CHAPTER FOUR

AFRICAN AMERICANISM

The situation of the black community, which had generally been the domain of the leaders till 1950s, began to draw mass attention after it. The result was an epic struggle whose history is well and widely known and requires only a brief recounting. Popular support demonstrated through sit-ins, mass meetings, marches and picketing ensured that the political elite received the message sent by their African American constituents. As long as the members of the community had resided in scattered, rural, southern settings, their votes were hardly ever cast. The two waves of migrations in the first half of the twentieth century changed that. The migrations, the consequent concentration of the community in crowded, segregated areas of northern cities, and finally, the spirit and solidarity aroused by the Civil Rights movement had another far-reaching effect. They began the process of instilling an ethnic identity in the African American community. The leaders, particularly the radical ones, during the movement sought consciously to create a new identity for their people. The ideas regarding the image and identity of the community, which had engaged the leaders and thinkers of the community in the new century, were diffused amongst the common people during the struggle for Civil Rights. The different streams of the movement contributed different strands to this process and helped to further the evolution of an African American consciousness which could meaningfully replace the negative
stereotypes of the community, both in their own minds and in the eyes of the wider American society. This chapter discusses the nature and effects of these different streams in creating an attitude and awareness amongst blacks which, by the end of the century, could justifiably be termed "African Americanism".

THE FIRST STREAM: NON-VIOLENCE AND MASS AWAKENING

The first, and the most important, contribution was made by the non-violent protest movement begun by Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King came to public notice through the Montgomery bus boycott in 1956. The boycott had been organized to support a black woman, Rosa Parkes, who had protested against being forced to sit at the back of a segregated bus. In a novel development, Dr. King was able to keep his people united for an entire year when the Supreme Court ordered desegregation. The new non-violent approach was a challenge to the contemporary image of the community. Since the stereotype of blacks, perpetuated since slavery days, looked upon them as docile and incapable of wanting or fighting for freedom, the new method was calculated to demonstrate the opposite. Facing hostile mobs, who had a history of considering black lives expendable, even possible police action, for the sake of demanding equality was most likely to jar the stereotype. Moreover, the non-violent nature of the protest would also ensure the continuing support of the new black ally—the Supreme Court. As an organ of lawfully instituted government the court could hardly be expected to countenance violence against the state as a viable strategy for reform.

Dr. King's efforts were assisted and complemented by a number of civil rights organizations who drew in people from all
walks of life. NAACP carried on with the battles for desegregation and had a mass support which could easily and swiftly be mobilized. Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) enlisted the support of white liberals. It was instrumental in providing militant workers who even laid down their lives for the cause. Dr. King himself founded the southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to awaken grassroots level support. The students played an important role in the movement through the radical Students' Non-violent Coordination Committee (SNCC). The protesters held sit-ins at segregated public facilities and rode in desegregated buses as a challenge to official segregation. The leaders realized that only a problem of crisis proportions would galvanize growing public sympathy into concrete action. Therefore, their actions led the nation to such a crisis. Their choices of locations for the bus rides and marches were deliberately the strongholds of prejudice and racism. From Montgomery, Alabama, which was proud to be called the "cradle of confederacy", to Birmingham, Alabama the sites were certain to evoke violent white reaction. As expected, local mobs everywhere turned out in a ruthlessly bloody welcome to the protesters. In some places, local politicians hoping to gain some mileage in the next elections, fanned the hostile fires further. At still other places, the local police tossed democratic norms to the wind and finished the job of terrorizing begun by the masses.

However, the images of peaceful black protesters being assaulted by white mobs and police were extremely embarrassing for the United States internationally. Specially, when the country was trying to woo Third World countries, populated by people of colour in the main, against USSR, its
civil rights record was a major impediment to the process. The liberal, anti-authority, anti-status quo philosophical climate of the 1950s and 1960s also swerved the popular opinion in the North in favour of demolishing the caste system of the South. Ironically, the North was to have its own share of violence but till the elections of 1960, the fight was squarely in the southern part of the United States. The growing maturity of the African American leadership in translating diffuse popular support into demonstrable strength was shown yet again by the mobilizing and harnessing of black votes, by men like Baynard Rustin, in the elections of 1960.

The result of the moral pressure exerted by the non-violent campaign and demonstration of popular support to the cause was the beginning of administrative action, to aid the pro-civil rights stance of the Supreme Court, under John F. Kennedy, the Democratic candidate, who entered the White House in 1960. However, in the absence of legislative action the picture continued to be troubling. In 1963, it seemed that finally a united march of African Americans on Washington, mooted earlier by Randolph, was an idea whose time had come. The protests till then had begun to yield some results. But it was impossible to desegregate each state county-by-county as the protesters had done till then. The kind of effort, manpower, and money required for such a task could never be put together. As the only agency that could deal with all the states

1 Sympathetic to the problems and aspirations of African Americans, he set up the Commission on Equal Employment Opportunities with the Vice President as Chairman. The President also issued an order to prevent discrimination in federally-supported housing schemes and appointed a Commission on Equal Opportunities in Housing. He also gave African Americans representation in the administration at higher levels.
together, it was considered imperative that the federal government should act at legislative level. To draw nationwide black support, the leaders coined the slogan, “For Jobs and Freedom” as the motto for the march on Washington. The slogan recognized the fact that the unemployment and unwritten segregation facing the community in the North were as grave as the caste system in the South.

A quarter of a million blacks gathered together along with 50 thousand whites to hear their leaders. It turned into the finest hour of the community which had managed to organize the biggest peacetime rally in independent America. Dr. King summarized the goals of the struggle in his famous speech, “I Have a Dream”. He declaimed to the people:

When we
allow freedom to ring from every town and every
hamlet, from every
state and every city, we will be able to speed up that
day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics will be able to join
hands and sing the old negro spiritual,
‘Free at last! Free at last!
Great God A-mighty,
We are free at last’.²

The moving spirit of the march, the spiritual courage and the feeling of generous integration displayed, moved both blacks and whites alike. Though President Kennedy did not live to see it, but the Civil Rights Act was passed by the Congress in 1964.

It was the most comprehensive law in support of racial equality ever passed by the Congress. Some of its major provisions forbade discrimination in most places of public accommodation and established a Federal Community Relation Service to help individuals and communities solve civil rights problems.

