BRER THULDY'S STATUE
LIBERTY FRIGHTENIN DE WORLD.
To be stuck up on Bedbug's Island - Jarsey Flats, opposit de United States.

(Only Authorized. Edition.)

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The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fictions into Ethnic Factions

Chapter One
Racism Begets Ethnic Myths, Ethnic Myths Beget Ethnic Projects
[insert facing page: Political cartoon "Brer Thuldy's Statue"]

Racial beliefs and practices harm large segments of our population. Yet few of us see society's

current state as unnatural or unjust; most deny that race or other structural forces limit the life

chances of individuals and groups. We do not believe that our attitudes or actions are based on

racial considerations. Instead, race has become commonsense: accepted but barely noticed, there

though not important, an established fact that we lack the responsibility, let alone the power, to

change. The color line has come to seem a fiction, so little do we apprehend its daily mayhem.

- Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial*

The United States has a fabled history of immigration, culturally signified by the sonnet

by Emma Lazarus who implores foreign nations to send "your tired, your poor, / your huddled

masses yearning to breathe free, / the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. / Send these, the

homeless, tempest-tossed to me, / I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" in a "world-wide

welcome" to them all. [1] The sonnet is inscribed on the interior of the pedestal of the "Mother of

Exiles" (as the verse names the Statue of Liberty). This iconic sonnet encapsulates the mythos

that United States is a nation built on the labor of immigrants and still welcomes immigrants

from around the world. Histories that look at the travails of nonwhites since the inception of

the first Thirteen Colonies and on until today could sit as testimony that the reality has never

quite lived up to the words that Lazarus issued from the Statue's "silent lips." Those histories,

instead, read as a complex contest for resources, one that was from the beginning

contextualized in a language that demarked the deserving from the undeserving, arranging the

humans involved into unequal ethnic groups.

The American polity is legendarily characterized as "a melting pot," a nation brought together under Lady Liberty's torch of enlightenment and crown of seven spires (representing the seven continents and seven seas),[2] welcoming the world's "tired" and "poor," who are willing to work, or to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps."[3] Although people from all over the world have come and still come to "America" (read "The United States") to restructure their lives, they are not all seen as equally endowed with the ability to fit in or become American. For example, persons joining the American Protestant Association in the late 1800s were encouraged to swear that they denounce the Catholic Church, would never join a workers' strike with a Catholic, nor would they ever knowingly allow a Catholic to join the Association.[4] Their sentiment about who made appropriate compatriots was far from isolated. At around the same time, the United States government instituted its first of many laws declaring populations inappropriate for immigration naming the Chinese as the first ethnic/national-origin group to be so deemed. Still, Catholics came and kept coming, as did the Chinese and other previously undesirable migrants, even though they received unequal welcomes and are not equally considered real "Americans."

Neither would each group eagerly embrace the unhyphenated term "American" in lieu of their other ethnic options, for many are quite fond of and embrace their separate ethnic identities. Well, that is true to a point. We've known for some time that people will change ethnic identifiers as they pick and choose among a possible set of ancestries in order to portray themselves in the most positive of lights. Mary Waters (1990), in her book *Ethnic Options*, explained how people decide which ethnicities to choose, preferring, for example, to say they are part French, but failing to acknowledge that they're also part Polish. How do some ethnicities become more desirable and others less so? Still, "USA-ers" call themselves "Americans" and believe in their nation as one built by immigration. How were all these ethnic

groups incorporated into the American polity and how do we develop legend and lore about who is better than whom? Despite the inequality that persists among ethnic groups in the USA ethnic conflict is minimal compared to many other parts of the world. How has incorporation occurred with so little ethnic conflict? What does the process of ethnic group inclusion and their differential outcomes tell us about how our society is organized? Is there a way to explain differences in outcomes that can be reasonably applied to several cases?

Two interrelated histories can provide answers to these questions. The first is a demographic record of the lands that comprise the United States of America, one that involves encounters with people who were living their lives when they were "discovered" by Europeans who chose conquest over community, and also voluntary and forced migrations. A chronicle of the inclusion or incorporation of these disparate peoples, the circumstances that brought them here, and what happened to them afterward is helpful in interpreting the commonalities and differences in the interpretive "starting points" for groups of various ethnicities. The second history explains how these people from lands here and foreign were drawn together into an economically and socially stratified American society. These joint histories frame the ways various groups were quite differentially integrated into American society. But if incorporation has happened for nearly all groups in US history, why is ethnicity still relevant? My answer is that these histories describe the racial and economic interactions that have kept ethnic, racial, gendered and class divisions among us alive, allowing them to persist even beyond the births and deaths of generations of now homegrown "Americans," yet remain ethnicized.

