

Anti-D'Souza: The Ends of Racism and the Asian American

Vijay Prashad

In 1995, The Free Press released Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society*.¹ The reaction to the book was not entirely expected. Those on the Left entirely denounced it, many simply by the sorts of glib comments made by the author on a well-orchestrated book tour. The Right was taken aback, especially when Glenn Loury and Robert Woodson called D'Souza "the Mark Fuhrman of public policy" and announced that his book "violated the canons of civility and commonality." The book, Loury noted, "is determined to place poor, urban blacks outside the orbit of American civilization" and is, therefore, "dangerous."² D'Souza (like many young neoconservatives) pride themselves on their prescription of "tough love" for U.S. society.³ In the case of his most recent book, D'Souza prescribes the medicine of "rational discrimination." He calls for the repeal of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in order to allow people to discriminate in the private sector, this to save Affirmative Action (545) as well as to force "us to accept the reality of group differences which are real" (286).⁴ There is, for D'Souza, such a thing as a singular "black culture," one with "black pathologies" which "pose a serious threat to the survival of blacks as a group as well as to the safety and integrity of the larger society" (485). These statements immediately provoked much critical response, but there was little of substance said of the book.

There are several reasons for the silence on D'Souza and the Left's lethargy towards combatting his ideas. For one, between 1991 and 1995 the Left and the liberals spent an immense amount of time doing battle with an onslaught of literature from the Right. This literary embarrassment provides some of the context for D'Souza's own revanchist tone and I will spend a section

VIJAY PRASHAD is assistant professor of international studies at Trinity College, Connecticut.

on that below. Second, most scholars felt entirely repulsed by D'Souza's arguments. D'Souza's colleague at the American Enterprise Institute, Loury exploded on Ben Wattenberg's television show (PBS, September 22, 1995) because "you're [D'Souza] indifferent or insensitive to something that's important about contemporary American life." If we look beyond D'Souza's tone, he participates in a national consensus on the black "under-class," one shared with Loury and Bill Clinton. I will spend a section on the idea of the "underclass" and on the way this leads almost invariably into a discussion of the "Asian American" and the "immigrant." Which raises the next point, that Asian American scholars must get over our tendency to be embarrassed by D'Souza and Francis Fukuyama and analyze their work not because they are of Asian ancestry, but because of the manner in which they deploy the history of Asian Americans and of Asia to bolster their arguments. As scholars in Asian American Studies, we are under special obligation to refute their arguments, especially since these rely upon standard stereotypes of the "Asian American" or the "Asian" for sustenance. This essay, then, sets itself three tasks, but it will lead into a conclusion on our idea of "racism" and on the struggle against it.

I. Revanchist Ideology

Angered by the Paris Commune (1870-1871), the Ligue des Patriotes around Paul Déroulède organized the revenge (*revanche*) against the working-class. This revanchism, this doctrine of revenge, was mobilized around a return to traditional values and it brought together dispossessed Parisians with the petty bourgeoisie. In opposition to the Civil Rights movement, there was a similar revanchism from below, a revanchism of the dispossessed whites that emerged around George Wallace and culminates in the militia movement and in the obscure militarized cults that pepper the U.S. landscape.⁵ This revanchism misconstrues the Civil Rights movement's "dual agenda"⁶ and sees it simply as an attempt by the oppressed to garner sectional power. There is little consciousness of the struggles of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for "an economic bill of rights. This would guarantee a job to all people who want to work and are able to work," and it would "benefit the poor of both [black and white] races."⁷ There is little interest in the hard work of the inheritors of George Wiley's vision, the community organizations grounded in areas of urban poverty, fighting against recalcitrant establishments. The revanchism of the dispossessed sees the symbols of tokenism and the black haute bourgeoisie and believes that the oppression of poor whites is a result of black assertion and not as a result of the normal dynamic of capitalism.

D'Souza and his ilk may borrow from this anger, but their own revanchism comes from elsewhere. His is a revanchism from above, a revanchism of the possessed whose strident ideological statements are intended to preserve power relations. While the dispossessed revanchists want to reorganize power relations amongst "races," the possessed simply want to reassert their right to be in dominance. In 1989-91, the U.S.S.R. was dissolved and, in a flash, the U.S. state lost its *raison d'être*. For over fifty years, U.S. state policy and industrial growth was premised upon the assumption of a stable enemy with whom one does not fight directly, but against whom one builds domestic political harmony (by the persecution of dissent as pro-U.S.S.R. communism) and economic relations (through the immense state capitalist arms sector and with the collaboration of labor unions) and one justifies all sorts of international intrigues and interventions based on the overall conflict (hence the brazen CIA and U.S. marines). In 1990, General Colin Powell announced that "I'm running out of demons, I'm running out of villains." Within the year, the U.S. state found two enemies, the first international (Saddam Hussein as the incarnation of Islam in 1991) and the other domestic (the Angry Black Man in 1992). These political worries came amidst a failure to stabilize an economy in crisis since 1967-73. From Reagan's 1966 gubernatorial campaign, an elite revanchism emerges and provides the groundwork for the Republican conquest of Congress and for the neo-liberal capture of the Democratic Party.⁸ Three elements of this revanchism from above require elaboration (racial, cultural and functional inequality).

