

EDITOR'S NOTES

W.E.B. DuBois in his classic, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903) raised the seminal metaphysical question regarding identity formation in the United States. Countless other scholars, scholar activists, and just plain citizens since, have and are raising this historical interrogative. "Who Am I?" "Who are we?" "Am I not a woman?" These questions are formed in the crucible of racism's white hot heat. And in an important sense, raising these questions is an essential first step towards mounting opposition to those hegemonic forces which work to ascribe social identity. The articles comprising this issue of the *Ethnic Studies Review* again draw our attention to the recurring questions regarding the implications of identity formation.

Defining oneself has never been an uncomplicated act in this nation and in many nations on earth. It has been made even more complicated by the systematized role that color consciousness and gender discrimination have played in shaping the social order. In the final analysis, raising the metaphysical question is an attempt to establish one's claim to both an individual and a group identity; an identity free to shift and to take refuge and reform if desired. And to do so against powerful oppositional forces intended to maintain the race, ethnic, gender and social class status quo. Importantly and disturbingly, these statuses are maintained by rules and processes of divide and conquer. The following six articles, in their own way, add to the body of information and perspectives

in ethnic studies on the important subjects relating understanding the complexities of the metaphysics of shifting identities.

Marcia Alesan Dawkin's article, "In Search of a 'Singular I': A Structural Analysis of Passing," provides an interesting conceptual approach to understanding the phenomenon of "passing" among a select demographic group in the United States.

The article, "In Passing: Arab American Poetry and the Politics of Race," co-authored by Katherine Wardi-Zonna and Anissa Janine Wardi, examines the cultural history of Arab Americans and the quest for self identification. The poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye is used as a device for clarifying the complexities of identity formation among Arab Americans.

Andrew Jolivéte's "Migratory Movement: The Politics of Ethnic Community (Re)Construction Among Creoles of Color, 1920-1940," examines how Creole communities, against pressures to conform, maintain and protect a mixed heritage identity.

In the article, "Reader Expectation and Ethnic Rhetorics: The Problem of the Passing Subaltern in Who Would Have Thought It?", Pascha Antrece Stevenson provides a thought provoking analysis of how María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's novel deals with the predicament of color consciousness and passing. In turn, Stevenson forces the question, does the ethnic writer have a broad, or more narrow, obligation when it comes to writing about matters relating to race and ethnicity?

Chong-suk Han's article, "We Both Eat Rice, But That's About It: Korean and Latino Relations in a Multi-Ethnic City," asks us to re-examine the race relations dynamics underlying the conflagration occurring in South Los Angeles after the jury verdict in the trial of the police officers charged with assaulting Rodney King. The author brings forward the under reported relationships between Latinos and Koreans in Koreatown.

In "Multiple Identities, Citizenship Rights and Democratization in Africa," 'Lai Olurode brings our attention to the complexities of democratization processes in Africa. This is especially the case given the histories of indigenous peoples subscribing to multiple and shifting identities.

Each of these articles approach the subject of identity differently. In common, each comments on how groups of human beings, often confronting terrific odds, attempt to carve out space for themselves where they can live as self identified beings.

Read on and ponder the challenges issuing from the circumstances presented in these discussions.

Otis L. Scott