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## Hemispheric cultural unity and the denial of white racism

### NOTA BENE

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## **Hemispheric cultural unity and the denial of white racism**

**John D.H. Downing**

Paper delivered at the PanAmerican Conference, Université de Québec á Montréal, April  
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### Racismo blanco como dimensión clave – y desafío - en la unidad cultural hemisférica

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Se ha escrito mucho de las diferencias de las culturas racializadas de los países de las Américas. A veces, se ha reclamado que el racismo sea únicamente propiedad estadounidense. A otras veces que la historia latinoamericana de la esclavitud racial fuera menos totalitaria que en los EE.UU. A aún otras, que la jerarquía racial microscópica de los países latinoamericanos los distinga claramente de los países angloamericanos con su cultura racial binaria. En verdad, abajo de cualesquieras diferencias específicas que sean entre las culturas nacionales dominantes de la hemisférica, esta ponencia reclama que haya unidad profundísima en la denegación persistente y generalizada, de parte de la población blanca de las Américas, que el racismo sea una fuerza poderosa y central en la cultura y los procesos económico-políticos de cada país.

### White racism as a pivotal dimension – and challenge – in hemispheric cultural unity

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Much has been written concerning the differences in racialized cultures in the Americas. At times it has been claimed that racism is a uniquely U.S. characteristic. At other times that the history of racial slavery in Latin America was less totalitarian than in the USA. At still others, that the finely differentiated racial hierarchy of Latin American countries sharply marks them out from the Anglo-American countries with their binary racial culture. In reality, beneath any specific differences there may be between the dominant national cultures of the hemisphere, this paper claims that there is very deep unity in the persistent and widespread denial, by the white population of the Americas, that racism is a powerful and central force in the culture and politico-economic processes of each country.

## **Introduction**

There is one fundamental feature in hemispheric cultures, a force that compels us all to connect together in one way or another, whatever our ethnic ancestry or social class or gender or age, and whether any of us individually buys into it or not. That underlying unifier is not an attractive achievement of these settler societies, not some miracle of cultural creativity. Rather the reverse: it is something that poisons our way of life wherever we are in the hemisphere. It is not even white racism as such, but something even more insidious. It is the all-too-common refusal to acknowledge the active, continuing, tenacious reality of racism in all spheres of culture and social relations. It is more insidious because this culturally normal and indeed entrenched denial then functions as a permanent invisible defense against engaging in anti-racist movements, against developing anti-racist policies at all levels, against identifying racism as the continuing scourge of hemispheric civilization after five hundred years.

### **Denying Racism in the USA**

Now no one, at least outside the USA, will seriously deny that racism is actively present *there*, will they? The history of wars against Indian nations, of slavery, of segregation, of repression of Black and Latino civil rights movements, the gigantic proportion of Blacks and Latinos currently rotting in jails, all the way to individual cases such as the brutal beating of Rodney King, or James Byrd's murder by being dragged behind a truck in Jasper, Texas, or Amadou Diallo's death in a hail of New York Police Department bullets as he stood unarmed at the door of his apartment block, or Pedro Oregón, shot in the back by police in his own home in Houston: these collective and single events surely make it impossible to deny the virulence of racism in the USA.

Yet there is in actuality an extremely widespread perception within the USA that racism died back in the 1960s with the defeat of segregation laws. The consequence? That it has been relatively easy to dispose of any and all affirmative action programs, however carefully constructed and conceived, on the ground that they are no longer needed, that the playing field is level and has been for some time. Thus affirmative

action, in any shape, actually gets to the crazy point of being *itself* defined as ‘racial’ discrimination and ‘racial’ humiliation.