RACIAL INEQUALITY

From the 1930s, U.S. liberal ideology eschewed the notion that inequality was based upon "race" (or biology/genetic differences) for the belief that differences resulted from cultural legacies whose origin was historical. Franz Boas, in 1931, wrote that

the present state of our knowledge justifies us in saying that, while individuals differ, biological differences between races is small. There is no reason to believe that one race is by nature so much more intelligent, endowed with great will power, or emotionally more stable than another, that the difference would materially influence its culture.⁹

Boas' talk on June 15 came not two months after the end of the first trial of the "Scottsboro Boys," victims of a racist state and society. Nevertheless, thinkers such as Boas propagated the idea that human differences resulted from "culture" and that the state, by cultivation of human potential, may create an egalitar-

ian society. The Civil Rights movement and the Great Society programs built upon that premise, that, even in the Reagan years was sacrosanct. In 1994, Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* challenged the premise and drew considerable support from the neo-liberal media. The book argues that differences are principally based on genes grouped in racial categories and that this inheritance is not idiosyncratic. The authors eschew social factors and they downplay the element of probability inherent in chromosomes.¹⁰ That the *New Republic* (February 3, 1996) can take a book seriously whose graphs come without scatter diagrams is either a mark of the decline of scholarly (technical) seriousness or a failure of our ability to discern the morality of argument. In the midst of the mindless debate over the book, Stephen Jay Gould correctly noted that to broach the subject of race-based intelligence is dangerous cant, notably since we are unsure of the scientific value of the concept of "race."¹¹ Herrnstein and Murray do not simply say that individuals differ in intelligence, but that groups do so. D'Souza, in a long chapter on IQ, accepts *The Bell Curve's* argument ("condemned but so far unrefuted," 435), but, unlike the authors themselves, he is careful not to tread the ground of crude biologism. "Physical differences between the races are hereditary," D'Souza argues, but he accepts, with qualifications, that it is a "'reasonable hypothesis' that IQ differences can be explained by culture and environment" (475-476). Rather than lodge his argument obviously at the level of "race" (as biology), he adopts the "racial" classification and anoints the terms with "culture" rather than "genes." D'Souza, then, can still talk of differences between blacks and whites (as if these are homogeneous) and he is able to argue that "substantial innate differences raise the prospect of a multicultural society characterized not by a benign equality, but rather by a natural hierarchy of groups" (437). This "natural hierarchy," for D'Souza, is premised upon racial inequality, but it is made manifest in a discussion of cultural inequality.

Cultural Inequality

The shift from "race" to "culture" occurs even within the Right. Whether certain characteristics are produced by "race" or "culture" become less relevant than the agreement that there are "cultural" flaws within groups which were once thought to be "races" (in the biological sense). There is a worry, for instance, that blacks do not have "Western values" and this leads to their poverty and rebelliousness. For this reason, the Right asked for the whip-hand to deal with the ghetto rebellions of the 1960s: "nation-wide experience has shown," Ronald Reagan noted, "that prompt dealing with disturbances leads to peace, that hesitation,

vacillation and appeasement leads to greater disorder" and, further, "what is needed these days, properly understood," wrote William S. Buckley, "is very solid doses of repression: not in the spirit of vindictiveness, but in the spirit of teaching those who wonder, that the United States is very serious about surviving the current doubts about itself, and about the worthwhileness of its essential institutions."¹² Those "institutions" are grounded in values that require protection, values from the "varied and opulent tradition of classical philosophy stretching back to Socrates, a tradition responsible for much of what Matthew Arnold termed 'the best that has been thought and said.'"¹³ D'Souza, on this terrain, argues that there is a "breakdown of civilization within the African American community," one "not the result of genes and. . .not the result of racism," but one born of "the conspicuous pathologies of blacks" (477-478). The "pathologies" are not a blight on the surface of the "African American community," but they are flaws at the heart of black "culture." D'Souza, like many social scientists, uses the term "culture" as a noun, so that it appears as "some kind of object, thing or substance, whether physical or metaphysical."¹⁴ There is one black "culture" and our knowledge of it is expressive of black "behavior." Discovery of these "pathologies" allows D'Souza to argue that black "culture" is damaged by its history (and, *sotto voce*, by its genetic inheritance). If we see "culture" as an adjective ("cultural"), we move "into a realm of differences, contrast and comparisons," a domain wherein contradictions and multiple, competing traditions become the hallmark of our understanding.¹⁵ This dialectical approach is outside the ken of American pragmatism (exemplified by D'Souza) which prefers to use "culture" and "civilization" to mark the content of one's character and chromosomes.¹⁶

