PART SIX

POLITICS

Race, Ethnicity, and Politics in American History

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THE ROLE OF RACE in American politics cannot be understood except as an example of the role of ethnicity in American politics. In spite of the long-standing elite opinion that ethnicity should not play any role in politics, that voters and politicians should act without regard to ethnic factors, in fact ethnicity has always played an important part in our politics. This is what we should expect in a country that has always had forms of racial and ethnic discrimination, and in which civic and university and corporate elites, for all their tut-tutting about ethnic politics, have often been more hearty practitioners than ordinary people of ethnic discrimination—of anti-Jewish discrimination up through the 1960s and of racial quotas and preferences since the 1970s.

Over the long course of our history politics has more often divided Americans along cultural than along economic lines—along lines of region, race, ethnicity, religion, and personal values. This is natural in a country that has almost always been economically successful and culturally multivarious, in which economic upward mobility has been the common experience and in which cultural and ethnic identities have often been

lasting and tenacious. It has been observed by none less than our current vice president that we are moving into a new and unprecedented era in American history in which our people are being transformed from one to many. But Mr. Gore in doing so not only mistranslated the national motto *E pluribus unum*—a mistake that would have been met with ridicule if made by his predecessor—but also ignored the long history of American political divides along racial and ethnic lines. We are not in a totally new place; we have been here before, and we can learn from our history—and our motto.

The common pattern seems to be this: there is an inrush into the electorate of a new ethnic or racial group, with a strong preference for one political party, and politics seems to be structured around this division. Attempts are made to limit the new group's strength in the electorate, sometimes successfully, more often not. Then there are inrushes of other groups, with checkerboarded political preferences, depending more on local circumstances and issues than on any single national pattern. Politicians and parties compete for the support of these groups, with generally benign results. Eventually, there is regression to mean: the issues and identities that once led a group to favor one party heavily are replaced by other issues and identities that tend to divide them pretty much along the lines of the electorate generally. But this is a process that can take a long time, and in which the original identities and issues continue to play an important role in politics for many years.

Such inrushes occurred even in colonial times. Puritans in Massachusetts were alarmed by inrushes of Anabaptists; the response was expulsion and the establishment of the Rhode Island colony. Benjamin Franklin was alarmed by the growing numbers of Germans in the interior of Pennsylvania; the response was gerrymandering to maintain the primacy of the Delaware River valley counties settled by Quakers and others from the North Midlands of Britain. Coastal North Carolinians were alarmed by the inrush of Scots-Irish to the Piedmont; the response was Loyalism in the Revolution. Interestingly, these divisions are still discernible in the election returns: Massachusetts and Rhode Island remain separate; the

Pennsylvania Dutch counties are the most heavily Republican territory in the Northeast; the North Carolina lowlands are much more Democratic than the Piedmont.

The first great inrush of newcomers to the electorate of the young Republic, of Irish Catholics, began in large numbers after the potato famine of 1846. But even in the 1830s the Whig mayor of New York, Philip Hone, noted with disapproval how Irish immigrants were being marched from the docks to the polls by Democratic precinct politicians; in those days noncitizens could vote. The Whig governor of New York, William Seward, elected in 1838, sought the Irish votes by promising state support for Catholic schools.

But by overwhelming numbers the Irish became Democrats. The party of Andrew Jackson, following the example of Thomas Jefferson, was more friendly to religious dissenters than its rivals; Whig Connecticut in the 1830s still had an established Protestant church. The Democracy (as it was called) was a laissez-faire party, in economics and also in culture. The Whigs favored federal road-building, and Upstate New York, settled mostly by New England Yankees and heavily Whig, was seething with agitation for abolition of slavery, temperance and prohibition, new Protestant sects—busybody activism abhorrent to the Irish. The Irish were greeted by discrimination; my Irish American grandmother, born in 1881, explained her support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by recalling the "No Irish Need Apply" signs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There was a racial element here: the Irish, with low rates of intermarriage and usually of distinctive appearance, were widely regarded as not "white."