Indeed Entman (1992) argues this is part of a syndrome he labels “modern racism,” proposing that the older biological and genetic versions of racist belief no longer have any real purchase on the public’s mind, and that their collapsed credibility is another element in the mistaken perception that white racism is effectively dead and buried. However, this effortless, un-thought-out process of denying continuing ‘racial’ discrimination to be in force not only bypasses regularly appearing reports and studies documenting its vigor in such varied areas as policing and the judicial system, the Hollywood film industry, mortgage and car loans, the TV news hierarchy, medical practice, educational provision and much more, not least on reservations.<sup>1</sup> It also reflects the signal lack of honest everyday communication between most people of color and most White people in the USA (and enabling that, the residential segregation typical of US cities). And, not least, the frequent roles of media in reinforcing everyday racism.

Entman & Rojecki (2000) and Heider (2000) conducted a series of studies of US television, especially of local news program content, which suggest that actually some of the most influential sources of these perceptions may be US media representations of people of color. In local television, for example, from at least the end of the 1980s onwards, shots of people of color being arrested and led away in handcuffs quite often formed one of the leading evening local news stories. Little else regularly surfaced about communities of color, save, in Heider’s research findings, once-a-year coverage of “colorful” ethnic festivals. This steady diet of ‘race’ = criminality easily suggests that despite all obstacles apparently having been lifted from Black progress, Black capacity to participate in civilized social intercourse is hopelessly limited.

As Entman and Rojecki (2000: 58) write:

“We do not mean to suggest the media consistently promote a particular racial mindset. Still less do we want to imply that media workers are fully aware of their contributions to public thinking...given their conventional

assumptions and practices, it is probably impossible for media to offer explanations, at least not with enough clarity, frequency, and vividness to challenge the sway of the deep-seated culture.”

To some degree this refusal to acknowledge the energetic persistence of racism also derives from variations in the uses of the term ‘racism’ itself. For many US citizens, ‘racism’ signifies pogroms and active persecution, powered by a vitriolic ideology of ‘racial’ hatred, and exemplified by the Nazi Holocaust and the KKK. Absent those, absent segregation laws, and racism is dismissed as an occasional individual pathology.

Yet concepts such as “institutional racism” (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967), or Heider’s (2000) notion of “incognizant racism,” both address dimensions of ongoing racist practice, practice with disproportionate effects on people of color but also with an impact on the quality of the democratic process. These do not depend upon pogroms to have their impact, or indeed on even any explicit intent to treat someone differently by virtue of their ‘race’. The institutional racism of the IQ-score testing system that effectively defines out many people of color from participation in higher education, the incognizant racism of reporters who regularly call upon the same White sources for expert opinion without beginning to think of diversifying their sources, the last-in-first-out rule in employment lay-offs, are just some illustrations of this level of racism, all the more tenacious and hard to challenge for not being initially framed with direct persecutory intent or malice aforethought.

In the USA, paradoxically, in whose culture - as distinct from Britain’s - the concept of social class has traditionally had very little public mileage, it has become much more common in recent years to redefine ‘race’ in terms of social class. While assuredly class is a key component in racism, as are gender and empire, it is ironic to see a rather unpopular and almost “un-American” concept wheeled out to “explain” – reductively - ‘race.’ I for one cannot resist the feeling that people in the USA, for the most part, will talk about *anything* rather than ‘race’ and racism. Even ‘class.’ (Though still for preference, ‘poverty’). William Julius Wilson set this train of thought in motion

with his book *The Declining Significance of Race*,<sup>2</sup> which was a significant if partially flawed piece of work, but whose title suggested sweet balm to chattering-class Americans anxious to put the fearsome 60s and 70s existential challenges to 'racial' privilege behind them.

Even the surge in numbers of the Latino population, now more or less at the same level as the African American population, has become a factor in the ongoing story. The cultural and phenotypical diversity of Latinos, specifically the proportion who might casually be thought to be White, can be mobilized as a "counterweight" to the long-established claims of African Americans. This is *not* to underestimate anti-Latino racism, or to venture into some spurious competition for Leading Target of Discrimination. It is to say that one elite use of the growth in Latino numbers is to tell African Americans, figuratively speaking, that they had better not assume they are the only ones in line. The Republican Party has never had a serious commitment to recruiting Black people or to securing their votes, despite there being some high-profile African Americans in the second Bush Administration. Its pursuit of Latino voters, by contrast, is very well-established indeed (Subervi-Vélez forthcoming).

