

report the following kinds of behavior in their otherwise Hispanic Catholic families: grandmothers who furtively lit candles on Friday evenings, families who refrained from work on Saturdays, a ranch family who raised pigs but would not eat pork, another family whose members were "allergic" to pork, and meals at which milk was not served along with meat. Over the centuries these practices have apparently lost their original ritual meanings and their context within Judaism per se, something akin to biological organs that have become vestigial in organic evolution. Yet into the twentieth century, Hispanic elders carry on these practices, not knowing the reasons why but cautiously whispering to their grandchildren, "Somos Judios" ("We are Jews"). The aunt of one Hispanic informant further told her niece that they were "Levines," probably not fully understanding the reference to the Levites or temple attendant priests in traditional Judaism. Although these four informants agreed to face Harris' camera, most individuals involved in these secret practices would not do so. One of the interviewees explains this fact forcefully: "The imperative not to tell is strong."

This imperative of secrecy is further revealed as Harris turns her camera on Stanley Hordes, former state historian for New Mexico. Hordes describes how the Sephardic Jews in Spain and Portugal were forced to convert or be expelled from Iberia in 1492. Many of these "Conversos" or "New Christians" escaped to the frontiers of the New World where the Inquisition continued but with somewhat less efficiency than in their European homeland. In one old adobe house in New Mexico, Hordes found next to a crucifix an object covered by many layers of paint: it was a mezuzah (a doorpost amulet containing Hebrew prayers). The continuation of these ritual practices and shreds of identity, though vestigial, are certainly intriguing. Even more astounding is the clear and pervasive sense of fear which people feel today as a consequence of events that occurred five hundred years ago.

In sum, this film offers an opportunity to ponder matters of ethnicity and personal identification via an excellent videographic piece: the southwestern scenery is dramatic, the interviewees engaging, and the background Sephardic music poignant.

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**David A. Hollinger. Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism. (New York: Basic Books, 1995) 210 pp., \$13.00 paper.**

This important volume by the distinguished intellectual historian, David Hollinger, sorts through key multicultural issues and brings a much needed freshness to a very stale, angry debate. In outlining the social contours of a postethnic America, he describes a country less

obsessed with race and ethnicity, and open to the forging of social bonds between people of different heritages of descent. Unlike many criticisms of multiculturalism, Hollinger's postethnic vision remains attentive to ethnic difference while pointing up the relevance and value of an American national culture. Those heavily invested in shoring up racial and ethnic boundaries will surely resist the author's depiction of a less fragmented postethnic America.

Following his introduction, Hollinger lays out his argument in five closely reasoned chapters, beginning with an examination of the differences between ascription and choice in the formation of social groups. Multiculturalism, in its promotion of diversity, has now conferred on the federal government's "ethno-racial pentagon"--Euro-American, African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American--a very doubtful cultural reality. At the same time, people of mixed-race parentage, asserting the value of choice and self-definition, challenge the classification. In a postethnic America, an Alex Haley might just as well seek out his Irish roots without raising eyebrows or objections that the "one drop rule" irrevocably defines who is Black.

Multiculturalism emerged from a steady movement since World War II from "species-centered to ethnos-centered discourse." Hollinger refers to various books making claims about the general characteristics of humanity (e.g. the Kinsey reports) that proved to be culture or class bound--the local masquerading as the universal. Multiculturalism, accordingly, has focused on narrow communities of descent in a determined rejection of the search of universals. Like its antecedent, cultural pluralism, this recalcitrant perspective emphasizes exclusive, ascribed social boundaries. It remains indifferent, if not hostile, both to the idea of a national culture and to social affiliations not defined by ethnic or racial criteria. By contrast, a liberal strain within multiculturalism--what Hollinger calls "cosmopolitan"--values diversity, yet shares with universalism a fundamental interest in the common group between people.

A postethnic America would build on the cosmopolitan world view. The "ethno-racial" aspect of identity would not be eclipsed but merely reduced in importance. Postethnicity emphasizes choice over group prescription and the formation of multiple affiliations. The ethno-racial element would therefore represent one among many bases of belonging. The cultural locales of identity would be capacious and unconfined. Moreover, the cosmopolitan view regards the civic character of the American nation as an effective mediator between the particularities of an ethnicity resistant to non-ethnic social formations and a universalism equally resolute in ignoring local differences. Fully aware of the difficulties of achieving postethnicity, Hollinger discusses some obstacles in his brief epilogue. Particularly vexing is the perpetuation of poverty in Black America because educational and economic opportunities are often beyond reach. Therefore, the possibility of testing bound-

ary permeability--a cornerstone of the postethnic order--remains remote, and ethno-racial identities harden as a consequence.

*Postethnic America* cogently examines multiculturalism against the backdrop of the author's moral unease about the ethnic and racial fault lines running across the United States. It commands the attention of anyone concerned about race, ethnicity and the American future.

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**Maria P.P. Root. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.)**

Maria Root's collection of readings cognitively and emotionally engage the reader in the psychosocial experience of being multiracial. These readings also foster a critical awareness of the implications of rising numbers of multiracial persons for issues of inter-group race relations and national identity. This awareness forces readers to re-examine the meanings and construction of race beyond the traditional five monoracial categories traditionally used to gather census data.

The book is well organized and begins with a dialog of implications of *de jure* and *de facto* aspects of the American tradition of racial classification by hypodescent, or the "one drop rule." Discussion centers on the government's role in the perpetuation of this blatantly racist ideal, represented by OMB Directive 15, which establishes the race and ethnic standards for federal statistics. Particularly insightful is the insider's look at the debate among and between racial/ethnic minority groups on implications for politics of collective identity of amending this directive by including a multiracial classification. For instance, the addition of a "multiracial" category could play an important part in dismantling racial construction as we know it today and, in the process, respect the identity rights of multiracial individuals who must negotiate minefields of political and social identification. On the other hand, the seeming contradiction of Blacks' insistence of maintaining the one drop rule in their struggle against white domination is well represented.

The essence of the book is the confrontation with the traditional structural and hierarchical issues to be faced as the nation pursues the dialog of race identity and race relations, especially as these are comingled with issues of gender, sexual orientation, social class, and biological versus cultural determinants of identity. Discussion includes non-obvious implications of today's divisive issues, such as critical roles played by multicultural education and diversity in the classroom in mitigating the effects of racism in society, the role of transracial adoptions in exacerbating the stereotype that Black parents are not interested in adoption