We have mostly folkloric histories about who got here and when, and why some succeed and others do not, all retold as if people used only their will and wits to make a living and a legacy. In these histories we find that some ethnic groups have been able to achieve a kind of racial uplift and have the rest of society think of them with a much-improved racial status. Perhaps the catchy title of Neil Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* makes Irish-American

history the best-known example of racial uplift for persons first considered black-equivalents but have since become whitened, but there are others (Chinese and Mexicans for example). Some achieve true or pseudo whiteness, and some do not. But we know that many we now think of as racially worthy (e.g., Irish, Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, etc.) have started at the "bottom" and moved "up" the racial hierarchy over time. What accounts for the success of those who become our ethnic heroes by reaching status positions higher than the positions they had when first incorporated, while others remain in low status positions and become our ethnic villains? Which groups rise as high as to reach the hierarchy's very top category and become white and how did they accomplish it? Which ones have not, and why? Physical difference/similarity alone cannot be responsible, because former non-white groups (like the Irish and Polish) were also once believed to be wholly racially different in appearance from "white," and some (like the Chinese) seem unable to achieve total whiteness but have achieved mobility nonetheless. What explains this?

Ethnic Projects

In specific historical moments various outsider groups undertook concerted social action (namely, an Ethnic Project) to foster a perception of themselves as "different" from the bottom, and "similar" to the top of that racial hierarchy. Ethnic groups are variously successful at this enterprise. Ethnic Projects succeed to the degree that the dominant population accepts that the new group is culturally or racially different enough from the hierarchical bottom to merit a recognizable "ethnicity," which itself references the dominant society's use of different racial overtones, and – if one's project is successful – provides group members some relief from the pejorative labels, damning prejudices, and exclusionary practices that had originally plagued the group.

Although many ethnic groups have made attempts to achieve "racial uplift" in this way, only a few have been successful. The theory of the ethnic project can be summarized as follows. Ethnic groups begin as a significant number of "outsiders" who don't fit well into the racial frame that is operative at the time of their insertion into their geographic communities. As the "stranger," they are first identified as equivalent to the "bottom of the barrel," racially speaking. The European colonizers of North America are not considered a minority group; they created the system of racial domination and put themselves at the top; racial subordinates are minority groups.[5] Most ethnic groups incorporated into the United States since then are looked down upon and given very low racial status.[6] For example, those nations who occupied the North American landmass before European conquest (variously grouped as a single ethnicity called "Native American," or "First Nations") were branded as savages, albeit "noble" ones. The savage ideation remained, even after some groups (namely the Cherokee and the Choctaw, among others) adapted the ways of transplanted Europeans, giving up their indigenous lifestyles in a futile attempt to preserve their existence and save their own lives. The Europeans who proselytized about the ways of "civilization" and promised to spare adoptees betrayed them, as were Native American nations who were less culturally malleable. In not so different fashion, albeit with different outcomes, Greek and Polish immigrants were seen as the worst kinds of brutes, uneducable, but useful because of their ability to labor at "what would kill a white man."[7]

Ethnic Project theory argues that many racialized groups (some immigrant, some native born) launch similar campaigns for "racial uplift" – but specific factors account for a group's success or failure in these efforts. A group's success is predicated on their ability to benefit from the marginalization initially designed to segregate them and deny them access to the socioeconomic opportunities and rewards that those at the top of the racial hierarchy are routinely granted.[8] That is, groups that succeed take the racial structure as a given, and

primarily work to change only their place in it.

