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カナダ、アメリカ、オーストラリアにおける多文化主義の台頭と同化主義政策の比較研究

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MULTICULTURALISM AND ASSIMILATION IN CANADA, THE US AND AUSTRALIA

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MULTICULTURALISM, NATION STATE AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN THE PROCESS OF GLOBALIZATION: CANADA, THE US and AUSTRALIA

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b. American Multiculturalism – The Position of Jewish Americans

Joel M. Halperna

This brief essay is written at the time of the end of the American election of November 2000. From the perspective of the history Jews in the United States one of the significant aspects of this election has been that for the first time in history there has been a Jewish candidate on the ballot. Joseph Lieberman, the Senator from Connecticut, has been the candidate of the Democratic Party for Vice-President. Not only is Joseph Lieberman of Jewish background but also, more remarkably, he is a practicing Orthodox Jew. At the same time, in this very close and contested election, there has developed a dispute about the voter count in the area of Miami. This is an intensely ethnic area populated, in part, by retired middle-class Jews from the north, many from the New York City metropolitan area. Also in adjoining areas are communities of African-Americans and Hati-Americans where similar voting problems have occurred. These matters will soon be footnotes to an important historical event, the contested presidential election of 2000, however, the point is readily apparent, namely that ethnic voting preferences remain very much part of the core concerns of contemporary American history. As of this writing these matters have not become part of race, religious or ethic hatred. This is true at least in terms of opinions, attitudes and actions that have been publicly expressed.

Yet it would be a mistake to think that at the turn of the millennium manifestations of hatred, and violent acts stemming from this hatred are absent from the American multicultural scene. One only needs to briefly explore the Internet to come across numerous web sites which focus on various forms of ethnic hatred including anti=Semitism. Sometimes it is a matter of scapegoating such as a site of a Serbian-American blaming the Jews for all the bad things that has happened to his country. Such a person may, in fact, be expressing a minority view within his own ethnic community but for one marginalized group to single out another group that is non-Christian, or even more markedly, non-white still remains what some consider a viable tactic within American society.

Occasionally these suppressed hatred break out into violent form as exemplified in the attempted execution of very young Jewish school children at a Jewish community center in Los Angeles last year. No children were killed and the sniper was taken into custody but the potentiality of the threat remains. It is pertinent to introduce here a perspective from the diverse Asian-American community. Where there have been occasional killings as in the case some years ago of the beating murder of a Chinese American in a Detroit by a bunch of autoworkers wanting to protest the competition of Japanese automakers. That the attackers had made a mistake was almost beside the point for they were expressing their outrage and vengeance at the other – in this sense an Asian face can mark a foreigner even after generations of living in the U.S. From a somewhat different perspective non-Christians can be exposed.

Thus those wishing to attack Vice-President Gore have repeatedly referred to his actions at a supposed fund raiser during a Buddhist temple visit in California and the formula "Buddhist temple" has been linked, at least in the minds of some, as a locus of illegitimacy. This references would never be made continually for a Christian church site and perhaps even for a Jewish synagogue as a place consistently identified with an illegal act, although the latter are sometimes foci for physical violence against property. But it is the overall concept of "otherness" that is at work here. This collective sense of otherness was exemplified in shooting which took place recently on the streets of Chicago in which African-Americans, Jews and Asians have together been singled out for a racist gunman's attack. In this case Jews were identified by a form of dress particular to some Orthodox Jewish communities, as in the case of the wearing of the skullcap.

Set against these ingrained prejudicial attitudes, or ethos, of prevailing "otherness" is the widespread and officially manifested value of "togetherness." of shared community. A most recent manifestation of this attitude concerns the nomination of Joseph Lieberman as vice-president by Albert Gore the presidential candidate. The selection of Lieberman has been widely reported as an attempt by Gore to avoid the controversy dealing with the moral controversies surrounding the persona of President Clinton by selecting someone who had taken a moral-stance against the activities of the president based on his convictions rooted in religious belief. Thus Lieberman's Orthodox Judaism could be seen as a moral equivalent to the "born again" evangelical Christians on the political right normally associated with the Republican Party and, in fact, was perceived this way by

several Christian evangelical figures. In the context of our discussion here it was a manifestation of how Jews have come to be accepted in the American way

Another aspect of crossing of boundaries and affirmation of shared community are the types of intermarriages that are occurring. Two of the American ethnic groupings with the highest rates of intermarriage are Jewish Americans and Asian Americans, specifically Chinese and Japanese Americans. When they marry each other, which happens with increasing frequency, this adds to numbers of those with diverse ethnic and racial heritages. From this perspective the interrelationships and shard patterns of Asian Americans and Jewish Americans are worth exploring since they are both groups of relatively high achievement and represent about the same proportion of population within the U.S. at 3%.

To attempt to describe the nature of multiculturalism in the U.S. on must continually bear in mind that on is dealing overall with a population of some quarter of a billion people and where there is myriad diversity forms of diversity on a series of levels that can be separated by the specifics of sub-cultures in turn split by class and regional differentiation. Thus for Jewish Americans as for Asian Americans these categories conceal an enormous amount of cultural diversity. For Asian Americans on needs only recall that this is a catch all category that includes South Asians, Thai, Lao, Khmer, Hmong, Vietnamese, Chinese, regionally differentiated, as well as Filipinos, Japanese and Koreans to name only some of the more general categories. A further source of differentiation is recency of immigration, a process still underway.

The same is true for Jewish Americans, although here there has been some decline in immigration after the large-scale movement of then Soviet Jews to the U.S. in the 1970s and 1980s. But a new phenomenon among American Jews has been an increase in hostility within the community as especially between secularly oriented Jews and certain segments of the very observant Orthodox Jewish community, especially Hassidic Jews grouped in communities still speaking Yiddish, the secular language of Jews in Eastern Europe which was dominant among immigrants to the U.S. in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries. Conflict has become particularly intense as the more geographically and mobile secular Jews move out of suburban communities and are succeeded by these Orthodox communities and their all embracing institutions which include schools as well

as synagogues and overall a segregated way of life. Not only are there overt differences in dress and the particularities of religious observances but there are major value clashes as in the status of women. The Hassidic Jewish community, many of whose members are quite prosperous, has launched missions to be found, for example, on many college campuses whose aim is to convert secular Jews. Here there are new types of boundary maintenance that were unfamiliar to earlier generations of American Jews. This can be seen from a multicultural perspective as a development that fosters a sense of "otherness" even as within ethnic groups.