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"Religion, Immigration and Assimilation: the  
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Amadu Jacky Kaba, *Seton Hall University*

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# **Religion, Immigration and Assimilation: the Hispanic/Latino Population in the United States and the North African/Muslim Population in Europe**

Amadu Jacky Kaba(Seton Hall University)\*

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## **I. Introduction/Background**

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there appears to be emerging an interesting phenomenon: the convergence or coming together of individuals either from different religions (for example, Christianity,

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\* 아마두 재키 카바(Seton Hall University, Graduate Department of Public and Healthcare Administration, kabaamad@shu.edu), “종교, 이민, 동화: 미국의 히스패닉/라티노와 유럽의 북아프리카인/무슬림”

Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.) or from within same religions (Catholics and Protestants for Christianity or Sunnis or Shites for Muslims) to support or oppose certain human behaviors such as opposition to abortion, support for prayer in school or opposition to same sex unions. It is through this observation that religion plays a crucial role in the acceptance and eventual gradual assimilation of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States, because this immigrant group is relatively conservative and religious in a nation (U.S.) that itself is relatively conservative and religious. For North Africans/Muslims in Europe on the other hand, they are conservative and religious in a continent that is increasingly becoming more secular or socially liberal and relying or believing less in God. Furthermore, for North Africans/Muslims in Europe, while their counterparts in the U.S. are Christians in a Christian country, they are Muslims in a Christian continent.

To explain the above claims differently, in the case of Latin American immigrants, most of whom are Christians (mostly Catholics) in the U.S., they tend to be enjoying a new and rising 21<sup>st</sup> century convergence of religious beliefs and conservative traditional values with the majority of the U.S. population in their opposition to what they perceive as a new rise in the level of secularism, especially in the U.S. and Europe. This new convergence of traditionalists in the U.S. goes beyond religious denominations (Catholics and Protestants) and inter-religions, such as Muslims and Christians. So in the U.S., one tends to find Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Orthodox Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, etc. sharing similar conservative values such as support of prayer in schools, a ban on same sex marriages, and opposition to abortion. In the U.S., for example, by 2005, the foreign born population comprised 12% and the overwhelming majority of that population comes from developing nations, which tend to be more conservative than European nations, which are now sending very few immigrants to the U.S. because their standard of living has improved remarkably in the post Cold War era. So here one sees a substantial foreign born population, which is arguably

conservative and religious migrating to a nation (U.S.), which itself is relatively conservative and religious—a new convergence.

In the case of North Africans/Muslims in European countries, there are serious problems with assimilation or integration primarily because while the majority of Europeans identify themselves as Christians, with strong secularism ideals or behaviors, most of the North African immigrants who are Muslims and Muslims from other parts of the world, tend to be very religious and conservative. One then finds that those North Africans or Muslims in European nations, with their strong conservative values could fit in better in the U.S., because of the American people's high belief in religion and God.

This issue of tensions between those who are in support of increase secularism and those who want religion and traditional conservative values to play a bigger role in society is beginning to receive a special attention from scholars (Hunt, 1999; Miller and Hoffmann, 1999; Philpott, 2002; Wuthnow 2003; Anderson, 2004; and Mazrui, 2004). It now appears that while the major confrontations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were mostly interethnic/interracial, the major confrontations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are cultural and religious, with a rising challenge to rapid secularism across the world. Therefore, we might be witnessing the end of conflicts based on ethnicity and race, and replaced by those based on culture and religion. Individuals or groups within each religion or denomination sharing similar ideological beliefs will begin to unite. It is therefore not surprising to see a merging or coalition forming of people from different racial/ethnic groups in the developing world sharing a lot more in common culturally and religiously with large numbers of Euro-Americans. For example, some members of a white family in the U.S., may share a lot in common religiously and culturally with non-white immigrants from the developing world than they do with their own blood relatives—Cultural and religious similarities replacing or transcending blood and racial ties.

This paper examines how the new world coalition of what I call "Traditionalists" who want to limit the influence of rapid secularism in the world, may be contributing to part of the reason why Latin American immigrants in the U.S. tend to be easily accepted in an increasingly religious nation, while North Africans/Muslims in Europe have a difficulty being accepted or they accepting the culture of their host nations primarily due to their resistance to an increasingly secular Europe. The paper also examines how assimilation of Hispanics/Latinos due to Christianity leads to rising political influence in the U.S., while for North Africans/Muslims in Europe divergent religions or religious and conservative beliefs with the people of that continent leads to economic, social and political exclusion within the societies they reside. The paper also presents a conceptual explanation of assimilation and how it is applied or connected to this work. The paper begins with a description of the geographic proximity of Latin America (from Mexico to Argentina) to the U.S., a rich white majority nation, and also the geographic proximity of North Africa to Europe, another rich majority white region. The paper describes who is Hispanic/Latino in the U.S., and North African/Muslim in Europe, and how the racial or genetic make-up of Hispanics is similar to that of North Africans/Muslims, which is one of the primary reasons or motivations for doing this paper. Let us now start by briefly examining the geographic proximity of Latin America to the U.S., and North Africa to Europe.

