New Race/Ethnicity Journal
Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and the Office of Minority Affairs at The Ohio State University take this opportunity to introduce to you a new journal, Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts. This peer-reviewed journal will be a home for fresh, innovative thinking on the challenges and opportunities represented by race and ethnicity in the 21st century. Most scholarly journals on race and ethnicity are devoted to certain disciplines, specific geographical locations, singular racial or ethnic identities, or a particular set of issues. They contribute immeasurably to our vital conversation on race and ethnicity, but very few, if any, allow for truly multidisciplinary and comprehensive explorations of the interrelated racial, racialized, and racializing phenomena that typify our increasingly interconnected world. The Kirwan Institute and the Office of Minority Affairs wanted to provide a venue that would encourage and accommodate heterogeneous thinking about the relationships between race, place, power, and meaning in the contemporary world. Contributors to Race/Ethnicity will include researchers from inside and outside the academy, as well as advocates, activists, and practitioners of all kinds. With respect to these roles, we hope and expect that many contributors will be both/and, rather than either/or. The journal’s purpose will have been served if it helps us move toward a better understanding of the dynamics of racial and ethnic hierarchies and helps us fashion the tools needed to dismantle them.

Inaugural Issue: Transnational Migration, Race, and Citizenship

Article Synopses

Steve Martinot’s “Immigration and the Boundary of Whiteness” is a theoretical investigation of national belonging, race, and ethnicity. He considers the forms of alienation experienced by the European immigrants of The Uprooted in relationship to those of escaped African American slaves moving north into Pennsylvania. In so doing, he argues that the most regulatory boundary characterizing American membership is not geographical, but racial.

Antonia Smith’s “Cement for the Canadian Mosaic: Performing Citizenship in the Work of John Murray Gibbon” cites writings on Canadian folk festivals produced by John Murray Gibbon in the 1930s, to show ways in which Canadian

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opting for a “color-blind” approach, find conceptual proxies for race—most notably class—or minimize the significance of race in understanding the racialized and unbalanced distribution of opportunity in the United States. This failure to be explicit about race strengthens the racially hierarchical patterns that are reflected in structures and inhabit our implicit mind. Our willful blindness leaves us in the grip of a false naturalness that robs us of hope and possibility.

I encourage you to listen closely to the presidential candidates in the coming months. Unless something remarkable happens prior to the elections, candidates are not likely to talk openly about race and its consequences in the United States unless they are talking directly to an African American, Latino, or Asian audience. In his new book, *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*, Drew Westen tells us that “irrespective of what we may feel and believe consciously, most white Americans—including many who hold consciously progressive values and attitudes—harbor negative associations toward people of color.” Westen suggests that “...the challenge for progressive politicians is to tell coherent narratives about issues such as affirmative action and poverty that will resonate with a public that is divided within itself.”

If we continue to avoid transformative dialogue about race, we run the risk of energizing “color-blind racism,” trivializing social and economic inequality that is fueled by race, and reinforcing prevailing notions of group privilege and social hierarchy. The transformative conference in November will provide a rich environment for the exchange of information and ideas to assist in contextualizing a new way of framing the race conversation. We hope that old strategies for communicating the story of race and justice in America will be refined or redefined by conference participants and that new strategies will emerge.

The content of the dialogue at the conference and the magnitude of our success will be informed by what we already know about the dynamics of talking and thinking about race. Research and scholarship provide valuable information about how messages and dialogues about race resonate with the American people. For example, we know that:

- Discussions about race-based disparities without accompanying examples and discussions of the dynamics that enable people to overcome the barriers that create these disparities do not resonate well with non-progressive audiences.
- Discussions about injustice and social inequality do not resonate positively if the impacted group(s) is not regarded favorably by the audience.
- Seemingly conscious positions on issues related to opportunity, diversity, affirmative action, and other race-sensitive social justice topics are often driven by subtle unconscious attitudes that may be more powerful than the decision maker’s own self-interest. Racial bias is often one of these subconscious attitudes.
- Many Americans have an inadequate understanding of the consequences of structural racism and cumulative race-based inequality; they believe that the playing field is “level.” This misperception colors the way that audiences react to messages about inequality in health, education, employment, housing, and other opportunity domains, and more generally, about social justice.
- The degree to which a message about race resonates with the audience and the way that it resonates depends on the “frame” that is employed to contextualize the message. If audiences reject the frame, they will most likely reject the message. “Framing” messages to appeal to conscious information processing is the flip side of “priming” to influence subconscious attitudes and behaviors.

A significant amount of energy at the November conference will be devoted to analyzing and contextualizing U.S. race relations and racialized outcomes from a structural perspective. While this perspective deepens our understanding of inequality and cumulative disadvantage, we have been reluctant to disturb the institutional arrangements and policies that support racialized outcomes. Our inability—or unwillingness—to apply structural solutions to persistent racial inequality is sometimes called the “implementation gap.” We have also made the mistake of thinking that we can achieve racial transformation by focusing on fixing the “racial other” without disturbing what has been called “possessive investment in whiteness.” The project of racial transformation is not a project just for non-whites; it is a democratic project for America.

At the conference, we will discuss the mechanisms by which institutional arrangements and public policies have energized and perpetuated cumulative race-based disadvantage across many opportunity domains and across generations, and how this perspective can be effective in bridging racial, ethnic, and ideological differences. This structural perspective is essential to transforming the racial agenda.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is a university-wide interdisciplinary research institute. Its goal is to deepen our understanding of the causes of and solutions to racial and ethnic disparities and hierarchies. This includes an explicit focus not only on Ohio and the United States, but also on the Americas and our larger global community. Our primary focus is to increase general understanding that, despite many differences, human destinies are intertwined. Thus, the institute explores and illustrates both our diversity and common humanity in real terms.

The institute brings together a diverse and creative group of scholars and researchers from various disciplines to focus on the histories, present conditions, and the future prospects of racially and ethnically marginalized people. Informed by real-world needs, its work strives to meaningfully influence policies and practices.

The institute also focuses on the interrelatedness of race and ethnicity with other factors, such as gender, class, and culture, and how these are embedded in structures and systems. Collaboration with other institutions and organizations around the world and ongoing relationships with real people, real communities, and real issues are a vital part of its work.

The institute employs many approaches to fulfilling its mission: original research, publications, comparative analyses, surveys, convenings, and conferences. It is part of a rich intellectual community and draws upon the insight and energy of the faculty and students at Ohio State.