Though Dr. King continued to be the foremost leader of the Civil Rights movement till his death in 1968, he had made his major contribution by this time. By bringing the community together for positive action in their own behalf, he had infused in the ordinary African American a new self-confidence and optimism about her/his ability to integrate with the rest of the American society. The cause of the African Americans had, for the first time since the Civil War, become a national concern. Integration of black and white in an American whole, in defiance of the past, was his approach and his contribution. The high moral ground claimed by his non-violent protests was instrumental in convincing the nation of the injustice of racism towards a courageous people and prepared it for making amends. The mass protests saw the sprouting of a sense of unity amongst the blacks. From this time onwards, despite disagreements within the community from time to time, a united front was deemed indispensable when dealing with the rest of the society. This development was supported in the main by a sense of empowerment arising out of group unity. Whether in political elections or on the streets, the community had been able to create an impact by acting together. Jesse Jackson, the undisputed leader of the community through 1970s and 1980s, felt the impact of this spirit when in the 1990s his criticism of the community before the wider society drew flak from other prominent African Americans. However, Jackson was also the
leader who was able to carry forward the non-violent protest method after the Civil Rights movement faded at the beginning of the 1970s. He utilized the method to force economic concessions from many corporate houses in 1970s when the economic recession was taking a toll of the community. Another impressive use of the strategy to convey the feelings of the community to the nation was the Million Man March in October 1995, organized by Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam. The two factors of mass mobilization and non-violent protests have therefore become part of the continuing repertoire of black political consciousness, to be used by any leader irrespective of the shade of his politics.

THE SECOND STREAM: AFRICA ABOVE AMERICA

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, designed to set right centuries of injustice, however, exploded a racist bomb. The African American organizations found that their drives for voter registration were more vehemently opposed than their marches for desegregation. The Ku Klux Klan came back to resume the leadership of the white backlash. Since laws could no longer be relied upon to "keep the Negro in his place", naked physical power was utilized to this end. In July 1964, three civil rights workers disappeared after having been arrested for speeding in Mississippi. Several weeks later their bullet-riddled bodies were found buried in an earthen dam. No convictions took place. Between June and October, some 24 African American churches in Mississippi were totally or partially destroyed by fire. It became a pattern.

The elections of 1964 made it clear that the existing legal protection of black voters was inadequate and in need of reform.
President Johnson, who had received their widespread support, called upon the Congress in a memorable speech for further action. The Congress responded swiftly by passing the proposed right-to-vote law. The action of the Congress notwithstanding, the force of racist reaction was demonstrated once again when the sheriff used tear gas, whips and clubs against peaceful demonstrators in Selma, Alabama. The 50,000 strong crowd that participated in Dr. King’s Selma-to-Montgomery march in 1965 reflected, nevertheless, the continuing strength of the anti-racist sentiment.

By mid-1960s, the successes of Dr. Martin Luther King were beginning to run into the more obstreperous prejudice and discrimination practiced in the North. Though the fight in the South had been tough and violent but there was the ease of having a definite and identifiable target to fight. The southern laws and prejudice were overt. The opposition in the North was against any integration of the races. If under the southern caste system, the African Americans had been treated as low castes with few and limited rights and opportunities in life, in the North they resembled more an Untouchable with his opportunities granted in law but contact with the wider society denied in practice. This amorphous but pervasive prejudice was more difficult to combat precisely because it was more difficult to pinpoint. In the urban areas outside of the South therefore other personalities, approaches and organizations were at least as visible as was Dr. King.

One such leader was Malcolm X. He belonged to the organization known as the Nation of Islam.\(^3\) In the quest for a

\(^3\) For the details of Nation of Islam, main reliance has been placed on Essien Udosen Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for an*
positive African American identity and rights, the Nation of Islam has an important and peculiarly individual place. Its origins have generally been traced back to the "Moorish American Science Temple", set up in 1913 by a man called Drew Ali. With little formal education, Drew Ali decided that the American blacks could achieve their salvation simply by making themselves into "Asiatics", or more specifically, into Moors or Moorish Americans whose ancestors had come from Morocco. He composed a 64-page Holy Koran--very different from the original--which his devotees were enjoined to guard as a secret. Unlike Garvey, he did not require his followers to leave the United States. It was enough for them to identify with an Islamic African nation and to adopt its religion, if only in name. Thereafter, they had to wait for the inevitable destruction of white rule when God would redeem his chosen people.

His ideas, however, were developed with greater dazzle and detail by a man called W. D. Fard who appeared mysteriously in Detroit in 1930. He came slowly to be recognized as a prophet in his own right. His teachings became violently anti-white over a period of time. He set forth his doctrine in Teaching for the Lost Found Nation of Islam in a Mathematical Way and an orally transmitted text, Secret Ritual of the Nation of Islam. W.D. Fard gave an entirely different mythology to his followers. He carved out an identity for them which was neither African nor American but Arabian. They were portrayed as the chosen people who had been delivered into slavery 379 years back and who would be delivered out of it by divine grace. This mythology shifted the whole issue away from

a nationality based on birth or one based on race, and gave the people relief from constantly swinging between the two. With the introduction of religion the entire focus seemed to shift to a higher plane so his people could bear the circumstances with fortitude born out of a sense of moral superiority.

Politically, Fard’s doctrine was clearly nationalistic. His message was addressed to a nation—the Nation of Islam. Those who belonged to it were not Americans and were to have little to do with American institutions—hence the Nation’s refusal to join the American war efforts during WWII. A group of Muslims broke away from Fard on this issue of refusing to deny their American nationality. It makes clear that the Black Muslims were not unmindful of the effect of this nationalism upon their status as Americans. Therefore, those who accepted the doctrine did so fully conscious of its implications.

In late 1933 or 1934, Fard disappeared as mysteriously as he had appeared and his followers split into two groups. The more influential group, the “Temple People”, was led by a man called Elijah Muhammad. He elaborated further the Nation’s mythology as created by his predecessors. He called the dark skinned Americans the original good people, the chosen of Allah. The white man had, on the other hand, been created by Yakub, the Nation’s Devil. Within the larger black nation, the so-called Negroes brought to America made up the Nation of Islam, and were destined to lead the way towards the destruction of the dominant white civilization and usher in a

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4 For a detailed discussion of the man and his philosophy, see, Claude Andrew Clegg, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York, 1997).
paradise on earth itself. The time of black redemption was also fixed as the year 1955.

Despite the vitriolic rhetoric, Muhammad did not take on the established authority in the manner of Marcus Garvey. He preached a segregated life and economic self-sufficiency but no violation of American laws. Thus, its hostile veneer not withstanding, the Nation managed to survive more as an organization to ameliorate rather than exacerbate racial tensions. It managed to combine the economic strategy of Booker T. Washington with the moral high ground of W.E.B. DuBois. Its followers, therefore, could realize within their sequestered existence both the self-respect and economic opportunity and sense of purpose denied to the community outside. However, the original price of believing in the mythology of the Nation was too much for the more educated and thinking members to pay. The Nation found its greatest success amongst the least educated of the community in the form of the poor, criminals and convicts. Its teachings gave them a purpose and self-respect and led them to ponder the meaning of their condition in the United States. It was here that the Nation discovered the man who would later galvanize the urban ghetto into action for racial justice in the form of Malcolm X. With the charisma of Malcolm X backing it, the Nation’s idea of forceful identification with Africa, soon spread amongst the community, albeit in myriad different ways.

