African Americans, Cultural Pluralism and the Politics of Culture

Frederick Hord
Knox College

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AFRICAN AMERICANS, CULTURAL PLURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE

FREDERICK HORD*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although the author has taught African American literature and history to black college students for twenty years, and has observed the evolution and dissolution of black student consciousness—that sense of rootedness in and clarity about the past which contributes to the cultural re-creation of African American identity and ethos—during that period, his last four years of instruction/administration at Howard University and West Virginia University have crystallized critical issues regarding that consciousness. For the experience of teaching black students and directing a Center for Black Culture ("Center" or "CBC") in the Eighties has provided focus and thus additional insight into the vital intersecting dimensions of racial pride and values. Each semester, students have raised questions about their

* Director of Black Studies, Knox College. B.S., Indiana State University, 1963; M.S., Indiana State University, 1965; Ph. D. Union Graduate School, 1987.
Professor Hord served as the Director of the Center for Black Culture at West Virginia University in 1987-88. He has authored numerous publications addressing the African-American experience.
dispositions regarding racial esteem and their praxis of social values. Each semester, in turn, the author has raised questions about how they relate to the African American past, the African phenotype, and the American ethos. Although the author’s involvement in the African American struggle as teacher/activist has been useful in assisting black students in deciphering the American side of their cultural duality, what remains particularly bothersome is the historical obfuscation surrounding issues of racial pride and values. In response to students’ questions about former students’ roles in the “movement,” it has been necessary not only to explore the external and internal forces that assaulted black student consciousness during and since the period projected on the PBS series “Eyes on the Prize”—especially the internal historical rootlessness reflected in the superficial embracing of Africa and the substantial external pandering to the reformist element of the black middle class—but also to dialogue with black students about connecting that history and its grounding with their own lives. Such connection seems indispensable for their clear assessment of their own predilections regarding racial pride and values.

II. IDENTITY/ETHOS AMBIVALENCE

The vast majority of more than a thousand students the author has taught and worked with at Howard University and West Virginia University seem confused—though concerned—about who they are and the propriety of an extreme individualistic/materialistic value system. What is more, they do not appear to understand the implications of identity ambivalence, much less the limited practicability and unlimited danger of their projected attempts to operationalize that value system. For instance, most students become thoughtful when they follow up the author’s recommendation to compare the way they are wearing their hair with students in the 1955 and 1970 yearbooks. Yet most are not sure what it means that the close-cropped look of the males on campus and the relaxed coiffure of the females resemble the styles of the pre-student movement days. Further, many do not attach overwhelming identity significance to the Afros in the 1970 yearbook. Some insist that current hair styles are merely a matter of vogue; others, however, answer
with long silences or concessions that perhaps they are not as secure in their identities as they thought.

Conversely, most students clearly agree that African Americans have by no means won the color-complex struggle; some openly admit their preferences for light-skinned companions of the opposite gender. A few students even relate stories about parents who unabashedly communicate their partiality toward light skin color. Yet, in spite of their own penchants, most students are aware that the African phenotype ranks at the bottom of the cultural hierarchy in this society. As a prime example, they talk about how the vast majority of "Ebony" models, even if they have deep brown skin, exhibit European features or their approximates.

Not only has the author witnessed a general disassociation from the African phenotype among African American students, but he has also discerned a mixture of nescience of and association with the dominant value system of this society. First there seems to be little clarity about the capitalistic system, much less their class locus in it or why the underclass is generally not on campus with them. Most students either do not understand what critics mean when they accuse the black middle class in the United States of complicity in the underdevelopment of people of color in the Third World when it uncritically accepts its privileges, or they deny such a connection. Too often, students also communicate the feeling that more black folks in the "underclass" could share the harvest of being college students if they became more ambitious.

In addition, strong feelings about returning to the community with their knowledge/skills appear to flourish among few students. Although some grant the unwholesomeness of such a lack of commitment, most are unapologetic about what they want, and seem quite sure they will be able to realize their materialistic objectives.