While the institute focuses on marginalized racial and ethnic communities, it understands that these communities exist in relation to other communities and that fostering these relationships deepens the possibility of change. It is the sincere hope and goal of all of us that the institute gives transformative meaning to both our diversity and our common humanity.
Developments

The work of the Kirwan Institute is made possible by the generous support of numerous people and organizations. New external funding includes the following:

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
The African American Male Project

The Ford Foundation
General operations
The Diversity Advancement Project
The African American Forum on Race and Regionalism

The C.S. Mott Foundation
The Structural Racism Caucus

The President’s Council (of Cleveland)
Regionalism and its effects on African Americans in Cleveland

The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Structural racism caucus and book project

Public Interest Projects
Fulfilling the Dream Fund (National Fund)
“A New Paradigm for Affirmative Action: Targeting Within Universalism”

The Tides Foundation
Katrina and beyond

The 21st Century Foundation
Katrina and beyond

The Open Society Institute
Core operating support

Democracy Alliance
General operating

For more information on making a commitment to excellence with a donation to the institute, please contact:

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Kirwan Institute Awards First Senior Faculty Fellowship

The Kirwan Institute has awarded its first Senior Faculty Fellowship to Sharon L. Davies, JD, John C. Elam/Vorys Sater Designated Professor of Law and former dean of faculty at Ohio State’s Moritz College of Law. Professor Davies will use the fellowship to continue work on her book *Rising Road – A Tale of Race, Religion, and Law in America* that recounts the 1921 killing of a Birmingham priest who presided over an interracial marriage.

Director John Powell says he is hopeful that the new fellowship program will strengthen existing relationships and build new relationships between the Kirwan Institute and the Ohio State faculty. “Tapping into the rich resources of faculty like Professor Davies who are working on research and scholarship themes that mesh with the institute’s work is one way to expand our capacity and to reach broader audiences.” Applicants for the fellowship are selected on the basis of criteria that include clarity of the fellowship project proposal, relevance of the proposed project to the ongoing work of the Kirwan Institute, and the potential of the fellowship project to encourage, facilitate, stimulate, and energize interdisciplinary research and scholarship.

Old conversations that frame racism as individual or group animus are incomplete and divisive. A structural analysis helps us to understand that racialized outcomes do not require racist actors and that we are all connected in an intricate web of causality. Transforming the racial agenda requires this understanding of our linked fate. This emphasis on a structural analysis and a creative discourse to illustrate our common humanity is at the heart of what we mean by a “transformative agenda around race.”

This issue of Update includes a response to the recent Supreme Court decisions that will significantly impact efforts to sustain racial integration in the public schools of Seattle, Washington, and Louisville, Kentucky, and in many other cities around the country. While it is notable that a majority of the Court recognized a compelling government interest in remediing racial isolation, these cases are indicative of an emerging and powerful national attack on affirmative action and racial/ethnic diversity.

Policies designed to achieve racial diversity have been successfully challenged in Michigan, California, Washington, Texas, Kentucky, and Massachusetts. Why are voters in these and other states opposed to affirmative action? One answer is that the case for affirmative action has been “framed” in language that does not resonate positively with a majority of the American people. Too many Americans see affirmative action as punitive or as unnecessary because they believe that all Americans have equal opportunity to achieve the American dream. What we need is a “transformative” language that will sustain a collaborative and inclusive dialogue on race, social justice, and the true meaning of democracy. Our national conference, “Toward a Transformative Agenda Around Race,” should provide valuable tools for crafting this dialogue.

John Powell
Executive Director

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national identity was produced and consolidated as white in the face of increasing ethnic immigration. Staging expressions of “the Folk,” these festivals expressed a fetishized acceptance of difference while ensuring the dominance of British-Canadian cultural identity.

Steve Garner’s “The European Union and the Racialization of Migration, 1985–2006” explores the racially and ethnically discriminatory consequences of international policy-making on immigration in the European Union. While ostensibly neutral, international policies, such as those named in the Schengen Accord, benefit the members of certain nations, while excluding others, especially in the framing of asylum seekers.

David G. Gutiérrez’s “The Politics of the Interstices: Reflections on Citizenship and Non-Citizenship at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” explores activist or resistant citizenship claims made by non-citizenship subjects. Detailing the pervasiveness of the non-citizenship subject in the United States—those who neither seek naturalization nor repatriation—but instead, who reside permanently in the interstices, Gutiérrez traces the possibilities of “denizenship.” Challenging liberal notions of citizenship linked to nation, Gutiérrez illuminates how subjects existing in this liminal space make demands on the state, while refusing assimilation.

Darcie Vandegrift’s “Global Tourism and Racialized Citizenship Claims: Citizen-Subjects and the State in Costa Rica” details the ways in which tourism—an industry created in the context of the global market—becomes a site at which subjects excluded from national membership due largely to race can make citizenship claims.

Garrett Ziegler’s “East of the City: Brick Lane, Capitalism, and the Global Metropolis,” a literary analysis that explores practices of citizenship beyond the nation. Exploring the gendered dimensions of transnational migration, Ziegler details how the novel narrates liberatory possibilities for Bangladeshi Muslim women through citizenship in the global economy.

For further information or to subscribe to the journal, please visit our web site at www.raceethnicity.org.

Kirwan Institute Journal (continued from page 1)

Institute Welcomes New Staff

Cheryl McLaughlin

Cheryl McLaughlin joined the Kirwan Institute staff as a research assistant in October 2007. She graduated from the University of Dayton in 2005 (Summa Cum Laude) with a BA in Sociology and Spanish. In recognition of excellence in her undergraduate program, Cheryl received the Jan E. Stets Research Award for original sociological research and the Dr. Edward A. Huth Silver Anniversary Award of Excellence for Outstanding Student in Sociology. She received an MA in Arts in 2007 in Ohio State’s Department of Sociology, serving as a graduate teaching associate and a graduate administrative associate. Her master’s thesis explores the ethnic identities of first-generation immigrants.

Eavon Mobley

Eavon Mobley is managing editor of Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts. She has extensive experience in managing academic publications in the private and public sectors. She held positions as assistant editor and circulation manager for Andrews University Seminary Studies, a biblical studies and archaeology journal published by Andrews University in Michigan, as managing editor for Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta, a geochemical and meteoritical journal published by Elsevier Science, and most recently as journals manager for the Academic Journals Program at The Ohio State University Press. She graduated from Muskingum College with a BA in Classics and a BA in German Languages and Literature. Eavon plans to pursue a master’s in public administration and is interested in studying issues of race/ethnicity in relation to public policies of the United States and other countries.