When he came in contact with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm was known as Malcolm Little and he was a convict in jail. He internalized the philosophy of the Nation to an extent where after his release from jail, he became one of the most influential members of the inner most coterie around Elijah
Muhammad. Malcolm had imbibed the basic idea of the Nation's message, i.e., the African Americans had to trace their roots to a place outside America. His disillusionment and alienation from America were vitriolic. In time, Malcolm X as he was now called, came to rival Muhammad himself in popular adulation and from this position he gave both respectability and popularity to the idea of blacks and whites being two people, separate and irreconcilable. He was made in charge of Temple 7 in Harlem in New York—a place smouldering with African American race consciousness and with a tradition of active protest against the discrimination towards the community. Malcolm X became a prominent spokesperson of black nationalism. He identified the African Americans at first with Africans completely. "You are nothing but Africans. Nothing but Africans", he said. In this phase of his philosophy he called upon the United States to execute her responsibility to send all her black people back to their "own homeland" in Africa, failing which they should be given territory in the western hemisphere "where the two races can live apart from each other". However, Malcolm X was not a blind follower of the Nation and found himself responding to the wide gamut of ideas thrown up by the ongoing Civil Rights movement in its various aspects. Thinking through the practical problems involved in any such scheme—problems of the "Americanism" of his people, of their attachment to the land of United States—he recognized later in his career that any emigrationism in the movement could only be philosophical. He said:

6 ibid., p. 57.
...if we migrated back to Africa culturally, philosophically and psychologically, while remaining here physically, the spiritual bond that will develop between us and Africa through this cultural, philosophical migration, so called migration, would enhance our position here, because we would have our contacts with them acting as roots or foundations behind us.7

Later still he recognized the problems in branding all whites as racists or looking upon the African Americans as constituting a “nation”. Towards the end of his life Malcolm X accepted that a black “state” in United States was not possible and he even gave up referring to black nationalism. His turning towards Africa for the identity of African Americans, however, was of lasting import for the evolving consciousness of his people.

Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography: “My whole life had been a chronology of changes”.8 In this one short statement, Malcolm X captured the predicament of his entire community in the twentieth century. As a person caught between the “American” values of justice, democracy and equal opportunities for all, and the “American” reality of their denial to the African Americans he found himself befuddled by the multifaceted nature of the issues involved. First, he felt compelled to challenge the prejudice and discrimination against the African Americans and began by countering rejection with rejection. Yet, he recognized the fact that in demanding the rights that his people did they were, in fact, appealing to an “American” tradition. This tradition, as discussed in chapter 2, had evolved due to the peculiar conditions and distinctive

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7 ibid., pp. 62-3.
historical development obtaining in the United States. They could not be replicated in any other place. As people who had evolved along with the land, the African Americans had absorbed the American values as well as any other migrants who had settled in the territory. They could not now "Africanize" themselves simply to make a gesture of protest. The idea of relinquishing their *patria*, merely because a struggle was involved in claiming it, would have been "unAmerican" and, as discussed earlier, had been refuted by the masses of African Americans. Recent data confirm that the whites and African Americans share more values than do whites and other Americans of colour. Malcolm X, therefore, gave up the idea of a separate territory for African Americans whether in Africa or America but the idea of an African cultural homeland for his people found long-term acceptance in the community. It was reflected in the widespread acceptance of the "Black Power" slogan as a symbol of the community's aspirations and identity, in the self-consciously "African" salutes, hair styles and clothes sported by youngsters in 1970s and continuing in several pockets till 1990s, in the rejection of standard English in 1990s as being "white" and so not black enough for children of the community, and in the Afrocentric movement in the academia in the 1980s and 1990s. One muted but significant aspect of this trend was a personal effort by many black individuals to trace their roots back to Africa. The most famous of these found expression in the form of the work Roots by the author Arthur Hailey. There were also others, less well-known people, who engaged in similar efforts. Africa, often through received notions rather than personal experience, began to acquire a permanent position of primacy in the self-image of the black people.
THE THIRD STREAM: POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

In the conflict-ridden days of the early 1960s, the growing liberalism of Malcolm X did not endear him to his followers. In Harlem, almost his personal fiefdom, he was beginning to face challenges towards the end of his life. He was perceived by many people to be becoming more and more pro-white and, by implication of the convoluted logic of American race relations, anti-black. Malcolm X was shot dead in 1965. In his death he shared the fate of Martin Luther King, Jr., towards whose position on racial issues he was then beginning to move. Dr. King was similarly killed in 1968 while preparing to address a rally in Chicago.

Both leaders were victims of African Americans' frustration with the racial situation by mid-1960s. Though desegregation in the South had drawn support even from whites in the North, its logical corollary—integration of the races—found equally stubborn opposition in both North and South. They experienced disillusionment with beliefs founded on a simplified right and wrong equation of the racial issue. As one participant was to put it some years later, "We thought it was really important to let white people know what was happening. It sounds silly now, but then I believed that if people really knew what conditions were like, they wouldn't let them continue." ⁹ What all such participants in the civil rights movement were forced to realize was the knowing complicity of white society in institutional and individual discrimination and racism. The disillusionment expressed itself in the form of anger

against the leaders, against whites in general, against the establishment, and against blacks who seemed to have availed of the opportunities in society and then forgotten their own people. 10 As racism closed many of the doors opened by the law in recent years, violence was legitimized in African American ghettos as a form of justice.11

The latter half of the 1960s became famous for the "long hot summers" when a number of important urban centers in America were rocked by racial riots. Though there were outbreaks in several places, including New York's Harlem, in 1964, it was the Watts riot in Los Angeles in 1965 that riveted the nation's attention on the American urban ghetto and the phenomenon it had become in terms of relations between whites and blacks. The riot in Watts raged for five days and at the end of it 34 persons, mostly blacks, were dead, almost 4,000 were under arrest, and property damage was estimated at $50 million. In 1966, more than twenty cities experienced violence of some kind, and in the summer of 1967 racial violence became so widespread as to make it seem the nation was heading for a racial civil war. The most important outbreaks occurred in Newark and Detroit. By the time the situation could be brought under control in Detroit, more than 43 persons were dead, almost 5,000 were under arrest and the

11 Jeremy Cohen and William S. Murphy, two reporters on assignment at the time of the Watts riots in 1965, reported the feelings of the black community thus: "Mrs. Frye, Ronald, Marquette [whose arrests had sparked off the riots] and Charles each believed the rioting would improve the lot of the Negro. They regretted the bloodshed, they said, but it was an eyeopener for the white community. This was a view echoed frequently throughout the torn neighborhood in the days that followed", ibid., p. 45.
damage to property was estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars.¹²

