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The increasing diversity of America has become a very pertinent and relevant issue of late - many wonder if the privilege that whites have enjoyed since the ratification of the Constitution will diminish or go away. As of right now, white culture is still the norm, the default by which American society defines itself, both to others and to itself. However, with the increasing calls for equality by many ethnic minorities, and the increasing population of minorities in many areas of the country - more than half of the population of California is now Latino or Hispanic - one wonders if America will still be seen as a white-centric country.

The white domination of American culture is evident even today; popular culture still places a disproportionate number of whites in films and television, where minority characters are seen as 'token' and only placed in these pieces of media in order to expand their audience to minority groups. Most business leaders, politicians and entertainment executives remain white, leading to a culture in which most important decisions that determine culture are given final approval by whites. This makes them the primary culture makers of America today.

However, this attitude has been slowly but steadily changing over the past few decades, and it seeks to continue changing. In popular music, for example, many top artists and producers are ethnic minorities, demonstrating a powerful influence over that aspect of media culture. The increasing influence of minorities, and the importance they have in big policy and business decisions, are being felt to an increasing degree as years pass.

What does this mean, then, for white culture? Will there come a time in which African-American culture will be the norm, and 'white' movies will become a niche market? To my mind, I do not believe that white culture will completely go away, nor would it be suppressed by a greater influence of diverse cultural figures. For one thing, white culture has been too firmly entrenched in American history to make it removable if people even wanted to do that. However, what is slowly happening is the push for an equilibrium of cultures, where no one culture is considered the 'default,' or representative of the country as a whole, and instead focusing on a number of subcultures that cater to (and occasionally cross over with) specific groups of people.

Since the Civil Rights Movement ended in the late 60s, the push for tolerance in both popular and political culture has been slow but deliberate. Due to the increasing influence of African-Americans in popular culture and American society, they are able to have somewhat of an easier time than their forebears. However, despite these incredible societal advances, there are some issues that still must be worked out. While prominent African American politicians and celebrities, as well as minority figures from other races, have more influence than they ever had before, there is still a systematic and institutionalized process by which African-Americans are still disenfranchised.

Various governmental systems are still disproportionately insensitive to minorities, and this remains a huge problem. There are " three flash points of tension in the justice system - the use of race as a criterion in the

surveillance, questioning, searching, and arresting of suspects; jury selection; and differential punishment of minorities" (Smelser et al., p. 18). Social and economic factors still leave blacks and Latinos at significant economic disadvantages, and the discrimination that many still encounter on a daily basis contributes to factors that lead to these higher statistics for sentencing and imprisonment.

The presence of prominent African-American celebrities and politicians almost seems to belie the fact that problems still exist that must be overcome; often, the election of President Barack Obama is held up as a sign that racism is no longer a problem. The cultural power of many black and Latino musicians and producers leads to the impression that they have 'taken over' popular culture, and are in charge of these decisions. Despite these appearances, there is still a long way to go before racial tolerance can truly be claimed by the majority of American institutions.

Despite this remaining intolerance, it can be stated that large leaps have been taken in the fight for equal treatment by racial minorities. The election of President Obama, and the success of many prominent black artists, politicians and musicians, are things that could not have occurred fifty years ago; with that in mind, it must be said that some progress has been made, but there is always more to do.

The decreasing size of the world due to globalization has done wonders for the idea of multiculturalism and tolerance in America. Due to the advent of the Internet and international travel, it is much easier for people of all cultures to communicate with each other. As communication and proximity is

key to understanding and tolerance, it became much harder to withstand the concept of "the Other," the people who you never see, do not know anything about, and thus inherently distrust. The Information Age has globalized the world to the point where it is nearly impossible not to know something about people from nearly all cultures; if you do not, that information is almost instantly accessible.

However, this is not to say that racism is dead. In fact, the era of globalization has made it easier to discount all claims of persistent racism as foolhardy, since it would be "impossible" to be racist in this day and age (Barlow, p. 8). The huge steps that have been taken to combat racism have provided a protective shield of sorts around those racist policies and attitudes that remain, as globalization has made it seem as though there is no more work to be done. This attitude merely furthers white privilege, as it creates an atmosphere of distrust and insulates said privilege under the guise of nonexistence.

At the same time, globalization offers substantial antiracist opportunities, not the least of which is the opportunity to educate those who have incorrect ideas about the cultures and behaviors of others. As people travel more and have greater access to people from other cultures, that personal contact allows for a more immediate sense of identification of races as people, and not The Other. To that end, globalization, despite its tendency to lull those with privilege into thinking the fight is over, also has tremendous potential to educate and inform.

## **Works Cited**

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