Charles Patton

Charles Patton is a graduate research associate. He holds a BA in Communication from DePaul University. His master’s thesis, in Ohio State’s Department of Sociology, investigates the impact of ethnogenic institutions and organizations on the occupational success of African Americans. More broadly, his research interests include race, stratification, and urban sociology. At the Institute, Charles is currently assisting with the Democratic Merit project and the African American Male Project.

Yusuf Sarfati

Yusuf Sarfati is a graduate research associate who holds a BA in political science and international relations from Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey, and an MA in Political Science from Ohio State. His doctoral research, in Ohio State’s Department of Political Science, investigates how religiopolitical movements garnered strength and how religion emerged as a divisive issue in politics in Turkey, Israel, and Indonesia in the 1990s. At the Institute, Yusuf is currently assisting with research on building coalitions between African American and immigrant communities.

In addition to re-thinking contemporary U.S. race relations and racial outcomes from a structural perspective, we will explore ways of “talking about race” that underline our linked fates as people and facilitate bridge-building and coalition formation across racial, ethnic, and even ideological differences. This emphasis on using racial analysis and discourse to draw people together for constructive purposes, rather than pry them apart, is at the heart of what we mean by a “transformative agenda around race.” The conference will be preceded by a film festival featuring a range of work that engages race in instructive ways.

“Toward a Transformative Agenda around Race”

Save the dates...
November 30–December 2, 2007
kirwaninstitute.org
“Schools and race: picking up the pieces” by Larry Gossett and John a. powell in The Seattle Times, July 8, 2007

On the last day of its term, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its most important decision, with implications for how our nation will deal with the continuing problem of racial segregation and fulfill its promise of realizing a truly integrated society.

This lengthy, complicated decision includes five different opinions and no clear majority on the most critical issues. Understandably, initial reporting and commentary on the case focused on the fact that a majority of the Court struck down the modest voluntary integration plans in Seattle and Louisville. These plans were crafted by local school boards striving to address the reality of pervasive racial segregation and isolation in their neighborhoods and schools and retain the hard won gains of Brown v. Board of Education. The ruling by the Court is indeed disturbing insofar as it appears to limit the tools available to achieve racial integration and fulfill the promise of Brown.

What has not been widely reported is how “for the first time in its history” the majority of the Court recognizes a compelling government interest not only in ending state-sponsored (de jure) segregation, as in Brown, or in pursuing diversity in higher education, but also in Remedying racial isolation, regardless of its cause.

Justice Kennedy cannot have spoken more plainly: “Compelling interest exists in avoiding racial isolation, an interest that a school district, in its discretion and expertise, may choose to pursue. Likewise, a district may consider it a compelling interest to achieve a diverse student population.” He joins Justices Stephen Breyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, David Souter, and John Paul Stevens to comprise a majority on this key point.

On the issue of whether school districts may, under certain circumstances, take race into account to address the reality and ameliorate the harms of racial isolation, the same five justices again form the majority. Here, Justice Kennedy finds Chief Justice Roberts’ insistence that race cannot be a factor in student assignments “too dismissive of the legitimate interest government has in ensuring all people have equal opportunity regardless of their race.” He concludes that while a color-blind Constitution is an aspiration, in the real world, where race often matters, color-blindness cannot be a universal constitutional principle.

In sum, five justices have plowed fresh legal ground, holding out hope to our nation that racial isolation, a harm to all students, can be redressed and a more inclusive democracy achieved. The broad articulation of the compelling government interest in avoiding racial isolation, and of the permissibility of school districts taking race into account to do so, should motivate policymakers and local governments to intervene and disrupt the process that feeds segregation, a process that reaches its unfortunate and predictable conclusion in schools themselves, at which point school boards are limited in their ability to respond.

Until now, advocates have focused much of their energies in pursuing racial integration in schools because that is where the harms of segregation most critically manifest themselves. Segregated housing patterns fuel segregated classrooms and disparate educational outcomes. Low-quality public schools, in turn, reinforce segregated housing patterns due to the strong correlation between housing prices and public school quality. These patterns result in a downward spiral of ongoing “white flight” and racial as well as economic segregation in our urban school districts.

The majority of the Court has now explicitly recognized the serious harms of racial isolation in our communities and classrooms. The Court also recognizes the impact of these arrangements on the promise of liberty and equality on which the nation was founded.

It is imperative that policymakers and the public do not misread this case and overlook the opportunities this unprecedented acknowledgement opens up to achieve integration in our schools and neighborhoods.
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

The institute provided Geographic Information Systems analysis to investigate the potential impact of statewide environmental justice review standards on neighborhoods in New York City.

Sustainable Pittsburgh

The institute is assisting Sustainable Pittsburgh in an assessment of the connection between affordable housing and economic opportunity in the Pittsburgh region.

Ohio Educational Access Map

Kirwan is assisting with a map of impediments to educational opportunity for the State of Ohio, in collaboration with the Economic Access Initiative at The Ohio State University. The institute also provided mapping services to identify areas for targeted programming by the Economic Access Initiative.

Policy Recommendations for a More Equitable, Sustainable and Vibrant Ohio

The institute compiled a comprehensive list of state-level policy recommendations that would advance more equitable outcomes. This policy reform platform was shared with Governor Strickland’s office and informed the advocacy activities of Greater Ohio, a statewide advocacy organization working with the legislature to promote smarter growth and development in Ohio. The institute has consulted with Greater Ohio to emphasize how racial and social equity are critical components of state policy reform.

Central Texas Opportunity Initiative & Community Partnership for the Homeless

The Kirwan Institute worked with a coalition of advocates in the Austin region to create interactive opportunity maps, in order to assist neighborhood organizations, local nonprofits, financial institutions, and advocacy organizations. The coalition sought to better serve its clients and to proactively shape housing and community development policy in the region. This initiative culminated in a series of public engagements with leaders in the Austin region in the spring of 2007. The Austin analysis provoked critical questions about access to opportunity in the region, and provided insight into what actions could connect more of Austin’s residents to the region’s opportunities. Some sample findings:

- Latino and African American children are much more likely to be located in the region’s low-opportunity areas, with two out of three African American and Latino children found in these communities. For children in poverty, this isolation from opportunity is more pronounced, with 69% of children in poverty in the region found in the region’s low-opportunity census tracts.
- Public transit lines are well connected to public health resources in the City of Austin, but transit access gaps exist with regard to health care resources directly to the west and north of the City of Austin.
- Several areas are characterized by unusually high food costs and concentrations of low-income residents. These areas represent potential locations for establishing high-quality, high-value grocery stores to meet local need.