Further, students report that the majority dream on campuses is the American dream, and that if black communal struggle is in conflict with the pursuit of that dream, there will be no struggle. Each semester, they have informed the author that a random sampling of black college students would disclose that from seventy to ninety percent would generally opt for class interests over racial
ones. In fact, when I ask them to estimate the number of students who would actually commit what Amilcar Cabral termed class suicide, the percentage plummets to less than five—sometimes less than one. Finally, when students have discussed the traditional African value system of communalism reflected in the notion "we are, therefore I am," their responses—in addition to lack of awareness—seem to essentially be either that such a world view today would be hopelessly naive or that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with the American ethos of individualism/materialism unless perhaps one becomes obsessed with self or things.

The author's observations as instructor/administrator have been corroborated by voluntary work with student government leaders and by published general analyses of black student consciousness by others like Muhammad Ahmad,1 S. E. Anderson,2 K. Sue Jewell,3 Ronald Walters,4 and Luke Tripp.5

The vast majority of black students have been removed from their history and have precious little context in which to put the vagaries of increased participation in mainstream institutions. The major responsibility for black student ahistoricity, identity ambivalence, an individualistic ethos, and their increasing use as buffers must be attributed to the institutions of this society. This paper focuses upon the relationship between the American institution of education and cultural repression of black students.

III. INTERNAL COLONIALISM AND EDUCATION

The major assumption in the following discussion is that the experience of African American people has been and continues to be one of internal colonialism. For more than forty years, a number of African American scholars and a few white ones have so des-

igned the black condition in this country,\(^6\) although the colonized occupy the same geographical space as the colonial power. The one factor that seems most critical to these analyses is institutional domination. In discussing that domination, black historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. suggests that the five constants of colonialism anywhere are economic exploitation, political control, racism, cultural repression, and force. Historian L. Alex Swan agrees with Bennett, and focuses on cultural repression when he claims that the colonizer “attempts to destroy its [colonized] culture, values, language, history, and virtually all else”\(^7\) in the processes of mystification and dehumanization.

Several African American scholars have identified the role that education assumes in that cultural repression. Educator Jomills Braddock asserts that it is “the primary vehicle for achieving cultural dominance.”\(^8\) Educator Patti Peterson, realizing that cultural dominance is inherent in colonialism, argues that education “often serves as the vehicle for intellectual aggression. It becomes far more than the transmission of knowledge; it is also the engine of transformation of peoples.”\(^9\) Bennett, recognizing that the colonizer must rely on more than physical force to sustain colonialism, claims that the oppressor will also use diametrically opposed methods of force to occupy the minds of the colonized:

He can forcibly deny the oppressed education, thereby limiting their social and economic possibilities, or he can forcibly educate the oppressed, thereby giving them his values and making them instruments of his purposes.\(^10\)

Bennett warns that by making the colonized ashamed of themselves and their values, the colonizer intends the “cultural retardation of a whole people and the systematic repression of their values, insights,
and expressions.” Sociologist Douglas Davidson supports Bennett’s idea of dehumanization, suggesting that colonial education is a “tool to perpetuate the colonizer’s sense of superiority and to induce a feeling of inferiority in the colonized subjects.”

Although education or lack of it has always been a weapon that the colonizer wielded against African American understanding and thus its humanity, education has been increasingly employed by the colonizer since the black movement of the Sixties to create a buffer class among the colonized. The author will not provide a history or detailed analysis of those years, but rather adduce some brief insights of additional black scholars as to the meaning of that period for the liberation struggle of African Americans. By liberation struggle, I mean the struggle for freedom from the mystification and dehumanization of this colonial order.

Literary critic Houston A. Baker, Jr. is clear about the subtleness of the devastation of the American education system. Branding it “a bastion of racism . . . striving desperately to maintain the status quo . . . [in which] White America has spent billions of dollars and a great amount of repressive energy to insure the dominance of white meanings,” he summarizes the general impact of the college and university welcome to black students:

[T]he ways of colonialism are subtle indeed. To draw off the young, to place them in institutions that alienate them from their culture has a devastating impact on the growth of any nation, And the type of literacy guaranteed by the academy today is still not calculated to provide anything approaching an adequate definition of black life in America . . . [T]he majority of black students . . . seldom . . . come . . . to any sense of themselves as representatives of a unique culture.

