**Cultural Diversity: It is All About the Mainstream**

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Cultural diversity is a thicket into which no sane person ought to enter. It is a subject that is hopelessly complicated, often corrupted by political posturing, and, if one digs very deeply, intellectually exhausting if not indeterminate. No one walks away satisfied. Throwing caution to the wind, I enter this dense terrain in this essay. My objective is to discuss some of diversity’s dilemmas through an analysis of the contraposed ways in which cultural diversity can be implemented—“cultural assimilation,” “transculturalism,” and “pluralism.” Each of these model of cultural diversity supplies an answer to what, for me, is the most important question concerning cultural diversity: to wit, which values or perspectives of the various groups thrown into the mix of cultural diversity (whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and so on) should govern mainstream society when these values or perspectives clash?1 The dilemmas lie not only in choosing among these conflicting diversity models *inter se*, but also in finding any one of the models acceptable on their terms given their inherent weaknesses.

To help simplify my critique, I shall, for the most part, focus on the black/white binary (the black/white relationship). That, in itself, is controversial; for many if not most civil rights theorists, particularly critical theorists (believers in anti-objectivism),2 reject the black/white binary in favor of a putatively more “inclusive” or “progressive” binary—the outsider/insider binary. I have argued on a previous occasion that the latter binary in fact subordinates outsider groups, the intended binary beneficiaries, and, even as it purports to jettison formalistic mindsets, creates its own formalism. Civil rights discourse stands on firmer grounds (both conceptually and empirically) if we focus on binaries period and not treat all racial minorities as a monolithic group.3 Thus, I ask rhetorically here a question I have raised and answered previously: “Why can’t binaries co-exist in civil rights scholarship as they do in civil rights law?”4

Same question for cultural studies: why not apply the cultural diversity models to each binary individually? A complete analysis would entail applications of the diversity models to Latino/white, Asian/white, and other binaries, as well as to intersectionalities—e.g., black-woman/insider—or even among subaltern groups—e.g., Asian-lesbian/straight-white-woman. As I said, this stuff can get complicated.

Centering my discussion on the black/white binary, I begin with a definition of the term “culture.” My intention here is not to be definitive or comprehensive but to merely supply a working definition of the term that will lay the foundation for larger points to come later. In considering the concept of culture, I will include some relevant thoughts about black culture.

**In Re Culture**

At its most basic level, culture can be defined as the congeries of values, attitudes, behaviors, language, music, art, stories, and other conventions that govern or characterize a society or identifiable group within a society. “The emerging scholarly consensus is that ‘culture ought to be regarded . . . as the signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored.’”5 Viewed in this way, culture can be (but need not be) synonymous with socioeconomic strata. Indeed the terms “culture” and “class” are often used interchangeably.6 A “signifying system” fundamentally refers to the folkways of a group: their ways of thinking, living, and behaving with or without conscious design. Folkways are a social group’s “commanding guides of conduct”–their psychology (attitudes, values, dreams, fears) and behavioral patterns. Hence, as used in this essay, the term “culture” shall mean “folkways.”

Can it be said that racial minorities in the United States have distinct cultures, or folkways? Answering this question pushes us deeper into the thicket of cultural inquiry. Subaltern groups have both separate and similar identities with the dominant culture. Eric Yamamoto has a nice take on the entire matter. “For racial minorities,” he observes, “culture is a complex matter: a group may identify and separate its own (historically rooted) culture from a dominant (out there) culture, even as the minority culture is being reshaped by influences of a dominant culture and even though those influences defy easy description.”7

Yamamoto’s observation certainly holds true for black culture. African Americans (I use the terms “black” and “African American” interchangeably) embrace core cultural values that are held in common with other Americans (e.g., the value of education, religion, and family, including the extended family) as well as those that are held only by themselves (distinct from whites and nonblack racial minorities alike) even as such folkways are shaped by interactions with other American cultural traditions. Unique black culture is not coextensive with any particular class. It transcends socioeconomic stratification within black society.8 I have described many of these core black folkways as follows:

There is, for instance, a strong belief among the great majority of African Americans of all classes . . . that slavery and Jim Crow continue to significantly limit opportunities for blacks, that racism and racial discrimination should be vigorously resisted at every turn in one’s personal life, and that a top priority of government and private institutions alike should be to eradicate racial evils from the American landscape root and branch. Sometimes this cultural imperative—that the government should engage in a search and destroy mission to root out racism from our society—can create a hypersensitivity toward racial matters. It is this sentiment that seems to have impelled President Barack Obama to instinctively see racism in the arrest of a renown black Harvard professor and friend, Henry Louis Gates, by a white police officer, Sgt. James Crowley of the Cambridge, Mass, Police Department. . . .Racial uplift, a visceral connection to “the cause”(or “the struggle”) for racial justice, racial solidarity in the face of expressions of overt racial discrimination, which gives rise to a communal spirit (as opposed to possessive individualism), reverence for the black mother, and *Soyez mefiant* (“be mistrustful”) when around whites all defined a quintessential black culture. So does the “African American survival maxim,” which admonishes young blacks: “You have the right to be angry about centuries of racial exploitation as well as present-day racism and racial discrimination. But you do not have the right to dwell on that anger, to feel guilty about these matters, to suffer low self-esteem, or to react in other self-destructive ways.” These folkways grow out of the black experience and are available to all blacks who chose to embrace them. Most blacks do in fact espouse these values, even if they do not always live by them all the time.

Steven Barboza’s wonderful book, *The African American Book of Values*, explains and illustrates dozens of black values, both common to white culture and unique to black culture. Far from typifying a logic in which all racial setbacks are blamed on society and all racial accomplishments are credited to the individual, the folkways reported in this book speak of personal and collective responsibility. For example, Langston Hughes’s poem, “The Negro Mother,” considered by many blacks to be the most important poem ever written about the black experience, captures many unique black values of this quality. . . . [It] was written in 1931, as the Harlem Renaissance was coming to an end, in honor of Mary McLeod Bethume, the leading black female figure of her day. In the poem, the black mother is praised for overcoming racial burdens and injustices, but more so for nurturing her children and encouraging them “to look upward and keep on climbing ‘up the great stairs’ of life.” Similarly, Alice Walker provides [in the book] a tribute to her great-great-grandmother who as a slave walked from Virginia to Georgia “with two babies on her hips.” Hence, the image of the black mother looms large in the black culture regardless of class. “Blood has been spilled and lives even lost in the African American community in defense of a mother’s honor.”

Historically, blacks have placed a great deal of value on the community. In an essay in the *Book of Values* titled, “Voices of Respect,” Maya Angelou explains why: “Neither the slaveowner nor the slave overseer was likely to speak to a servant in anything but the cruelest language. But in the slave society Mariah became Aunt Mariah and Joe became Uncle Joe. Young girls were called Sister, Sis, or Tutta. Boys became brother, Bubba, and Bro and Buddy.” The black community traditionally and in modern times is a place where blacks do not have to prove their humanity. There is no burden placed on blacks to painstakingly try to persuade others that racism has a lethal legacy and crippling presence in today’s society. These perspectives are simply accepted as truth, because most have experienced racism in their lived experiences. Everyone in the community—one’s immediate or extended family, close friends, neighbors, colleagues, and co-workers—is on the same page when it comes to understanding racism. Those relatively few middle-class and elite blacks who, having lived a life of high triumph, embrace a post-black culture on the sly or openly certainly strike at the heart of this heritage. Post-blackness envisions an anti-black African American community. Post-black African Americans would seek to self-consciously unglue the bonds that bring together an eclectic group of individuals bound by an African heritage and a common history of racial oppression in this country.9

What makes black and other minority cultures even more complex is the fact that they actively engage not one but two dominant cultures—“high” and “popular.” High culture (sometimes referred to as culture with a “C”) purports to be serious, elevating, and, hence, worthy of preserving for the ages. These folkways purport to be timeless rather than timely—classical music or jazz as opposed to heavy metal or rap. High culture is largely generated from the values and behaviors of society’s elites; i.e., men and women who control our most important mainstream institutions—economic, social, legal, educational, and political.