Local Advocacy and Community Building in Battle Creek, Michigan

In the summer and fall of 2006, the Kirwan Institute worked with the National Resource Center for the Healing of Racism in Battle Creek, Michigan, facilitating community engagements around the “Communities of Opportunity” model. In addition to conducting analysis that examined the structural causes of regional disparities, Kirwan staffers assisted with regional meetings focused on the need to connect all residents to opportunity, and to address housing and economic development disparities that disadvantage the entire region.

Housing in Maryland

The Kirwan Institute worked with the Maryland ACLU to assess housing trends, foreclosure, and rental opportunities in Baltimore’s high-opportunity neighborhoods. This analysis will be used by a housing advocacy coalition to aid public housing residents in accessing affordable housing in high-quality neighborhoods.

Northern California Legal Services

The Institute is advising Northern California Legal Services on strategies to map opportunity in the Sacramento region. Northern California Legal Services is also using the institute report Communities of Opportunity: A Framework for a More Equitable and Sustainable Future for All as an educational and training resource.
On June 28, 2007, the United States Supreme Court ruled on the Constitutionality of voluntary racial integration plans in Seattle, Washington, and Louisville, Kentucky. The cases of Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, and McFarland v. Jefferson County Board of Education have far-reaching implications for how our nation will continue to address the persistent problem of racial segregation and fulfill the promise of a truly integrated society. The sharply divided Court produced five different opinions in this lengthy, complicated decision. This FAQ will help explain what these cases are all about and what this decision means.

Q1: What are the Seattle and Louisville cases about?
A1: The question before the Supreme Court in these cases was whether public school districts in Seattle and Louisville could voluntarily use race-conscious measures to avoid racial isolation and achieve racial diversity in their elementary and secondary schools. Each school district implemented a tie-breaker system designed to maintain integration in the school system despite widespread residential segregation. Parents of non-minority children sued the school districts asserting that the plans violated the Equal Protection Clause. The District Courts in both cases ruled in favor of the school districts and upheld the voluntary integration plans. The Ninth Circuit and the Sixth Circuit Courts of Appeals affirmed those rulings. The parents appealed these decisions to the United States Supreme Court.

Q2: What were the main issues addressed by this decision?
A2: The two main issues before the Court were whether school boards may use race to promote voluntary integration in their schools and, if so, how they may do so.

Q3: The Louisville and Seattle school districts “lost.” What does that mean?
A3: The Court sided with parents who challenged the school assignments and struck down the race-conscious tiebreaker plans used by the school districts. As a consequence, the school districts “lost” the lawsuit.

Q4: Can districts use “race” to achieve diversity or not?
A4: Most definitely “yes.” Educational policymakers may pursue race-conscious policies. The only stipulation is that they have to be careful how they use race. The Court is wary of what it calls “racial classifications.” Measures designed to achieve racial diversity that do not classify people on the basis of race are generally permissible without exception. For example, drawing attendance zones with a general recognition of the demographics of the neighborhood in order to create a diverse student body is a policy that takes race into account, but does not classify students by race. However, measures that classify or categorize individuals solely on the basis of their race in order to treat those people differently are probably impermissible except as a last resort.

Q5: Why does the media imply that “race” cannot be used?
A5: When the case is filtered into short sound bites, the take-away message seems to be that “race” cannot be used because the particular race-conscious plans being reviewed by the Court were struck down. The Court’s fractured ruling adds a further layer of confusion to an already complicated jurisprudence.

Q6: I’ve read that Justice Kennedy’s decision was the most important one. Why?
A6: Justice Kennedy provided the swing vote. The Court produced five opinions, none of which attracted a majority five votes.

Four justices sided on two opinions in full. Justice Kennedy signed onto the opinion written by Chief Justice Roberts in part and wrote a separate opinion to explain where he disagreed. In a sense, Justice Kennedy split the difference. Justice Kennedy’s opinion, the fifth vote in the result, is therefore the controlling opinion of the Court. Importantly, Justice Kennedy sided with the four dissenting Justices in finding that the school districts had articulated a compelling government interest justifying the use of race where the four justices supporting the Roberts opinion did not.

Q7: What does this decision have to do with the 2003 affirmative action cases?
A7: Although the Seattle and Louisville cases are not affirmative action cases, like the affirmative action cases, they raise the question of the Constitutionality of race-conscious government action.

The 2003 affirmative action cases, known collectively as Grutter and Gratz, established the proposition that universities may consider race as an admissions criteria to achieve diversity in their student bodies, so long as race is one of many factors considered together in a holistic fashion. The framework for analyzing race-conscious measures articulated by the Supreme Court in Grutter was relied upon by the Courts of Appeals below in affirming the constitutionality of the school board’s voluntary integration plans.

One issue before the court in Seattle and Louisville was whether the compelling government interest in achieving a racially diverse student body would be extended in the K-12 context. Although a majority of the Court found that the specific diversity interest in Grutter was inapplicable, five justices held that school districts may consider diversity a compelling government interest that justifies the use of race measures to achieve a diverse student body.

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African American Male Project Update

By Ming Trammel

For nearly two years, the Kirwan Institute has been working to expand the knowledge base and academic scholarship related to African American males, a project funded by the Kellogg Foundation. A major component of this work has involved updating the social science literature on males in the areas of education, employment, juvenile justice, and incarceration. The last such review took place more than a decade ago (Gordon, Gordon, and Nembhard, 1994). Scholars in the original review determined that research on black males was situated in four main areas: (1) education; (2) psychological issues; (3) politics and economics; and (4) demographical and statistical data.

Although these issues remain salient 10 years later, two emergent themes have helped broaden the research field. The first considers the influence of music on the racial identity and academic achievement of black males. The second investigates identity construction of males as both racial and gendered selves. While new themes have emerged, old disputes remain contentious, especially concerning underemployment and unemployment of black males. For example, while some scholars found that immigration had deleterious effects on African American male employment, other researchers found that immigration had no significant impact on employment. There is also a growing body of research labeled “community/environment/geography” which has emerged, linking the developmental status of black males to the condition of their communities and neighborhoods. Crowder, Tolnay, and Alderman (2001), for example, have demonstrated that black males from low opportunity areas in northern cities who migrated south increased their economical opportunities and had better social networks in their new communities of residence.