Ethnoracial groups hopeful for ethnic project success undertook some subset of activities intended to foster relationships separate from and possibly superior to ethnic nonwhite others. In some cases groups used their workplace and neighborhood relationships to African Americans to show those deemed to be "white" that they were not themselves also "black." They proved themselves to be nonblack by ostracizing and in some cases brutalizing their black neighbors, friends, spouses, children, and co-workers. They segregated themselves in both land and culture. They would separate themselves from supposed racial inferiors by self-segregating their residences, workplaces, and sites of leisure. Many took the added step of forbidding intermarriage between themselves and (only) racial inferiors. They chose to protect and maintain their racial superiority by enforcing a racial labeling that was intended to make the aforementioned racialized/racializing segregation commonsensical; occupations, neighborhoods, and activities are labeled according to the racial hierarchy, as "white," "civilized," or "cultured," as opposed to "black," "savage," "heathen" or "street." Chinese immigrants in the Mississippi Delta, Mexicans in Texas, and the Irish in the Northeastern U.S.A. all had lived among and intermarried with African American, yet to achieve racial uplift decided to segregate themselves residentially, occupationally, and romantically from the "blacks" with which they had been formerly conjoined and compared.

In their quest for increased racial status, ethnic groups with successful strategies failed to threaten to bring down the racial status quo. That is, successful groups only sought to raise their own status within the hierarchy and did not question the legitimacy of racialized thinking nor of human hierarchies. For example, the Irish said that they would no longer work with blacks because Irishmen "did white men's work." Mississippi Chinese chose to open retail stores and become economic middlemen, refusing to sharecrop but arguing neither against the existence of the sharecropping system, the unfair advantage whites took, nor the maltreatments

of blacks who were left with sharecropping as their employment alternative. In sum, racial status seekers appeal to the hierarchy's racial superiors regarding their group's racial worth, and often offered justifications regarding the worthlessness of racial inferiors. Even ethnic groups who had attained "whiteness" and wished to secure their position regularly reasserted their superiority. Only Native Americans and African Americans made appeals to the equality of men and women of all races, and for choosing this (failing) strategy for relief from racial enmity, they were certainly unrewarded.

Of course, not everyone in a group automatically agreed to comply. Thus, ethnicized seekers of higher status would commonly institute mechanisms of punishment for those within their own group who would ignore the incipient or ongoing ethnic project and instead trespass over hierarchically lower color lines, i.e., varied attempts to inappropriately fraternize or cooperate with racial "others." For example, Mississippi Delta Chinese would ostracize those in their group who would not break off romantic liaisons with their African American mates/spouses/co-parents. Similar actions took place among Mexican and Irish intermarried groupings. White women who refused to leave the Native American families they joined often were labeled kidnap victims, bringing to their new families violence from the group of white families of origin who wanted their kin back "home." (e.g., romantic liaisons, or labor unions).

Unsuccessful ethnic projects may do many or all of these same things, but they have not to date gained high racial status for their group. The reason some have not triumphed is that their ethnic project efforts actually threaten the racial status quo. In their endeavors to raise their status, groups who pose a threat to the very racial hierarchy itself must fail if those who dominate the racial system are to retain their power.

How An Ethnic Group Comes To Be Recognized As Such

The basis for all these projects is ethnoracial mythmaking that creates an ethnic group and a racial lore to characterize them. For such mythmaking to succeed, we first need a demographically significant subpopulation, large and sociologically significant enough to require the group to be identified by a name, a creation story that explains how they got here, and a justification for the place they have in the society into which they're incorporated. This process of mythmaking has several steps that can be identified for the purposes of making it recognizable. Not all steps are required, nor is there a singular sequence to them.

First, we have to decide on which groups are significant enough to count. The history of the United States is in large part a history of the *demography* that recounts how the population of this nation became the admixture it is today. The populations includes three categories of persons: persons to whom the land offered food to eat and a place to call home well before the nation now present on this land was ever a thought; persons who arrived voluntarily to labor and find their way in a new land, or; persons forced to migrate here, whether pushed from their own lands by violence and hardship, or forced by contract or enslavement to give labor on this land in exchange for survival. Chronicling the demography of a nation is not a mere counting exercise: we must know who someone is in order to count them, tally their characteristics and historical events, and tell their story. This in turn requires decision making about which of their characteristics are salient. Which characteristics and events "count," and how do we weigh them to decide what makes up a group and what facts are relevant to their history?

Another step is *naming*. We believe ethnicity to be created by a group's own process of cultural production, but the truth is that not all groups get to name themselves. Think of American "Indians," or immigrant "West Indians," so named because of Columbus' geography errors. Neither group named themselves, nor have the power to erase the mistakes. This is why I call this ethnic creation process one that takes place in the context of *racialization*. Ethnic projects are not merely about the creation of an ethnic identity, for many of these groups are

not merely embracing their own ethnicity. Think of the ways we create amalgamations of many so called "American Indian" nations, or "West Indian"/"Black Caribbean" persons from islands so many and so varied that they speak different languages and emerged from different colonial histories. Persons in dominant races who never cared what those people called themselves long ago snatched from them their original names and applied names that fit the dominant way of thinking.