The context for D'Souza is not just national, but also worldwide (as the hegemony of the U.S. state over the populace relies upon global power, the "foreign" and the "domestic" should not be partitioned). Fukuyama and Huntington's work reminds us that the triumph of "Western" values is being seen in some quarters not just in terms of the national canon, but in terms of international culture. Fukuyama argues that the end of the Cold War brought us to the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" with the "universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."¹⁷ Our own Hegel, Fukuyama retails the Weberian thesis that certain regions of the world did not have a breakthrough to capitalism due to cultural flaws and not for reasons of power. "The question of the motive forces in the expansion of capitalism," Weber wrote in 1904, "is not in the first instance a question of the origin of the capital sums which were available for capitalistic use, but above all, of the development of

the spirit of capitalism."¹⁸ Weber screens off imperialism (both feudal Iberian and capitalist Anglo-Dutch), itself a dialectical unity of the expropriation of the direct producers of Europe and the colossal appropriation of values in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The "spirit of economic life," Weber argues, is directly linked to "rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism." His studies of other world religions finds "spiritual obstacles" in their theologies towards the production of a rational ethic of work and accumulation.¹⁹ Weberist notions of appropriate cultures provides for us the conclusion that the four dragons/tigers succeed because of Confucianism (the Chinese alternative to Protestantism).²⁰ Fukuyama celebrates the "ineluctable spread of consumerist Western culture" in China, only because he sees it grounded in a theory of Order and Savings.²¹ His vision is made bolder by Samuel Huntington who also agrees that the "West" is the "dominant civilization" and that the "paramount axis" is along "cultural and civilizational lines" in which the "most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts" will not be "between social classes, rich or poor, or other economically defined groups, but between people belonging to different cultural entities." From Huntington, we hear that the "central focus of conflict for the immediate future will be between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states."²² We are fed with a steady diet of anti-Islamic and anti-East Asian prose and we are led to believe that we need an enormous military arsenal to control the "Islamic States" and the "Pacific Rim."²³ The mastery of the "West" is now writ in global terms and this, in sum, seems to disprove all other experiments with social relations.

Functional Inequality

Of these "Western" values, one such is the "free-enterprise system," or capitalism. The oil crisis (1967-73) ended the advanced industrial state's faith in elements of stabilization learned from Keynesianism (notably, through the kind of approach in Samuelson's famous textbook). The ground was opened for Milton Friedman and the monetarists who offered a revanchist strategy of stabilization grounded in the belief that control over money supply is the sole mode of intervention into an otherwise "free" economic system. In an influential 1968 article, Friedman argued for a "natural rate of unemployment," one reached invariably by a system despite the attempts at fiscal or monetary stimulation whose inflationary impact would return the system to the "natural rate."²⁴ Given this "natural rate of unemployment," it should not come as a surprise that the Federal Reserve operates with the assumption that "the unemployment rate, according to Board members and Bank presidents, should stay around 5.25 to 5.50 percent through the fourth quarter [of 1997]" (Alan Green-

span's Monetary Policy Report of February 26, 1997). If we use the new U-6 method adopted as an alternative by the Department of Labor, this threshold rate of unemployment rises to about 10.6 percent. That is, our economic system is structured so that about one in ten employable adults is restrained from remunerative work.

Given this, it is no surprise that the rate of those under the poverty line increased dramatically (in 1990, 32.5 million U.S. residents lived below the state's poverty line, an increase of over 23 percent from 1978). Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, divided the U.S. population into four categories in order to better forecast and plan the national economy. A quarter of the workforce work as farmers, miners, government employees and others whose jobs are relatively protected; another quarter, however, are the "old footsoldiers of American capitalism," the blue-collar workers in high-volume enterprises whose jobs are "sinking fast." About 30 percent of the workforce, in retail, consumer care, child-care, nursing and security, find their jobs "slowly sinking." The only section, the remaining 20 percent, to find their jobs "rising" since they are in the field of "symbolic analysis" (those who identify and solve problems and work in strategic brokering). For Reich, "the most important issue over the longer term is the *quality* of the jobs, not the number."²⁵ With the rise of neo-classical economics and the victory of "efficiency" over "morality," domestic inequality is sanctioned on functional grounds. Further, there is an expectation that production of primary materials and machine-made goods will be done in regions outside the U.S. wherein the low organic composition of capital, rules against labor organization and the political control of wages will enable goods to be made at a low cost (again justified by theories of "comparative advantage" and "maintenance of competitiveness," both code words for imperialism).²⁶ Regardless of the state's preservation of unemployment, D'Souza argues that poor blacks have rejected "such conventional strategies of upward mobility as getting a job" (517). How does one get a job, when there are indeed few jobs available, when there is no system of child care and when the educational structure is in crisis? These are not questions posed by D'Souza, who is more interested in an analysis of "pathologies" and dismisses the important scholarship of William Julius Wilson and others, whose work he terms "excuse theory" (520). An extended analysis of D'Souza will require some appreciation of the stakes of the debate on that entity mis-named as the "underclass."