Our analysis has also revealed that much of the research and scholarship on black males has been rooted in a “cultural” or “deficit” model. In other words, the lens used to explain black male disparities in education and employment outcomes or their overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system was largely rooted in a framework that construed black males as the source of their problems, giving little consideration to contextual or structural factors. In light of the overuse of the deficit-framework, less research is available that explains how structural factors impact outcomes in the areas of education, employment, and mental/public health for males. Because of this, we are under-informed about how black males manage to avoid the pitfalls and hardships that beset other black males, despite structural constraints (Noguera, 2003). Furthermore, much of the research also concentrates on “young black males,” ignoring inquiry on older males or the early adolescent growth period for males. This gap in the literature is especially critical in the preadolescent years for male development because the dearth of such research limits the development of interventions that may promote key substantive and transformative change for this population. In addition, without studies on older males, the research loses the critical voices and experiences of older adult black males. A final area highlighted in the research on black males considers the interaction of school and juvenile system policies that create disparate outcomes for males. This area of study was the central focus of the Kirwan Institute’s May conference on African American males (archived at www.kirwaninstitute.org/AAMaleproject/aamp_conference.html).
The African American male project team collaborated with the GIS department to generate a map of the dynamics of opportunity for African American males. Opportunity is defined as the structures and environmental conditions that contribute to community stability and individual advancement such as sustainable employment, high-quality educational institutions and experiences, healthy and safe communities, stable and safe housing, or access to health care. Expanding and maintaining access to opportunity means deliberately connecting people to the critical resources needed to excel and succeed in our society. For African American males, this involves promoting mobility for marginalized populations, allowing them to escape distressed neighborhoods, and having access to opportunity-rich neighborhoods. Research has found that connecting people to opportunity-rich communities promotes economic and educational success, especially for youth.

The following maps capture the degree of neighborhood opportunity in the Los Angeles and Detroit metropolitan areas, ranging from very high opportunity (represented by the darker areas) to very low opportunity (represented by the lighter areas). As the maps illustrate, the Los Angeles African American male population is geographically concentrated in areas of lower opportunity. In Detroit, similar concentrations are apparent, but much more pronounced, showing nearly all of the males in the data set in areas of very low or low opportunity. The maps help to demonstrate the spatial isolation of African American males within opportunity-deprived and distressed neighborhoods, communities that are devoid of the resources most Americans take for granted.

The richness of this data provides a compelling new dimension to studying the relationship between African American males and opportunity in geographic, social, and economic terms. For example, we can begin to analyze black males in “very high opportunity areas” to uncover factors that led to their success and study black males from “very low opportunity” areas who are successful. Future research should examine factors that contribute to African American male success across the opportunity spectrum, rather than focusing merely on males in the “very low opportunity” areas, especially since this has been the primary focus of past and present research.
Kirwan Institute Small Grants Program


This project examines the perceptions of urban students about their high school preparation for postsecondary education. Participants are the first generation in their families to attend college. Face-to-face interviews and geographical questionnaires are used in this investigation. These researchers believe that a better understanding of the preparation these students receive in high school will assist administrators, school counselors, teachers, higher education professionals, and educational policymakers in developing appropriate policies, curricula, and programs to enhance success in college.


This research project investigates the political empowerment of Caribbean immigrants in Toronto, Canada. The focus on Caribbean immigrants can be of great value in expanding our knowledge and understanding of racialized minority and recent immigrant populations. Findings from this research will also contribute to the understanding of the role of race/ethnicity and immigration in shaping the policy making processes in urban centers. “In Canada, despite a long history of immigration and the decidedly urban character of contemporary immigration patterns, the focus on questions of race and ethnicity has been systematically neglected.” Professor Nelson’s research will attempt to fill in critical gaps in knowledge regarding the role and impact of race and ethnicity in Canadian city politics. Primary sources of data in this investigation include census data in Canada, federal government documents (local, provincial, and national), and interviews with leaders and activists at the local and national level.


Since 2004, the Sudanese region of Darfur has been the scene of a violent conflict that the United Nations described as the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Although the events in Darfur have attracted unprecedented international attention, Professor Sikainga observes that “much of the media coverage tends to follow the familiar patterns of focusing on the drama rather than analyzing the nature and the root causes of the conflict.” Missing from the coverage of the Darfur conflict is information about how the Sudanese people themselves have responded to and thought about these crises. This research project will shed light on the internal debate within the Sudan, particularly among Sudanese political parties, civil society groups, NGOs, intellectuals, activists, and journalists.

A Glance at the Past Year...

Melvin L. Oliver’s Visit
On March 2, 2007, Professor Melvin Oliver, dean of the Division of Social Sciences and professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and co-author of Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality (1997), visited the Kirwan Institute. He delivered the keynote speech for the “Increasing Wealth Inequality: From Social Investment to Privatized Citizenship” session followed by a book signing.

Ian F. Haney Lopez Talk

African American Male Conference
The Kirwan Institute hosted the “African American Males: Beyond the School to Prison Pipeline and Moving Towards Opportunity” conference on May 11, 2007. The conference focused on the different and sometimes subtle ways in which the educational system and prison system interact to create disparate situations for African American males.

The Stanley Muroff Civil Liberties Forum
On May 24, 2007, Debra Dickerson, featured speaker of the Stanley Muroff Civil Liberties Forum and author of The End of Blackness, discussed the current state of racial progress in America. The event was co-sponsored by the Kirwan Institute and Ohio State’s John Glenn School of Public Affairs.

Sarah Jones’ Performance
The Kirwan Institute and the National Association of County and City Health Officials co-sponsored the performance of Sarah Jones, “A Right to Care,” during the NAACCHO’s annual meeting, “Health Equity and Environmental Public Health – From Local to Global,” on July 11, 2007.

Two years after Katrina Panel Discussion
Ohio State faculty discussed their research and rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast to assess progress since Katrina. The panel discussion was co-sponsored by Ohio State’s City and Regional Planning Program and the Kirwan Institute on August 29, 2007.

“About Race, About Justice” event
Kirwan Institute Seeks Postdoctoral Fellows

The Kirwan Institute is seeking applications for postdoctoral fellows to further its cause. The fellow must have a doctorate degree and demonstrate understanding of the institute’s mission to alleviate problems created at the intersection of race and ethnicity and possess relevant research and writing skills. Preferred qualifications include evidence of initiative in seeking out and pursuing actions to accomplish goals and objectives, the ability to work as a member of a team and independently, accomplish time lines, handle multiple work assignments, and demonstrate commitment to high-quality performance.