Less important mainstream institutions (meaning society could function without them), e.g., those in the sports and entertainment industry, run on a different grade of octane: popular culture, or culture with a “c.” Popular, or “pop,” culture, in contrast to high culture, seeks to entertain (rather than educate), titillate (rather than elevate). It aims for mass appeal. Pop culture makes no pretense of being anything more than a representation of the here and now—a flash in the pan. It seeks to be timely rather than timeless. “In music and the movies, even in TV, the designation of No. 1 is . . . besieged by the increasingly fast turnover in chart toppers and by the advent of new barometers of popularity. . . . [A]nd not everyone can even agree on what makes the measure of a No. 1.”10 Although black culture certainly interacts with pop culture, my discussion of cultural diversity mainly implicates high culture, which is the all-important fuel of America’s most important institutions.

**In Re Diversity**

Taylor Cox tenders a definition of cultural diversity that, for present purposes, I accept. In *Cultural Diversity in Organizations*, Cox defines cultural diversity as “the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance.” Thus, he envisions “diversity in the context of social systems that are characterized by a majority group and a number of minority groups.”11 I take this to mean that, if not a lateral transmission of values among groups with distinct folkways, cultural diversity contemplates some level of group mixing or, at the very minimum, coexistence among different groups with distinct folkways.

The Supreme Court opted for a lateral transmission of values, the highest manifestation of cultural diversity, in its most famous case on cultural diversity, *Grutter v. Bollinger*.12 A majority of the justices in *Grutter* upheld the constitutionality of race-based affirmative action on the ground that it was a narrowly tailored means of achieving a diverse student body. Diversity’s value, the Court reasoned, was its “potential to enrich everyone’s education and thus make a law school class stronger than the sum of its parts.”13 The Court continued: “In addition to the expert studies and reports entered into evidence at trial, numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and ‘better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals.’”14 This thinking clearly applies beyond the facts of the case (higher education); not only to elementary and secondary education, as the Court subsequently indicated in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, but to society as a whole.15

Despite its embrace of cultural diversity at its highest level, the Supreme Court did not indicate how such diversity should be implemented in or outside the educational context. What is the proper mix of disparate folkways in the mainstream culture? How is cultural diversity to be manifested?. There are at least three ways in which cultural diversity—different groups with distinct folkways exchanging values, mixing to a lesser degree or merely coexisting—can be evinced: “cultural assimilation;” “transculturalism;” and “pluralism.” Each of these diversity models offers a different response to the all-important question of whose values should prevail when majority and minority values clash in mainstream society.

**Cultural Assimilation: Black Face, White Mind**

There is little question whose values control the mainstream under cultural assimilation: white-middle-class values, and not black or other minority clashing values. Cultural assimilationists do understand that America is not by design a homogenous society like Japan (which “has done little to open itself up to immigration”16). Hence, cultural assimilationists readily accept the fact that in our heterogenous society immigration as well as inter-racial marriage will continue to change *the face* of the American mainstream from “Beaver Cleaver pink” to “café-au-lait.”17 They wish to preserve, however, the *values* *that control the mainstream*. Thus, although the faces in the crowd can be white, black, yellow, brown or mixed, the mindsets and sensibilities that govern important institutional or societal questions must be of one unifying type—white middle-class. The sum and substance of cultural assimilation for African Americans is *black face, white mind*.

This is not to say that cultural assimilationists would never allow contraposed minority folkways to determine decision making within American mainstream institutions. They have in fact accepted such diversity in artistic endeavors. We see this in the music industry wherein, for example, the Motown Sound is permitted to set new standards in pop culture. Although Jazz began as a “devious challenge[] to the conventions that had come to dominate popular culture,”18 it now occupies an iconic position in high culture. These developments do not seem to bother cultural assimilationists. Similarly, cultural assimilationists do not find much wrong with the ascendancy of a distinctly black style of basketball, which now defines the standard of performance in professional and college basketball. Although the standard of female beauty in the American mainstream remains blond and blue eyes, cultural assimilationists would not strenuously object to a darker hue defining the standard of beauty so long as the female features remain European. All the black Miss Americas have had European features.