A third step: *characterization.* This is where one might recognize such myths as those meant to convince that upward mobility may be achieved by hard work and moral righteousness (a.k.a. the "bootstrap" or "model minority" myths) or that some groups are more prone to drunkenness or criminal activity. It is characterizations of this kind (lodged against "savages" and "heathens") that created races in North America.[9]

Counting, naming, and characterizing groups are all steps in the process that sociologists call *incorporation.* Are groups welcomed, embraced, accepted, included, integrated, blended, or assimilated? Tolerated or ignored? Marginalized, segregated, rejected, "rehabilitated," ostracized, or annihilated? By whom are they embraced, tolerated, or rejected? What power does the dominant have to disseminate and popularize their assessments? How much control, agency, and responsive power does the subordinate group have? Thus, two histories are relevant and conjoined: the history of the lives of those in the group, and the history of their absorption, offering perhaps related but perhaps different stories of the systematic ways generations of "these people" are incorporated into a social order.

Together in the U.S., these demographic and social incorporation histories describe a register of interactions that have created and kept alive ethnic and racial (and related gendered and class) divisions among us, allowing them even to persist through the births, and deaths of generations of home-grown but still ethnicized and racialized "Americans." Even as we presume to blend subsequent waves of offspring and foreign-born newcomers into this nation

we continually recreate an economically and socially stratified society of subgroups – some of which we create whole cloth when no such group "existed" before. (What are "Indians"? "Afro-Americans"? How can we call "Mexicans" the legally white U.S. citizens who lived on land in Arizona and Texas even before Arizona and Texas existed?) How did such stratifications come to be?

Racism Begets Ethnic Myths, Ethnic Myths Beget Ethnic Projects

The history of the United States of America is full of moments of creating and applying ethnic labels to groups of people who had different characterizations for themselves than the ones the larger society is encouraged to believe. Sociological theory about ethnicity suggests that group members who share culture and heritage form their own ethnicities and assert their own ethnic identities. By contrast racial groups are formed when outsiders decide what characteristics define each group and who is in it. But the reality of ethnic group formation in North America is that ethnic groups are formed in a racial context, meaning that the group itself does not always have control over how they are read by those in the larger society. The racially dominant group controls the ethno-racial landscape, and projects some of the ethnic and racial rationale in order to protect their position and ensure the racial status quo. Perhaps because groups in the United States do not always control their own ethnic identities is some of the reason why race and ethnicity are often confused. Newcomer ethnicities become salient when a significant number of "outsiders" (persons who don't fit well into the racial frame operative at the time) join their geographic communities. It is as the "stranger" that they are first identified as equivalent to the "bottom of the barrel," racially speaking. Many ethnic groups we now think of as white have started at the bottom, and moved "up" the racial hierarchy.

Once created, ethnic groups may either embrace their new assignment, effectively creating an identity of it that they're willing to embrace, or they may actively struggle against the characterization imposed upon them by society's majority. Once they choose a form of (in)action, they have at hand a number of tools to use to invoke new characterizations of their ethnic identity. These actions form the basis of an ethnic project.

All ethnic groups are initially racialized – indeed, no one is allowed in the United States to be without a race.[10] In their responses to ethno-racialization – a process that has most groups enter at the bottom of the racial hierarchy – a group likely chooses to re-create their ethnicity in a way that would serve as a counterweight to the severely limiting racial characterizations that they are assigned. I have argued elsewhere that ethnicity can even be read as a type of racial marker, a placeholder in the ordered listing of racial categories that comprise the racial hierarchy of the United States.[11] In the US today the inequality among ethnic groups is congruent with the way North Americans structure their *racial* hierarchy. The history of most ethnic groups is truly a tale of their racial inclusion. Newcomers to the United States are labeled so that group-outsiders can be aware, and beware; the ethnic lore about them is a racialized fiction about their origins, prospects, culture, and physical appearance, and indicates their status position.