II. The "Underclass"

Michael Katz informs us that the term "underclass" came to the center of U.S. thought through a 1977 article in *Time* that spoke of

"the unreachables: the American underclass. . . . Their bleak environment nurtures values that are often at odds with those of the majority—even the majority of the poor." The last phrase, unpacked, implies that those who live behind the ghetto's "crumbling walls," the black and Latino denizens of the "inner city" must be set apart from the white poor whose values are not damaged by their poverty.²⁷ As Charles Mills notes, the term "underclass" is a "way of talking about blacks without talking about blacks."²⁸ D'Souza, without euphemism, asserts that "[African America's] main challenge is a civilizational breakdown that stretches across class lines but is especially concentrated in the black underclass," whose behavior "flagrantly violates and scandalizes basic codes of responsibility, decency, and civility" (527). The image put forth of urban blacks and their segregated spaces is one of a blight on the landscape and not of people who struggle and survive within the dynamic of capital. Fukuyama asserts that "the contemporary black underclass in America today represents what is perhaps one of the most thoroughly atomized societies that has existed in human history."²⁹ Not only do the blacks live in an Hobbesian world without Lockean values, but the U.S. government, we are told, is "subsidizing [their] behaviors," such as commerce in narcotics, illegal association in gangs and teenage pregnancy.³⁰ If blacks are not damaged by their "culture of poverty" and "pathologies," then they are chronically lazy. This is not just D'Souza and Murray, but also Bill Clinton, whose "welfare reform" bill of August 22, 1996 and whose "crime bill" of August 21, 1994 illustrate the government's acceptance of the neo-conservative framework.

In 1899, W. E. B. Dubois grasped a dynamic that seems to be bred into the bone of U.S. history. "Most people," he wrote, "were willing and many eager that Negroes should be kept as menial servants rather than develop into industrial factors." This was done principally through discriminatory hiring, through a denial of training/education and by "the natural spirit of monopoly [from the part of the employers who relied upon cheap black menial labor] and the desire to keep up wages [from the part of the white aristocracy of labor]."³¹ Dubois highlights the economic impoverishment of urban black life (not only in the North, but also in the Southern cities) and he illustrates, once more, that joblessness is a structural condition of advanced industrial capitalism, one that cannot be remedied without serious structural transformation. Mills is right that the "underclass" too often is seen as "a class which is not a class, a social entity which is asocial."³² The "underclass" is, after all, within the class structure, albeit much of it is out of work. In 1867, Marx demonstrated that laborers under the rule of capital produce not

only the accumulation of wealth, but also their own relative superfluousness (as machines and organization makes labor relatively redundant). The disposable population or "reserve surplus population" still "belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost." This belonging is proved by the simple gesture that if anyone tries to alter the situation, capital "tries to check its inconvenient action by forcible means and State interference."³³ If we accept this structural dynamic, then the relevance of the will to work amongst urban blacks becomes irrelevant. Perhaps there are those in the ghetto who "refuse to work," but to get them to want to work is itself not going to provide decent jobs.³⁴ Given this structure, to call the "underclass" lazy is inadequate since "in order for someone to be properly described as being lazy, there must be a genuine opportunity for that person to engage in meaningful and nonexploitative work."³⁵ Many studies show that urban blacks evince a desire not just to hold a job, but for worthwhile work and education, for a meaningful life. Significant numbers of those who are in poverty, further, are transients between meaningless jobs. There is widespread recognition in the literature of the distress and disaffection among the urban blacks and of their desires and struggles to fashion a destiny.³⁶ Such is the state of affairs, one far more complex than allowed by D'Souza and his ilk.

The neoconservatives reduce complex questions to issues of "responsibility" and "governmental intervention." Lounsbury dismisses the causes of poverty amongst blacks ("whatever *fault* may be placed upon 'racist American society'") and argues that "the *responsibility* for the behavior of black youngsters lies squarely on the shoulders of the black community itself."³⁷ Charles Murray notes that "ultimately we must come to terms with the limits of government in promoting these ends and we must begin taking a much larger measure of personal responsibility for ministering to the needs that remain."³⁸ On "responsibility," few activists and intellectuals disagree that the agency for social transformation must be in the hands of the black masses (alongside others, but perhaps in a vanguard position³⁹). In 1903, for instance, Dubois pointed out that "the responsibility for their own social regeneration ought to be placed largely upon the shoulders of the Negro people."⁴⁰ There is disagreement over what the phrase "personal responsibility" means in the context of transformation: does it call for cultural development without structural transformation? Posed with this problem in the work of Booker Washington, Dubois noted that "responsibility must carry with it a grant of power; responsibility without power is a mockery and a farce."⁴¹ How can one take charge of one's life and rejuvenate one's cultural capital if social structural forces