## **II. Geographic Proximity of Latin America to the U.S. and Africa to Western Europe**

Latin America (the territory from Mexico to Argentina) shares land border with the United States through Mexico. The two countries share a 1,940 miles border. It is useful to point out that states in the Southern United States, Southwest and West that share land border with Mexico,

were once Mexican territory, but were lost to the U.S. in the Mexican-American War and Treaty of 1848 (Dinnerstein et al. 2003; Gutierrez 1997).

Africa on the other hand, does not share land border with Europe, but Spain technically shares land border with Morocco (Ceuta, 6.3 km, and Melilla, 9.6 km), just as the United Kingdom shares land border with the Republic of Ireland, partly due to Colonialism. The two continents, however, through Spain, share a water border and it takes only 10 miles from northern Morocco to southern Spain (Amiar 1992). It is useful to point out that over 90% of the total landmass of Africa does not share land border with any other country or continent. This is due to the construction of the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869 and it cuts off almost all of the land mass of the continent of 11.635 million square miles, and made it a giant island. So only a small landmass of Egyptian territory shares land border with Gaza/Israel. Later in this paper, the proximity of both of these two developing regions to the two developed regions or entities of Europe and North America will prove to be an important component in trying to understand the treatment of immigrants in each host continent. Let us now briefly examine the racial make-up of Latin Americans and North Africans/Muslims.

### **III. Racial Make-up of Latin Americans in the U.S. and North Africans/Muslims in Europe**

Since this paper will be interchanging the words "Hispanics" and "Latinos", it is useful to provide a definition for what these words mean. In addition, a brief definition of the word "Mestizo" and "Zambo" will also be provided to present the reader with a better understanding of the condition of this group in the United States. Burchard et al. note that: "The term 'Hispanic' or 'Latino' describes a population with a common cultural heritage and most often a common language, but it does not

refer to race or a common ancestry. Although Latinos have been considered to be first and foremost an ethnic group, they represent a heterogeneous mix of Native American, European, and African ancestries. Therefore, they can self-identify as any race or of mixed race as defined by the 2000 US Census.” (2161). As for the term Mestizo, Burchard et al. claim that “...intermarriage between Spanish Christians and Native Americans, the progeny of which were called *Mestizos*...” and that “...African-Native American unions, the progeny of which were called *Zambos*” (2162). The Hispanic immigrant population in the U.S. is similar in racial make-up to that of the general U.S. population. It is comprised of blacks, whites, mestizoes, Native Indians, and people of Asian descent.

The groups with the largest populations in Latin America are whites, Mestizos, Native Indians, and (using the definition of a black person in the U.S., see Yancey 2003; Glazer 2001; Rossing 1988) blacks or people of African descent. For example, as of July 2001, research by his author shows that out of the estimated total population of 490 million in Latin America (excluding the Caribbean), Whites comprised 182,690,461 (37.3%), Mestizos, 152,751,357 (31%), Amerindians 58,265,533 (11.9%), Blacks 16,071,290 (3.3%), Mixed {Blacks mixed with Indians or with Whites or Mestizos} 73,844,229 (15.2%), and other racial groups comprised 7,217,685 (1.5%). If the definition of blacks in the United States were used in Latin America, the black population would be at least 90 million (18.5% of the total 490 million) in July 2001.<sup>1)</sup> By July 2005, the total population of those same nations combined was 518 million. In the U.S., of the 38.3 million Hispanics in July 2003, Black

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<sup>1)</sup> Compiled and calculated by author based on data presented in the Central Intelligence Agency: 2001 World Factbook. Office of Public Affairs. 2001 Washington, D.C. 20505. pp.1-658. Global Support Imaging & Publishing Support. Can also be accessed online at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/download.html>.

The classification of regions is based on United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs groupings of regions and continents of the world. Retrieved on July 12, 2004 from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49.htm>.



Hispanics or Hispanic Blacks comprised 1.7 million (U.S. Census 2003, 2).

#### **IV. North Africans/Muslims in Europe**

The North African/Muslim immigrant population in Western Europe comprises Arabs, blacks, and people of Asian descent, with Arabs comprising among the racial groups with the most number of immigrants and the group with the most misunderstanding with Europeans. While the data on Europe in this paper will focus on Arabs, especially those from Africa, in some instances, data will be provided on the general Muslim population in Europe. That is because it is sometimes difficult to just generalize on North African Arabs alone, while they share a lot of characteristics with other Muslims from Africa, Asia and other parts of the world. The aim here is to present a general understanding of the condition of people of Muslim descent in Europe, a very large proportion of which are Arab.

There is a difference between the U.S. and many European nations in the classification of racial/ethnic groups. For example, in European countries, groups are classified according to ethnicity, while in the U.S. groups are classified according to race. So an Arab may be classified as an Arab in Europe, but classified as white in the United States. The Arab populations in North Africa and the Middle East include blacks, brown skinned Arabs (who could be mistaken for a Mestizo in the Western Hemisphere), and those Arabs who have over time been mixed with Europeans and can be listed as white in the United States. Rogers (1944) notes of the mixing of Europeans and Arabs in North Africa that: "In...Egypt, North Africa were also groups of isolated whites, who were being absorbed by the dark-skinned population." According to Rogers, the process "... of the absorption of incoming whites in these lands had

been going on since the days of the Pharaohs" (208). Let us now turn to the conceptual definition of Culture and how it is related to this paper.