Moved to act by 1967 by the continuing violence, President Johnson appointed a commission headed by Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the riots and their causes. The report of the commission submitted in 1968, and a follow-up report, brought some important data to the notice of the public and the policy makers. The most significant finding of the commission related to the average participant in the riots, Contrary to the prevailing stereotype, the report portrayed the rioter in these terms:

The typical rioter in the summer of 1967 was a Negro, unmarried male between the ages of 15 and 24 in many ways very different from the stereotypes. He was not a migrant. He was born in the state and was a life-long resident of the city in which the riot took place. Economically his position was about the same as his Negro neighbors who did not actively participate in the riots.¹³

The commission went on to reveal that in its findings the self-reported counter-rioters, the ones who tried to actively stop the riot, were generally more educated, better employed people “probably well on their way into the middle class”. They were less likely than the non-involved, but more likely than the rioters, to have been migrants to the place of the riot. What this report presented the nation with was the spectacle of a northern


born, urban black youth, caught in the trap of poverty, but not the poorest, a little educated—more than the uninvolved—and unemployed or doing menial work, leaning towards violence out of frustration with the system.\textsuperscript{14} It meant clearly that the myth

\textsuperscript{14} Some of the findings of the survey on the comparative characteristics of the self-reported rioters, non-rioters and the non-involved would bear detailed citation.

\textbf{Age:} In Detroit survey, 61.3\% of the self-reported rioters were between the ages of 15 and 24, while only 22.6\% of the non-involved fell in this group (p. 489).

\textbf{Family Structure:} Rioters tended to be single more often than the non-involved. Same trend was seen for divorced and separated people. But an almost similar percentage of both seemed to have been brought up in homes without a male head (p. 489).

\textbf{Regional Affiliation:} In the Detroit survey, 74.4\% of the rioters, 36.0\% of the non-involved and 47.5\% of the counter-rioters were born in the North. A significant difference between those born in the South and those born in the North was that the former tended more generally to avoid involvement in the riot in any form (pp. 489-90).

\textbf{Income:} In Detroit, possibly due to different methods used, more rioters had annual incomes below $5,000 than the non-involved. If the age factor is taken into consideration, this difference disappears. No male self-reported counter-rioters earned less than $5,000 per annum. In Newark, only 3.2\% more rioters than the non-involved had incomes below $5,000 per annum. Less than 9\% of the rioters and the non-involved had incomes above $10,000 annually but almost 20\% of the counter-rioters earned this amount or more (pp. 490-91).

\textbf{Education:} In the Detroit survey, 93\% of the rioters had gone beyond grade school compared to 72.1\% of the non-involved; the respective figures in Newark were 98.1\% and 85.7\%. The majority of the rioters, however, were not high school graduates. Almost twice as many counter-rioters as the non-involved, and again half as many as the rioters had attended college.

\textbf{Employment:} In the Detroit survey, 29.6\% of the rioters were unemployed compared to 31.5\% of the non-involved; comparable figures for Newark read 29.7\% and 19.0\% respectively. Rioters rather than the non-involved were more likely to be intermittently employed and to be employed in unskilled jobs. They also reported dissatisfaction with their jobs more often than non-involved—the difference being 15.1\% in Newark. As many as 69\% of the rioters, compared to 50\% of the non-involved, felt that racial discrimination was responsible for their not finding a better job but 76.9\% of the
of the “riffraff”, the outsider making trouble, the misguided poor, the uneducated, being behind the riots was just that—a myth. The real picture seemed to suggest that education beyond the basic level, political consciousness, racial pride and a sense of belonging turned into frustration with the system when there was lack of any vital stakes in the established society. When the youth became aware of their rights, their perception of discrimination became sharper while their tolerance for it lessened. On the other hand, blacks with important stakes in the system, in the form of stable families, assets, higher education and steady employment, were likely to go out of their way to protect the status quo. In fact, the less educated, equally poor, recent migrants were less likely to meddle in the city’s affairs either as rioters or as counter-rioters.

Racial Attitudes: In the Detroit survey, 48.6% of the rioters and 22.4% of the non-involved found Negroes more reliable than whites; comparable figures in Newark were 45.0% and 27.8%. In Detroit survey, 36.1% of the rioters and 21.1% of the non-involved thought civil rights organizations with both black and white workers would be better without whites; comparable figures for Newark were 51.4% and 33.1%. In the Newark survey, 72.4% of the rioters and 50% of the non-involved admitted to hating whites sometimes; 71.4% of the rioters and 59.5% of the non-involved felt that Negroes with money tended to look down upon others of the community; 50.5% of the rioters and 35.2% of the non-involved felt that “the Negroes who make a lot of money are just as bad as white people”.

Political Attitudes: In the Detroit survey, 43.2% of the rioters and 19.6% of the non-involved felt the riot was due to anger against politicians; 70.5% of the rioters and 48.8% of the non-involved felt it was due to anger against the police. 44.2% of the rioters and 33.9% of the non-involved felt they could never trust the government. 39.4% of the rioters and 15.5% of the non-involved felt the country was not worth fighting for in case of a major world war; comparable figures in Newark were 52.8% and 27.8%; only 3.3% of the counter-rioters in Detroit felt the same.
It also meant that the most potent and constant reminder of continuing racial discrimination, and restricted life chances for the community, was poverty. Forced to live in cramped, unhealthy houses with few chances of employment specially outside the community itself, with hardly any chances of receiving quality education, the average ghetto member was constantly reminded of the racism which kept her/him there. The Kerner Commission was accurate in its observation: “What white Americans have never fully understood--but what the Negro can never forget--is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. white institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it”.15

However, it should be emphasized that poverty by itself was not enough to evoke violent reactions. In the twenty-five years after the Emancipation, there is reason to believe that the black community actually became poorer than it was before but there were no violent riots to match the fury of the 1960s. Even migration to urban areas and concentration in the ghettoes was a phenomenon which belonged to the second and third decades of the century and not the sixth. What did distinguish the situation in the 1960s was the rise in expectations brought about by the Civil Rights movement and the positive response of the whites. Till then the black community had no expectations of support or understanding at any large scale from whites. The changed philosophical climate of the post-World War II era, however, aroused white individuals and government institutions in favour of racial justice on a considerable scale. Equally important was the unplanned but very real intellectual preparation within the community. The exposure to democratic