Sociologist James Turner and historian W. Eric Perkins elaborate further on the phenomena of mystification and dehumanization which proceed from the training that black students receive in bourgeois institutions, which have as their ultimate purpose the defense and

11. Id. at 212.
14. Id. at 130.
authentication of the American racist/capitalistic/sexist society and Euro-American culture:

To date, the Afro-American intelligentsia has been deficient in uncovering the 'reality' behind the 'appearance,' leaving our self-understanding and the politics associated with coming to self-consciousness in a vacuum.\textsuperscript{15}

As Braddock notes, these "native elites . . . are unable to move affirmatively toward liberation because of their failing to recognize their own oppression."\textsuperscript{16}

Turner explains that the increased number of black students in white universities proceeded from an effort "‘to create greater acceptance of the social system by giving them a vested interest in its benefit,’"\textsuperscript{17} not because it was the moral thing to do or that America had no choice but to accede to black student demands for larger admissions. Thus, the real purpose behind the newly opened doors was to produce "‘a large national black bourgeoisie as a stabilizing social class to counteract the growing alienation and disruptive currents among the black masses.’"\textsuperscript{18}

According to Turner and Perkins, this attempt of the colonizer to preempt the black student movement and appropriate young black intellectuals has been alarmingly successful. As a consequence of the bourgeois social, economic, and political theory they absorb, "integrationism, black capitalism, the success myth, [and] possessive individualism are results of such ideological domination and manipulation.”\textsuperscript{19} They point out that thus the social outlook of these students "is social reformism: the philosophy of economic and property acquisition, personal thrift and moral righteousness.”\textsuperscript{20} Finally, they raise a sensitive but crucial issue in the demystification of the African American colonial experience when they maintain that the cultural nationalism of that period was in some ways reactionary because it "was not antithetical to this view, since it did not foster

\textsuperscript{15} Turner & Perkins, \textit{Towards a Critique of Social Science}, 7 \textit{Black Scholar} 2, 8 (1976).
\textsuperscript{16} Braddock, \textit{supra} note 9, at 32.
\textsuperscript{17} J. Turner, \textit{Black Nationalism}, \textit{Topics in Afro-American Studies} 70 (H. Richards ed. (1971).
\textsuperscript{18} Id. at 70.
\textsuperscript{19} Turner & Perkins, \textit{supra} note 16, at 8.
\textsuperscript{20} Id. at 7.
an anticapitalist position." 21 The upshot of this substantial colonial success has been aptly described by Baker:

Articulate young blacks who might have played significant roles in the black community have been effectively removed. Their training in the academy makes it unlikely that they will ever return home. 22

Another way to summarize the impact that college has had on recent black students is to argue that an additional three R’s have increasingly operated in that experience that have had as much influence if not more than the traditional ones. They are rendering, reinforcement, and reward. The past is rendered from the perspective of those in power, and their values are valorized. The attendant hierarchies of culture and dominant meanings are reinforced in the minds of black students. Finally, those students who accept such are rewarded both during and after the educational experience. William Strickland, Jr. labelled this process "the Americanization of the race." 23

Must there be such cooptation of black college students? The author thinks not. Blacks, with the support of liberated Whites, must develop a strategy of institutionalized resistance to the mystification and dehumanization inherent in this colonial educational system, and explore legal alternatives. First, however, Blacks who are in educational institutions—and/or who are parents of the young—must follow the counsel of Turner and Perkins and promote their own demystification:

We must accept our responsibility to understand the reality of our national oppression, and how various forms of political, economic, cultural and social forces intersect to dominate black people as a systematic process of the social order. 24

Second, those black educators and parents who have demystified their experience of internal colonialism and have reclaimed their own humanity must focus on the cultural duality of their students/children, and in the words of psychologist Louis Williams, "assist them