Their Democratic preference remained solid for more than a century. Irish votes were what made New York, the largest and by far the most politically prominent state, a key marginal state in most elections rather than heavily Whig and then Republican. In New England, politics was divided on Catholic-Protestant lines up through 1960s as much as politics is divided on black-white lines in Mississippi today. The Irish propensity for large families made Yankee Republicans proponents of birth control (President George Bush's mother supported Planned Parenthood even as

she had five children herself) in an effort to prevent being outnumbered by Catholics. But it was in vain. In 1918 Henry Cabot Lodge defeated John F. Fitzgerald in a Senate race divided on Catholic-Protestant lines; by 1952 the numbers had changed enough that Fitzgerald's grandson defeated Lodge's grandson for reelection.

The strong Irish preference for Democrats continued up through 1960, when Fitzgerald's grandson was elected president. In that election, 78 percent of Catholics voted for John Kennedy, while 63 percent of white Protestants voted for the Scots-Irish Protestant Richard Nixon. Four years later, even as Lyndon Johnson was elected by a landslide, the Catholic Democratic percentage declined slightly to 76 percent; it has never remotely approached those levels since. You can only elect the first Irish Catholic president once. The election of Kennedy, his high job approval, the pomp and ceremony of his funeral—all established conclusively that Catholics were fully American. At the same time, with the Vatican II reforms, a sudden decline in the number of large Catholic families and in vocations for the priesthood, and the end of the Latin mass and meatless Fridays, Catholics were becoming less distinctive. Today Irish Catholics vote pretty much like the electorate as a whole.

Following the inrush of Irish Catholics was a second stream of new voters, Germans who arrived in large numbers after the failed revolutions of 1848 and up through the 1880s. Unlike the Irish, they did not all head for the major cities—many became farmers—and they were not monolithically Democratic. German Protestants tended to be Whigs and then Republicans; German Catholics were more Democratic; Germans in heavily German Milwaukee in time elected a Socialist mayor and congressman (the latter was a secular Jew but seems to have been regarded by himself and by voters as an ethnic German). In some places the Germans voted against Protestant Republicans; in others they voted against Irish Democrats. Germans were wooed by both political parties. One reason Abraham Lincoln was nominated by the Republicans in 1860 was that he had always opposed the nativism of the American (Know-Nothing) party, many of whose supporters had become Republicans: the Republican kingmakers

wanted a candidate who could win German votes in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. Republicans promoted to the Cabinet Carl Schurz, a German immigrant with a political base in St. Louis's German community.

German ethnicity survived as a political factor until well into the twentieth century. Many German Americans opposed American entry into World War I and were understandably resentful of the heavy-handed, even authoritarian way in which Woodrow Wilson's administration suppressed German culture. In 1940 German Americans, though few were sympathetic to the Nazis, and Scandinavian Americans turned sharply against Franklin Roosevelt, fearful that he would produce war with Germany; this was the "isolationist" vote. But there were other German traditions as well. New York's Senator Robert Wagner, born in Germany and a frequent visitor there, was an admirer of Germany's social democratic tradition. He was one of the few Democratic officeholders in the early 1930s who supported welfare state measures (most others were progressive Republicans like Robert LaFollette Jr., from heavily German Wisconsin). Wagner was the lead sponsor of the Social Security Act and the National Labor Relations Act, which made possible the rise of the industrial unions.

The next great inrush of an ethnic group into the electorate resulted from the enfranchisement of the former slaves after the Civil War. Suddenly, with federal troops enforcing their rights, blacks were a majority of voters in South Carolina and Mississippi and large minorities in several other southern states. (There were few blacks in northern states, some of which had prohibited the settlement of free blacks; in 1870, 91 percent of blacks lived in the South.) Not surprisingly, they were overwhelmingly Republican, voting 90 percent or more for the party of the man who signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This black preference for the Republicans continued up through the 1930s; most blacks voted for Herbert Hoover over Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. But blacks switched to the Democratic party in the 1930s in thanks for New Deal programs and the pro–civil rights stance of some New Dealers—interestingly, the most prominent, Eleanor Roosevelt, Harold Ickes, and Henry Wallace, were all former Re-

publicans themselves. It should be noted that Democratic percentages among blacks were not nearly as high in the 1940s and 1950s as they became starting in the 1964 election. John Kennedy won 63 percent of black votes, far below his 78 percent among Catholics, and such prominent blacks as Martin Luther King Sr. and Jackie Robinson supported Richard Nixon.

