populists pushed to alleviate the debt burden on mortgaged farms and looked to Black votes, leading the party to emphasize racial tolerance and to attack racism.²⁴ But particularly in the South, the Populist movement was defeated by the use of race hatred.²⁵

The removal of a significant portion of the laboring population from public life—through disenfranchisement and educational, occupational, and residential segregation—shifted

¹⁹ ALLEN, *supra* note 15, at 187.

²⁰ ALBERTO ALESINA & EDWARD L. GLAESER, *FIGHTING POVERTY IN THE US AND EUROPE* (2004).

²¹ *Id.* at 95.

²² IRA KATZNELSON, *WHEN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION WAS WHITE* 22 (2005).

²³ ALESINA & GLAESER, *supra* note 20, at 95.

²⁴ AKHIL REED AMAR, *AMERICA'S CONSTITUTION* 158 (2005).

²⁵ *Id.* at 159.

American politics to the right, complicating for generations the efforts of reformers. The power of the Solid South weakened the prospects for both change in racial matters and progressive legislation generally, as demonstrated by the failure of the Populist movement and during the New Deal era.

1. Race and Class During the New Deal

Class and race directly intersect in the cluster of social policies that emerged during the New Deal. Southern legislators used their institutional power in three ways to fortify racial hierarchy within New Deal programs: (1) drafting of laws that were racially discriminatory and drawn along racial lines (exclusions of agricultural and domestic workers and many self-employed workers, 65 percent of African Americans were denied its protections.²⁶); (2) insistence on local administration, which protected southern social, political, and economic systems (states controlled benefit levels for aid to dependent children, assistance to the elderly and poor²⁷); and (3) prevention of the attachment of anti-discrimination provisions to pending legislation (labor unions won the right to organize and discriminate on the basis of race).²⁸ The early architecture of the welfare state, devised during the mid-1930s, thus bore the stamp of Jim Crow racism.²⁹

The impact of racism in New Deal labor policies and their impact on labor are instructive. Unions were not yet organized in the South at the time of the New Deal, and their effort collapsed altogether after the Taft-Hartley Act, which curtailed union organizing, devastating unions and Black workers. Dixiecrats fought for the Act, concerned that labor organizing might fuel civil rights activism and the Fair Labor Standards Act would cause wage leveling along racial lines.³⁰ As a result, in the second half of the twentieth century, unions continued to be relatively contained within the enclaves of the Northeast, Midwest, and far West, with low union density in the South and West coast.³¹

Rather than continue to fight for government welfare programs for all who need them, unions concentrated on securing pension and health insurance provisions and generous bargaining agreements for their members.³² Ironically, the constrained position of unions helped sunder the issue of race and the question of labor markets so that the emergent civil rights movement “transformed jurisprudence and shaped landmark legislation without possessing instruments with which to redress economic harms.”³³

²⁶ KATZNELSON *supra* note 22, at 51.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ ANDREW BARLOW, *BETWEEN FEAR AND HOPE: GLOBALIZATION AND RACE IN THE UNITED STATES* 37 (2003).

³⁰ KATZNELSON *supra* note 22, at 74.

³¹ Sean Farhang & Ira Katznelson, *The Southern Imposition: Congress and Labor in the New Deal and Fair Deal*, 2005, *STUDIES IN AM. POL. DEV.* 1, 5.

³² KATZNELSON, *supra* note 22, at 77-78.

³³ Farhang & Katznelson, *supra* note 31, at 7.

Post World War II government programs helped to create a White middle class and exclude Blacks from its ranks. The Selective Service Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) helped to create the White middle class through educational, residential and financial programs.³⁴ More than 200,000 mainly White veterans took advantage of the bill's provisions providing access to capital to acquire farms or start businesses. Veterans Administration mortgages paid for five million new homes.³⁵ By 1950, the federal government spent more on schooling for veterans than on expenditures for the Marshall Plan.³⁶ For the first time, millions of Americans acquired a college degree, transforming the economic destiny of the nation. The domestic face of America underwent a transformation that included the seeds of White suburban sprawl.