## **V. Conceptual Explanation of Assimilation**

There have been different but similar definitions of assimilation in the past several decades. Most of the definitions explain the integration of minority groups into a larger society. Golash-Boza (2006) points out that: "The concept of assimilation was developed in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and can be understood as the process by which immigrants are incorporated into the host society" (29). Assimilation is "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Quoted in Alba and Nee 1997, 828). According to Morawska (2004), assimilation is "... a multipath process, involving the incorporation of immigrants and their offspring into the economic, political and social institutions and culture of different segments of the host society" (1375). Shamai and Ilatov (2001), note that "Assimilation is the process of giving up traditional ethnic identity and accepting the dominant group's culture" (682).

This author defines assimilation as a gradual process of the acceptance or integration of an immigrant group by the dominant members of a host society. This acceptance or integration does not mean acculturation – the actual abandonment of one's culture for another, in this instance the dominant European or Anglo-American culture. As Schwartz et al. (2006) note: "In most cases, the immigration experience is accompanied by acculturation. In the most general terms, acculturation can be defined as 'the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact'" (2). Culture is the way of life and behavior and beliefs of

a particular group of people. So here, Hispanics/Latinos might become assimilated in the U.S., but they still continue to maintain their culture, including their language.

Writing about the assimilation of Asian and Latin Americans in the U.S., Waters and Jimenez (2005) note that the literature in social science research show that although there are some variations, these two groups are in the process of being assimilated into the mainstream U.S. society. This is being done through intermarriage, spatial concentration and social and economic development (105-106). Waters and Jimenez continued by claiming that: "Studies that focus on race find much higher intermarriage rates with whites among Asians and Latinos than among blacks with whites....Mexican Americans experience no significant barriers to intermarriage with non-Hispanic whites" (110).

In an article that explains how Hispanic and Muslim immigrants deal with the issue of assimilation in Western nations, Davidson et al. (2006) point to what they see as a threat by radical Muslims, be which they tend to separate themselves from the mainstream society, instead of assimilating. The authors also note that these Muslim immigrants in Western societies tend to "... promote behaviors that Western society cannot tolerate, such as the martyrdom of children, domination, destruction, beheadings, suicide bombings and destruction of artifacts deemed unacceptable to their beliefs, but are revered by others"(10). Davidson et al. add that radical Muslims tend to be resistant to assimilation because of their deep religious beliefs lead them not to accept the beliefs of others, but that other strict religious groups such as the Amish or Orthodox Jews do not threaten others.

The authors, however, point out that "Terrorism does not reflect traditional Islamic culture, but the acts of extremists have caused many people to associate violence with Islam (10-11). The authors also note that Muslim parents tend to be successful in slowing the pace of integration or assimilation of their children, especially regarding "...social behavior such as sexual activity and alcohol consumption—

and they retain parental authority, which often is lost in Mexican households” (13). As for Hispanics, Davidson et al. point out that they tend to assimilate quickly within the mainstream United States: “As an indication of Hispanic assimilation, 50 percent of third-generation immigrants marry outside the immigrant group and many become Protestant—evangelical Protestant” (Davidson et al. 2006, 13).

What all of this means is that a Hispanic Christian immigrant to the U.S. could arrive in the country on a Saturday and on Sunday would be attending a Church service. As a result, he or she would immediately start interacting with people in that community. And if he or she becomes a member of that Church, the pastor or members could easily find a job for them and also look out for their social welfare. For North African Muslims or Muslims in Europe, on the other hand, they would go to a Mosque, which would have immigrants comprising the overwhelming majority of members and separated from the mainstream community. So the problem might really not be hatred or prejudice, but actually the inability for natives and immigrants to meet at a particular location and thereby get to interact or know one another.

This now brings us to the main theme or thesis of this paper—that due to their sharing of similar religious and cultural beliefs, Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. are forming a strong coalition with most Americans, while North Africans are diverging in their relations with Europeans, due to their strong conservative and religious beliefs in what many see as an increasingly secular continent. Let us now turn to this important part of this paper.

## **VI. Religion, and the Process of Assimilation by Hispanic Immigrants in the U.S. and North African/Muslim Immigrants in Europe**

The evidence of the gradual assimilation of Hispanic immigrants into the mainstream American society tends to lean towards religious and cultural similarities.

An increasing number of publications in recent years have been pointing to the rise of religious and traditional conservatism in the U.S. and in most developing nations. This rise appears to be a challenge to the continuous influence of secularism in the U.S., Europe and other developed nations (Oldfield 1997; Miller and Hoffmann 1999; Cristi 2001; Smith 2003; Philpott 2002; Anderson 2004; Sanderson 2005).

Philpott (2002) has made similar observations pertaining to the rising opposition across the world against secularism and the influence of religion in politics in those entities.

Philpott (2002) points to three separate trends that have been identified. The first trend is the growing power of religious organizations within countries who are shaping public debate and policies of government. Examples of such organizations include The Hindu National parties in India, Turkish Muslim movements in Turkey, Christian Orthodox in Russia, evangelicals in Latin America, ultra-Orthodox Jews and Orthodox Jewish nationalists in Israel and Conservative Christians in the United States. These various groups according to Philpott "...have all come to exercise increasing influence over laws governing marriage, education, foreign policy toward favored groups and states, religious minorities, and the relationship between religion and the institutions of the state" (83).