already remove the possibility of liberty? How can one administer one's life without the capacity to do so? To ignore Dubois on this point is to obscure the relations of power that drive the maintenance of poverty amongst blacks. To address power relations, one might consider the phrase "governmental intervention" (as in Murray), wherein the state is understood as a "neutral" entity poised in a project of "redressal." The "state" does not hold power, but it is the "center of the exercise of political power," that is the exercise of class domination over society through the instrument of the state.⁴² The U.S. state is pledged to the protection of the rights of the propertied, those who control the means of production and who hold the bulk of the social wealth. In other words, by various mechanisms, the state maintains inequality, so that if there is to be a withdrawal of the state, then its protection of the plutocracy will end, something off the horizon of D'Souza and Co.⁴³ The argument is just this, that "personal responsibility" is an insufficient means to thwart a state beholden to specific class interests. The only possible remedy is significant transformation of our social structure.

III. The "Model Minority"

What does all this have to do with a journal devoted to Asian American Studies? The entire argument for the cultural failure of the black "underclass" is lodged in terms of the success of Asian Americans. In a recent book on immigrants, Thomas Sowell argues that "had Africans migrated voluntarily to the Western Hemisphere, there would still be no reason to expect the black population of the hemisphere to have the same economic history as the white population."⁴⁴ Instead, in chapters on the overseas Indians and Chinese, we are treated to success stories that have become all too common. Dinesh D'Souza is to the point:

Another factor contributing to the intimations of inferiority [of blacks] is the embarrassing fact of Asian American success which has become evident to most people in recent decades. The incredible economic and intellectual achievements within a single generation not only of middle-class and professional Japanese and East Indians, but also of poor immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Korea have called into question the claim that in America one has to be white and preferably male in order to succeed. By proving that upward mobility and social acceptance do not depend on the absence of racially distinguishing features, Asians have unwittingly yet powerfully challenged the attribution of minority failure to discrimination by the majority. Many liberals are having trouble providing a full answer to the awkward question: "Why can't an African American be more like an Asian?" (436).

This paragraph bears within it all the assumptions of the "Model Minority" thesis. Although Asian American Studies has scrupulously exorcised the demon of the concept, the idea operates deviously in the media and among purveyors of a subtle racism.⁴⁵ The notion of "Model Minority" is wielded by Asian American merchants associations and politicians at strategic moments to gain favors from power brokers. On July 24, 1997, Susan Au Allen (U.S. Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce) told the House Committee on Small Business (Subcommittee on Empowerment) that "one of our [Asian American] enduring beliefs is that hard work brings rewards. That is why so many of us pursue higher education. We also place great value in individual responsibility and entrepreneurship." Ms. Allen offered, in precis, the values associated with the "Model Minority" concept, values fashioned three decades ago by the U.S. media.⁴⁶ The concept relies upon an agreement that one can make general statements about denominational groups based on culture in a non-contradictory fashion. Of course, Ms. Allen, like many who rely upon such generalizations, accept exceptions, but point out that their general statements are deduced from the median.

In brief, the myth of the "Model Minority" is based on the idea that Asians succeed because of a "strong work ethic and family encouragement."⁴⁷ Fukuyama, in a chapter entitled "Blacks and Asians in America," compares Asians with Jews and blacks with the Irish. Such a comparison reproduces standard stereotypes of the hardworking and familial Jew/Asian and the lazy and irresponsible Irish/black.⁴⁸ Asian success in the U.S. is premised not upon natural or cultural selection, but upon *state* selection whereby the U.S. state (through the 1965 Immigration Act) fundamentally reconfigured the demography of Asian America, one only now being corrected as non-professionals migrate to join families, as refugees, as workers in the transportation, lodging and other trades and as small businessmen (shops, motels, etc.).⁴⁹ The nature of the statistics trumped by D'Souza and the U.S. state, furthermore, obscures the fact that "Asians have unusual amounts of both wealth and poverty."⁵⁰ Of those who succeed, there is rarely security, since considerations of the backlash (Bakke case/the notion of "overrepresented" Asians), of the glass ceiling and of overt violence persist.⁵¹ Success does not guarantee anything, since, as Andrew Hacker notes perversely, Asians are "probationary whites" and that although most firms wish to hire whites, "to combine competence and color, Asians serve as acceptable surrogates."⁵² If Asians are "surrogates," we are not always unwilling. Many of us rely upon racism for our entre into U.S. firms and universities and many of us share that hidden transcript of racism made manifest by D'Souza. His book uses "race" in a ra-

tional manner, as a weapon in a class war against the dispossessed urban population and as a way for certain elements of the bourgeoisie of color to leverage their own desirability on the basis of anti-black structures in the U.S.. In the long run, the "Model Minority" thesis will be detrimental to the Asian American, but, in Keynes' famous line, in the long run we will all be dead. To convince the Asian Americans to go against our short-term interest is to reintroduce the importance of a moral vision of social justice.⁵³