These New Deal programs were not merely discriminatory; they were an affirmative action program for Whites.³⁷ Moreover, not only were Blacks excluded from the full benefits of the programs, a fact which results in tremendous disparities today; racial fears also induced proponents of these programs to narrow their scope, limit their applicability, and ultimately reverse their trajectory to the detriment of working class Whites. To understand the full impact of the New Deal social policy, we need to understand how these policies influenced class identity.

2. Race and the Middle Class

The class order that emerged in the post-war period was a radical break from the past. The new identity of "middle class" was a White one. This middle-class identity and the assumptions that sustain it are significant impediments to progressive change and the development of a progressive movement.

There is a prevailing assumption that class is primarily an economic location. In fact, class is as much a cultural as an economic formation. The middle class is not organized around income or even wealth. All but the wealthiest Americans and those who are truly impoverished consider themselves middle class. Instead, the middle class is organized on a moral basis, built upon the concept of merit. The unprecedented wage hikes (including increases in benefits, retirement funds, and social insurance programs), coupled with housing and educational subsidies of the GI Bill, transformed many Americans' understanding of the basic rules of society.³⁸ By the mid-1950s, the class consciousness of America was markedly different from what it had been even in 1946. The 1930s and 1940s were marked by open and intense conflict between workers and their employers.³⁹ In contrast, the newly emergent middle class was the embodiment of the idea that everyone could achieve the "American dream" by cooperating with corporate America.⁴⁰

³⁴ KATZNELSON, *supra* note 22, at 114.

³⁵ *Id.* at 115.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ BARLOW, *supra* note 29, at 33.

³⁹ *Id.* at 34.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

The narrative of the American Dream – if individuals work hard and play by the rules, they succeed – is the primary explanatory variable for social mobility.⁴¹ As a consequence, the middle class is understood in individualistic terms rather than group position. With its arrival, working-class consciousness evaporated from American society.

Race is part of the construction of class-as-merit, and this individualistic ideology is part of what defeats the development of solidaristic consciousness.⁴² Class identity, after all, is constructed not only from economic position or shared understanding, but also through shared action, which is severely limited by educational, occupational, and residential segregation.⁴³ Low levels of labor organization lead White workers to interact less with leaders who are invested in building multi-racial solidarity.⁴⁴ Residential segregation – indeed the very construction of the suburban middle class itself – means that working class Whites often do not live near people of color.⁴⁵

Racial residential segregation and suburbanization were important in creating this new sense of the middle class after WWII. Black neighborhoods and eventually entire cities became and remain stigmatized by White suburbanization and its cycle of self-fulfilling prophesy. The merit ethic of the American Dream deprives White workers of the tools to engage in a progressive critique or social change.⁴⁶ Moreover, the inability of people of color to enter suburbia, though it was the direct result of federal programs, is chalked up to Black inferiority or “natural” preference.⁴⁷ The experience of living in a segregated society makes this constructed arrangement seem natural and inevitable.

C. Race and Anti-Federalism

The success of the Republican Party in propounding an ideology of states rights and anti-federalism is bound up with 20th century appeals to racial divisiveness. The modern Republican Party owes the largest part of its dominance in the South to the successful appropriation of the race issue and White supremacy. White supremacy and anti-federalism, both racial and economic, provided the glue for a union between the conservative Southern Democrats, representing the rigid ethnic, religious, moral and social conservative neo-Kluxers, and the neo-Bourbon economic conservatives.⁴⁸

Critically, the GOP in the South was able to use its opposition to federal “intrusion” on race matters as a foundation to include opposition to federal action on a host of other

⁴¹ LANI GUINIER AND GERALD TORRES, *THE MINER’S CANARY* 103 (2002).

⁴² Martha Mahoney, *Class and Status in American Law: Race, Interest, and the Anti-Transformation Cases*, 76 S. CAL. L. REV. 799, 829 (2003).