15 ibid., p. 486.
rhetoric provided by the two world wars, the stoking of black pride by movements like Marcus Garvey's movement in the 1920s, the flowering of a black cultural movement in the form of the Harlem Renaissance had all helped to focus more and more on the injustice of the situation of African Americans. The last element was provided by the non-violent protests of Martin Luther King. Till he applied the method of extra-systemic pressure to gain justice, most reform organizations had worked within the ambit of existing laws. The NAACP had challenged the lack of equality in separate institutions because the Supreme Court in 1896 had directed the authorities to provide "separate but equal" facilities. In this sense, the challenge was not to the justice or morality of the court's position but to the lacunae in the observation of it. When Dr. King supported Rosa Parker's challenge to segregation in transportation, he challenged the morality of the idea of segregation itself. Further, the method of protest adopted by him was an appeal to government and people both transcending the usual routes of redressal of grievances against the system, provided by the system. Though he was not the first to use it, he was successful in holding the protestors together for an year. By legitimizing extra-systemic pressure tactics to ensure justice, even if it entailed the modification of the system itself, Dr. King imparted to the struggle a moral, almost religious character, where the actions of the protestors could not be judged by their ordinary meaning within the system. Consequently, organization of protests and marches, picketing and such means could not be termed disruptive in the ordinary sense since they were undertaken in pursuit of a mission larger than the system itself. This mission-like character of the struggle for racial justice was
a fundamental aspect of it from this period onwards. There was always an expectation of the system to amend itself to provide racial justice and any delay or denial of this claim led to bitter disappointments. Though Dr. King believed in non-violence, in time, this sense of mission became detached from the idea of non-violence. Extra-systemic means to secure racial justice—whether violent or non-violent—were considered legitimate by a group whose enhanced expectations of equality from the Civil Rights movement were shattered due to the unchanging reality on the ground.

The Civil Rights movement brought the issue, and the anger, of African Americans to the limelight. The urban blacks were determined to be heard in the only way they felt would matter. The early successes of the movement only made the stubborn continuation of racist practices more unbearable. So long as poverty was perceived by the community as the outcome of racism, violence would continue to flourish amongst its members since it was now held up as a weapon against injustice. In the ghettos, the basic issue was not rights in law but power in practice. Physical violence was the only means to take control left to the community. The anger of the ghettos had been most successfully vocalized by Malcolm X. He had preached the need for a revolution in America “by any means necessary”\(^\text{16}\). But Malcolm X was not a rabble-rouser. As his thinking progressed to wider issues, he included the oppressed whites in the category of beneficiaries from the needed revolution. However, in this he was unable to carry his people with him. They were totally part of the American racial system

in which the whites and the blacks looked upon each other as homogenous categories and not as an aggregate of individuals. Lacking large scale contact at personal level, they thought of the other community as an organic whole. The common black person, as a result, was unable to extend his/her sympathies to any section of white society. Thus, Malcolm X became instrumental in lending his authority to the idea of violence as a legitimate means to fight injustice, though he was unable to promote understanding between blacks and whites. The riots of the 1960s were a manifestation of this conviction amongst the African Americans. A majority of blacks interviewed after the Watts riot accepted violence was a legitimate means for ending inequality. Poverty of the ghettos, consequently, led to the glorification of violence against the system. By the 1990s, it crystallized as an essential element of black persona, an assertion of its personhood, which translated into increasing violence even within the community, in all aspects of life.

THE STREAMS COMBINE: EVOLVING AFRICAN AMERICANISM

The result of these three streams in combination was an emphasis upon the question of the community’s identity as well as its welfare from late 1960s onwards. The two issues soon almost merged into each other. But the sense of a new identity, unity and success made the expression of these emphases take new forms. What ended with the 1960s was the pattern of race relations where a majority of African Americans had subscribed to accommodationist practices. Protest had gained a new power and legitimacy. It was no longer the fringe movement of a few

17 Cohen and Murphy, n. 10.
runaway slaves or redemptionists like Garvey and intellectuals like DuBois. It was now part of the African American mindset.

At the psychological and intellectual level, racial pride and assertiveness of the rising group consciousness of blacks were captured by the slogan "Black Power". It was first coined by Adam Clayton Powell at a Chicago rally in May, 1965 and later elaborated upon in his Howard University Commencement speech of 29 May 1966. However, it was popularized by the chairman of the SNCC, Stokley Carmichael. He raised the slogan at the James Meredith march of 1966. From that time, Black Power became the effective rallying cry of the radical sections of African Americans. As a concept with a definite meaning or a political programme the slogan has remained elusive. Writing contemporaneously, Harold Cruse pointed out

19 It had begun as a one-man march across Mississippi by a civil rights activist called James Meredith. But it became more widespread once Meredith was shot by a lone white sniper.
20 Though Carmichael later collaborated with the historian, Charles Hamilton, to write a book bearing the title *Black Power* in an attempt to make the term analytically more accessible, they did not succeed. What they did do was to cover the territory of almost all the segregationist black groups in the twentieth century without coming up with anything radically different.

Hamilton and Carmichael asserted that black people inside the United States formed a colony on whom colonialism was practiced. They redefined colonialism to mean "institutional racism". This at best was a forcible stretching of the facts to fit the leading ideological mould of the times, i.e., anti-colonialism. The authors were not able to explain how the blacks could be a colony without a contiguous territory of their own. Moreover, the economic dynamics of colonialism—the kernel of that system—did not fully apply to the situation of blacks in America. (To put it in a nutshell, the colonial powers took the raw produce of the colonies at cheap rates and after value addition in the mother country sold it to other countries and back to the colonies themselves at much higher prices. Though black labour was exploited in America but there was no raw material produced by them. Second, as the New Deal showed, mney spent on the welfare and infrastructure of Americans may have reached the
with great insight, "...while the slogan cast a revolutionary sounding theme and a threat of more intense revolt across the land, the substance was, in fact, a methodological retreat to black social reforms". 21

Members of SNCC and CORE realized the problem of leadership inherent in such nebulous concepts and sought to impart a programmatical substance to it. 22 However, their efforts showed up only an impasse reached in devising new strategies in black struggle for positive inclusion within Americanism. They did not advocate a revolution and while some definitely leaned towards separatism of the kind practiced by the Nation of Islam, others went along with direct-action integrationism of earlier CORE strategy. The expression of "self identity" for the community was also left open to individual interpretations and led to a plethora of approaches encompassing everything from African clothes and hairdos, Black Power salutes, ghetto violence, defiance of established authority, to creative co-operative efforts aimed at empowerment of the poor blacks. Despite denial by Carmichel,

blacks late or in smaller quantum but it did reach them. As a result they actually benefitted from colonial or imperial exploitation of peoples in the colonies, though racial prejudice ensured that they received the smallest share of the national pie.) All black nationalists, like the Black Muslims and the Black Panthers, had faced this problem earlier and come to terms with it in their own distinctive ways but without ever satisfying the criteria for a nation in any meaningful way. Hamilton and Carmichael described the new goal as the "creation of power bases from which black people can work to change statewide or nationwide patterns of oppression through pressure from strength--instead of weakness". Their aim in chalking out a programme was to obtain "black self-determination and black self identity". The idea of black "self-determination" was merely a variation of the old communist demand for the same.

21 Cruse, n.18.
22 ibid.
the two strains uniting all of Black Power movements were re-legitimization of separatism in the mainstream African American political life, and romanticization of an African past and, often its supposedly revolutionary present.