Finally, however, before turning our attention to the rest of the hemisphere, we must return for a moment to notions of 'racism'. Like Robert Entman, Martin Barker (1981) noted in his *The New Racism* how traditional biological and genetic formulations of racist belief seemed to be ebbing away and were being replaced by culturalist ones, defining subordinate 'racial' groups as inferior because of their way of life and therefore inappropriateness to the nation to which they had emigrated or fled as refugees, rather than their skin color. Pierre-André Taguieff (1991) has argued in much the same direction in the continental European context. It is plausible that to some degree, the many-decades-long scientific onslaught on the fiction that 'race' determines behavior, and the growing level of public information about the Nazi Holocaust, have de-legitimized among more educated sectors of the public the spurious biology and genetics that

underpinned racist practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though not entirely even in those quarters: *The Bell Curve*<sup>3</sup> was published to widespread critical acclaim as a fearless and massively documented scientific study, and it is still easy enough to hear everyday unscientific expressions conveying that perspective, such as “jungle bunny,” “monkey,” or even the seemingly benign “Africans’ natural physical grace.”

At the same time, it makes sense to ask whether on a daily level the technicalities of genetics or biology were ever the *sole* stuff of racist beliefs and practice. It is more plausible, I would suggest, to recognize that they represented an intellectually somewhat more elaborated version of common racist disdain. In practice, issues of way of life and culture, tied to, obviously, location in the political economy and especially the capacity for insubordination and outright rebellion, always played a decisive role in the generation of hostile stereotypes and narratives concerning people of color (Kiernan 1969; Haller 1971; Weston 1972; Davis 1970: 480-517; Frederickson 1971; Boxer 1973a: 241-72; 1973b: 251-74). The dominance of religious categories in the earliest forms of White racism regarding Africans (Jordan 1969: 3-43) is an obvious case of the changing content of ‘racial’ definitions. What is fascinating in the light of this is the recent turn in studies of racism in Latin America, too, precisely toward a recognition of racism’s “cultural heart” (NACLA 2001).

We will turn to Latin America, and to Canada and Québec, in just a moment, but let us conclude this first section with the further observation that in the post-Nazi world to define racism “culturally” is one way to differentiate one’s practices – favorably, needless to say – from those of the “biological” racists. Dividing by “way of life” can seem milder, more flexible, less hateful, less *serious*, less culpable, easier to disclaim as not being “really” racist. People wishing to wriggle off the hook of being accused of white racism find this distinction very helpful.

Although let us not forget too the persistent voices endeavoring to deny the Nazi Holocaust actually happened. While that at present seems the prerogative of neo-fascist cranks, the two impulses are not leagues apart.

### **Latins and Canadians Concur: the USA = RaceProblemsAreUs**

One of the pleasanter satisfactions for many Latin Americans, and equally for many Canadians and québécois, has been to identify their aggressive US “neighbor” as the General Headquarters of white racism. One example of many is the 1954 version of a short story “En este lado,” by Mexican writer José Luis González (1981), in which Bill Rawlings, an African American student in New York, has an affair with a white American fellow-student that ends with her walking out on him, unable to take the racist hostility directed toward her. He too has to run for it to get away from a group of Whites ready to beat him up for his relationship. He later finds himself in Mexico, where despite his halting Spanish, he meets only warmth and kindness from Nacho Rosales, proprietor of a little restaurant where he steps in by chance to eat lunch. The proprietor befriends him, counsels him, supports him, and at the end of the story physically throws out some white American tourists who object to Bill’s presence. After the fracas is over the story closes with a pivotal remark to Bill by Rosales, as he hands him a plate of food. Rosales momentarily apologizes for its spiciness but then says, echoing the story’s title: “It’s high time you start understanding how we like to do things on this side of the line (*acá de este lado*).”<sup>4</sup> The implication is that the Black man has found his new Mexican home, safe from the racism of the USA (and its culinary blandness).