⁴³ *Id.* at 803.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 877.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ GUINIER, *supra* note 2, at 104.

⁴⁷ Martha Mahoney, *Whiteness and Remedy: Under-Ruling Civil Rights in Walker v. City of Mesquite*, 85 CORNELL L. REV. 1309, 1328 (2000).

⁴⁸ GLENN FELDMAN, *BEFORE BROWN* 286 (2004).

fronts. Race issues were the glue used to attract support for other issues that had anti-federal government potential – more class-oriented and traditionally economically conservative issues including Republican opposition to taxes, environmental protections, worker safety, labor unions, gender equity, and the programs of the New Frontier and Great Society. By convincing not so rich Whites that redistribution policies favor minorities, conservatives have been able to build large coalitions against welfare policies. Some poor Whites are willing to vote against redistribution that would favor them because of racial animosity directed at Blacks who would receive the same benefits.⁴⁹

A new and cryptic vernacular for racial politics developed: poverty, crime, taxes, rights, values, and urban development implicate race.⁵⁰ It is impossible to separate racial meaning from these discussions.⁵¹ For example, opposition to taxes is not simply opposition on the philosophical level; it is tied to the issue of “federal programs,” which to many white southerners means taxpayer supported programs to benefit Black Americans.⁵² In recent decades, racially charged issues such as civil rights, voting rights, educational segregation, affirmative action, and welfare, have been increasingly supplemented by a myriad of other issues that constitute a “politics of emotion”: religion, morality, family values, abortion, school prayer, gun control, etc. As White supremacy alone once did for the Southern Democrats, these issues, together with the unspoken race issue, work to keep lower- and working-class Republicans contentedly and often unwittingly supporting a similar program of economic conservatism. Race thus continues to infuse itself into policy debates today in less visible but no less potent ways.

In the last 70 years, although Whites have made gains, they are more limited as a result of our racial history than they otherwise would have been. The racial mythology of the welfare state has become so entrenched in party politics that it constrains the policy choices for progressive change that would benefit all Americans, whatever their color or class. Our very freedom depends upon the exposure of this mythology and the resulting work to address its underlying realities.

III. Targeted Universalism: Using Race Transformatively

If conservatives triumph by diverting White Americans from legitimate class concerns to focus on racial ones, progressives should begin by focusing on legitimate race concerns and move people to class concerns.⁵³ The challenge is to link—to integrate—the interests of people of color with those of the White working and middle classes without losing sight of race. This requires both a transformative set of programs as well as a transformative discourse. The transformative programs must include targeted universal

⁴⁹ ALESINA & GLAESER, *supra* note 20.

⁵⁰ Linda Faye Williams, *The Constraint of Race: Slavery, the Legacy of the “White Citizen,” and American Social Policy*, *Repairing the Past: Confronting the Legacies of Slavery, Genocide, and Caste* 4 (2005) at <http://www.yale.edu/glc/justice/williams.pdf>.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² FELDMAN, *supra* note 48, at 295.

⁵³ Williams, *supra* note 50, at 27.

strategies. But there must also be a discourse to inspire Whites to link their fates to non-Whites and different non-White groups to link their fates to each other.

To advance an entire progressive agenda, progressives will need to cultivate enduring coalitions that regularly command more than 51 percent of the relevant vote.⁵⁴ An electoral victory based on demographic maneuvering and policy positioning does not necessarily build a durable coalition. A momentary convergence of interest can lead to an electoral victory, but governance is a different story. Imbedded institutional actors, such as administrative officials, are often able to resist or influence policy implementation. Control over critical institutions such as schools or housing may be dispersed among different levels of government. Implementing a progressive agenda will not be effective unless these institutional resistances are overcome, a process that necessitates a long term vision and a sustained convergence of interest based on a sense of shared fate.