But of course for many years most Americans of African descent were not allowed to vote. The inrush of blacks into the southern electorate in the 1860s and early 1870s was followed by moves by white Democrats to bar them from voting. Often these took the form of physical intimidation that might well be called terrorism; this persisted until the 1960s. Legal means were used as well: grandfather clauses, poll taxes, all-white Democratic primaries, literacy requirements administered discriminatorily.

In some southern cities—Memphis, New Orleans—blacks were allowed to vote on the understanding that they would vote as directed by white political bosses. In other southern cities—Richmond, Louisville—a tradition of black Republican voting continued. But for nearly 100 years most Americans of African descent were disenfranchised. In the 1930s blacks made up perhaps 3 percent of the national electorate; Jews, with 4 percent, were a larger voting bloc. In 1948 the benign competition to be seen as supporters of civil rights among Harry Truman, Thomas Dewey, and Henry Wallace was aimed politically more at Jewish voters in New York and other large and politically marginal northern states than at the mostly disenfranchised blacks in the politically mostly safely Democratic states of the South.

Inrush and disenfranchisement: this was the pattern for blacks, but it was, to a lesser extent, the pattern among Irish and other immigrant groups as well. By the late nineteenth century, noncitizens were no longer allowed to vote. Voter registration requirements were passed, literacy requirements were passed, party printing of ballots was prohibited—all at least partly to reduce the huge numbers of immigrants and ethnics voting. Voter participation—the percentage of the potential electorate voting—peaked in the 1890s and declined rapidly up through the 1920s. Even the enfranchisement of women was motivated in part by the belief that immigrant and Catholic

women would not vote while white Protestants would, and so it turned out: Republicans carried Illinois in 1916, when, thanks to its enfranchisement of women, it cast more votes than any other state, and the Nineteenth Amendment, passed in 1919 (but never ratified by New York) swelled Republican percentages in the 1920s.

These methods of partial disenfranchisement also reduced voter participation by the eastern and southern European immigrants who began arriving in large numbers around 1880—the most numerous were Italians, Jews, and Poles. Like the Irish and unlike the Germans, they flocked almost exclusively to the industrial cities of the northeast and the Great Lakes; like the Germans and unlike the Irish, these immigrants developed checkerboard patterns of political allegiance. It was almost an odd-even phenomenon: in any given metropolitan area, the native Protestants tended to vote Republican, the second group (almost always the Irish) Democratic, the next group Republican, the next Democratic, and so forth. Thus, Italians in New Haven tended to vote Republican, Italians in Cleveland Democratic. Poles in Buffalo were Republican, in Detroit Democratic. In Philadelphia, which developed a strong Republican machine, almost every group tended to vote Republican; in New York, with its strong Democratic machine, most groups tended to vote Democratic.

The Jews were an exception, voting often for Socialists and other leftist candidates. In New York, repelled by the heavily Irish Tammany Hall, they voted for Social Democratic Fusion candidates, of whom the most prominent was Fiorello LaGuardia, a half-Italian, half-Jewish Episcopalian who was elected to Congress in the 1920s on the Republican and Socialist tickets and mayor in 1933, 1937, and 1941 on the Republican and American Labor party lines. In often marginal and fiercely contested New York, the Jews often held the key votes. This had national consequences, for if the Jews on the party spectrum stood between Upstate Protestants and New York City Catholics, on the issues spectrum they were well to the left of both groups—social democratic on economic issues, pro–civil rights and civil liberties on cultural issues. This helps to explain the leftish leanings of

nationally important Democrats like Al Smith, Robert Wagner, and Franklin Roosevelt and Republicans like Thomas Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller.