Or we might turn to the 1937 study by Puerto Rican scholar Tomás Blanco (1985: 138-139), where at the close he lists ten points that mark off ‘racial’ culture in Puerto Rico from its US variant. Among these are that there are very few places from which Black people are banned, and even there a light-skinned *mulato* will be admitted; legal segregation and lynching are unknown; the term *negro* is used “much more as a

euphemism than derogatorily”; prejudice in Puerto Rico is “much more social than racial”; and

“economic, cultural and political standing tends to cancel out prejudice; or cancels it out completely, above all when the skin is not dark...Color and features count for more than blood.”

The point is certainly taken concerning lynching and segregation, but it is impossible to bypass *negro* as “euphemism,” the significance of light skin, and the racial mythology of “blood.”

From Anglo Canada I will select the press treatment of a 1994 fatal shooting in a toney Toronto dessert restaurant, where a steadily repeated theme – the assailant was a Jamaican immigrant, the victim a young white woman – was that African American urban crime patterns had now taken over a previously pure Canada (Henry & Tator 2000: 124-58). One press columnist wrote “a city’s safety and self-confidence, like a woman’s virginity, is lost only once and is never retrieved” (cited in *ibid.*, p.133). The point is slightly different from González and Blanco, in that the focus here is the danger represented by Black Americans (notwithstanding the fact the assailant was a Jamaican) rather than the racism of White Americans. Nonetheless, in all these cases the assumption is similar, namely that the USA is the Mecca of racial problems and hostilities, as opposed to the rest of the hemisphere.

In Québec, some would point, as evidence of the persistence of white racism there, to opposition to Federal multicultural policies and to the notorious remark of then-premier Parizeau about the “ethnic” vote after the narrow defeat of the 1995 secession referendum. Neither, in my view, stands up as evidence. Disputes over multicultural policies in Québec have a great deal to do with former Federal premier Trudeau’s attempt to equate the specific claims of Québec with those of a variety of much smaller new migrant populations as a way to try to draw the teeth of the secessionist movement (Gagnon 1997). There is a politics of ethnicity which is not simply coterminous with

white racism. And Parizeau's remark, though unquestionably objectionable, was in the end that of a single (losing) politician.

Much more to the point, I would propose, are public *and* governmental attitudes to First Nation rights in Québec. These were evident in two documentaries on the 1990s James Bay hydroelectric projects (*Flooding Job's Garden*, dir. Boyce Richardson, 1991; *Power*, dir. Magnus Isacsson, 1996) and another documentary on the 1990 Oka crisis (*Kanehsatake*, dir. Alanis Obomsawin, 1993). In all three documentaries we see the hemispheric norm: avid denials of racist attitudes cheek-by-jowl with their expression.

### **The Hemispheric Denial of Racism**

This proposed contrast between “the U.S. and the rest” does not match up to the historical evidence, though - up to a point - it would be nice if it did. A series of studies<sup>5</sup> make it clear that whereas US ‘racial’ ideology has focused on the “one drop of ‘black’ blood” notion – the most extraordinarily concentrated mishmash of fake biology and color spectrum blindness that even a chimpanzee would be unlikely to invent – Latin American ‘racial’ ideology has typically zeroed in on the supposed power of ‘white blood’ (presumably lacking in red corpuscles) to upgrade the African or indigenous human being. Intermittent immigration policies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia and elsewhere rested on their elites’ desperate search to “whiten” the population of their countries. If it had not had such a tragically distorting impact on so many millions over so many centuries, the absurdity of this hemisphere’s attribution of such miraculous cultural power to haemoglobin– “Black” blood deteriorates, “White” blood improves - would be enough to make a cat laugh.<sup>6</sup>

In the modern era, this ideology has effectively been hegemonic in mass media. The point is made with great force regarding Brazilian cinema’s and television’s refusal to represent Afro-Brazilian life, in the award-winning 2001 documentary by Brazilian film-maker Joel Zito Araujo, *A Negação do Brasil* (Denying Brazil), and his book (Araujo 2000) of the same title. It is made equally by Charles Ramírez-Berg in discussion

of Indian representation in his study of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema (1992: 137-56), and by Bonfil Batalla (1996) in his searching study of the profound indigenous dimension of Mexican culture.