This coalition must be multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-class. Census projections suggest a minority-majority nation by 2060—a projection that represents great opportunities and challenges for building a progressive majority. With rising diversity, it is increasingly unlikely that a single racial group can succeed in independently pursuing a progressive policy agenda. The primary challenge for progressives is to find ways to successfully broaden their coalitions in ways that engage diverse constituencies.

A. Race and Multi-racial Coalitions

The most successful and progressive multi-racial coalitions have tended to be those that addressed race explicitly-- the abolition movement and the civil rights movement. Nonetheless, some emphasize the importance organizing a movement around race-neutral universalism because working class Whites may feel less threatened and progressive politicians may be less vulnerable for supporting universalist programs.

Universalist approaches have not produced promised outcomes. Mayor Dennis Kucinich of Cleveland tried to build a progressive class movement. He called his strategy “urban populism.”⁵⁵ This strategy emphasized economic issues, since these united various city constituencies, but downplayed social issues, the most important of which was race.⁵⁶ In doing so, race baiting crept into the reelection campaign and destroyed his chances of uniting the city’s Black and White working-class neighborhoods.⁵⁷

Post Civil War Populist success resulted from southern White Populist leadership that realized the need for multi-racial coalitions in order to succeed. Interracial union efforts are more resilient in that they bounce back more quickly after defeat, such as coal and

⁵⁴ Sheryll D. Cashin, *Shall We Overcome? Transcending Race, Class, and Ideology Through Interest Convergence*, 79 St. John’s L. Rev. 253, 274

⁵⁵ Pierre Clavel & Wim Wiewel, *Introduction*, in HAROLD WASHINGTON AND THE NEIGHBORHOODS 1, 14 (Pierre Clavel, et al eds., 1991).

⁵⁶ *Id.*

⁵⁷ *Id.*

New Orleans longshoremen unions, where unionism was defeated but were solidaristic, so that unions were able to rebound quickly.⁵⁸

Universalist approaches undermine the groups that would be most likely to campaign aggressively for a progressive agenda. Consider how the CIO, post WWII, de-emphasized race and failed to make strong appeals to Black workers. Fifty years later, in Miami, Florida, the nation's largest textile plant union organizing failed, and not until union organizers found they could draw on the strengths of Chicano and Black communities did the organizing effort make progress.⁵⁹

Race is the most divisive, but it is also the most powerful motivating force in the grass-roots movements of the larger U.S. cities. People of color are unlikely to stay in coalitions where their racial concerns are ignored. By not including race explicitly, Progressives require communities of color to abandon their political identity and the claims they make on the state for a class-based identity which is not a powerful, relevant identity in today's politics. Progressive efforts must unify race concerns with other concerns in a constantly evolving "struggle to find language and metaphors [for] a multi-race, multi-class development environment."⁶⁰ Progressives need to appeal to minority communities and then weave that message into a larger mosaic.

Whites and the identity of whiteness have been the major impediments to multi-racial coalitions. In our history, there are signs that this is changing, but we need a clear strategic and adroit leadership to spur it on. The key to whether progressive movements will obtain widespread support and the level of commitment by supporters is and always has been their commitment to interracial solidarity.⁶¹

1. Electoral Successes

Two successful examples of multi-racial coalitions produced Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, the first Black mayor of that city, and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, the first Latino mayor since the 19th century. Harold Washington's 1983 mayoral campaign base was overwhelmingly Black, but gained critical support of poor Latinos and poor Whites. In the primary, Washington received 80% of the Black vote, 24% of the Latino vote and 17% of his coalition was White.⁶² In the general election, he received 65% of the Latino vote providing the critical margin of victory.⁶³ In Chicago, political power had been based on the political machine of the Daley administration, a coalition between business interests and the White working class represented by unions.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 160.

⁵⁹ GUINIER, *supra* note 2, at 101.

⁶⁰ Robert Mier & Kari J. Moe, *Decentralized Development: From Theory to Practice*, in HAROLD WASHINGTON AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD 64, 94 (Pierre Clavel, et al eds., 1991).