Ethnic Projects succeed to the degree that the dominant population accepts that the new group is culturally or racially different enough from the hierarchical bottom to merit a recognizable "ethnicity," which itself references the dominant society's use of different racial overtones, and – if one's project is successful – provides group members some relief from the pejorative labels, damning prejudices, and exclusionary practices that had originally plagued the group. Although many ethnic groups have made attempts to achieve "racial uplift" in this way, only a few have been successful. Normally, upon first encounters, new groups find themselves at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Indeed, their ethnic label becomes nearly

synonymous with the bottom of the racial hierarchy, of late identified as "black," where the position of privilege is fixed as "white." However, I argue that while the commonly known and broad racial categories (like "white" and "black") are fixed, ethnicity itself is far more flexible. Some groups have been able, in certain circumstances, to manipulate this flexibility enough to change the racial connotation of their ethnic label. They do so by controlling their economic and social position, and undertaking ethnic "marketing" campaigns to change the public image their ethnic labels connote, and creating a new ethnic identity for themselves that also creates distance from the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

By contrast, a group's failure to achieve uplift may be traced to several factors as well, but these include efforts to dismantle the racial status quo, the launch of campaigns to appeal to the wrongheadedness of human hierarchies, or the failure to work to increase one's own group status by using tools that would denigrate others. Ironically, what I'm suggesting is that even something as "radical" as embracing our common humanity apparently is a weak tool to use to dismantle the racial order, if we look to history to test this idea. But there seems to be no way out of this conundrum: one may become a racializer, and even a racist, and be rewarded for it, but groups who embrace human difference and who value human beings equally tend to be punished for such progressive and enlightened thinking – particular if they broadcast these ideas while holding a position at the racial nadir. The embrace of the unhyphenated term "American" in lieu of their other ethnic options is not equal across ethnic groups, partly because some are denied the ability to shape their ethnic image (i.e., "assimilate"), and as a result perhaps many accept and become quite fond of their separate ethnic identities.

This theory about the importance of ethnic projects in reifying race is not at all meant to downplay the importance of structural forms of racism and unequal opportunity that have aided in generating and sustaining inequality in the United States among racial and ethnic groups. The proportion of blame to be attributed to structural and institutional forces behind

perpetuated inequality can hardly be underestimated. But there is more to the perpetuation of racial falsehoods than what we call institutional racism. And surely racial fictions do not persist because we are all members of hate groups. There must be some way that regular folk buy into racial systems and perpetuate it, or racial mythology would have died long ago. Racialization is hardly a process completely within the control of the ethnic group in question. But neither is racialization without agency, without the ability to respond. The idea of the ethnic project is meant not to erase the importance of social structure in the human hierarchies we create out of race and ethnicity, but only to rebalance the scales by allowing a focus on what we collectively do to reify these systems. That is, every day we each perform and remake (or socially construct) our races and ethnicities each time we act on behalf of our own ethnoracial group, or are perceived by others to have done so. Inequality among races and ethnicities is directly attributable to actors who struggle for higher ethnoracial status.

Racialized societies are inherently hierarchical – the *purpose of race* is to assign differential value to human lives. Human differences exist without race, but race or racial thinking is surely required in order to put a worth on human differences. Where hierarchies exist (racial or otherwise) the higher strata are the most desirable. Groups in hierarchical societies naturally would seek to ascend the hierarchy and attain more desirable positions to improve their social, economic, and political position. Those already at the top work to maintain their position. Relatively powerless newcomers to hierarchical systems like these are incorporated into its lower strata, at least until they figure out how the system works and form their own responses to their incorporation. Then they too vie for increased status, jostling for higher positions against others already ranked in the hierarchy. This is the crux of a group's ethnic project.

Ethnicity and race are neither wholly distinct, but neither are they interchangeable. While the differences between these systems are elaborated upon in the next chapters, it is

useful to make one important distinction here: race is an *ascribed* set of character traits with which individuals and groups are *labeled* by others; ethnicity is understood to be most often *asserted*, or *claimed* by the individual or group in question. Racial assignment in the United States is *pro forma*. (Confirming this is the frequently posed but rather insensitive question "What are you?" – or worse, "No, but where are you <u>really</u> from? – lodged repeatedly at only a few people who are expected to assist the inquirer in assigning the racially ambiguous or "foreign-looking" respondent to the appropriate box.) The sociological realm has treated racialization as a top-down process that is almost as if it is some amorphous entity (called "society" by many who otherwise grasp for a better term). But society is comprised of real persons, and the ones racialized are just as real. One theoretical group racializes, the others receive and perhaps resist racialization. But racialization is neither silently nor inconsequentially imposed, nor received.