21. Id.
in developing an awareness of the forces of racism and colonialism with its psychological, sociological, and physical oppression."\textsuperscript{25} In fact, psychologist Arthur Mathis suggests that it is more important for educators and parents to help black students demystify their experience by teaching "them the true function of the American system . . . than teaching them racial pride and identity."\textsuperscript{26} Is demystification of the American ethos more important than understanding one's identity? Perhaps, rather, the processes are interactive, for one's identity is impacted by the American ethos even as that identity affects one's own ethos. In sum, Turner contends that African Americans who are concerned with black education "cannot be apolitical because as an internal colony our people are engulfed by the oppressors' institutions."\textsuperscript{27} Further, he argues convincingly "that control over content and definition of the learning of our young is a pivotal facet of the liberation struggle."\textsuperscript{28}

IV. THE CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

One institutional way to participate in defining and controlling the content of the educational experience of black college students on predominantly white campuses is to employ the Center for Black Culture as an institution within an institution. Not only can its resources be developed to reflect a black perspective, but it can also impact the curriculum. At present, the WVU Center is attempting to assist in: 1) bringing to fruition the Certificate in Black Studies, which includes developing new courses in that area; 2) assessing the black content of traditional courses; and 3) persuading faculty to provide options for students to do papers on the black experience. The CBC is also exploring ways with the new Dean of the libraries to: 1) evaluate the major libraries in terms of black materials; 2) build a stronger black collection in those libraries; and 3) coordinate

\textsuperscript{25} L. B. Williams & M. El-Khawas, \textit{A Philosophy of Black Education}, 47 J. NEGRO EDUC. 177, 181 (1978).


\textsuperscript{27} Turner, \textit{supra} note 18, at 72-73.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Id.} at 73.
the CBC development of black holdings within that system. Such efforts should eventually bear upon the curriculum.

Programs which have been sponsored by the CBC or in conjunction with academic departments or student organizations can also have an academic influence. Recent symposia on black women in American history and literature, South Africa, racism on college campuses, Blacks in politics, black philosophy, and social work among Blacks were intended to augment the textbook/discussion experience of the classroom.

What must occur to realize the above is for the Center to establish and maintain academic credibility, autonomy, and an angle of vision from the black perspective. Thus, it is not only necessary that staff members of the CBC have academic credentials in black history and culture as well as success in resisting cultural repression, but also that the administrator to whom the Center reports understands authentic cultural pluralism, subscribes to it, and permits the autonomy for its actualization. It requires a view of history from the vantage of the victim as well as genuine humility on the part of that administrator.

Even so, except in alternative institutions and other black institutions where black administrators in fact exhibit a black perspective, there should be no pipedreams about cultural pluralism being effected in the near future. Therefore, what needs to occur at the same time efforts are made to create a Center which will move in that direction is an exploration of legal precedents and possibilities to protect the rights of national minorities. Although the author is at best a dilettante in legal matters, it seems appropriate to raise questions about the present status of U.S. domestic and international legal policies regarding cultural pluralism.

V. CULTURAL PLURALISM AND THE LAW

In his recent book, *Plural But Equal*, black cultural historian Harold Cruse examines the fourteenth amendment and the United States Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision for their implications regarding cultural pluralism. Cruse performs an incisive analysis of the Constitution and the fourteenth amendment.
Arguing that "the Constitution was conceived as a political covenant for an all-white nation" and that it "was never conceived, written, amended, or otherwise interpreted either to reflect, accommodate, or otherwise acknowledge the pluralistic composition of American society," he contends that the fourteenth amendment's equal protection clause is too vague to guarantee African Americans equal economic and political rights, much less cultural ones:

The final version of the Fourteenth Amendment as ratified permitted such a degree of interpretive elasticity as to whose equal protection was actually defended that ultimately all types of citizens and interests were due as much, and even more, equal protection than the blacks.

Relating the Brown decision to that amendment, Cruse avers that "[t]he Fourteenth Amendment, cited by the high court in 1954 to support the Brown decision, does not, cannot, guarantee or enforce what Brown mandated." He questions that decision as a judicial conception on the same basis that he questions the Constitution:

While it legally and morally banished segregation, it did so on the premise that America is, was or ought to be '... one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all,' which was always a myth and continues to be a myth.