Black Power succeeded more as a slogan than a philosophy. Its success as a slogan lay in the fact that it

...conjures up the historical conflict between blacks and whites at home and abroad. It suggests Negro dominance and retaliation against whites for centuries of oppression...it induces plain old human pipe-dreaming occasioned by frustration, megalomania or the relief that comes from transporting one's feelings aloft on the jet of the imagination.23

Ironically, it succeeded because it was a constant reminder of a conflict between black and white and encouraged a feeling of hostile separation. It reinforced the impression of the two communities as organic wholes that had been an important factor in hindering a racial coalition on economic issues. In an effort to counter the prevalent idea of white as positive and black as a negative attribute, Black Power proponents utilized the same strategy as proponents of white racial supremacy which promoted an exclusive concept of blackness. Africa came more and more to symbolize a combined homeland for all the African Americans which knit them closely together while enhancing the sense of being different from the white Europeans. Black Power built further upon the mass awakening, primacy of Africa, and an implied promise of power

through violence which had been bequeathed by the Civil Rights movement. In the process, it went against the integrationist approach of Dr. King and, almost unconsciously, privileged violence against his non-violent methods. This sharp focus on blackness in contrast to whiteness found expression among educated blacks in the form of the Black Studies movement.

Ever since the Emancipation of African Americans, they had displayed a tremendous desire for formal learning. The enhanced racial pride during the second half of the twentieth century, along with a better understanding of the dynamics of social control through stereotyping were the factors that had led to the movement for Black Studies. The first school to introduce a Black Studies programme was San Francisco State College in 1966. By 1968 even a major university like Yale had followed suit.\(^{24}\)

However, the question of contents and the purpose of Black Studies was full of an acrimonious debate resulting even in sporadic violence in several campuses. From the words of some of the first blacks to associate with the programme it was clear that the programme had been "conceived in frustration and bitterness by an articulate and highly emotional minority".\(^{25}\) Tom Jones, one of the earliest participants in the movement for Black Studies, described what had inspired him and his followers in 1969, in these words:

\[\ldots\text{to give us that psychological freedom of self-definition, to define what we are now, what}\]

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we have been as a people, and what we will be as a people and as a nation in the future...[and] to teach us the political methods, the political ideology to lead to the kind of political freedom and economic self determination that we are to have.\textsuperscript{26}

This obviously was a very political and action oriented programme but it held sway for several years, dominating the debate about the purpose of Black Studies. This approach attributed most "white" or "Western" achievements to Africa. In this way, Western science, technology and philosophy were appropriated to further "black" virtuosity. However, such an approach was anti-intellectual and quite at variance with any tenets of cognitive knowledge. The advocates of this point of view were primarily interested in changing the all-white perspective of the world perpetuated by the academia till then. But they advocated an entirely black perspective in its place regardless of its merit. As could be expected, from the time of its inception itself, and more so as the years progressed, this whole approach to education came to be challenged from within the community itself. Eminent scholars like Kenneth B. Clarke protested the overriding emotional content and the mystique of "Negritude" which the programmes propounded. Their criticism, gradually, has made the pursuit of Black Studies more academically oriented.

However, the very movement and the debate on it stress that counter-racism had found a deep foothold in the psyche of the African Americans. Whenever a corrective for white dominance was required--from the world of ideas to housing--the solution by at least a fair section of the community was

\textsuperscript{26} Quoted in Draper, n. 24, p. 155.
black dominance, or at least as much of it as could be managed within a still-prejudiced society. Second, the curricula generally saw the return of the African Americans to Africa for a positive image and a positive heritage. It was telling, and of lasting significance, that their past in America was not considered respectable enough even by the community itself. The respect for "go-getters" displayed by the community makes sense only when it is realized that the slaves' accommodation within the slavery system could not be respected in the American intellectual context. The American tradition, as discussed, held great regard for individual responsibility for a person's circumstances in life. Passive accommodation of lack of freedom and rights could not find much sympathy or form the kernel of a positive black identity. This is seen in the tremendous efforts made since mid-century to attribute acts of revolt and rebellion to slaves which are true but hardly represent the common pattern of slavery times. The extreme form of this search for a positive black tradition is to be found in the Afrocentric movement. While the criticism from eminent scholars generally corrected the extreme tilt of Black Studies in 1980s and 1990s, this movement continued with the glorification of Africa. Though all this had the effect of strongly underlining the unity of black persons so that racial identity became nearly all-encompassing for the experiences of blacks, most incidents, whether in public life or private, came to be viewed through a racial prism.\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, the Afrocentric scholars have been

\textsuperscript{27} A less sophisticated version of this phenomenon was the Black Panthers' movement with its adoption of "African" styles in dress in behaviour, stress on violence, on blackness, but with a genuine effort to improve the lot of the community through internal reforms. Its extremism put it on the FBI's agenda and by the beginning of 1970s
unable to extricate themselves from the idea of cultural superiority in terms of scientific and technical achievement. Their attribution of Western science to Africa, as the means for extolling African intellectual prowess, is testimony to that. But they have failed to generate any alternative vision of man, culture or civilization based on African philosophies, tradition or history. By operating within the Enlightenment framework of Western thought, they find themselves in the untenable position of proposing Africa as the mother of Western civilization. While this approach encourages black obsession with race, it cannot escape scrutiny against Western ideals of a good and meaningful life, lived in accordance with Western traditions.

One area where this test against the American version of Western ideals has become particularly cantankerous is that of Affirmative Action. It has pitted the strong tradition of individualism and "meritocracy" against the need for group rights for African Americans. In fact, it seems to have led the way for a "minority syndrome" where issues of economic distribution, political representation and opportunities for employment are invariably viewed through a majority versus minority paradigm. In case of African Americans the need for such rights was recognized in the 1960s by the political establishment explicitly.

The preferred mode of the government and black intellectuals in late 1960s to effect the group rights was the institution of programmes for "Affirmative Action". The idea originated in the Executive Order No. 11246 issued by President
Lyndon Johnson in 1968. The intent of the Executive Order may best be expressed in the words of the President himself:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others and still justly believe you have been completely fair. 28

The President, in saying this, was articulating the liberal consensus that the act of dismantling the legal regime of discrimination was not sufficient to ensure equality for African Americans. There was need for something “positive”, or something “affirmative”, to ensure this end. Affirmative Action programmes were designed to fit this need. They included a set of federal, state and local initiatives and regulations to create a "fair and non-discriminatory" competitive environment for blacks in American society. The Great Society envisioned by Johnson stressed education, training, and the strengthening of black institutions. The basic idea was to improve the quality of life for African Americans so that when opportunity did come their way they were as well prepared to take advantage of it as whites. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was entrusted with the job of implementing this vision.

Despite clear objectives, the programmes were difficult to implement. Affirmative Action basically broke itself down into two components: the "outreach" programmes which gave special training and skill-building support to the African Americans, and, what many suspect to be an undeclared quota system.