IV. Racism, Bad

The end of racism, proclaimed by D'Souza, might be a decline in prejudice or "overt racism." The offensive variety of racism is characterized by those who feel no compunction to display virulent hatred for certain people based on what is understood as "race." This is a rare variety in public (that is, rarer than it was three decades ago), but it is common enough in hushed tones in private wherein jokes act as a medium for transmission. The fight against overt racism involves the consolidation of codes against hate speech, of social taboos and of the rearticulation of forms of personal decorum that make overt racism inappropriate. Racism, however, does not only come in this form.

A second form of racism is illustrated by the "Model Minority" thesis (one used by D'Souza, and therefore, an example of the persistence of racism). This "inferential racism" refers to "naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether 'factual' or 'fictional,' that have racist premises and propositions inscribed in turn as a set of *unquestioned assumptions*."⁵⁴ Inferential racism, in general, is "invisible" because it is not considered as offensive. Given the enormity of the structural crisis in the U.S., the media still tends to view blacks as the source of the problem (this is so in the 1965 Moynihan report which blames black women for poverty and it is so in the attack on young black men who are blamed for a breakdown of civic life). Blacks are only applauded as musicians and athletes (486), standard stereotypes from the days of slavery. If one attacks blacks by paying tribute to "Asian intelligence," one is seen to be immune from charges of racism; this is the way in which the "Model Minority" thesis is a pillar of inferential racism. The fight against this form of racism includes the exposure of the class interests inherent in the stereotype and a firm commitment to fight against the use of the stereotype by action in the open media. Organized groups and disorganized individuals already conduct this activism by making visible those Asian Americans who work hard to survive within the U.S. and whose work in sweatshops, in taxicabs, on the fields, in factories and in motels is considered a fail-

ure of the Asian ideal.⁵⁵ Every deployment of the "Model Minority" thesis is a slur against these Asians as well as against urban blacks and against those Asians whose family and ethical arrangements fall outside the ken of embourgeoisment, such as gays and lesbians, socialists and others who practice a form of "Asian Mis-Behavior."⁵⁶ To make this sector visible is a start in the fight against inferential racism.

Apart from overt and inferential racism, there is also racism's structural form, wherein the histories of exploitation and oppression produced an unequal world validated after the fact and guaranteed as private property. Racism, given this account, is not an irrational prejudice which remains at the level of abuse and stereotype, nor is it capable of being defeated by the tonic of education alone. It finds itself in the structure of social life and it is sustained by the reduction of "racism" to its overt form, whose cultivation of hate is eschewed by the majority of the population. Structural racism refers to the historical appropriation of values and the monopolization of power by an elite that is wedded to class privilege and to white supremacy. Martin Luther King, Jr., was aware of the power of this form of racism towards the end of his meteoric life:

The plantation and ghetto were created by those who had power, both to confine those who had no power and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The problem of transforming the ghetto, therefore, is a problem of power—confrontation of the forces of power demanding change and the forces of power dedicated to the preserving of the status quo. Now power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political and economic change.⁵⁷

Given this analysis, the fight against racism must seek to build power amongst the powerless, to do the kinds of organizing work that is tedious, but fundamental. "A few strong leaders do not give a community power," notes Alfredo De Avila (Center for Third World Organizing or CTWO),

If you think about organizing as the process of closing the fist, of turning what is only potential power into real power, it doesn't make sense to build up the strength of only one finger. Organizers do their work of building unity and purpose. You have to make the fist, which is the organization. . . . In our society, no victory is forever a win. The real importance of organizing is having the leaders and the organization in place because there is always another fight around the corner, another issue that comes up.⁵⁸

This is the work done by labor unions, whether those affiliated to the AFL-CIO (now under renewal). Outside, but alongside

