

The mirror of the other and america: the multinational society

[Society](#)



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The issues explored in "The Mirror of the Other" and "America: The Multinational Society" point out problems in society that are compounded by the "mono-cultural" attitudes that Reed and Fuentes tell us to try and avoid. Social problems that take part in "mono-cultural" attitudes include racism, poverty, and ageism. Carlos Fuentes talks about the interactions between Hispanic culture and Americans inside the United States. In "America: The Multinational Society", Ishmael Reed discusses the fact that many cultures influence the United States more than people think.

Ishmael Reed believes strongly in the "western" influence, and incorporates many ideas from it. "By which they mean, presumably, a civilization created by the people of Europe, as if Europe can be viewed in monolithic terms" (Reed p256). Racism in today's culture-filled United States is at an all-time high. The Hispanic culture and the American culture coexist whether we like it or not. "The two cultures coexist, rubbing shoulders and questioning each other. We have too many common problems, which demand cooperation and understanding in a new world context, to clash as much as we do" (Fuentes, p251-252).

Fuentes would believe that "mono-cultural" attitudes are curable and seen as a disease. Fuentes would address this problem by coming together and living with our differences cooperatively and peacefully. Reed would also agree to come together as one and not be racist. "Such blurring of cultural styles occurs in everyday life in the United States to a greater extent than anyone can imagine and is probably more prevalent than the sensational conflict between people of different backgrounds that is played up and often encouraged by the media" (Reed, p257).

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Poverty is the state or condition of having little or no money, goods, or means of support. We live in the world's wealthiest nation. Yet 13 percent of people living in the United States live in poverty. In most areas, a family of four needs to earn twice the poverty line to provide children with basic necessities. The "mono-cultural" attitude towards poverty needs to stop. All cultures need to come together as one and conquer what Hispanics and Americans live through.

Fuentes has his own view on family and the way we should act and also pursue closeness with our siblings. "And of course there is the family - family commitment, fighting to keep the family together, perhaps not avoiding poverty but certainly avoiding a lonely poverty" (Fuentes p252).

Ageism is a tendency to regard older persons as debilitated, unworthy of attention, or unsuitable for employment. Fuentes states that elders are like a storybook and are never shunned from society.

The care and respect for the elders is something called *respeto*, the respect for experience and continuity, less than awe at change and novelty. This respect is not limited to old age in itself; in a basically oral culture, the old are the ones who remember stories, who have the store of memory" (Fuentes p252). In Fuentes's mind the elderly are respected to the highest degree. In his culture the elderly are perceived as a royalty and are of the highest honor.

One could almost say that when an old man or an old woman dies in the Hispanic world, a whole library dies with the person" (Fuentes p252). When going through "The Mirror of the Other" and "America: The Multinational Society" there are many social problems that take on "mono-cultural" ideas.

Fuentes and Reed challenge this by giving their own ideas. They address problems like racism, poverty, and ageism by giving their answers of combining cultures. Each author takes on these problems with their own ideas and resolutions to stop these social issues.