The second trend is that religious organizations are exercising a transnational influence in the politics of countries abroad (83). An example of this might be Christian Conservatives in the U.S. influencing the U.S. government not to financially support any United Nations programs that advocate the use of condoms or contraceptives in

developing nations, a decision which a high proportion of religious leaders in those countries would support. Or conservative Anglican Bishops in sub-Saharan Africa threatening to leave the Church if a Gay Bishop in the U.S. is allowed to be consecrated. For example, John H. Adams reported on August 23, 2004, in the *Layman Online* that: "...two Biblically traditional former Episcopal congregations in the Diocese of Los Angeles held worship services Sunday under the authority of an African diocese" despite threats from their bishop. According to Adams, church attendance has mushroomed "... in the wake of the media attention on the rift between orthodox Episcopalians and the liberal Episcopal Church (USA)." According to Adams: "African Anglicans have been sympathetic to U.S. Episcopalians who were shocked by their denomination's decision to approve the election of V. Gene Robinson as a bishop after Robinson had left his wife and family to live in a homosexual lifestyle." The Most Rev. Henry Luke Orombi, archbishop of Uganda, was quoted as saying that the Rt. Rev. Evans Kisekka, bishop of Luweero, Uganda, had his "... full blessing and support in receiving the clergy from St. James' Church, Newport Beach, and All Saints' Church, Long Beach, California, USA. These clergy are canonically resident in the Luweero Diocese and are priests and deacons in good standing of the Church of Uganda."<sup>2)</sup>

The third trend according to Philpott is that, "...even more powerfully, religion shapes not only the policies of states but also their very constitutions, thus becoming 'the law of the land'" (83). To support this claim, Philpott points to the rise in the use of "Islamic Law" or Sharia in the past two decades in countries such as Sudan, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. Philpott observes these trends and notes that "In its own way, each of these trends challenges secularization as differentiation" (83).

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<sup>2)</sup> John H. Adams, August 23, "African Anglican bishop backs breakaway California Churches," The Layman Online. Retrieved on August 5, 2005 from <http://www.layman.org/layman/news/2004-news/african-anglican-bishop-backs-ca.htm>.

The current Pope of the Catholic Church, Benedict XVI, had expressed concerns on the growing dependence of “aggressive secularism”. According to Sanderson (2005), the then Cardinal Josef Ratzinger had said in an interview in the newspaper *La Repubblica* that secularism is being:

...transformed into an ideology which is imposed through politics and does not give public space to the Catholic or Christian vision, which runs the risk of becoming something purely private and thus disfigured. We must defend religious freedom against the imposition of an ideology which is presented as if it were the only voice of rationality, when it is only the expression of a ‘certain’ rationalism (19).

This issue appears to be dividing people in the United States and also dividing the United States and Europe. Miller and Hoffman (1999) note of the rising perception of divisiveness among the people of the United States on different popular social and moral issues including politics, religion “... and popular debates on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, and school prayer. Underlying these specific issues is a sense that Americans are coalescing into two broad groups, each vying for control of American culture” (721). Miller and Hoffman observe that religious denomination which used to bond groups might be replaced by groupings based on religious orthodoxy. This might have resulted to the establishment of two broad camps: orthodox and progressive, with both camps represented by members of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish beliefs. “These two groups are presumably engaged in an openly hostile battle to control the symbols of American life” (722). Miller and Hoffman add that scholarly studies on this topic in recent years indicate that “...denominational affiliation continues to affect attitudes toward many issues, such as abortion, sexual behavior, and egalitarianism, both between religious groups...and within religious groups” (722).

## VII. Europe - United States Divide

There has also been a visible split or misunderstanding between the U.S. and Europe primarily because of religion. The following questions might have been asked before in debates: “Who lost China?” or “Who lost Russia?” It is likely that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are those who will ask the question: “Who lost Christianity?” That is because the region of the world that spread Christianity all over the world and made it the religion with the largest following in the world, is the region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which a strong majority of people say that religion does not play a very important role in their lives.

While the evidence continues to show a rise in religion in the U.S., there continues to be a rise in secularism in Europe. According to Anderson (2004), while America is becoming very religious, “Europe is becoming a very secular place” (144). Anderson quotes the general secretary of the United Reform Church in Britain as saying that: “In Western Europe, we are hanging on by our fingernails.... Europe is no longer Christian” (144). Anderson continues by noting that in France, just 1 out of every 20 people attends weekly religious service, 15% of Italians and 30% of Germans. Just over 1 out of every 5 Europeans (21%) hold religion to be “very important”. Forty percent of Europeans believe in heaven and 50% of that figure believes in hell. Fifty seven percent of Spaniards, 55% of Germans, 40% of French and 30% of Swedes believe sin exist. In its draft constitution, many commentators criticized the European Union for not including “Europe’s Christian heritage in its proposed constitution” (Anderson 2004, 145-146).