Appointment is for one to two years. The fellow will work under the supervision of the executive director and deputy director. Many initiatives will be team events in which the fellow will be expected to lead and contribute as an active team member. Where appropriate, the fellow will also consult with members of the advisory board, project working groups, individual consultants, and community/policy leaders.

Position(s) may be full time with an annual equivalent salary based on education and experience plus applicable fringe benefits. Applications should include a cover letter (not to exceed three pages) and supporting documents:

Candidate’s Application Letter (2 copies):
A two- to three-page application letter that includes a brief description of the candidate’s background, training, and recent scholarship; a specified starting date of appointment; and an indication of the desired tenure of the fellowship (12 or 24 months).

Supporting Documentation (1 copy each):
A complete curriculum vitae, including indication of special awards and honors, an official grade transcript (sent by the university conferring the doctorate) showing the award of a doctorate (or anticipated award date; in this case, an updated transcript must be submitted prior to appointment), reprints of any scholarly publications; and three letters of recommendation.

The institute will accept applications until February 1, 2008, with interviews in March 2008, and the appointment starting in September 2008. Please send applications and direct questions to:

Tara I. McCoy
mccoy.266@osu.edu
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
423 Mendenhall Laboratory
125 South Oval Mall
Columbus, OH 43210

To build a diverse workforce, Ohio State encourages applications from minorities, veterans, women, individuals with disabilities, and others who diversify the workplace.

Kirwan Film Festival:
The Devil Came on Horseback

In conjunction with the Transformative Race conference, the Kirwan Institute will host a film festival November 27 through December 1, 2007. The festival will present films that approach the topic of race in a variety of life and policy dimensions and make use of a structural portrayal of race and racism (i.e., not focusing solely in individualist perspectives). The goal of the film festival is to illustrate structural racism in myriad forms through a medium that will not only reach a broader audience but also has the ability to transform the way activists, academics, policymakers, and other interested individuals talk about and work around race and other issues of social justice. For this reason, we have selected films of both domestic and foreign origin that deal with issues such as race, gender, class, identity, image, politics, education, and other social and structural forces that intersect to shape the lives of us all.

To kick off the Kirwan Institute’s inaugural film festival, we will be screening The Devil Came on Horseback in partnership with the Wexner Center for the Arts. An eyewitness account of urgent moral authority, The Devil Came on Horseback is the firsthand account of former U.S. Marine Captain Brian Steidle, sent by the African Union to investigate the Sudanese government’s genocide of its own citizens living in the western Darfur region. The title refers to the government’s Arab militias known as the janjaweed—“devil on horseback”—sent to brutally exterminate or displace hundreds of thousands of other Africans guilty only of being non-Arab. The film also traces Steidle’s desperate efforts to bring his video documentation of this incomprehensible mass slaughter to the American public, with Nicholas D. Kristof finally breaking the story in the New York Times in 2005. The tragedy in the Sudan continues; in June of this year, Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich addressed it this way: “Let’s face it, if Darfur had a large supply of oil, this administration would be occupying it right now.”

The Devil Came on Horseback (Annie Sundberg, Ricki Stern, 2007, 85 mins.)
Tuesday and Wednesday, November 27 & 28, 7 p.m.
Wexner Center for the Arts

Please visit our web site at kirwanfilmfestival.com for details on other films, purchasing tickets, and other activities.
Talking about Race
Institutions, Opportunities, and the Fate of African Americans: A Brief Response to Cosby and Poussaint

By Andrew Grant-Thomas

Bill Cosby and Alvin Poussaint are deeply troubled by the high rate of absentee fatherhood among African Americans and concerned about what it signifies for the socialization of black children, especially boys. They argue that we continue to ignore the “crumbling” black family at our peril, identifying it as the cause of dismal school dropout rates, unconscionably high rates of incarceration, and the “black-on-black” violence that afflicts the African American community.

At the Kirwan Institute, we share the sense of urgency that animates their forthcoming book, Come on People: On the Path from Victims to Victors; the stops on their national “callout” tour; and their recent interview on NBC’s Meet the Press. Each man has a long, rich history of engagement with the African American community and we honor the activist spirit that enlivens their efforts. However, we also fear that by building on a flawed and partial analysis that largely mistakes cause for effect, their efforts will prove counterproductive.

Can black family formation bear the enormous burden of responsibility that Cosby and Poussaint place on it? No, it cannot.

On virtually every important indicator—life expectancy, poverty, high school and college graduation rates, and more—life for African Americans has improved, not worsened, over the two generations that the proportion of children born to married adults has declined. This is precisely the reverse of what we would expect if the incidence of married parenthood were the primary mover behind the still-grim outcomes that Cosby and Poussaint highlight. Conversely, they discount the degree to which many African Americans today succeed in spite of family dissolution.

The point is not that black families and communities are better off when parental relationships dissolve. It’s that we need to look beyond trends in family formation for our explanations.

Consider the explosion in the prison population that has claimed so many young black men since the 1980s. The phenomenon owes much less to changes in black socialization and behavior and much more to the failed “War on Drugs,” whose major features have included a dramatic increase in drug arrests, mandatory sentencing for drug offenses, longer prison sentences, and the heavy law enforcement presence in low-income minority communities.

Furthermore, research on the criminal justice system, the ownership and rental housing markets, and the employment market repeatedly document bias against blacks, especially males, at every step. African Americans and Latinos are far more likely than whites to live in extremely segregated, high-poverty neighborhoods with poorly resourced schools, bad health care infrastructures, and a dearth of decent jobs. To insist that residents “choose” in any meaningful sense to live in such neighborhoods defies both common sense and a mountain of research to the contrary.

The cumulative effect of these disadvantages is enormous. Their harmful effects are primarily institutional and systemic in nature, not cultural. Cosby and Poussaint do invoke institutional and systemic racism, but only to discount it, making their argument much less powerful than it would otherwise be.

No one denies the importance of people of all stripes acting responsibly as individuals, family members, and citizens. As parents, teachers, friends, and community members, that is exactly what we must urge our children to do. Moreover, it is incumbent on each of us to model constructive attitudes and behaviors ourselves, even in the face of difficult circumstances.

However, if we wish to promote change, it is important to recognize that the choices available to each of us are shaped by the institutional conditions and opportunity structures in which we move. In turn, our collective values and resources shape the social institutions that define those opportunity structures. If we amend the structure of opportunity, behaviors and attitudes often interpreted in terms of culture will change as well. Move a young person from an environment marked by gangs, truancy, and watchful suspiciousness to one characterized by strong schools, public safety, and positive reinforcement of socially beneficial norms and watch that young person’s attitudes and actions change accordingly.