The New Deal changed the checkerboard voting patterns of these ethnic groups. Local loyalties were overshadowed by national issues, and all the groups became heavily Democratic by the late 1930s. Jews, poised between the two parties in the 1920s, became heavily Democratic by the 1940s, giving Roosevelt more than 80 percent of their votes; they remain heavily Democratic today, though a smaller proportion of the electorate (2 percent versus 4 percent). In time, ethnic groups like the Italians and Poles tended to regress to mean; after the elections of 1960 and 1964 they became much less heavily Democratic, like the Irish. This was part of a process of assimilation. Immigration was reduced to negligible levels by the immigration act of 1924, and there was no inrush of immigrant groups until after the law was revised in 1965.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, America seemed to have reached a pause in its racial and ethnic politics. But only a pause. For in the second half of the century, new groups entered the electorate, the groups that are now officially recognized as "minorities"—blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. On the surface this seems to have produced an altogether new "multicultural" politics, as predicted by Al Gore among others; some analysts proclaim with relish that white non-Hispanics will some time in the next century cease to be a majority and that "people of color" will control American politics. But on closer examination these new inrushes of voters have produced an ethnic politics closely, almost eerily, resembling the ethnic politics of 100 years ago. And the results are likely to be similar: one constituency remaining solidly Democratic for years, others the subject of benign competition between the parties, and ultimately regression to mean.

First came the inrush of blacks into the electorate between 1940 and 1970. It was caused first by the huge migration of blacks from the rural South to the cities of the North and then by the end of the disenfranchisement of blacks in the South after passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Before 1940 there was relatively little migration of blacks to the North. In

1900, 90 percent of blacks still lived in the South; in 1940, in spite of some migration in World War I and the emergence of the visible black ghettoes of Harlem and South Side Chicago, 77 percent of blacks still lived in the South. But the war industries of the 1940s and the booming auto and steel factories of the 1950s and 1960s, whose unions strongly opposed racial discrimination, brought blacks north: the percentage of blacks living in the North rose from 23 percent in 1940 to 32 percent in 1950, 40 percent in 1960, and 47 percent in 1970. At that point, migration leveled off; as many blacks moved south as north, and the percentage in the North was still 47 percent in 1990. But for three decades the black move northward was one of the great migrations of American history.

These northward-moving blacks became the most heavily Democratic constituency in the nation—perhaps even more Democratic than the Irish at their most monopartisan. In some states their votes were actively sought by Republicans, notably Nelson Rockefeller in New York. But where civil rights was strongly championed by Democrats, like Governor Mennen Williams and UAW President Walter Reuther in Michigan, blacks were voting 90 percent or more Democratic in the 1950s. (Interestingly, Williams came from a Republican and Reuther from a Social Democratic family; neither had any connection with the laissez-faire Democratic party, which refused to interfere with either segregation or the saloon.) The Democratic percentage among blacks everywhere rose to around 90 percent when President Kennedy backed the civil rights bill in 1963 and when the Republican party's presidential nominee, Barry Goldwater, voted against it in 1964 (and in spite of the fact that a higher proportion of congressional Republicans than of Democrats voted for it). Since then, blacks have enthusiastically supported the national Democrats' antipoverty and big government programs. They have strongly supported race quotas and preferences, which were originated in the Nixon administration but have been supported enthusiastically by Democratic and opposed by some Republican politicians. They gave overwhelming percentages to Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, and Bill Clinton and almost unanimously supported Clinton against charges of scandal in 1998. For the last

third of the twentieth century, they have been the solid core of the Democratic party.

Then the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 suddenly swept away all barriers against blacks voting in the South. Blacks rose from about 6 percent of the electorate in 1964 to 10 percent in 1968. But this did not have entirely positive effects for the Democrats, for in the same years, white Catholic voters were moving toward the Republicans. In part this was a natural regression to mean: the first Catholic president had been elected, and they were free to decide on other issues. But in part it was a reaction to the urban riots of 1964–1968, to the attacks by black politicians on mostly white police forces, to the school busing ordered by some federal judges in the North, to the antipoverty programs, which were closely associated with blacks.