In a Pew Research Center for the People and the Press survey on religion in 44 countries released on December 19, 2002, unlike the United States, most Europeans said religion is not very important in their lives. In the survey, 59% of Americans said that religion is very important in their lives. However, in Europe, the figures were substantially lower than that of the United States: 33% in Britain; 27%



in Italy, 21% in Germany; 11% in France; 36% in Poland; 35% in Ukraine; 29% in Slovakia; 14% in Russia; 13% in Bulgaria; and 11% in the Czech Republic, said that religion is very important in their lives. The United States, however, shares its support for religion with most developing countries, including Latin American countries. Many people outside of the U.S. might view that as a big contradiction because they do not expect such a high proportion of people in the U.S. to say that religion is very important in their lives. As for the developing countries in the survey, 60% or more of them said that religion is very important in their lives: 91% in Pakistan; 65% in Turkey; 80% in Guatemala; 77% in Brazil; 95% in Indonesia; 92% in India; 88% in the Philippines; 69% in Peru; 66% in Bolivia; 61% in Venezuela; and 57% in Mexico.<sup>3)</sup>

Sanderson (2005) also points out that it is projected that in a decade there will be more practicing Muslims than Christians in Britain, even though 72% of the British in a 2001 survey identified themselves as Christian. However, when asked to rank ten things that were important in their lives, 80% of them put religion at the bottom of the list (p.19).

In the United States, on the other hand, Anderson points out that "More than 80 percent of Americans (90 percent in some surveys) profess belief in God" (p.146). The U.S., according to Anderson boasts more houses of worship (e.g. churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc.) per capita than any other country in the world: for every 865 people, there is one house of worship. Of the 159 million Christians in the U.S., 22% (3 out of every four in the adult population) claim to attend religious services more than once per week, and that almost 75% of Christians attend at least once or twice per month. An estimated 39% of adults in the country are born-again Christians. Anderson notes, however, that, "America's highly educated, often left-leaning elites are every bit as secular as the most disenchanted Europeans." Of this group,

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<sup>3)</sup> The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. 2002, December 19. "Among Wealthy Nations ... U.S. Stands Alone in its Embrace of Religion." Retrieved on December 21, 2002, from <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=167>.

Anderson quoted theosociologist Peter Berger as saying that while its members are smaller in population, they control "...the institutions that provide the 'official' definitions of reality, notably the education system, the media of mass communication, and the higher reaches of the legal system." Anderson continued by claiming that:

These elites have wrought secularizing changes in law and culture over the last several decades—using the courts to drive crèche displays from public property and to end prayer or religious instruction of any kind in public schools, for example. However, they have yet to persuade the majority of Americans to embrace a secular worldview themselves (145-147).

Anderson points to the rising influence of religious conservatives in the U.S., noting that this group shapes the American society, including doing charitable work and views on family life. This group says Anderson has "...a transpolitical presence in almost every walk of American life" (155). Anderson points out that this group has become a major or the major influence on the Republican party's social policy approach. Brookings Institution political scientist Thomas Mann is quoted as saying that religion has now become "the most powerful predictor of party [identification] and partisan voting intention..." (157).

## **VIII. Religious and Traditional Convergence among Individuals from Different Religions**

The world is witnessing a convergence of relationship between most Americans and most people of the developing world, who are just as

religious as Americans. Writing about similarities of Euro-American and Islamic values in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mazrui (2004) observes that in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a convergence between Euro-American values and traditional Islamic values, including in areas such as sexual behaviors, alcohol consumption, gender roles and the death penalty. But according to Mazrui, by the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, relationships between the two peoples' values diverged: "as the USA became more ethically and sexually libertarian. Sex, alcohol and drugs were ascending in America. The importance of Religion deteriorated markedly in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in the USA" (793-794). Mazrui also notes that in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century divergence between the two peoples "...were marked by prejudice and racism" (793-794).

What might have happened is that as "prejudice and racism" declined sharply in the U.S. by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it became easier for people from the developing world, including Latin America to share more similarities in terms of religion and traditional values with most Americans. It is therefore no surprise that the Republican party, which is perceived as more religious or conservative tends to be increasing its share of members from the developing world and certain Christian denominations such as Catholics (which include a substantial portion of Hispanics). Catholics, for example, are reported to comprise 22.7% of the U.S. population, and that they are concentrated in key electoral states such as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Texas and California., each with at least 24% Catholic. No Democrat has won the presidency of the U.S. without winning at least half of the U.S. Catholic vote (Culler 2000, 8). In the 2004 Presidential Elections, the Republican party won the majority of the Catholic vote (52%).

The positive shift in racial relations in the U.S. coupled with the increasing sharing in similar religious beliefs and conservative traditional values between groups from the developing world and

members of the Republican party is causing the gradual merging or coalition building between these groups. In assessing the book, *The Politics of the Spirit: The Political Implications of Pentecostalized Religion in Costa Rica and Guatemala* (2002), Gaskill (2003) observes that perhaps one of the most significant findings that might have resulted from the book is that :

...religious beliefs have a much stronger effect on political behavior than religious affiliation. This suggests that the denomination- or affiliation-oriented studies that dominate the literature are bound to miss the most important religious determinants of political behavior. Because some of the most politically relevant beliefs are shared across denominations, their effects may only show up at the individual level and may be missed or misinterpreted by researchers looking for between-group differences (191).

