

# NOTES

## INTRODUCTION: WHAT MULTIRACIAL COUPLES CAN TELL US

1. Frequently conflated, the terms “race” and “ethnicity” continue to be used interchangeably by social scientists and lay people (Callinicos 1993). Ethnicity may be differentiated from race in that it refers to a sense of common heritage made up of similarities of religion, history, and national or geographic origin. Ethnicity is linked to one’s social and familial legacies and traditions and is *socially* mediated and understood. In contrast, race is closely linked to biology and physiognomy, and while it is still used as a template for mapping genetic relationships, the concept is a social construction that also takes on multiple meanings and carries profound consequences when employed in social contexts.
2. A propaganda film entitled *The Black Stork* (1917), showcasing eugenic ideals, ends with a doctor’s euthanization of a multiracial infant, born of the union of a white slave owner and his black servant; see Pernick 1999 and Washington 2006.
3. While some hailed Obama’s election as the harbinger of a postracial era, the discourses circulating around his “blackness” and “whiteness” reanimate the logics of the one-drop rule. Talking about “how white” or “how black” Obama is serves to resurrect the “eugenicist logic in which racial categories are never dissolved or resolved through racial mixing” (Smith 2009:132).
4. Participants identified themselves by indicating their “race or ethnic background” on a brief questionnaire. Two participants indicated Latina ancestry, and described themselves as “black” and “Afro-Latina,” respectively. Four participants had Native American ancestry; two of these described themselves as “white,” and they stated that because they themselves, family members, and other persons perceived them to be “white,” they were considered white partners.

## 2. CROSSING A BLACK-AND-WHITE BORDER: CHOOSING THE OTHER

### 1. RACIALIZED BODIES AND BORDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

1. For an interesting discussion on race as a politically motivated category, see Milton Kleg's *Hate, Prejudice, and Racism* (1993).
2. For example, see *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Pager 2007). After sending selected test applicants to apply for low-level jobs with hundreds of employers, Princeton sociologist Devah Pager found that criminal convictions for black men seeking employment were “virtually impossible to overcome,” partially because convictions served to reinforce powerful, entrenched stereotypes. The stigma of conviction was less damaging for whites, with white men who claimed to have just been released from prison being equally likely to be called back for second interviews as black men with *no* history of criminal involvement. Pager concluded, “Being black in America today is just about the same as having a felony conviction in terms of one’s chances of finding a job.”
3. A parchment from which writing has been partially or completely erased to make room for another text (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/palimpsest> [accessed March 1, 2008]).
4. See Oshinski 1996.
5. [www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/integration\\_7-31.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/integration_7-31.html).
6. James Baldwin wrote, “You know, and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon” (<http://progressive.org/archive/1962/december/letter>).
7. Kwame Holman writes, “There remained one constant in every major US conflict through World War II: When manpower shortages arose, blacks were enlisted” ([www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/integration\\_7-31.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/integration_7-31.html)). Black bodies and their labor, including military service, were a mainstay of economic and military development throughout US history.

## 2. CROSSING A BLACK-AND-WHITE BORDER: CHOOSING THE OTHER

1. The terms “black” and “white” appear here because (1) the interviewees in this project preferred the term “black,” and, pointing to their own particular ethnic and geographic origins, some subjects deemed the description “African American” exclusive and inappropriate, and (2) these starkly contrasting categories reflect material divisions among ethnic, “racialized” groups that persist in our society today.
2. I appreciated George’s statement because his response highlighted the phenomenon wherein researchers, as they conceive a study and devise means of inquiry, discover upon entering the field how abstract and potentially baffling some questions are in actual practice. I also appreciated the fact that the people whom I interviewed persevered and

## 7. (RE)PRESENTATIONS OF INTERRACIAL COUPLES IN CINEMA

invested time and energy in articulating helpful responses to demanding or unfamiliar inquiries.

## 4. A NEXUS OF BORDERS: THE NEXT GENERATION, AND INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

1. Fanon discussed the idea of “lactification” in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967:47), holding that some persons of color seek to moderate their race, lessen their degree of blackness, and in effect become “more white” by marrying a white spouse (see also Hook 2004).

## 5. RAISING (AND ERASING) DIFFERENCE: DOMINANT AND MARGINALIZED DISCOURSES IN MULTIRACIAL COUPLES' NARRATIVES

1. In *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (2005), James Loewen highlights significant fictions, omissions, and distortions in US history texts, arguing that the homogenized, insipid, and explicitly Eurocentric treatment of history bores most primary- and secondary-school students, who then fail to see its relevance to their lives.

## 6. SYSTEMIC INTERVENTIONS WITH INTERRACIAL COUPLES

1. On June 7, 1998, white supremacist Lawrence Russell Brewer Jr., assisted by two companions, beat and then stripped James Byrd, tied him to the back of a pickup truck, and dragged him until his body was torn in two.

## 7. (RE)PRESENTATIONS OF INTERRACIAL COUPLES IN CINEMA, LITERATURE, AND RESEARCH

1. See Maria Root's *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992) and *Love's Revolution* (2001).
2. Race is also an important factor in homogamous relations. However, the internalized and familiar patterns of intelligibilities and practices may not demand the same explicit negotiations as if one partner was black and the other white, especially in a social context that conditions us to see each other as “different” without accounting for the ways that “difference” becomes even possible (i.e., legacies of slavery and racial violence such as the exploitation and dismemberment of communities).



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