Even, in the interests of a certain concept of social revolution, the Cuban regime and the 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist leadership have both sought to sideline political demands specific to Afro-Cubans. The post-1959 regime strenuously denied that racism had any purchase beyond class mechanisms. Fix jobs and education access, ran the theory, and racism melts like snow in summer. *El pueblo, unido, jamás será vencido...* What is more, even discussing 'race' was argued to be retrograde. This reached an amazing point in the otherwise stunning Cuban film *El Otro Francisco* (1975), which offers a brilliant Brechtian representation of diametrically contrasting views of slavery. Despite its rigorous critique of self-serving abolitionist liberalism, it closes with an assertion that once the Cubans were able to join hands against the Spanish, and to put slavery and racism behind them, they finally won their independence from colonial rule. Not one suggestion of the monumental 'racial' pogrom of 1912 in which thousands of Afro-Cubans were slaughtered for daring to assert their political rights and form an activist Party of Color to contest elections (Helg 1995). We are compelled to ask *why* Cuba had to wait for independent Afro-Cuban film-maker Gloria Rolando to make her video-feature *Raíces de mi corazón* (Roots of My Heart) over 1999-2001, the first ever visual treatment of this silenced chapter in Cuban history.

Marta Elena Casaús Arzú (1998) has vigorously attacked the failure to acknowledge racism in the Guatemalan context. She argues that it began with the colonizers' systematic attempt to strip the Mayans of their religion, language and customs, and continued on in full vigor post-independence, built into the system of plantation labor control. The case of Guatemala is obviously of the highest importance, since for all the monstrosities of the Argentinean junta of 1976-83, of the Pinochet regime, and of the Peruvian military during the García and Fujimori regimes, all that

slaughter combined cannot match the absolute numbers of mostly Mayan Guatemalans killed and injured from 1954 to the present. Let alone relative to Guatemala's population. There is a tremendous implicit racism in the accusations of those who single out the post-1959 Cuban regime as especially monstrous, for even the most vitriolic of its opponents never gets to suggest that it has been responsible for anything along the lines of the Guatemalan genocide since 1954. Why, we may ask, do they glide past that comparison in comfortable silence if not because of their dismissal of Mayan lives as of no consequence?

This intuitive Euro-Latin American response to the First Nations of the Americas finds different renditions, more subtle by far than the frothing Miami exclave and its Washington<sup>7</sup> reflexes, but still on a not very distant page. A famous short story by Cortázar (1970), "The night face up" (*La noche boca arriba*), illustrates the point. It tells of an un-named individual who goes out casually on his motorcycle in the middle of Buenos Aires, and comes off it through trying to avoid a pedestrian. Taken to hospital, he fluctuates between consciousness and a nightmare in which he finds himself hunted down by Aztecs who intend to sacrifice him. The nightmare is that of being drawn back into primeval American life, in total contrast to the casual, confident modernity of Buenos Aires. He is being carried up the steep steps of a pyramid:

"...and suddenly he saw the red rock, glistening with streams of blood, and the feet of the victim bumping along as he was being dragged over to be sent tumbling down the northern steps. In a final moment of hope he squeezed his eyelids together, moaning to wake up. For a second he thought he would manage it, because once more he was motionless on his bed... But the smell of death was close, and when he opened his eyes he saw the blood-drenched figure of the sacrificial priest coming towards him with the stone knife in his hand."