This sharing of beliefs by individuals regardless of denomination or religion might be responsible for the new coalitions that are being formed not only in the U.S. but also across the world—Christian Conservatives in the U.S. now must look out for the wellbeing of those who share their beliefs whether they are in the U.S. or scattered across the world—a second phase in the unity of the various peoples of the world.

One can begin to understand why Hispanics in the U.S. are claimed to be converting to Protestantism. The Hispanic origin population in the U.S. is reported to have declined from 70% Catholic in the 1980s (22% Protestant) (Hunt 1999, 1603), to 53% in 2001 (Gardyn 2001, 25). Wuthnow (2003) points out in a study that in the U.S., “Evangelical Protestants, Other Protestants, and Other Christians are significantly more likely than mainline Protestants to have friends who are manual workers...”(432), a group that includes a substantial proportion of Hispanic immigrants. By the year 2005, it is apparent that the Hispanic

population is visibly gaining political and religious influences in the United States. This is seen in the rise of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. becoming prominent in politics, religion and business. In Europe, at this same time, there is a deep mistrust that has developed between people of Arab or North African descent and Muslims and their host societies. It is not uncommon now to see pictures of suicide bombings traced to people of Arab or North African descent. This mistrust has the potential to result in some form of war between Arabs and Europeans. Let us examine the political and cultural conditions of Hispanic immigrants in the U.S. and North Africans in Europe.

### **IX. Political and Cultural Influences of Hispanics in the U.S. and North Africans in Europe**

An increasing number of scholarly and non-scholarly publications have highlighted the political and cultural gains that Hispanic immigrants or people of Hispanic descent have made in the United States (DeSipio 1996; Garcia 1997; Gutierrez 1997; Suro 1998; Connaughton and Jarvis 2004; Sizemore and Wesley 2004). Apart from the fact that by 2004, Hispanics had become the largest minority group in the U.S., they have also become very influential. Although the Hispanic group in the country is very diverse, DeSipio (2001) notes in a review of the book *Latinos and U.S. Foreign Policy: Representing the "Homeland"?* (2000) that the author "... identifies four issues that shape contemporary Latino relations with the majority population: politics, language, free trade/relations with Latin America, and the status of Puerto Rico" (329).

There are various examples now showing how Hispanics are gaining influence in the U.S. under both political parties (Democrats and Republicans), but the Republican party is beginning to pull in Hispanics

at a faster rate, due primarily to the fact that it is the party viewed as sharing the religious and conservative beliefs that most Hispanic immigrants bring with them to the country. According to Connaughton and Jarvs (2004), due to their increasing numbers, relative youth and their concentration in 10 key electoral states, Hispanic voters are beginning to be viewed as a “sleeping giant” in U.S. politics, one that has the potential to have a major or crucial impact in future elections (464). It is this potential according to Connaughton and Jarvs that the Republican party is attempting to lure in a manner that it has not done for minority groups in a long time: “Republican interest in Latinos is notable, for unlike Democrats (who have a history of being publicly open to diverse and ethnic coalitions, even if at times the history has been impure...), the GOP has respected hierarchy, homogeneity, appeals to individuals over subgroups, and loyalty to the party” (465).

From 1976 to 1996, on average 68% of Hispanics voted for Democratic presidential candidates (Leal, Barreto, Lee, and de la Garza 2005, 41). The Republican party has been making gains since 1996. For example, the Hispanic vote for Democrats was 62% and 35% for Republicans in 2000, up from 21% in the 1996 presidential elections (Hamilton 2002, 22-23). By the 2004 presidential elections, the Republican party received 44% of the Hispanic vote, a 9 percentage point increase from the 2000 presidential elections (Leal, Barreto, Lee and de la Garza 2005, 41). In addition, the data show that the more religious a Hispanic individual, the more likely they are to vote for Republicans in presidential elections. For example, in the 2004 presidential elections, 58% of Hispanic Evangelical Christians and 49% of other Christians (e.g., Mainline Protestants) voted for the Republican party. In 2004, 43% of Hispanic Evangelical Christians and 38% of other Hispanic Christians identified themselves as Republicans (Leal, Barreto, Lee and de la Garza 2005, 47).

Hispanics are not only increasing their voting participation rates, children and grandchildren of Hispanic immigrants are also running for

political office nationally and locally. Hispanic representation in Congress increased from 11 members to 21 from 1991 to 2003, a 73% increase. As of 2003, there were 197 Hispanics in state legislatures, a 46% jump since 1991 (Williams 2003). The 109<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress that took office in January 2005 had 25 Hispanics, including two Republican U.S. Senators, Mel Martinez (Florida) and Ken Salazar (Colorado), who won their seats in the 2004 elections (Radelat 2004, 18). Also, on May 17, 2005, Antonio R. Villaraigosa, a son of Mexican-American parentage, won as Mayor of the city of Los Angeles, California. Villaraigosa became the first Hispanic mayor of Los Angeles since 1872. The 110<sup>th</sup> Congress of the U.S. had an increase of one more Hispanic Senator, Robert Menendez, from New Jersey. The second George W. Bush administration also has two Hispanic cabinet secretaries (or cabinet ministers). They are Alberto R. Gonzales, Attorney General and Carlos M. Gutierrez, Secretary of Commerce.