the AFL, we see the phenomenon of "Asian unions" such as the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, the Korean Immigrant Women Advocates, Workers' Awaaz, Lease Drivers Coalition and the Chinese Staff and Workers Association (the idea of the "Asian union" requires separate treatment elsewhere, since the notion of an "ethnic union," such as DRUM in the early 1970s, is under-theorized). Without the newly resurgent AFL-CIO it is unclear that these organizations will be able to sustain themselves (in this regard, the 1997 UPS strike was a demonstration for *all* U.S. workers). These groups harvest their organizers from CTWO, now run by Rinku Sen and Francis Calpatura in Oakland, California. Much of the support is given by agencies such as the Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence in New York City, managed and run on a shoe-string by young committed activists. These organizations build power in opposition to the will of the dominant classes. They are joined by numerous women's groups (such as Manavi, Sakhi, Asian Shelter and Advocacy Project, Asian Women United) and by socialist groups (Forum of Indian Leftists, for example) who are frustrated by a patriarchal bourgeois capitulation to the normal logic of U.S. capitalism. These outfits not only expose the class instinct of the "community," but they are also dedicated to the formation of an alternative morality and set of social relations, born in a vision of socialism whose day is yet to come. They fight against environmental racism, structural unemployment, violence against women and "minorities," and share the burden of the struggle for black liberation. The work of these groups is outside the purview of D'Souza, but it is also outside the ken of those who find no fellowship with D'Souza, but who dismiss this form of work against structural racism as outdated (socialism, after 1989?). Although Antonio Negri rots in some Italian prison, his call to "define communism as the collective struggle for the liberation of work" is pregnant with possibilities.⁵⁹ It is about time we join up and get to work not only to "define," but also to construct ramparts for the fight to truly end racism. Or, as Langston Hughes put it, "I been starvin' too long, / Ain't you? / Let's go, Revolution!"⁶⁰

Notes

Acknowledgements: Elisabeth Armstrong, Gautam Premnath, Sudhir Venkatesh, Maurice Wade and Johnny Williams. Part of this article was given at the University of Chicago in February 1996 (thanks to Mala DeAlwis, Predeep Jeganathan and to Arjun Appadurai for useful commentary).

1. Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles of a Multiracial Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1995). For ease of reference, all citation numbers from D'Souza directly follow the quoted text in parenthesis for this review essay.

2. *India Abroad* (September 29, 1995) and Jack E. White, "The Bigot's Handbook," *Time* (October 2, 1995).
3. Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Clarence Thomas and the Tough Love Crowd* (New York: New York University Press, 1995) and D'Souza's own statement in "Shanty Raids at Dartmouth," *Policy Review* 36 (Spring 1986), 31 where he notes that the "outrageous style" of the *Dartmouth Review* "challenge[d] the etiquette which protects liberal orthodoxy and return[ed] taboos which are legitimate topics for argument to the public debate."
4. *The Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 1995.
5. Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace and the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 375-379 and Kenneth Stern, *A Force Upon the Plain: The American Militia Movement and the Politics of Hate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
6. Dona Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Rights Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
7. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Showdown for Nonviolence," *Look* 32 (April 16, 1968) collected in *A Testament of Hope*, ed. James Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 67.
8. Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 78-113.
9. Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture* (New York: MacMillan, 1940), 12-13.
10. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1994). A protégé of B. F. Skinner, Herrnstein's behaviorism led to the education of pigeons for the US military in order to recognize and report on the posts of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (what the CIA called the Viet Cong). *Science* 146, 1964.
11. S. J. Gould in *Natural History* 104: 2 and *New Yorker* (November 28, 1994), T. Beardsley in *Scientific American* (January 1995) and L. J. Kamin in *Scientific American* (February 1995).
12. *U.S. News & World Report* (December 30, 1968) and William S. Buckley, "On the Right," *National Review* (May 5, 1970).
13. Dinesh D'Souza, "The Legacy of Leo Strauss," *Policy Review* 40 (Spring 1987), 37. *Idem.*, "The New Liberal Censorship," *Policy Review* 38 (Fall 1986).
14. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996), 12.
15. Appadurai, *Modernity*, 12.
16. But see for a reconsideration of the tradition, Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
17. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), 3-4 and *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

18. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1956), 68. R. H. Tawney, based on similar material, draws the opposite conclusion in his Holland Lectures of 1922, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Mentor, 1947).
19. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 26-27. More sanguine was Milton Singer, *When a Great Tradition Modernizes: An Anthropological Approach to Indian Civilization* (New York: Praeger, 1972).
20. Tu Wei-Ming, ed., *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1-10 and S. N. Eisenstadt, *Japanese Civilization: A Comparative View* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1996).
21. Fukuyama, "The End of History?" 4.
22. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) and his earlier essay, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993), 48.
23. On anti-Islam, see Bernard Lewis, "The Revolt of Islam," *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964) and "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990) and on anti-East Asia, see James Fallows, *Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System* (New York: Pantheon, 1994), 440-442.
24. Milton Friedman, "The Role of Monetary Policy," *American Economic Review* 58 (March 1968), but also A. W. Phillips, "The Relationship between Unemployment and the Rate of Change of Money Wage Rates in the United Kingdom, 1861-1957," *Econometrica*, N. S. 25, 1958 and for a critique, M. C. Sawyer, *The Political Economy of the Phillips Curve* (Aldershot: Edward Edgar, 1991).
25. Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 203.
26. Vijay Prashad, "No Sweat," *Public Culture* 10:1 (Fall 1997).
27. Michael B. Katz, "The Urban 'Underclass' as a Metaphor of Social Transformation," *The 'Underclass' Debate. Views from History*, ed. Michael B. Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6.
28. Charles W. Mills, "Under Class Under Standings," *Ethics* 104 (July 1994), 859.
29. Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 303 and on "civic engagement," see Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6:1 (January 1995), an argument criticized by Katha Pollitt, "For Whom the Ball Rolls," *The Nation* (15 April 1995).
30. Charles Murray, "Helping the Poor: A Few Modest Proposals," *Commentary* 79: 5 (May 1985), 27.
31. W. E. B. Dubois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 126 and 129.
32. Mills, "Under Class Under Standings," 858.
33. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 628-640.