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² Doug Gills, *Chicago Politics and Community Development: A Social Movement Perspective*, in HAROLD WASHINGTON AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD 35, 52 (Pierre Clavel, et al eds., 1991).

⁶³ *Id.*

The basis of Washington's multi-racial victory was a movement strategy. Aggressive, vocal, and independent action on the part of people associated with neighborhood organizations and community action groups mobilized his campaign.⁶⁴ It provided an organizational basis for his campaign and the substance of much of its policy direction.

Latino-African American coalition possibilities are important to progressives. They may provide a site for progressive organizing and an alternative to the Southern strategy of racial division. Both Latinos and Blacks are economically disadvantaged relative to Whites; both experience substantial discrimination in housing, education, and employment; and both advocate for enlarging the social welfare state.⁶⁵ In spite of these shared interests, competition over jobs, educational resources, housing, and political power often place Blacks and Latinos in conflict against one another and this conflict can act as a powerful barrier to political alliance.⁶⁶

Leadership can make a critical difference. In the Los Angeles mayoral race of 2001, Antonio Villaraigosa built his campaign around a labor-left-Latino alliance that consisted mostly of Latinos and liberal Whites. He lost. His opponent, James K. Hahn, had the support of the African American community and moderate Whites.⁶⁷ It was not until Villaraigosa expanded his coalition by reaching out to Blacks that he won in a landslide in 2005. Critically, he mobilized non-Latino voters by assuaging Whites and African Americans that he would be sensitive to their interests. Villaraigosa, like Washington, benefited from a durable, multi-racial alliance of community-based organizations and labor unions.

Opportunities for Black/Brown coalitions are increasing. Durable electoral coalitions that are politically powerful result from mass attitudes and mass behavior.⁶⁸ With Latino's growing political presence, Latino leaders have taken strides to inculcate a sense of shared fate among Latino subgroups. As more Latino politicians gain prominence, this will create a feedback loop reinforcing a growing sense of pan-Latino identity, which in turn creates conditions for Latinos to identify more strongly with Blacks. Several generations of African American leadership, not to mention the powerful socializing force of the civil rights movement, have linked the fate of African Americans to other racial and ethnic minorities.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 35.

⁶⁵ Kaufman, Karen M, *Cracks in the Rainbow: Group Commonality as a Basis for Latino and African-American Political Coalitions*, POL. RES. Q., June 2002, at 199.

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ Raphael J. Sonenshein & Susan H. Pinkus, *Latino Incorporation Reaches the Urban Summit: How Antonio Villaraigosa Won the 2005 Los Angeles Mayor's Race*, PS: POLITICAL SCIENCE AND POLITICS 713, 714 (October 2005).

⁶⁸ Kaufman, *supra* note 65, at 201.

⁶⁹ *Id.* at 207.

B. Targeted Universalism Defined

Race and class inequalities are inextricably linked, and collective solidarity across the races can be achieved only by fleshing out their intersections, not by ignoring them. Universal programs often ignore the fact that different populations are situated differently in the economic and social status of society. And even if a program is universal, like welfare, it can be perceived as targeted if a disproportionate number of a disfavored group benefit. An alternative to strict universalism or a group-focused approach is to pursue what we call “targeted universalism.” This is an approach that supports the needs of both the particular and the more dominant group.

Rather than using racial awareness as a tool to weaken social supports, we can strategically deploy it as a diagnostic tool, like a miner’s canary.⁷⁰ Those who are racially marginalized are like the miner’s canary: their distress is the first sign of a danger that threatens us all, and their vulnerabilities reveal the places where the social fabric is disintegrating.