Ethnic group responses to being racialized stand on two presumptions: first, *racialization* by definition requires downgrading the status of some in order to uplift others; and, second, the response to being the target of downgraded racialization is to seek higher status. Those painted with a racial brush just do not stand there and silently allow it to occur – they act, and such actions may be mapped on a sociohistorical timeline. Perhaps we give so much credit to the overwhelming power of race that – except for large-scale movements like the abolitionist movement, or the Civil Rights movement – we downplay the less successful actions undertaken by groups who resist racialization. Perhaps because we have had little public recognition for alternative theories, we have put far too much store in social myths like "assimilation," "pulling oneself up by the bootstraps" and other ethnicity-focused folkloric variants of Horatio Alger tales. Horatio Alger was a late 19th century novelist, who actually wrote about those who were down-and-out and were rescued by wealthy patrons; yet he was largely redrawn as a figure who penned tales about heroes that overcame obstacles, corrected

their impulses, and by the end of his stories, are on the road to success because of their moral righteousness. The message being, that whatever the obstacles, the individual can triumph by living an exemplary life. Alger's stories appeared at the peak of European immigration, and the immigrant represented the historical enactment of an Alger story. Social scientists projected the Alger viewpoint, which became a precursor for scientific tales about how assimilation occurs. Thus have ethnic groups been deemed the ethnic heroes or ethnic villains.[12]

In much of the work by sociologists on the mobility of groups of individuals that see themselves as ethnically related to one another, a problematic tendency exists. Mobility achieved by the persons within such groups tends to be explained by (if not entirely due to) the strivers' ethnic culture. These writings have the secondary tendency of using cultural arguments to explain why ethnic groups who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy stay there. The inclination to write this way is iconic in the landmark writings of Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Norman Podheretz, but may also be found in the works of contemporary writers. Followers in this classic tradition include Dinesh DeSouza, Thomas Sowell, William Julius Wilson, Alejandro Portes, and Jennifer Lee. As Toni Morrison explained in her 1973 *Time Magazine* article entitled "On the Backs of Blacks," "in race talk the move into mainstream America always means buying into the notion of American blacks as the real aliens. Whatever the ethnicity or nationality of the immigrant, his nemesis is understood to be African Americans." She notes that every immigrant group to enter the United States steps on the backs of African Americans in order to rise above. A study of the ethno-historical record shows her to be correct, and that anti-blackness is a necessity under the US racial regime. The only way to change this is to change the regime. Surely change is possible, but it requires withdrawing from the game of ethnic "King of the Hill" – the contest where groups threaten and withdraw from one another in order to better compete for status superior to the others in the game. Unfortunately, the prognosis found in the histories presented in this book is that for

the United States, the game is built into the nation's political and cultural DNA, and seems ineradicable and therefore unending.

What we know about ethnic groups – all that we've ever known about them – is what we know about them *racially*. That is, we make ethnic lore to explain to one another the characteristics of any group of people, be they Irish, or Latina, or Terrorists,[13] but we struggle to describe a group without reference to where they fit in the socioeconomic or politicultural hierarchy. This "fitting in" is the key to their racialization. The moral logic of race and the moral logic of ethnicity evolve together. That is, the definitions of what we mean by race/ethnicity as systems, what groups exists in a given system, what constitutes a given race/ethnic group and how individual members of particular groups might be identified, appropriate actions for an individual of a given race when among their peers or in the company of persons of other groups – the rules of these items evolve together over time, and have done so from the very first invention of these concepts.

In the United States that is what we know and report about any given ethnic group has much to do with how we talk about that ethnic group's racialization process –namely, ethnic myths, are in large part if not strictly, racializing myths. We create these myths about the ethnic group themselves, but also about who "we" are (as Americans, as a society, as a "norm" against which others are measured). Moreover, ethnic group-identities are formed in concert and conversation with the racial views about the group. The ethnic groups themselves read the racial writing about them on the wall, and rethink who they are by reflecting on the racialization they are currently experiencing and that which they experienced in the past.