In the meantime, southern white voters were moving rapidly away from the Democratic party. In part this was also a regression to mean: it was 100 years since Sherman marched through Georgia (John Kennedy's number two state in 1960). But it was also in part a response to issues. Only a negligible number of southern whites wanted to restore segregation: the integration of public accommodations and workplaces ordered by the 1964 Civil Rights Act was accepted much more readily than almost anyone expected. But most southern whites did oppose the antipoverty programs at home and the national Democrats' increasingly dovish policies abroad. This did not mean that black-backed candidates always lost in the South: Andrew Young was elected to Congress by a white-majority district in Atlanta as early as 1972. But just as Yankee Protestants united in voting against Irish-backed Democrats in Massachusetts in the early 1900s, so did white Southerners unite in voting against black-backed national Democrats in Mississippi in the 1970s.

The Voting Rights Act was not the only 1965 law that changed the shape of the American electorate. So did the 1965 immigration act, in ways that were almost entirely unforeseen. Many members voting for it may have expected a resumption of the European immigration so sharply cut off in 1924. But postwar Europe was prosperous and sent few immigrants.

Instead they mostly came from Latin America and from Asia. Latin America accounted for 40 percent of immigrants in 1971–1980 and 39 percent in 1981–1993, Asia (including the Middle East) for 36 percent in 1971–1980 and 27 percent in 1981–1993.

Like the immigrant groups that followed the Irish from the 1850s to the 1920s, these new Hispanic and Asian groups did not flock almost unanimously as "people of color" to the Democratic party but produced a checkerboard pattern of political allegiances. Hispanics and Asians have not necessarily seen discrimination as their greatest problem and have not seen big government as their greatest friend; for them America has been not an oppressor but a haven. And some liberal policies have arguably worked against their interests. Poor public education and bilingual education programs that prevent children from learning how to speak, read, and write English well have arguably hurt Hispanics; racial quotas and preferences have clearly hurt Asians, just as they hurt Jews from the 1920s to the 1960s. It simply does not make sense to see today's Hispanics and Asians as the counterparts of blacks during the civil rights revolution. Certainly, their political behavior is different. Blacks remain heavily Democratic, but the picture is quite different among Hispanics and Asians. Hispanics on balance currently lean Democratic, but not everywhere, and by differing margins and for different reasons in different places. Asians have actually been trending Republican: they were the only group in exit polls to register a higher percentage for George Bush in 1992 than in 1988, and they voted by a narrow margin for Bob Dole over Bill Clinton in 1996.

Today's blacks, like the Irish of 100 years ago, have a history that gives them reason to doubt the legitimacy of the demands of the larger society—slavery and segregation in one case, anti-Catholic laws in the other. Like the Irish of 1900, the blacks of 2000 are concentrated heavily in ghettoized neighborhoods of big cities; even in the South, heavily black rural communities have continued to lose population, and an increasing percentage of southern blacks live in the region's burgeoning metropolitan areas. To be sure, significant numbers of blacks have moved to suburbs—some to

heavily black neighborhoods, others to mostly white areas—just as many Irish were moving out from Boston in 1900. But they are still more highly concentrated than any other identifiable ethnic group.

This has been reflected in political representation. In the 1990s redistricting the Voting Rights Act was interpreted as requiring the maximization of the number of majority-black districts, resulting in many convoluted district lines and a sharp increase in the number of black congressmen and state legislators. However, such districting also reduced the number of blacks in adjacent districts, and so arguably reduced the number of congressmen with an incentive to pay heed to black voters' opinions. It also meant that most successful black politicians fell on the far left of the Democratic party, a comfortable place in majority-black constituencies but not a good position from which to seek statewide or national office; it is significant that the first black to lead in presidential polls was not Jesse Jackson, who rose through protest politics, but Colin Powell, who rose through the most integrated segment of American society, the United States Army.