To draw on Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres’ useful metaphor, the fact that it’s far easier to “blame the canary” and ask it to mend itself than to muster the awareness, resources, and political will to improve the air in the mines doesn’t mean that the canary is the main problem. The last thing black America needs—the last thing America needs—is to wrongly insist that we are.
Kirwan Interns Reflect on Their Experience

For four years, the Kirwan Institute has offered a summer internship program, with approximately 35 participants. We hire undergraduate and graduate students and activists every summer to pursue research and writing on issues of race and ethnicity (e.g., racial and economic segregation, racial justice, regional equity, democratic participation, and governance). Summer interns assist in preparation of presentations, literature reviews, bibliographic annotation, and planning and coordinating meetings, conferences, and other engagements. The program is 10-12 weeks long. Our focus is to familiarize young scholars and activists with our work and to bring new perspectives to the work that we do. Read what our interns had to say about the experience on their exit surveys.

How do you think the experience of working with us will help you during the rest of your time at Ohio State and in your future career?

“The Kirwan has helped me tremendously. It has allowed me to discover a potential sub-interest in causal chains that complements my current research interests. My motivation for applying to graduate school was to conduct research on the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow, and other forms of racial oppression. The Kirwan has provided me with this opportunity and allowed me to further explore this topic. I truly view this experience as the catalyst for my future career as a researcher in the field of sociology.”

“I think it exposed me to a number of topics I would not have been exposed to otherwise. More importantly, it exposed me directly to people whose lives are much different from mine. It’s not always easy to come into contact with others different from myself, no matter who you are. I can be shy and being forced into contact was certainly a positive thing for me.”

“I have completed my academic career at Ohio State. In my future, I think that the way I approach the issue of race will forever be affected by my experience at the Kirwan Institute.”

Addressing Racial Isolation in the Light of the Parents Decision

By Christine Rogers, GIS/Demographic Specialist

In the recent Supreme Court ruling Parents Involved in Community Schools (“Parents”), a majority of justices agreed that preventing racial isolation and promoting diversity in education were compelling governmental interests. However, a majority of justices also concluded that school districts can use the racial classification of individual students to realize those interests only in very limited circumstances. Therefore, many school districts that until now achieved a measure of diversity in their student populations through the racial classification of individual students will be searching for race-neutral means to avoid racial isolation while promoting high educational performance.

Some observers pushing for alternatives to individual racial classification argue for proxy measures for race, such as eligibility for free and reduced lunch. This assumes that schools integrated by income will also be substantially integrated by race. In fact, this is often not the case—there are more whites living in poverty than people of color, despite the fact that African Americans and Latinos have a higher percentage of families in poverty than whites. In light of this severe limitation to income-based strategies, we conducted a preliminary analysis, testing two race-neutral models to identify areas of racial isolation in Seattle and Louisville.

Although there are more whites in poverty than people of color, poor African Americans and Latinos are much more spatially concentrated than poor whites. Therefore, the first model targeted neighborhoods of spatially concentrated poverty to test their correlation with race.

Parents Involved in Community Schools

Decision

By Christine Rogers, GIS/Demographic Specialist

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Although there are more whites in poverty than people of color, poor African Americans and Latinos are much more spatially concentrated than poor whites. Therefore, the first model targeted neighborhoods of spatially concentrated poverty to test their correlation with race. We compared the results to a multi-factor analysis that identified neighborhoods of “low educational opportunity.” Our preliminary findings indicated that the second, more robust analysis better captured a significant number of students of color, rather than using poverty rates alone. However, under different demographic and geographic conditions, different models may be more or less useful in identifying areas of racial isolation.

The Kirwan Institute will continue to explore new strategies and models for producing diverse and successful schools, building upon the expertise of social science researchers, geographic information systems analysis, and best practices in education policy. Our goal is to be a resource to school districts desiring to use voluntary integration policies to promote diverse and successful learning environments.
I think “equal educational opportunity” is much more important than “diversity.” What did the Court say about opportunity?

The justices are keenly aware of the unfortunate fact that educational disparities are in many ways just as troubling as they were at the time of Brown. Justice Kennedy, whose opinion is controlling, writes that “[o]ur nation from the inception has sought to preserve and expand the promise of liberty and equality on which it was founded... Yet our tradition is to go beyond present achievements, however significant, and to recognize and confront the flaws and injustices that remain. This is especially true when we seek assurance that opportunity is not denied on account of race.” The enduring hope is that race should not matter; the reality is that too often it does.”

Although the justices do not directly confront the question of equal educational opportunity, they leave the door open for school districts to try and find solutions to the ills that plague our schools, even with race-conscious measures. As Justice Kennedy makes clear: “School districts can seek to reach Brown’s objective of equal educational opportunity.”

How many school districts will be affected by this decision?

About 1,000 out of the 15,000 school systems in the country currently use race in some way to decide where children go to school. (Source: Amy Stuart Wells, professor of education at Columbia University’s Teachers College.) Many of those districts are expected to revamp or abandon those race-conscious policies because of the new ruling.

I’ve read that the Court analyzes race-conscious measures under “strict scrutiny review.” What does that mean?

The Supreme Court has a three-tiered framework for analyzing the constitutionality of government action. The lowest level of review is known as rational basis review. To satisfy rational basis review, the government action under review must be rationally related to a legitimate government interest. This is a catch-all category under which most government activity is reviewed. Under intermediate level review, a government action must be substantially related to an important government interest. Classifications based on gender or sex are generally reviewed under this standard. Finally, under strict scrutiny review, government actions must be narrowly tailored to serve a compelling governmental interest. Government action in lawsuits alleging a violation of fundamental rights is generally reviewed under this exacting standard.

Are all racial classifications, including remedial classifications, subject to this heightened standard?

Yes. Since 1995, a majority of the Court has held that all racial classifications, whether they are remedial in their nature or not, are subject to strict scrutiny review.

Is the racial composition of schools and school districts a “compelling government interest” or not?

Yes. In the previous 50 years of jurisprudence, the Supreme Court has only recognized two interests as compelling in the race context. The first is the compelling interest in remedying the effects of past intentional discrimination of the sort condemned in Brown v. Board of Education.

The second government interest the Court has recognized as compelling for using race is the diversity interest in higher education upheld in Grutter v. Bollinger. In Seattle and Louisville, both Justice Kennedy and the Chief Justice’s opinion agree that the interests asserted by the school districts in this case are different than the interests previously found to be compelling by the Supreme Court. However, Justice Kennedy states unequivocally that a compelling interest exists in avoiding racial isolation, an interest that a school district may choose to pursue. In addition, a district may consider it a compelling interest to achieve a diverse student population. For the first time, a majority of the Supreme Court has articulated a new compelling interest that supports the use of race in governmental activity.