Donald Howie, an NAACP legal counsel in the Brown case, later reasoned the relationship between the myth and the language of Brown. The Supreme Court's central statement was loaded:

To separate them (black children) from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone.

He translated it into an approximation of the following syllogism that represents black dehumanization because the language suggests integration means assimilation:

30. Id. at 38 (emphasis in original).
31. Id. at 37.
32. Id. at 38.
33. Id. at 38-9.
Separation of Black children from White children generates a lasting feeling of inferiority in Black children.
Segregated public education separates Black children from White children.
Segregated public education generates a lasting feeling of inferiority in Black children.\textsuperscript{32}

Cogent extensions of this syllogism are that black children suffer irreparable psychological damage from association with themselves and that integration means association with white children. Implicit is a rejection of cultural pluralism. Cruse is explicit when he maintains that \textit{Brown} did not oppose the dehumanization of African Americans, although "its historical role \textit{should} have been to . . . pave the road for the black minority to function more effectively in a racially, ethnically, politically, and culturally plural society."\textsuperscript{36}

From these analyses, one could posit that neither the fourteenth amendment nor the \textit{Brown} decision provided equal protection for black rights under the law, whether those rights were political, economic, or cultural. Y. N. Kly, Director at Large of the International Law Program of the National Conference of Black Lawyers' Community College of Law and International Diplomacy in Chicago, maintained that there is a method to the madness of the United States' denial of such rights when he examined its policy of minority rights after the establishment of the United Nations:

During this period 1948-54, . . . the black national minority represented a potential hornet's nest which the U.S. had no desire to risk disturbing by furthering egalitarian concepts internationally which might someday serve to alter its traditional slave and conquest-oriented minority development. Thus, vulnerable on the domestic front as far as collective rights in relation to minorities were concerned, the U.S. embarked upon a policy of de-emphasizing collective human rights in the U.N. in favor of an emphasis on individual civil and political human rights.\textsuperscript{37}

Kly continues by making a lengthy analysis of a report accepted in 1977 by the Sub-Commission of the Commission of Human Rights of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35} \textit{Id.} at 373.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} H. CRUSE, \textit{supra} note 30, at 348.
\end{itemize}
Yet other governments, such as that of the U.S.A., which have not explicitly recognized the existence of minorities within its borders, indicated that the objective of their policy is 'cohesion and unity of their people (through assimilation and Anglo-Americanization) and the creation of an atmosphere in which the various ethnic, religious and linguistic groups may find the opportunity to transcend the differences between them,' (thus leaving the Anglo-American in the superior position of overseeing this unending process and setting the rules and conditions by which it proceeds). On the basis of that assumption, the tendency of such governments has been to de-emphasize the scope of intergroup differences, or often even to deny their existence altogether. 38

Ironically, the Sub-Commission declared that harmonious relations in a multinational society largely depend on the dominant group allowing minorities "to pursue their . . . cultural development according to their own tradition in an atmosphere free of discrimination." 39 Developing only in accord to the traditions of the dominant group fosters not only "non-harmonious relations, but also the domination and developmental retardation of the minority." 40 The Sub-Commission further concluded that not only is one source of intergroup tension and friction a policy of forced assimilation, but also that when the contributions of a minority group's "culture (not their contribution to the dominant, e.g. Anglo-American, culture) are recognized," it represents one source of security which is necessary for the elimination of intergroup tension.

What seems to undergird these analyses of the United States' domestic and international policies relating to national minority rights is the assumption that those policies reflect Anglo-Saxon domination—including cultural repression. The myth of the melting pot, of one nation, is convenient in perpetuating those policies. This myth is central to the colonial operationalizing of the institution of education, and so is interwoven in political, economic, and social institutions. In addition, it seems that there is a relationship between such politics of culture and minority group retardation and resentment. Conversely, respect for and protection of cultural diversity will make differences at once less repressive and less divisive.