The blacks of 2000, like the Irish of 1900, have had high rates of crime and substance abuse; they have also produced large numbers of police officers and an influential clergy. They have produced many great athletes and entertainers and a cultural style that most Americans find attractive. They have tended not to perform well in economic markets, but they have shown an affinity for rising in hierarchies, particularly the public sector and in electoral politics. California, which is only 7 percent black, has over the past twenty years produced a black lieutenant governor and a black Assembly speaker, black mayors of Los Angeles and San Francisco, and came within 1 percent of electing a black governor in 1982. And of course blacks in 2000, like the Irish in 1900, are one of the main core constituencies of the Democratic party, although blacks are still awaiting, as the Irish were a century ago, their Al Smith and John F. Kennedy.

The blacks of 2000, like the Irish of 1900, show no sign of abandoning their overwhelming allegiance to the Democratic party. Republican percentages among blacks have risen in the last two decades, but only very

slightly except for a few unusual elections in a few states. Indeed, allegiance to liberal Democratic ideas seems stronger among more educated and affluent blacks than among others; yet the cultural conservatism of many higher religious blacks has not translated into support for Republican candidates to any substantial extent. Regression to mean still seems a long time ahead in the future.

Today's Hispanics, like the Italians of 1900, come from societies with traditions of ineffective centralism, in which neither public nor private institutions can be trusted to act fairly or impartially; southern Italians and Latin Americans were all subjects of the Emperor Charles V. Like the Italians, the Hispanics have migrated vast distances geographically and psychologically, moving from isolated and backward farming villages to particular city neighborhoods pioneered by relatives and neighbors from home. The Hispanics of 2000, like the Italians of 1900, tend to be concentrated in only a few states (even today, half of all Italian Americans live within 100 miles of New York City): more than three-quarters of Hispanics live in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois.

Here they often maintain contact with their old homes, sending back remittances and in many cases returning; their commitment to remaining in the United States is in many cases not total. They often have strong religious faith, but they tend to mistrust most institutions, including government and businesses. They work exceedingly hard, and often with great pride in craftsmanship, but often do not seek to rise economically and tend to drop out of school early. They depend on family and hard work to make their way.

Politically, the Hispanics of 2000, like the Italians of 1900, tend to vote for different parties in different cities. Cubans in Miami are heavily Republican, Puerto Ricans in New York heavily Democratic. There are rivalries as well between different Hispanic groups: in New York Dominicans may overtake Puerto Ricans as the leading Hispanic group, while in Chicago the North Side Puerto Ricans currently have an edge over the South Side Mexicans.

Most important are the sharp differences between the politics of Lati-

nos in the two largest states, Texas and California. Mexican Americans in Texas, some of whom have deep roots in local communities and churches, elect Republican and conservative Democratic congressmen and legislators as often as liberal Democrats and in 1998 polls were shown casting majorities for Republican Governor George W. Bush. The pro-Bush feeling can be attributed to his fluent Spanish, his frequent visits to Hispanic communities, his policy of close ties with Mexico, his emphasis on family and hard work—his showing that he understands and appreciates the Latinos' strengths. It also may rest on the fact that relations between Anglos and Latinos in Texas, for all its past history, have been relatively close and friendly: almost nobody doubts that Latinos are truly Texans.

In contrast, Mexican Americans in California often seem to live in a nation apart and are met with a certain hostility by Anglo elites, from the leftish Jews of Los Angeles's Westside to the rightish whites living in gated communities in the outer edges of metro Los Angeles, to San Diego surfers worried about the discharges of Tijuana's sewage on their beaches. California's Latinos tend to live in enormous swaths of metro L.A. that until very recently had few Latinos, in atomized local communities where politics is waged by direct mail financed by rich liberals. The candidates they elect tend to come from a small group of politically connected Latino Left Democrats.