Cortázar's story suggests the ultimate White fear of being sucked into the vortex of the past and finding oneself utterly powerless, not conqueror now, not insouciant heir of bloody *conquistadores*, but victim. But why did the Argentinean-Parisian Cortázar take admittedly violent Aztec culture as encapsulating the indigenous American past -

and why would indigenous violence somehow be more symbolically powerful than that of the Europeans?

### **Three Latin American challenges to the denial of racism**

The denial of white racism has foremost been common among people of - in whole or in part- European ancestry. Not surprisingly, it has been challenged by those on the receiving end. I will conclude by taking three very well-known short stories<sup>8</sup> to illustrate this point, not as representative but rather as suggestive: “The serf’s dream” (*El sueño del pongo*, by Peruvian José María Arguedas, 1983); “Why Black people’s nostrils are made from clay” (*Por qué las nariguetas de los negros están hechos de fayanca*, by Cuban Lydia Cabrera); and “The legend of Tatuana” (*Leyenda de la Tatuana*, by Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias, n.d.).

In Arguedas’ story, drawn from Quechua folklore, an indigenous serf on a Peruvian estate is taken as the butt of the landowner’s cruel sense of humor and systematically humiliated. Finally the serf has a dream, which he relates to his tormentor, that they both die. Yet even in heaven the social and ‘racial’ distinctions of planet Earth initially appear to be all too present. Even angels have different colors and radically different heavenly standing, and initially both the landowner and the serf receive totally opposite treatment. One exquisite angel is ordered to coat the landowner’s body with honey, whereas another disheveled old angel with scarcely the strength to move his wings is told to coat the serf’s body with feces. But then, in a tremendous dramatic reversal, they are commanded to lick each other’s bodies, “very very slowly.” Upon this, the old angel suddenly becomes young again, his wings recover their blackness (the color of the mighty Andean condor), and his original tremendous strength returns: a parable of final reversal of fortunes, and of justice.

The Cabrera story about the origin of stereotypical African noses is also taken from folklore, this time Afro-Cuban. It concerns Lukankansa, the traditional Yoruba god of pottery, who was the first to give humans noses. Noses became instantly popular, but

were only available for White people, who had always been rich, since their forebears had forever had an eye for making money. Lukankansa made them noses that were long, straight, curved, turned-up, whatever shape he was asked for. One day Black twins turned up, elbowing their way through the crowd and demanding noses as well. Not only this audacity, but they wanted them for free! Lukankansa tried to hustle them out of his workshop, but strain as he would, he could not budge them from where they stood. The crowd was getting restive, so he simply turned his attention to his other customers. The twins started to chant and fire shot out through their eyes, filling the workshop with sparks and flames, setting fire to Lukankansa and his client, so that they had to rush outdoors to save themselves.

The next day the twins were back, and threatened to repeat their actions. So Lukankansa very hurriedly plopped two roughly made clay blobs, with two breathing holes, on the twins' faces. They went away delighted, and in due course all Black people wanted the facial upgrade as well, but also for free. So Lukankansa would each time do a down and dirty job on them, but always warning them not to expect too much... The story plays with stereotypes of Black facial ugliness and magical destructive powers, and neatly balances White acquisitiveness with Black assertiveness, leaving Whites still in power but not totally, and morally no superior to Blacks.

The legend of Tatuana was also put together by Asturias from Mayan and other popular sources and is told in the magical realism mode that owes much to them. The story is highly detailed, but concerns in essence the Master, a part of whose soul has been sold to the Trader in Priceless Jewels, and who goes to try to buy it back. The Trader, "like all merchants a man without any heart," refuses, for he plans to use it to buy the most beautiful woman in the slave market. He does so, and then proceeds on a journey with the slave he has bought, she completely naked except for her hair coiled around her body. Despite this humiliation, he constantly promises her the finest palace and a retinue of servants, and swears he will put himself totally at her command. However, the Trader

comes to a sudden and sticky end, thrown from his horse and into a ravine during a storm. His retinue of thirty servants is killed with him and only the slave survives. Despite her comprehensive humiliation, and the Trader's greedy power, she seems to be under some protection.