Each ethnic group has the power to respond to their racialization. Indeed, the cases presented here will show that ethnic groups do respond, launching repeated and reiterative campaigns to educate and re-educate the racializing masses about who they really are, with the intent to improve their reputations and increase their racial status. That is, no group simply

accepts the racializing characterizations aimed at them. They each read the messages about them and work concertedly to revise racial messages to have the group read in a more positive light. We have tended to read these variously as identity movements, but they might also be read as active responses to their racialization. Thus, I'm using these pages to re-interpret ethnic history in light of the racial developments occurring during the time of their incorporation. In sum, ethnic groups are organic – who comprises the group, how group members see themselves, and how others perceive them are all fluid, not fixed, characteristics. Ethnic assertions, choices, and group (not personal) identities, then, might be thought of a small-scale character campaigns carried out by persons so aligned with said group and who openly, publicly proclaim their pride in being so.

Understanding ethnoracial[14] lore in this way allows me to do a couple of things: see race where others have not seen it before, even as they've talked about race but not used the label; and see the social *agency* (the dynamic power social groups have and use to draw their images on the society's canvas) where others have seen a more passive "identity" politics, i.e., external processes are taking shape in places sociologists have understood as more internalized (except when such processes have become as extreme to cause them to be labeled identity *movements*). The ethnic group identity call and response – again, an iterative process that can be historically traced, and compared to the group formation process and identity responses of others – is what I call an ethnic project.

We need look no further than at our own actions to understand our continued failure to undermine the rigid racial hierarchy that plagues the United States of America. We reshape and re-embrace the fallacy of race because it benefits most of us for doing so. Play the ethnoracial game well and your group can rise in status, although it requires publicly denigrating others that the group decides are beneath them. Gain punishment instead for questioning the rules of the game, or the value and logic of playing it.

We no longer need to question why this illogical social construction won't just die and go away. For it to die we have to learn to stop using the tools of race as we play ethnic "King of the Hill" with our identities, cultures, and origins. We even play the ethnic project with the "Mother of Exiles." Note the image of Thomas Worth's 1884 statue that is "Frightenin De World," said to stand "opposit de United States" [sic] instead of within it. Compare that image to the image of the statue in the mind of its creator, Edouard Laboulaye, Chairman of the French Anti-Slavery Society, an organization devoted to celebrating freedom of slaves where they have been liberated, and promoting freedom in the nations where human enslavement still existed. The organization provided food and clothing for freed slaves in the U.S., and the women's division of the Anti-Slavery Society (headed by Laboulaye's wife) raised funds and made the clothes donated to the former slaves. It was in 1865, the year the United States ended its reign over the trade in human bodies from the African continent, that Laboulaye proposed the idea of the gift of this statue to the U.S.[15] He was hoping only to have the project done in the 10 years that remained until the young nation's Centennial celebrations, perhaps to conjoin black freedom with freedom and independence for the United States. Liberty, it could be said, is a Lady meant to welcome freedom for *black* men, women, and children but this bit of history is lost to the average tourist who visits the statue's site. Americans are taught that Liberty welcomes the immigrant, the ethnic one might say, and not that she welcomes to the fold the free black offspring of former slaves over whose graves she watches.[16] Perhaps we are not taught that because these ideas are those of Lady Liberty's creator, not of those who accepted the statue as a gift, and who reshaped it to fit our preference for ethnic tales over dreams of racial equality.

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1. These words attributed to Lady Liberty come from the sonnet "The New Colossus," written in 1883 by poet Emma Lazarus and etched in bronze at the base of the statue. It reads:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,

With conquering limbs astride from land to land;

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand

Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she

With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

[2] The number of existing continents varies between one and seven depending upon the geographical convention to which one adheres. For example, while Lady Liberty's spires signify seven continents the rings of the Olympic symbol reference the five-continent model. Sometimes America is one continent, and sometimes it is divided into North and South; sometimes Eurasia is one continent, and sometimes it is divided into Europe and Asia; sometimes Antarctica counts, and sometimes it does not. In most minds the Americas include North America, South America and Central America, yet persons from the United States identify themselves as "Americans" in a monopolistic way that uses the term exclusively to describe them, as if the others within the continent cannot be so named.

[3] The "bootstrap" idea can be attributed to Horatio Alger, a nineteenth century novelist who

wrote about 130 stories that we characterize as about people overcoming extraordinary circumstances by living in morally "right" ways and working hard. In truth, the characters in his novels who met with economic and social success did so by way of wealthy benefactors, in ways much like Daddy Warbucks' benevolance to Little Orphan Annie.