38. Id. at 12.
39. Id.
40. Id. at 13.
41. Y.N. Kly, supra note 38.
VI. PATHS TO CULTURAL PLURALISM

How then can we respect and protect specifically the right of African Americans to understand and to practice their own culture, to be conversant and comfortable with their own identity and ethos? How can the proper respect for and protection of difference make it possible finally to grasp genuine universality? Is not the universal experience in any colonial society deemed to be that of the colonizer? Is not cultural repression the logical order in any such society? How can the politics of culture, with its material base, be affected? No doubt, given that base and the attendant imbalance of power, African Americans must at once harness their own power and link up with other powers on both a national and international basis. Percipient Whites must see the connection of such self-determination and coalitions to the preservation of their own authentic power. Finally, then, what are some potential strategies within those frameworks and what can they mean?

A. Institutional Approaches

The effects—including the mystification and dehumanization of cultural repression—of dominant institutions can be mitigated through minority institutions. Such has been largely the case with the black church, and to a lesser extent, the black college or university. Although both institutions have been influenced by the colonial system, they nonetheless have contributed to African American resistance to mystification and dehumanization. (Alternative institutions in the Garvey and Nation of Islam movements were even more successful in that resistance.)

As has been mentioned, a Center for Black Culture can serve such purposes on predominantly white campuses. Obviously, since it should not support the cultural hierarchies in this society and so should not propagate its dominant meanings, the proper vision and purposes of that Center will be in contradistinction to the vision and purposes of the dominant elite of this society. Three other related problems arise from the nature of a colonial order and would impinge on the Center’s ability to achieve academic credibility, autonomy, and a black perspective. First, colleges and universities are
not committed to bring in black scholars steeped in the black experience, especially those who have hewed a black perspective. Second, there is both opposition and apathy toward any enterprise which emphasizes the black experience. Due to a perfect understanding or lack of understanding of cultural pluralism, such efforts are often branded as anti-white or racist: It matters less that racism is the use of racial chauvinism to subjugate another racial group. Third, many black scholars who are brought in to direct such Centers are themselves victims of cultural repression and/or opportunists. But if run properly and allowed the autonomy to operate as an institution within an institution, such a Center may impact the politics of culture as part of the national super-structure.

B. Constitutional Change

Many sober analysts would gainsay the possibility of the above occurring in a colonial society; the author has cited his own reservations. Cruse would support such skepticism, but argue that, unless his suggestion for a new Constitutional amendment is heeded, "the only hope left for the political, economic, and cultural survival of blacks into the next century is self-organization."42 His proposition for an amendment is a provocative one. Cruse not only points out the specific and unique historical relationship of the Constitution to African Americans—including the vagueness of the fourteenth amendment—but also, asserts that women are pressing for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment ("ERA") because they recognize the vagueness of the fourteenth amendment and believe it thus to be "an insufficient safeguard against sex discrimination practiced against a class".43 Cruse then projects the potential consequences of such ratification for Blacks:

[It] would constitutionally submerge the nonwhite minority group, effectively burying it as a political and/or legal issue. The black minority group, in particular, would be left constitutionally stranded in the legal mire of the ambiguities of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause.44

42. H. Cruse, supra note 30, at 382.
43. Id. at 31.
44. Id. (emphasis in original).
He concludes his argument by positing the need for "an equal rights amendment to the Constitution that would bar economic, political, and cultural discrimination against a minority group based on race."\textsuperscript{45} Cruse contends that "such an amendment would not only reassert the original substance of the Fourteenth Amendment, but reopen to debate the social policy implications of the equal protection clause's ambiguities."\textsuperscript{46} The issue of that amendment, he says, could be raised by either an independent black political party or the Rainbow Coalition.

C. International Law

An international approach to protecting black rights has been recommended by African American freedom fighters for almost forty years. In 1951, a petition was made to the United Nations to protest genocide. In the 1960s, Malcolm X created a stir by threatening to bring the United States' violation of black human rights before that same body. Recently, Ms. Pansye S. Atkinson advised the Congressional Black Caucus to look to international law to seek defense against the cultural repression of United States' colonial education.