She meets up again with the Master, but they are thrown into jail, and sentenced to be burned at the stake, he as a magician and she as someone possessed of a devil. But the night before their execution, he indeed gives her a magic tattoo in the shape of a tiny boat, which enables her to escape through the wall and make herself invisible. And he turns himself into an almond tree overnight in the jail cell. They both survive against all odds.

The three stories taken together do not summarize twenty nations or hundreds of years of history. But in their different ways they evoke a different perspective on Latin American racism from the conventional denial mode: Arguedas', Cabrera's and Asturias' stories, rooted in indigenous and African experiences, forcefully express, often tinged with a subversive irony, the resentment, mockery and aspirations of the subjugated.

### **Conclusions**

To summarize: historically and currently, whether in White deployment of Buffalo soldiers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in U.S. wars against Indian nations, or the analogous strategy in Argentina with the 1833 and 1879-80 Desert Campaigns and the 1865-70 Paraguayan War, both of them programs of mutual genocide<sup>9</sup>; or whether we have in view the contemporary concentration of Afro-Brazilians at the bottom of the economic ladder and the analogous situation for Blacks and Latinos in the USA, or the disproportionate percentage of First Nation citizens in Canadian jails; there is ample evidence, past and present, that the typical denial of white racism in the Americas consists of a huge hypocritical lie. It is a lie which effectively hobbles the prospects of movement toward a stronger and more vigorous democracy. And, though I am all for

hemispheric cooperation, there is no sign that the Free Trade Area of the Americas will make the slightest dent in this problem. Quite probably the reverse.

In conclusion, let me restate what I consider the main point of this analysis: it is that the pervasive White denial of racism throughout the hemisphere is the chief obstacle to the growth of movements such as pan-Indian movements, or the new Black political movements in Brazil, which seek to challenge and overturn 'racial' hierarchy. 'Racial' hierarchy is still hegemonic, including in the outlook of many individuals of color themselves. Without idealizing the movements of opposition, it is nonetheless such movements alone which offer any hope for the hemisphere's future.

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<sup>1</sup> For excellent if deeply disturbing surveys of White privilege in the USA see Lipsitz (1998: 1-23) and Oliver & Shapiro (1997).

<sup>2</sup> William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray (1994) *The Bell Curve: intelligence and class structure in American life*. New York: Free Press. This elaborate reassertion of racist genetics reiterated the work of Jensen a generation earlier (cf. Arthur R. Jensen, *Educability and Group Differences*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> This is the ending of the 1954 version; the 1980 revision, in the source referenced here, ends on a less ideologically exact note.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Fernandes 1969; Araujo 2000; Wright 1990; Wade 1997; Hanchard 1994; Stam 1997; Degler 1986; Pérez Sarduy & Stubbs 2000; and two special issues of the *NACLA Report on the Americas* (2001).

<sup>6</sup> “Blood” was originally probably a stand-in for sperm, as in pre-scientific days people speculated that semen was some kind of condensation of blood and the humors.

<sup>7</sup> The Guatemalan genocide was possible because of the Reagan Administration’s energetic support for President Ríos Montt in the 1980s, and successive U.S. administrations’ cozy tolerance of Guatemalan military repression before and since. Even the U.S. Central America solidarity groups focused much more on Nicaragua and El Salvador than on Guatemala.

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<sup>9</sup> See Martínez Sarasola (1992), 254-305. The very term “Desert” Campaign was designed to obliterate the fact these lands were inhabited and farmed, in exactly the same way so many earlier prints of the U.S. West showed it completely bereft of humans. In the movie *Red River* (1948), John Wayne stands at the Texas frontier, looks out over vast empty space and pronounces it “mine, all mine.” The comparabilities and continuities are intense.