The momentary convergence of interests, as often used in electoral coalitions, is not a sufficient condition for coalition building. When dealing with zero-sum issues, such as political representation or public jobs, coalitions tend to break down into racial antagonism. Harold Washington’s campaign was the product of decades of cross-racial organizing at the community level. To build a progressive movement, progressives need to summon social justice commitments as a moral force.⁷¹

Universalism makes its beneficiaries objects rather than subjects. Targeted universalism understands the need to anticipate resistance, and provides a transformative conception of power that situates conditions within a larger vision of social justice.⁷² Progressives must envision new narratives to replace those which prevent coalition building. The crucible of struggle and collective resistance opens up the potential for new stories that are not zero-sum.

One illustration that Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres provide, highlights the ingredients of successful multi-racial coalitions and the way that race can be used to bridge group interests and instill a sense of linked fate.⁷³ In the 1990s in Greensboro, North Carolina, K-Mart’s distribution center workers were 65% Black. Blacks, who were not in the largely White union, and White union workers fought together for better wages. The union recognized the role race played in producing the lowest K-Mart distribution center wages and benefits of any in the country. They created a coalition with Black ministers who reframed the issue not in terms of labor or race per se, but in terms of whether it was just that K-Mart should pay wages lower than any other plant simply because the workforce was mostly Black. For a progressive, cross-racial coalition to emerge, Whites

⁷⁰ See LANI GUINIER AND GERALD TORRES, *THE MINER’S CANARY* (2002).

⁷¹ *Id.* at 247.

⁷² *Id.* at 53.

⁷³ GUINIER, *supra* note 2, at 131-34.

need to engage with race, and Blacks need to engage with a more inclusive vision of social justice.⁷⁴

Economic patterns are also opening up opportunities for a progressive message among Whites. Andrew Barlow argues that globalization is unleashing forces which are creating a crisis not only in the third world, but within the United States. As globalization takes its toll, the U.S. economy is increasingly bifurcating between jobs that require little skill and education and those that require college or postgraduate degrees.⁷⁵ Low-skilled jobs can be transported overseas at a greatly reduced wage rate. Moreover, although real wages have been stagnant, the cost of health care, education, retirement, and housing has further stressed the middle class. In the past year, we have seen a debate spring up about the nature of outsourcing. Middle-class workers are working longer and harder, but feel as though they are on a shrinking ice cube.

But instead of engendering great class consciousness and a critique of the expanding prerogative for the elites, there has been increased racial resentment. The dominant politics of this era has been to galvanize and appeal to middle-class voters' fear of falling. From anti-immigrant policies to attacks on civil rights policies such as affirmative action, to a high profile war on drugs, to the expansion of prisons and the use of the death penalty, to the war on terrorism, politicians have become highly skilled at creating dangerous foes to attack and contain.⁷⁶ The erosion of the American dream may open up new ideas about the "good life," especially the affirmative responsibilities of corporations and government to civic society.⁷⁷ Globalization is opening up new political and ideological spaces. It is not clear if this space will be progressive or reactionary. Targeted universalism recognizes the need for a strategy that is universal and is responsive to the stress and decline of the middle class.

Not only is the crisis in the middle-class order likely to result in institutional changes, but the networks of globalization, by necessity, require an international legal regime. Capital flows and international trade is structured by a series of multi-lateral treaties and institutional arrangements. As these pathways grow and routinize, they correspondingly increase the international legal order. This order will provide opportunities for the use of international accords and treaties for the enforcement of human and civil rights. Training and educating a generation of lawyers in international human rights law is going to become an important ingredient and a force for progressive change. Human rights law is not couched in terms that would be understood as a special pleader. But the present condition should counsel us not to assume that the changing global world and the new institutional arrangement will in and of itself entail new class solidarity or a progressive response. There will be a critical need for leadership to help frame these changes into a transformative agenda.

It is necessary to find a way to speak to racial, class, and gender issues along with a host of other identity issues frankly and honestly and in ways that promise inclusion—with

⁷⁴ GUINIER, *supra* note 2, at 31.

⁷⁵ BARLOW, *supra* note 29, at 67.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 122.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 143.

ideas like targeted universalism and with language that unashamedly embraces American values of justice.

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