In institutions that are more socially significant—principally those involved in politics, law, finance, manufacturing, education, and family—however, cultural assimilationists insist on the domination of white-middle-class folkways. Accordingly, the white indisposition toward rocking the racial boat (“playing the race card“) trumps the African American cultural imperative that it is not only permissible but mandatory for blacks to offer steadfast resistance to racism and racial discrimination. Similarly, American individualism is vindicated over black identity (what cultural assimilationists would call “racial tribalism”); racial incrementalism (a go-slow approach to racial-justice issues) takes precedence over racial boldness or assertiveness; liberty is more important than equality in most instances; and racial amenia (“get over it”) is much preferred to a long memory of slavery and Jim Crow.

While it is it is entirely possible that important mainstream institutions could borrow elements from the black culture in a manner similar to what has taken in sports and entertainment, such diversity would not sit well with cultural assimilationists. They have criticized the creation of black studies departments in colleges and universities as pandering (“cultural relativism”), the byproduct of “identity politics.”19 It is not necessary to include high quality black authors like Toni Morrison and James Baldwin in the literary cannon when we have the Great Books.20

Within society’s most important mainstream institutions, then, cultural assimilation implements cultural diversity at the lowest level possible—coexistence, or mere representation. Diversity is calculated by physical proximity of different phenotypes (what can be called “esthetics diversity”) rather than by ideological inclusion (what can be called a “diversity of voices”). African Americans and other racial minorities thrown into the cultural mix have no distinctive, certainly no dissenting, voice. To the extent that cultural assimilation envisions a high level of diversity (a lateral exchange of values) in these institutions, the exchange ratio is so low as to be imperceptible. Any transmission of values is almost certain to be unilateral, going from majority to minority group—one-way integration.

There is an articulated reason why cultural assimilationists wish to keep low the proportion of cultural difference in America’s most important institutions. This reason, which is their strongest in my view, has little to do with racial antipathy toward blacks or other racial minorities. They simply want our society to remain devoid of debilitating social conflict that other countries have experienced. Especially in the aftermath of 9/11, it hardly seems unreasonable to cultural assimilationists for Americans to insist that “we ought to pay more attention to what holds the nation together.” Cultural assimilationists believe that we as a nation are traveling down a dangerous road if we “decide that people belong irrevocably to one or another ethnic community.”21 Indeed, in the wake of 9/11, even liberal Western European societies are reluctant to tolerate, let alone absorb, contraposed cultural traditions from minority groups. The war on terror has created “new pressures on minority members to minimize any outward signs of difference.”22

Cultural assimilation is problematic to many African Americans. It imposes cultural subordination on African Americans. Black identity is denied and black culture is not allowed to contribute to the shaping of important mainstream institutions. The dilemma is essentially this: *must blacks suffer the consequences of assimilation—the inevitable displacement and even degradation of black pride and heritage—for a piece of the pie? Must blacks suffer one form of subordination (cultural subordination) to alleviate another form of subordination (socioeconomic subordination)?* Other diversity models present their own dilammas.

**Transculturalism—Black Face, Mocha Mind**

Transculturalism, or “cosmopolitanism” in the global context,23 seeks cultural convergence. All cultures come together to form a new American melting pot. Each social group contributes something of value to a new, blended mainstream culture. Forming the mainstream is not “a linear process of [racial] obliteration, but a dynamic one in which minority and majority cultures converge.”24 Thus, although there is assimilation under transculturalism, it “has less to do with one group adapting to another,” as in the case of cultural assimilation, “than with the blurring of boundaries among groups. . . . [A]ssimilation is a two-way street, and mainstream culture is more malleable than monolithic.”25 With its focus on a lateral exchange of values, transcultural seeks to implement cultural diversity at its highest, most ambitious level. Judith Liu refers to this as “assimilation-lite.” *Black face, mocha mind*.

While transculturalism certainly has influenced the shaping of pop culture—Tiger Woods, Alicia Keys, Halle Berry, and other multiracial public figures feed the growing demand in the entertainment, advertising, and fashion industries for multiracial faces26—it has had far less impact in high culture. The cultural canon is still largely white and middle class. Mainstream political practices, business conventions, legal rules (including the denial of full equal rights to homosexuals), educational policies, and social standards are set from the purview of white-middle-class-heterosexual males.27 Transculturalism in high culture would mean that, *inter alia*, universities and colleges would have to incorporate courses on racism and homophobia into their core curricula *pari passu* with courses on Shakespeare and Constitution Law. Judges would have to fixate on racial subordination rather than racial discrimination, the latter of which, unlike the former, is actionable only if a specific perpetrator of discrimination can be identified. Reflecting the sensibilities of African Americans and all other outsiders, the concept of “merit” in higher education would have to include not only technical proficiency, but also character traits regarding race, gender, and homosexuality. A racist physicist, for example, would be deemed to be considerably less qualified for an opening in the physics department than a nonracist physicist even if the former had greater technical proficiency.