34. Jennifer Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 209.
35. Howard McGary, "The Black Underclass and the Question of Values," *The Underclass Question*, ed. Bill Lawson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 62; and on this desire for jobs amongst black women, see Donna Franklin, *Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African American Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 222-226.
36. For an overview, see Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, "Getting Ahead: Social Mobility among the Urban Poor," *Sociological Perspectives*, 37:2 (1994), "The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto," *American Journal of Sociology* 103:1 (July 1997) and Loic Wacquant, "America as Realized Social Dystopia: The Politics of Urban Disintegration," *International Journal of Contemporary Sociology* 34: 1 (1997).
37. Glenn C. Loury, "The Moral Quandary of the Black Community," *The Public Interest* 79 (Spring 1985), 12.
38. Murray, "Helping the Poor," 34.
39. An idea explored by Herbert Marcuse, "Re-Examination of the Concept of Revolution," *Diogenes* 64 (Winter 1968), 20.
40. W. E. B. Dubois *Speaks*, ed. Philip Foner (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), 130-131.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London: New Left Books, 1973), 115.
43. Frank M. Kirkland, "Social Policy, Ethical Life and the Urban Underclass," *The Underclass Question*, 164-168 and Thomas J. Sugrue, "The Structure of Urban Poverty: The Reorganization of Space and Work in Three Periods of American History," *The "Underclass" Debate*, 95-100.
44. Thomas Sowell, *Migration and Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 377.
45. Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams. Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1994), 139-142.
46. "America's Chinese," *Life* (January 8, 1951), "Hard Work at Hip Wo School, San Francisco," *Life* (April 25, 1955), "Why No Chinese-American Delinquents? Maybe It's Traditional Respect for Parents," *Saturday Evening Post* (April 3, 1955), "Chinatown Offers Us a Lesson," *New York Times* (October 6, 1957), "Americans without a Delinquency Problem," *Look* (April 29, 1958), "Chinese Lack Delinquency," *Science News* (September 17, 1966), "Success Story of One Minority Group in US," *U.S. News and World Report* (December 26, 1966) and finally, Irving Kristol, "The Negro Today Is Like the Immigrant Yesterday," *New York Times Magazine* (September 11, 1966).
47. D'Souza, *Illiberal*, 27.
48. Fukuyama, *Trust*. For the Irish as "black," see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
49. John M. Liu, "The Contours of Asian Professional, Technical and Kindred Work Immigration, 1965-1988," *Sociological Perspectives* 35:4 (1992).

50. Arthur Hu, "Asian Americans: Model Minority or Double Minority?" *Amerasia* 15: 1 (1989), 245 and for a theory of the poverty, see Wen H. Kuo, "Colonized Status of Asian Americans," *Ethnic Groups* 3 (1981).
51. *The State of Asian Pacific America: Economic Diversity, Issues and Policy* (Los Angeles: Asian Pacific American Public Policy Institute and UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1994) and the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium's annual *Audit of Violence Against Asian-Pacific Americans* (Washington, D.C.: National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, from 1994 onwards).
52. Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile and Unequal* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992), 117.
53. For a first step, I recommend Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* (New York: Anchor, 1995), 377-378.
54. Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes," *Silver Linings*, ed. G. Bridges and R. Blunt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1981), 36-37.
55. *Amerasia Journal* 18: 1 (1992) on sweatshops, but also innumerable issues of *SAMAR*, notably the Winter 1994 issue on "Class Encounters of a South Asian Kind."
56. The name of a festival organized by Nayan Shah at SUNY Binghamton in 1995. The various Pride Utsavs and socialist conferences offer ample evidence, especially *Desh Pardesh*, that haven of left-wing "behavior" in Toronto. See also, *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Gay and Lesbian Experience*, ed. Russell Leong (New York: Routledge, 1996).
57. *A Testament of Hope*, 246.
58. Alfredo De Avila, "Closing the Fist," *Third Force* (November/December 1994) and also, Gary Delgado, *Beyond the Politics of Place. New Directions in Community Organizing in the 1990s* (Oakland: Applied Research Center, 1993), 10.
59. Toni Negri and Félix Guattari, *Communists Like Us* (New York: Semiotext[e], 1990), 10
60. *Good Morning Revolution. Uncollected Writings of Langston Hughes*, ed. Faith Berry (New York: Citadel, 1992), 4.