[4] The text of Oath No. One is: "I hereby denounce Roman Catholicism. I hereby denounce the Pope, sitting at Rome or elsewhere. I denounce his priests and emissaries and the diabolical work of the Roman Catholic church, and hereby pledge myself to the cause of Protestantism to the end that there may be no interference with the discharge of the duties of citizenship, and I solemnly bind myself to protect at all times, and with all the means in my power, the good name of the order and its members, so help me God. Amen." Further, Oath No. Four reads, "I do most solemnly promise and swear that I will always, to the utmost of my ability, labor, plead and wage a continuous warfare against ignorance and fanaticism; that I will use my utmost power to strike the shackles and chains of blind obedience to the Roman Catholic Church from the hampered and bound consciences of a priest-ridden and church-oppressed people; that I will never allow any one, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, to become a member of this order, I knowing him to be such; that I will use my influence to promote the interest of all Protestants everywhere in the world that I may be; that I will not employ a Roman Catholic in any A.P.A. city if I can procure the services of a Protestant."

[5] See Stephen Steinberg's *Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*, 3d ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, [1981, 1989] 2001.

[6] Bashi, Vilna, and Antonio McDaniel, 1997, "A Theory of Immigration and Racial Stratification," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 27, no. 5 (May), 668-682.

[7] Waters, Mary. 1990. *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. 2.

[8] This book expands upon ideas I first wrote about in two articles that theorized about the ways race and ethnicity intertwined in American society. (See Bashi and McDaniel, 1997, op. cit.; and Bashi, Vilna, 1998, "Racial Categories Matter because Racial Hierarchies Matter: A Commentary." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 8 (September), 959-968.) I explained that certain ethnic groups were associated with particular racial groupings, and that an individual's choice to first identify themselves with an ethnic label does not indicate an inability to identify racially. In fact, I suggested that racial and ethnic identities are indeed far from being separate, for the choice of ethnic label is not so much about one's self-image as it is about the place one is accorded in the larger hierarchical framework where race and ethnic group labels are constructed. Moreover, in the conclusion to my first book, *Survival of the Knitted: Immigrant Social Networks in a Stratified World* (Stanford University Press, 2007), I showed that immigrants who work together to help one another actually help to construct themselves as an ethnic group in the eyes of the employers, realtors, and neighbors with whom they share workplaces and communities. Of course, immigrants are not the only ones who have networks, or work to their groups' collective good.

[9] Audrey Smedley *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 3d ed., Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007.

[10] This is an argument I first made in my article "Racial Categories Matter because Racial Hierarchies Matter: A Commentary." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21(September 1998, vol. 8): pp. 959-968.

[11] See Vilna Bashi and Antonio McDaniel. May 1997. "A Theory of Immigration and Racial Stratification." *Journal of Black Studies* 27 (5): pp. 668-682.

[12] Steinberg, 2001, op cit.

[13] Since its inception, the Department of Homeland Security has had five hearings on Muslim

radicalization, but none on right-wing terrorism, despite the fact that the right wing in the United States has committed six times the number of "murderous attacks" than Muslim radicals do. (While more deaths may be attributed to Muslims in attacks in the 20 years between 1990 and 2010, 99.2% of all those deaths in the period happened with one event, the attack on 9/11/2000.) See the 18 August 2012 article in *The Economist* entitle "The benefits of hindsight: The need for more monitoring of domestic terrorism" which may be found at http://www.economist.com/node/21560566.

[14] The word "ethnoracial" was used by Karen Brodkin (1998). She used the combined term to explain that in her book the words " 'race' and 'ethnicity' [are used] more or less interchangeably" (p. 189, n.1). In *The Ethnic Project* I don't use the words interchangeably, But the term "ethnoracial" is useful to suggest those contexts and historical moments in which ethnicity is highly racialized, i.e., when/where the salience of race makes visible the actions, intentions, and messages of ethnic agents.

[15] See Barry Moreno, 2005, *The Statue of Liberty Encyclopedia*. New York: New Line Books; the 1985 documentary "The Statue of Liberty," directed by Ken Burns for Florentine Films; and the Public Broadcasting Service website about the film, http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/statueofliberty.

[16] See "African Burial Ground: Revisit the Past to Build the Future," at http://www.africanburialground.gov or the National Park Service's site "African Burial Ground" at www.nps.gov/agbg, both accessed August 2012.