One major factor for this Hispanic influence (especially Mexican in the West and Southwest) in the United States is that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas now appear to be Mexico's sphere of influence, just as Mexico itself, along with the entire Western Hemisphere is the sphere of influence of the United States. Hispanics of Cuban descent also have considerable political and cultural influences in the state of Florida.

The Hispanic influence in the U.S. is also being witnessed in various important ways. For example, Frank del Olmo reports in the *Los Angeles Times* that the Mexican government has issued identification cards called *Matricular* to its citizens living in the U.S. illegally. According to del Olmo, in 2002, the government of Mexico issued 1 million of such cards in the U.S., with 165,000 issued in Los Angeles alone (del Olmo 2003, M5). Elsner (2003) reported that several Latin American governments have also decided to follow Mexico's lead in providing identification cards to their citizens residing illegally in the United States. Guatemala began issuing the cards in 2002. Honduras is

reported to begin using the cards soon, while El Salvador and Brazil are still studying the issue.

Audrey Hudson reports in the *Washington Times* that the Matricular cards are accepted by more than 800 police departments in 13 states, and that more than 400 cities in the United States consider the cards proper identification. Also, the cards are accepted by more than 70 banks including Bank of America, Bank One, and Citibank. According to Hudson, Colorado is the first state in the Union to outlaw the use of the Matricular cards (Hudson 2003, June 14). A *Los Angeles Times* editorial also points out that more than 36 states have passed laws that allow illegal immigrants to obtain driver's licenses (June 16, 2003).

Hispanic language and culture is beginning to become part of the mainstream culture in the United States in the beginning to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the United States Census, as of 2000, there were 28 million Spanish or Spanish Creole speakers in the United States ("QTP16. Language Spoken at Home 2000," 2000). Major sports organizations now broadcast their games in Spanish; Cable television stations are now showing movies in Spanish; and governments, from local to national, in the country are also training their workers to learn how to speak Spanish to deal with the increasing Spanish speakers in the country. "'*Manos arriba!*'" The teacher prompts. '*Manos arriba!*' the officers answer, one at a time. '*Manos arriba!*' writes Ken Ellingwood in the *Los Angeles Times*. Those were police officers in Tennessee learning how to speak Spanish because of the increase of Spanish speakers in the state and other Southern states. Ellingwood adds that: "Similar scenes are now playing out around the South, as police officers, firefighters, social workers and other government officials scramble to cope with a population of immigrants from Mexico and Central America that has grown faster in spots around this region than anywhere else in the United States" (Ellingwood 2003, A-1). Domenico Maceri writes in the *International Herald Tribune* that: "The increase in the number of Spanish speakers is also encouraging officials who deal with the public



to learn the language. In Phoenix, Arizona, firefighters who learn Spanish qualify for a monthly bonus of \$100. In Las Vegas, Nevada, a similar bonus is being finalized for county employees. Bilingual police officers in El Mirage, Arizona, receive an extra \$100 a month, and those in Glendale, Arizona, get \$75" (Maceri 2003, June 24). Local and state politicians are also not the only government officials learning how to speak Spanish. National politicians are doing the same to get an edge in future elections. Eilperin 2003) reports that 20 Republican Congressional lawmakers and 50 of their aids have taken up Spanish classes.

It is worth nothing that there have been publications in recent years in which serious concerns are expressed pertaining to Mexican immigration in particular (Buchanan 2002, 126; Huntington 2004; Ling Ling 2004). Harvard University professor, Samuel Huntington, is quoted in Ling Ling (2004) as saying of Mexican immigration to the United States that the:

...persistence of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two people, two cultures, and two languages...The United States ignores this challenge at its peril...Mexican immigration differs from past immigration and most other contemporary immigration due to a combination of six factors: contiguity, scale, illegality, regional concentration [in the American Southwest], persistence, and historical presence...Demographically, socially, and culturally, the reconquista (re-conquest) of the Southwest United States by Mexican immigrants is well underway(409-410).

## **X. Culture, Religion and North African Muslims in Europe**

If North Africans/Muslims in Europe were in the U.S., their status would completely be different and improved. That is because most

Arabs, regardless of religion qualify as whites in the U.S. making it easier for them to be accepted by the mainstream society. As a result, there are numerous prominent people of Arab descent in the United States. Their achievements include winning Nobel Prizes for the U.S. (Egyptian-born professor at the California Institute of Technology, Ahmed Zewail, who won the Nobel Prize for the U.S. in Chemistry in 1999), serve as CEOs for major American corporations (former Arab American CEO of Ford Motor Company, Jacques Nasser), serve as U.S. presidential candidate (Ralph Nader), serve in the U.S. Congress (at least 5 Arab Americans in Congress as of 2002) and presidential cabinets (former Secretary of Health and Human Services, in the cabinet of President Bill Clinton, and second Bush administration Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham), representing both political parties and they are professional entertainers and athletes. A big part of the reason for all of this is that like Hispanic immigrants, Arabs and Muslims share a lot more in common with Americans of any ethnic group some important ideological beliefs, such as prayer in schools, opposition to abortion and same sex marriages. Indeed, in the 2000 U.S. presidential elections, in the state of Florida, which decided the election narrowly, the majority of Muslims, including Arab Muslims voted for the Republican party. Arabs and Muslims in general in the U.S. also tend to be a little moderate than their compatriots in Europe. As Bawer (2002) notes, "...Muslims in America tend to be more affluent, more assimilated, and more religiously moderate than their co-religionists in Europe" (338).