Under the latter, corporations, business and government offices were required to translate the goal of "diversity" into visible numbers of minority employees.

Nathan Wright, Jr., the chairperson of the National Black Power Conference in 1967, spelt out the black objections to the first part of the programme:

> It is a commonplace that Negroes of great potential are excluded from high level positions simply on the basis of color. The basic emphasis by industry and government upon new means of overcoming lack of training among the Negro community has come increasingly to be seen as a perhaps unconscious dodge to delay giving immediate and significant opportunities to Negroes who are already more than prepared for jobs for which they would apply.29

Despite the long duration of Affirmative Action policies, this complaint still finds voice amongst blacks and their white supporters. Deval Patrick, the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, reported in 1994 that in that year the EEOC had received 91,000 complaints of job discrimination and a study by Glass Ceiling Commission indicated that white men still have the vast majority of upper level jobs.30

The result of such a feeling led civil rights groups to demand greater reliance upon the second part of the programme, i.e., visible and quantifiable increase in the employment of African Americans. This, however, was exactly

the point where the issue became contentious. The white community objected to any kind of quota system which would translate into lower standards for minorities simply to increase employment amongst them. It went, they argued, against the very cornerstone of American civilization that prided itself on strict promotion and reward of merit. In a number of opinion polls in recent years, the community has expressed its opposition to the policy of racial preference to create equality of outcome rather than of opportunity. The margin of those in opposition to those in support has generally been 3 to 1.31 However, a majority is not against, what may be termed, soft Affirmative Action, entailing special training and outreach efforts. They also seem to be willing to accept some short term compensatory measures to rectify obvious cases of proven discrimination. But what they absolutely refuse to accept were programmes which were perceived to be aggressive, numbers-driven preference schemes like those in university admissions and civil service hiring.

The leaders had been clear from the beginning that any kind of quota system would be construed as going against the American grain. Led by Hubert Humphrey, they had promised that the law was aimed at rectifying cases of intentional discrimination and not to apply sanctions simply because a workplace contained few blacks or because few blacks passed an employment test.

In practice, however, it became more and more difficult to find any other way of demonstrating the efficacy of the

government programmes except to go in for unofficial quotas.\textsuperscript{32} To further complicate matters, most of the Affirmative Action programmes were based upon executive action and not legislative decrees so that the details were hardly ever debated or made public. This left a lot of room for subjective and personal assessment where both sides could quote “facts” in their own support.

What has been clear, however, is that standards in many areas of public life, viz., education, government contracts and civil services have been changed to accommodate the minorities. A 1995 study by Rutgers professor, Alfred Blumrosen, found that five million minority workers and six million women have better jobs today than they would have had without preferences and anti-discriminatory laws.\textsuperscript{33} This, according to the supporters of the programmes, promotes the much needed diversity so that the ethnic minorities may not be forced to fit the straitjacket of Anglo-Saxon standards designed to put them ahead of the rest. They contended that the African Americans were being judged not by “lower” but by “different” standards that recognized and rewarded their own special qualities and attainments. Their detractors, however, remain unconvinced. To a majority of whites, specially males, this is simply “discrimination in reverse” where they are being made to pay for their race or the colour of their skins. According to this view, just as racism had created its legal edifice in the form of Jim Crow so are the Affirmative Action programmes the legal


embodiment of a counter-racism which has its own white supporters and stooges.

These feelings are not new but what is new is their intensity and extent since the late 1980s. The elite consensus which had overridden the conservative opposition to Affirmative Action in 1960s was breaking down. In the case of *Adarand Construction vs. Pena*, the Supreme Court, in 1994, struck down a programme which had earmarked highway contracts for the minorities. The civil Rights leaders reacted angrily. Jesse Jackson called it a “major setback” but the reaction of the civil rights allies--the administration, the press, and the liberal intellectuals--was muted.

The courts, since Bakke in 1978, had been staunch allies of Affirmative Action. In 1990s, however, their support seemed more difficult to come by. They have grown reluctant to use “race-conscious remedies” not only in the workplace but also in educational institutions and for voting rights. Gerrymandering to promote more minority representatives in the legislatures has been struck down. Critics have also grown more vehement in their accusation that the defence of Affirmative Action comes primarily from the few, privileged sections of the minority community who have improved their positions substantially due to the programmes. But the advantages have not filtered down to the ordinary blacks. The programmes, therefore, in this view, are nothing more than instruments of elite aggrandizement.

The African American community too was divided on the efficacy of Affirmative Action. In a poll carried out by *Newsweek* in 1995, 46% of the respondents showed themselves to be against Affirmative Action in employment or college admissions
while 50% supported them.\textsuperscript{34} In another survey, 41% identified black families themselves as the most capable and suitable agency for improving the lot of the community. Only 14% recognized the government to be such an agency.\textsuperscript{35} However, most African Americans at the same time were highly sensitive to the perceptions of white assaults on civil rights and consequently backed their leaders unitedly in defending Affirmative Action.

The unity caused by perceptions of continuing white racism and a strong black racial identity makes it difficult for African Americans leaders to accept or voice shortcomings in the community. The attitude has re-legitimized explicit white racism by aiming criticism against African Americans as a whole rather than against an underclass that forms only a small part of it.

The two decades of 1970s and 1980s saw a recession in American economy. As was natural, economic issues began to dominate the national agenda and the racial question was also viewed through the prism of economics. Murmurings began in the 1970s against the enormous amounts being spent on welfare of the poor by the government. Although, in terms of absolute numbers more whites than blacks received welfare aid, as a proportion of their population more blacks were dependent upon government help. With the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House in 1981, there was a concerted attack upon the welfare structure. There was widespread resentment


amongst whites against what was perceived as willful black dependence on welfare. They were termed lazy, not inclined to work, lacking in family values and given to crimes. As the attack on welfare and blacks seemed to coalesce so black solidarity gained in strength. The group solidarity was further strengthened by the need to combat the damage of the economic recession on the community. As the most vulnerable section of the community, the blacks were badly hit by retrenchments and declining economic opportunities.