In addition, California Latinos were repelled by the 1994 campaign of Republican Governor Pete Wilson and his support of Proposition 187, barring aid to illegal immigrants. What bothered them was less the substance of the issue (some 30 percent of Latinos voted for it) but the implication they saw in Wilson's ads that immigrants were coming to California only to get on the welfare rolls. "He's saying we're lazy," as one Latino businessman put it, although in fact Hispanic men have the highest workforce participation rate of any measured group. Wilson's failure to appreciate the genuine strengths of California's Latinos and, until 1998, at least, California Republicans' apparent lack of interest in them have produced higher Democratic percentages among Latinos there in the late 1990s than in the middle 1980s—an ominous sign for national Republicans because

Latino turnout has been rising sharply, and without a sizable share of Latino votes a Republican presidential ticket will have trouble carrying California.

Latino voters could turn out to be the focus of the 2000 presidential race. If the Republicans nominate Bush, they would have a good chance of turning around the Mexican American vote in California, in consolidating Cuban American support in Florida (where his brother Jeb Bush was elected governor in 1998), and in making inroads among Latinos in other large states. The Democrats may counter that by nominating for vice president Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, former New Mexico congressman and ambassador to the United Nations, who, despite his name, is Hispanic. There is a historic precedent, the focus by both Democratic and Republican strategists on Jewish voters in 1948.

Finally, the Asian Americans of 2000 in many ways resemble the Jews of 1900. The Asians, like the Jews, come from places with ancient traditions of great learning and sophistication but with little experience with an independent civil society or a reliable rule of law. Like the Jews, many Asians in this century—overseas Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, Moslems and Hindus in India and Pakistan—have been subject to persecution and have had to make their way in the world amid grave dangers. They tend to excel at academic studies and have quickly earned many places at universities—and have been greeted by quotas that bar them in spite of their achievements. They have had great economic success and perform well in economic markets. Like the Jews, they tend to be concentrated in a few places—in the great metropolitan areas of California, in New York City, around Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Houston. (The Japanese Americans of Hawaii are mostly descended from immigrants who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.)

Politically, the Asians have been taking a different route from the Jews. Few, aside from some campus activists, have been attracted to left-wing causes; some but not very many (the Japanese Americans in Hawaii) have been staunch organization Democrats. Asians with a history of anticommunism have voted mostly Republican: Koreans, Vietnamese, Taiwanese. Filipinos, mostly in low-income jobs and subject to discrimination by

Americans for a century, have been heavily Democratic. The Asian trend toward Republican in the 1990s has not been much studied and is a bit mysterious. Contributing to it may be the Los Angeles riots (in which the Los Angeles elite tended to portray the rioters as victims and the shop owners of Koreatown as oppressors) and the racial quotas and preferences that bar so many Asians from places in universities. The Jews, after all, reacted against the quotas of a Republican Protestant elite by voting Democratic ever after; the Asians may be reacting against the quotas of a Democratic liberal elite by voting Republican for many years. Similarly, the Jews, understandably on the alert for possible persecutors, believed they would come mostly from the political right wing; Asians may see their threat coming from big city rioters and murderers who are not held responsible by local juries for their crimes.

The experience of the immigrants of 100 years ago should give us at least cautious optimism about the future course of the minorities of today. The high rates of crime and substance abuse among the Irish receded after some time; crime rates and welfare dependency among blacks have experienced a sudden and sharp decline in the 1990s. The aversion to education and economic advancement of Italian Americans waned in time, and in spite of the civic poverty of their homeland and the dire predictions of elites earlier in this century the Italians have blended in well to American life; there is good reason to think the same will happen to today's Latinos. The Jews, early in scaling the economic and academic heights, have seen discrimination and anti-Semitism diminish down toward nothing; the Asians may find the barriers they face receding as well. Politically, all these new Americans have the advantage of living in a society where there is a tremendous political penalty for shows of intolerance and ethnic discrimination, and in which both political parties have an incentive to seek their support. There will be times when ethnic conflicts in politics will be wrenching, but American history also teaches us that ethnic competition in politics can very often be benign and in any case is as American as apple pie (or pizza or tacos).