If the school districts articulated a compelling government interest, then why did they “lose”?

To survive strict scrutiny review, not only does the government action have to be supported by a compelling government interest, but it has to be narrowly tailored to serve that interest. In the view of a majority of the Court, these plans were not narrowly tailored. To be narrowly tailored, the government activity at issue must be shown to be carefully drawn to serve the interests asserted. Another factor considered in determining whether the government activity is narrowly tailored is whether the government considered and attempted alternative methods of achieving its stated goal.

The Court wrote that the districts failed to show that they considered methods other than explicit racial classifications to achieve their stated goals. As Justice Kennedy wrote, racial classifications should be used only as a last resort. Because five Justices found that the voluntary integration plans were not narrowly tailored, they were determined to be unconstitutional.
International Program of the Kirwan Institute

The institute’s international program was launched almost a year ago and is still in its nascent stages. There are two aspects to our international work: collaborating with regional partners in exchanging knowledge and experiences on the issues of race and ethnicity; and working at the international level with international organizations such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The main objectives of the international program are to build an international network to fight against racism and discrimination and to promote social inclusion both nationally and internationally. We have embarked upon four specific activities.

Networking
We try to find groups such as coalitions of NGOs and people’s movements to partner with in our work for examining the cultural, economic, political, and social experiences of racial and ethnic minority groups in the countries of various regions. While the institute acts as the research arm and does research and policy advocacy, our partner groups set their own agenda and do the local organizing.

Comparative Analysis of and Best Practices in Countries
We plan to come up with criteria such as the marginalization and discrimination of minorities in Big Emerging Markets (BEMs), democracies, or other countries. We would identify three or four indicators such as housing, education, or the growth and perpetuation of inequality, etc., for closer scrutiny. Some of the questions that we ask include: Are there large marginalized communities in these countries? Does the marginalization have a similar or comparable pattern? Is the marginalization in one country relevant to the other cases compared? As a corollary to this, we would also look at what these countries are doing to address disparity, marginalization, opportunity impediments and so forth and prepare a list of “best practices.”

Collaboration with Transnational Organizations
The institute is collaborating with two potential project partners, the European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR) and the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO). We are working on a proposal for a best practices database for the housing sector. The goal is to collect data on projects in the housing sector that have successfully been carried out by European partner cities. We intend to show implications of the housing sector with other areas such as education and employment.

CERD Shadow Report
The institute has started working on a shadow report for the state report submitted by the United States in April 2007 to the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) of the United Nations. The United States, like other states that have ratified the convention, is required to submit periodic state reports to the Committee for the CERD, the body charged with monitoring government progress on implementing the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). NGOs can influence this examination by filing so-called shadow reports that examine a government’s progress on issues related to the convention and offer independent critique, usually in specific issue areas. A number of NGOs, individual experts, and institutes under the coordination of the Human Rights Network are putting together a Shadow Report to be submitted to the CERD by the end of November 2007.

Both as a framing piece and a substantive piece, the Kirwan Institute is going to include a section on structural racism in order to provide the committee with a different view on the “progress” made than reported in our government’s official state report.

Conference on “Toward a Transformative Agenda on Race”
One of the panel discussions of this conference taking place in November/December 2007 will be dedicated to the issue of race and racism beyond the U.S. perspective. We plan to promote a dialogue among international experts by having them address the following questions: How can we understand and analyze racial and ethnic relations from a non-American perspective? How is race and racism understood conceptually in their particular region of work? What are the main challenges this understanding of race and racism has in addressing racial hierarchies in the particular region they work?

kirwantransformativeraceconf.org
For some time now, the push for “color-blind” discourse, policies, and practices around race and ethnicity in the United States has become more and more pronounced.

Some justify this push with respect to the (sadly mistaken) belief that nowadays racial identity has only marginal effects on a person’s social interactions or access to social and economic opportunity. Some advocates for color-blindness go further: more than superfluous, they say, race talk of any kind is inherently divisive and pernicious.

At Kirwan Institute, we believe color-blindness, while urged by many with the most laudable intentions, is generally a mistake, and one with profound consequences. At the same time, we agree that all too often implicit and explicit race talk has been used to divide and alienate. (Especially with Senator Barack Obama likely to play a major role, the strategic use of race and race talk will continue to merit close attention throughout the 2008 presidential campaign season.)

This fall, from November 30 to December 2, the institute will host a national conference in downtown Columbus, Ohio, entitled “Toward a Transformative Agenda around Race.” There, we will join partners and colleagues from throughout the United States and beyond to offer some promising alternatives to “color-blindness.”

Please join us at this important event!

The conference will challenge scholars, activists, and practitioners to explore ways of “talking about race” and “doing around race” that underline our linked fate as people and facilitate bridge-building and coalition formation across racial, ethnic, and even ideological differences. This emphasis on using racial analysis, discourse, policy, and practice to draw people together for constructive, proactive purposes, and to enact our commitments, is at the heart of what we mean by a transformative agenda around race.

The many conference highlights include opening remarks by Ohio State President E. Gordon Gee, an evening keynote speech by actor-activist Danny Glover, a closing keynote speech by Senator Bill Bradley, and more than 40 panel and workshop sessions on a range of important topics organized around three themes: innovative, transformative thinking about race; ways of communicating this transformative vision persuasively; and ways of organizing ourselves to promote racial transformation.

“Toward a Transformative Agenda around Race” will also showcase two plenary sections featuring several internationally renowned scholars, including Drew Westen, Saskia Sassen, Susan Sturm, and the institute’s own executive director, John Powell.

The conference will be preceded by a film festival that begins on November 27 and ends on December 1. The overall goal of the film festival is to illustrate the power of institutions, structures, and systems to shape individual lives and group dynamics through a medium that can transform how we talk about and do work around race and social justice. Together, we will explore the potential of film as a tool to help us examine, rethink, and sometimes modify our received ideas about race and racism. We have selected films of both domestic and foreign origin that deal with issues such as race, gender, class, identity, image, politics, education, and other social and structural forces that intersect to shape the lives of us all. We will also include several films in the body of the conference itself.

We expect some 500 to 600 participants, including students, journalists, policymakers, advocates, activists, practitioners of all stripes, and scholars.

Hope to see you there!