

THE MYTH OF A MONOCULTURAL “WESTERN” CIVILIZATION

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If one takes Constantinople as the traditional dividing line between the Occident and the Orient, then the so-called “western” religions are Oriental faiths. Before the coming of Christianity to Europe, the dominant religions were Olympian, Druidic, or Odinistic. The latter two are now being appropriated—for better or worse (in the case of Odinism)—by contemporary “Westerners.”

When I traveled to India for the first time, I found it initially puzzling that the newspapers called the Middle East “Western” Asia. Distinguishing cultures by the cardinal directions is obviously quite arbitrary. To avoid these confusions, I now tell people that I taught Euro-American and Asian philosophy and religion.

But even here the term “American” must include the rich and sophisticated cultures of the indigenous peoples of the “Western” Hemisphere (which of course to Asians is to their East). For example, the Iroquois Confederation had a profound effect on the founding of American democracy, and Iroquois women had more rights than their European counterparts. You can read the eloquent Iroquois Constitution at www.indigenouspeople.net/iroqcon.htm.

What is really amazing about some who clamor for a return to Western Civilization is that they define it narrowly as “Anglo-Saxon” culture. Former Congressman Tom Tancredo, a second-generation Italian-American, once declared that “people who are not white Anglo-Saxon have become American by adopting a white Anglo-Saxon culture.” This is really odd: all the Italian Americans I know celebrate their Southern European heritage and their cuisine is one of the most popular in America.

Even more ironic is that Hispanic Americans, some whose families were on American soil long before Northern Europeans came, also have a Southern European heritage and speak a European language. Along with Catholic Poles, French, and Italians, Hispanic Americans are also “European Christians,” another term that our nativists are fond of. More irony abounds in the meaning of that word: one who “protects the interests of native inhabitants against those of immigrants.”

In his most recent book *Suicide of a Superpower*, Pat Buchanan predicts that “historians will look back in stupefaction at 20th and 21st century Americans who believed the magnificent republic they inherited would be enriched by bringing in scores of millions from the failed states of the Third World.” In the book Buchanan also repeats his outrageous and completely discredited claim that white males are the most intelligent human beings.

Due primarily to Anglo-Saxon oppression and a belief that the Irish were not full human beings, Ireland was a failed “Third World” state. But no one would now say that Irish Americans, especially after building the transcontinental railroads along with their despised Chinese co-workers, are not welcome in this nation.

Interestingly enough, some American nativists give back-hand compliments to Asian Americans for their hard-working, entrepreneurial spirit, but they condemn Hispanic workers who turned American fields and orchards into the most productive in the world.

Significantly, studies such as *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* show that urban ghettos have higher crime rates not because Irish, Polish, African-American, or Hispanic residents are naturally inclined to violence, but primarily because of income inequality. As early as the 1940s, sociologists “described how some neighborhoods had persistent reputations for violence over the years—different populations moving in and out—but the same poor neighborhoods remained dangerous, whoever was living there” (*Spirit Level*, p. 140).

Muslim Americans (many of them hard working Asians) have the highest average income of any ethnic group and their women have earned more college degrees than their men, but Buchanan, Tancredo, and many others want them deported as well. Christian Europe was in the Dark Ages until Islamic scholars brought Arabic translations of the Greek literature, medicine, and philosophy—the foundations of “Western” civilization—to medieval Spain.

When Keith Ellison was elected as the first Muslim to Congress, Virginia Congressman Virgil Goode welcomed him with a threat of deportation, assuming that his constituents had mistakenly elected a terrorist who had illegally entered the country. Third son of a Catholic African American, who had been in the country since 1742, Ellison converted to Islam as a young adult. The insults, arson, and physical attacks against Muslim Americans have increased dramatically. Recently State Rep. Rick Womick, a Republican from Tennessee, proposed that American Muslims can just “go back to where they came from.”

Muslims have lived in America since the importation of slaves from West Africa. Thomas Jefferson once defended the sacrifice of lambs, which most certainly indicated that some of his slaves were Muslims celebrating the feast of Eid. Jefferson studied the Qur’an and may have drawn some legal inspiration from it, and he also celebrated Eid at the White House, a tradition that President Obama has continued.

Contrary to popular belief, 63 percent of Arabs living in the U.S., with roots in this country going back over a century, are Christians. Steve Jobs, Ralph Nader, Gen.

John Abizaid, and former Senator George Mitchell are all from Christian Arabic families. Well above the national average, 36 percent of these good citizens have a bachelor's degree or higher. According to the Prejudice Institute: "Fewer than 11% of Arab Americans live below the poverty level [national average is now 16%]. On average, the Arab American income is 22% higher than the U.S. national average."

The U. S. has been a multi-cultural nation since its inception, and no culture, except remote isolated tribes, can claim to be pure. We now live in a "fact aversive" climate, so too many people accept as truth Tancredo's and Buchanan's bigoted statements. This is a national tragedy.

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