Vocal white racism, with the resources of a much larger population base at its disposal has been able to ignore or drown out some facts relevant to the debate. It has been demonstrated that even if African Americans had incomes to match whites, the creation of wealth or assets in the community would be much lower due to the historic poverty of the group. This means that it would take several generations for a particular family to reach a level of affluence where the children could start life with chances resembling that available to other groups. Second, the African American middle class has grown tremendously since the 1960s. But it has been kept from joining the community of the great American middle class only through white prejudice which persists with unofficial racial separation in housing and marriages which are important vehicles of encouraging a minority to identify with the majority. Further, the strong benefits of white colour in America continue in invisible but significant forms so that, in spite of complaints about discrimination in favour of blacks, hardly any white

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person wishes to change places with a black one. Also, white prejudice has caused a tremendous desire in blacks to create an identity separate from whites. The virtues which the whites would like the blacks to imbibe, like unbroken families, hard work and education, find the least favour in sections where poverty and race consciousness are the greatest. As “white” virtues they are constant reminders of white racism and black poverty which is often blamed on black victimization by whites. But the culture of the black middle class shares much in common with whites. Once a black person acquires significant stakes in the system she/he is content to work within it. The greatest example of this phenomenon is to be found in the black political elite. The 1970s had been witness to the election, at the local and state levels, of a number of black officials. African American participation in elections brought into being a second level of leadership, exercising influence on smaller segments of population, working the system as insiders rather than as prophets from outside, but able to win concessions for the community by integrating with whites in less dazzling but still potent ways. Carol M. Swain, in her study of black

38 Writing in 1976, Leonard A. Cole mentioned six ways in which the elected African Americans benefitted the community. These included quiet influencing of policy decisions in favour of the community, using their power to increase the number of blacks in government appointed positions, sensitize their white colleagues to the needs and abilities of the community, provide effective links between government and black citizenry, legitimize black use of power by displaying that blacks can and do rule as effectively and wisely as whites that challenge racial stereotypes, and they provide positive role models to the community. See, Leonard A. Cole, Blacks in Power: A Comparative Study of Black and White Elected Officials (Princeton, 1976), pp. 221-3.
Congressmen, found two styles of functioning adopted by these officials. The first was to co-operate with the white establishment and play by the already established rules. The second was to keep up an assault on the system from inside to side with the black protest imagination of their constituents. Bringing her study up to the first half of 1990s, she feels that the trend is towards greater integration because the black congressmen are no longer totally dependent on black-majority districts for their election.\textsuperscript{39} This is evident from the fact that

\textsuperscript{39} The high point of this phenomenon was reached when Jesse Jackson contested for the Democratic Party's nomination for presidency in 1984. His candidacy marked the first full scale effort by an African American to capture the nation's highest office. The keystone of the Jackson presidential campaign was the Rainbow Coalition. Through the Rainbow Coalition, he tried to forge a new coalition of blacks, browns, native Americans, Asian Americans, Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, Caribbean Americans and other poor in the American society. The success of his platform was obvious when he managed to capture 465.5 delegates rather than the projected 175-200. Whatevsore, 21% of the Jackson vote was non-black. Once again in 1988, Jesse Jackson ran a high-profile campaign for presidential nomination to be accepted as the valid spokesperson for all the marginalized sections of America. It has been generally accepted that the two Jackson campaigns "built unprecedented coalitions of farmers and inner-city residents, of academics and factory workers in support of two progressive campaigns". As a result, he was courted by almost all the presidential hopefuls of the Democratic Party in 1992. For detailed discussion of the style of politics followed by Jesse Jackson and his vision, see, Roger D. Hatch and Frank E. Watkins, eds., \textit{Rev. Jesse L. Jackson: Straight from the Heart} (Philadelphia, 1987); Gail Sheehy, \textit{Character: America's Search for Leadership} (New York, 1988); Thomas Landees and Richard Quinn, \textit{Jesse Jackson and the Politics of Race} (Ottowa, 1985); Robert E. Jakoubek, \textit{Jesse Jackson: Civil Rights Leader and Politician} (New York, 1991); Allen D. Hertzke, \textit{Echoes of Discontent}:
the black Caucus in Congress, created in 1971 to make possible co-ordinated action on part of black legislators, was thrown open to white legislators in 1988. Though the white members are only associate members with lesser powers in proceedings of the caucus but the trend is unmistakable. Black Congressmen have shared the high reelection rates of white legislators. This has resulted in their attaining enough seniority to obtain truly important positions within the Congressional system and they find it difficult to attack the system of which they are such important parts. Swain applauds this fact as a stepping stone on the path to building colour-blind coalitions in American system. Though there were elected representatives who carried on as outsiders--as representatives of an oppressed minority, speaking the language of protest and reform--but in most cases there was a division of sorts in leadership responsibilities. As discussed earlier, the task of keeping up extra-systemic pressure remained with a charismatic leader counting the African Americans throughout the country as his constituency; but the task of implementing the reforms of the Civil Rights Era was shouldered by elected officials and legislators. Both worked simultaneously, often together, but did not engage in a struggle for supremacy of approach as was the case till 1930s certainly, and till early 1950s to a lesser extent. However, the same situation of cooperation is yet to develop in other fields of public life.

In its entirety, this situation has given a definite character to African Americanism in 1990s. There can be no denying that the community has developed a section of intellectuals who

\[\text{Jesse Jackson, Pat Robertson, and the Resurgence of Populism (Washington, DC, 1993).}\]
wish to demand justice on same terms as other Americans—certainly no less—but also no more. In opposing a constant romanticization of Africa and its past, they express their ability to handle the reality of their American past and its residue in the present in the form of racial prejudice. The tougher task is for them to carry the community with them without reducing the pressure on white community to accept their role in that past and to erase its shadows from the present. The larger part of the community falls in a different category. After a survey of relevant literature, Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim conclude that existing theories of ethnicity can be classified into two contrasting perspectives: the primordial approach and the mobilizationist approach. The former emphasizes premigrant, primordial group ties associated with physical affinity, a common language, a common religion, and other cultural and historical commonalities as the basis of ethnicity. In contrast, the mobilizationist perspective accepts the concept of "emergent ethnicity", the view that ethnicity is created and recreated in the context of adjustment in the host society. Thus it emphasizes residential segregation, occupational concentration, and other structural factors in the host society—including economic competition and the level of discrimination against the group—as the sources of ethnicity. Undoubtedly, the emerging ethnicity of African Americans falls within the second category. It swings between integrationist and separatist approaches depending on the national mood. So long as the nation was supportive, an integrationist approach found favour. It helped

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historic injustices and lack of black self-confidence to fade. It seems to have lessened the feeling of inferiority amongst African Americans which the negative stereotypes of pre-1960s days were likely to breed. The average African American is more sensitive to the role of racist propaganda which can lead to unfavourable assessment of her/him. The unity and concerted action of the people helped overcome great barriers in the path to racial equality. But when the national mood turned conservative the sense of unity made it impossible to accept criticisms from the majority. The need to be constantly on the defensive against offensive stereotypes and prejudice has lent black ethnicity a sharp, combative and uncompromising emotional state which must of necessity draw substance from opposition to the majority. In some sections of the African Americans this unending stress on race and racism has created disillusionment with the system and bred pathologies of victimhood. It also makes her/him suspicious of racism even in cases where it is not the culprit. In a 1993 Gallup poll, 93% of whites and 95% of blacks agreed that people use racial discrimination as an excuse for their own shortcomings.41 But the dynamics of race relations in America in 1990s made it impossible for blacks to jeopardize their racial unity to correct this situation within their community.