The unwillingness of North Africans and Arab Muslims in general to be as moderate as Arabs in the U.S. has caused many Europeans to be concerned that if they do not assimilate into the societies in Europe in which they live, it is Europeans who might end up being Islamized. In analyzing the book *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe*, Aman (2003) notes that part three of the book includes chapters that focus on the religion of Islam and Muslims in Europe, "...represent a very different 'other,' a religio-political force

that has engaged the West for centuries with a legacy of major confrontations and conflicts, from early Arab conquests to European and American colonialism" (66). According to Kastoryano (2004), "Some Europeans question Islam's compatibility with the West and the ability of its adherents to adopt Western "universal" values" (1235). Mahdi (2003) notes that in different European nations, Muslims "...are accused of supporting terrorists or of defying the values and institutions of their host culture." Mahdi adds that some politicians and academics in the West "... view Islam as essentially nonliberal, nondemocratic, and anti-Western" (628; also see Ferrari 2004).

As a result of this mistrust between Muslims, especially North African Muslims and Europeans, Bowen (2004) observes that many Muslims in France, for example, find themselves in the middle of deciding between two competing groups of social norms. First, to seek acceptance, many Muslims "...seek acceptance, recognition, or citizenship in France, [they]... accommodate some of the demands that they assimilate." However, others believe it to be obedient to their religion and therefore must never stop engaging in their regular religious practices whether in public or private, but must "... display their cultural differences from non-Muslims through dress and choice of foods, and maintain their membership in the global *umma* (community of Muslims)" (Bowen 2004, 44).

One such public display of their religion is the wearing of a headscarf by Muslim women in France. The French government in recent years opposed the wearing of a headscarf in public schools and decided to ban the practice altogether. The French National Assembly on February 10, 2004, by a vote of 494 to 36, with 31 abstentions, approved "... the first reading of a brief law that prohibited (after September 2004) the wearing by pupils in any public school of any conspicuous sign of religious affiliation" (Judge 2004, 2). Towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century of the third millennium, relations (political, cultural and religious) between North Africans or Arabs in Europe are

still not positively strong enough to result to unity between the two groups.

## **XI. Conclusion**

In this paper, with the similar geographic and ethnic/racial locations of Latin America and North Africa to the U.S. and Europe respectively, the author attempts to understand why Hispanic immigrants tend to integrate more quickly in the U.S. than North Africans do in Europe. As the numerous scholarly and non-scholarly evidence show, the melting pot idea of the United States and sharing similar religious and traditional values with most of the population appear to work well for Hispanic immigrants, while in Europe, cultural, religious and deep mistrust between the North African/Muslim immigrant groups and the host countries are serving as hindrances to any real integration. This divergence has sometimes led to suicide attacks in Europe and the U.S. by Muslim extremists claiming to represent most Muslim Arabs or Muslims in general. There is a strong possibility that the establishment of a strong federal government in Europe, such as that which exists in the U.S. could help the continent not only to deal with its immigration problems efficiently, but it also has the potential to improve relations not only with Muslim North African immigrants, but also all immigrants on the continent.

As for the people of the U.S., being very religious when compared to Europeans, it is very likely that Europeans might be very religious privately, but due to their history, which includes ethnic conflicts based on religion (e.g. Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland), the people of the continent might not want to return to the days of such conflicts. As a result, they may attempt to avoid any public display of religion or God in order not to offend any groups. One could also argue that, since it is Europeans who spread Christianity to the point where it

is today, they might not view it with the same reverence as Christians outside Europe do.

In the case of the U.S., however, one must remember that while Europe is said to have a 40,000-year history, the U.S. is only a few hundred years old, and compared to Europe, Africa, and Asia, it is truly a New World with a very unique or unusual history. The current inhabitants (Africans, Asians and Europeans) of the U.S. have ancestors who came here as either slaves, indentured servants or fleeing religious persecutions. So to them they believe that religion or God is responsible for their current survival in a land far away from their ancestral homes. They therefore, might have no shame or hesitation to publicly proclaim their submission to God.

## Abstract

This paper argues that there are geographic and human (racial make-up) similarities in the emigration of Hispanics/Latinos to the U.S. and that of North Africans/Muslims to Europe. The paper argues, however, that compared to their counterparts in Europe, the Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S. tends to be more assimilated, with shared religious history (Christianity) being a big part of the reason for such assimilation. To put differently, unlike North African/Muslim immigrants in Europe, Latin American immigrants are more integrated in the U.S. because most of them share with the majority of the population similar beliefs in conservative traditions, Christianity and God, while North Africans in Europe tend to be Muslims in a Christian continent, very conservative and religious in a continent that is increasingly becoming secular and relying less in religion and God.

**Key Words:** Immigration, Religion, Europe, U.S. Hispanics, Arab/Muslims/ 이민,  
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