Kly, whose analysis of the inadequacies of United States' domestic and international policies to protect the rights of national minorities has already been recounted, also believes that international law provides the answer. In the book \textit{International Law and the Black Minority in the U.S.}, he fleshes out his vision. First, he cites legal precedent for such protection:

The sacredness of the ethnic idea, of the right of a people to continue to be themselves in all significant ways in which their culture has made them distinguishable and unique from other ethnics, has found recognition in the principles of 20th century human rights law, in the instruments for minority protection in the constitutions of progressive and socialist nations, and in international bodies including the United Nations.\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{45} Id. (emphasis in original).
\textsuperscript{46} Id.
\textsuperscript{47} Y.N. Kly, \textit{supra} note 38, at xii (emphasis in original).
Article 27 is the nucleus of Kly's proposal. Tracing its history from 1950 to its unanimous adoption by the General Assembly in 1966, he cites the article:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.

Implementation would impose upon the United States government two requirements:

- the necessity of officially recognizing the legal and political existence of national minorities... living within... [its] borders; and; the acceptance of the concept of 'special measures' or affirmative action designed to make available the circumstances, finances, technology, etc. to enable the minority to reach equality with the majority, maintain its cultural and ethnic identity, if desired, while sharing a political, economic and social equal-status relationship with the majority.

Although Kly concedes that the general principle incorporated in Article 27 has not "yet entered into customary international law, or has acquired in any way the status of a rule of law... the legal principle exists and... it is in the process of being accepted by states."

One recent document prepared by the United Nations on minority rights is E/CN.4/Sub.2/382/Add.1-6, which was sent to all states for their comments and consideration. Kly makes four critical points about the significance of this document as he claims that it is the first United Nations' document about which the following is true:

- whose recommendations have been adopted by the Sub-Commission and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights...
- to stress the need for urgent involvement of the United Nations in the question of minority rights...
- to clearly connect the question of racial discrimination to the question of minority rights, and to suggest that these objectives are interdependent...
- tangible evidence of a change in the attitudes of the United Nations towards the problems of minorities.

48. Id. at xxiii.
49. Id.
50. Id. at 4.
51. Id. at 23.
Although the logic of the analyses of Cruse and Kly seems impeccable, and their legal strategies are consistent with human rights and the language of prior legal premises, their very critiques of United States' U.S. domestic and international policies suggest that those strategies will not be implemented by this country. Even without fine-tuned rationations, there is the immutable logic of colonial systems, classical or internal. Cultural repression is indispensable to political and economic domination of the colonized; this is at once the tightest and largest of the closed circles of logic. What then can be done? Or, what must be done? The closed circle of colonial logic tightens even as the world constricts.

VII. CONCLUSION

There are no panaceas, but the author returns to what are in fact three concentric circles of activity. In the innermost band, which is black institutionalization, African Americans must organize among themselves to oppose cultural repression in education. Near the end of that last arc of the first spiral, and in the beginnings of the new curve of coalition with Whites, Centers for Black Culture can advance the demystification of colonial hierarchies of culture and dominant meanings, which Blacks and Whites need in order to resist dehumanization. Nationally, if such coalition does not move in the direction to protect African Americans from colonial institutional domination by means of a new amendment, then Blacks must also push that. In the third and largest orbit, African Americans must combine their forces with national allies and with other oppressed people—and those who support them—around the world to legitimize black cultural autonomy necessary for black cultural integrity and authentic cultural pluralism. International law represents one way to get this done.

To change metaphors, retreating from the politics of culture in American education which contribute to African American cultural repression is to reinforce those colonial politics. Blacks will continue to be socialized away from their own identity and value system. In their concomitant rejection by the other whom they seek to become, they will experience what black Caribbean sociologist Orlando Pat-
terson terms "social death." African American class division will continue to widen, and understanding of that division will diminish. At a larger level, the rich culture and communalistic ethos that have proceeded from the black experience will be decreasingly available to the country. Whites will be deprived of the critical chance to look at their own experience through the eyes of the victim. Globally, imperialism—including cultural aggression—will march on and be marched upon. The casualties will come in all colors; the blood will be red.

52. O. Patterson, Slavery and Social Death 5 (1982).