Transculturalism creates a dilemma for groups thrown into the mix. These groups cannot escape cultural hegemony, as each group contributing to the new melting pot will have to surrender some (perhaps most) of its own identity as it assumes a new identity in the mainstream. While in the new mainstream, each social group is required to jettison the characteristics that define its uniqueness in deference to the creation of one homogenous national identity. When outside the mainstream, such as at home, it is perfectly acceptable to wish one a Merry Christmas or Happy Kwanzaa or Happy Chanukah. But in the media, schools, major department stores, and other mainstream venues, it is Happy Holidays, a blending of all holiday traditions. Unlike cultural pluralism, as we shall soon see, the mainstream does not embrace all holiday traditions distinctly and equally. There is, in other words, only one mainstream under transculturalism. It is a mainstream that may be difficult for some minority groups to embrace, as each group is required to give up characteristics—such as a strong devotion to family or bilingualism in Latino culture—that define a group’s cultural uniqueness.

Indeed, minority and female students in my civil rights seminars, who tend to be among the most progressive students in my law school, typically express frustration and even annoyance with what they regard as transculturalism’s “self-satisfied imperialism.” Maintaining one’s cultural identity is very important to many young Americans of all colors. They do not wish to surrender their identity to a marginalizing mainstream culture.

Transculturalism faces yet another dilemma. Like cultural assimilation, transculturalism may not be as accessible to African Americans as it is to other racial minorities. Citing research compiled by Richard Alba and Victor Nee in *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (2003), Orlando Patterson observes that “for non-blacks, assimilation is alive and well in America.” For example, “80 percent of the population define themselves as exclusively white,” and “almost half of all Hispanics now define themselves as ‘white alone.’” African Americans, however, have not been incorporated in this process of social incorporation. “In private life blacks are almost as isolated from whites today as they were under Jim Crow. Whatever the reason—an undertow of racism, black racial preferences abetted by identity politics, or both—their isolation means that the problem of ethno-racial relations in America remains, at heart, a black-white issue. As the example of Henry Louis Gates Jr. demonstrates, “even prominent upper-middle-class blacks risk being racially profiled and subjected to “humiliating treatment by white policemen, as well as explicit racist abuse.”28 Thus, the dilemma any melting-pot mainstream (whether cultural assimilation or transculturalism) presents to blacks is twofold: the mainstream cultural may not be as welcoming for blacks as it is for other racial minorities, and, for those blacks who are let in, success may to a large extent depend on their ability to develop the racial insensitivity of a black immigrant. As Patterson notes, rather indelicately, “West Indians are notoriously insensitive to the white-eyed hounds of racism nipping at their naive immigrant psyches.”29

**Cultural Pluralism—Black Face, Black Mind**

Unlike cultural assimilation or transculturalism, cultural pluralism ordains cultural identity. Each group maintains racial and ethnic distinctions. The American mainstream is neither white and middle class, as it is under cultural assimilation, nor mocha, as in the case of transculturalism. There simply is no mainstream; there are only mainstreams. There is no single cultural canon; there are instead many canons. The groups mix like a salad—lettuce, carrots, cucumbers, and other vegetables are readily identifiable. Except as indicated in a moment, each group thrown into the mix is given equal respect and cultural legitimacy within its respective realm or ambit of influence. *Black face, black mind*.

Black, white, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Latino, women, homosexual, and so on: the American mainstream culture is multifaceted. It is a culture consisting of not one but many legitimate mainstreams. There is no attempt in cultural pluralism’s implementation of diversity to merge different folkways into some semblance of a “melting pot.” In fact, contrary to transculturalism’s underlying assumption, cultural pluralism maintains that it is impossible to blend all cultures into a mythical melting pot. Worse, any attempt to do so is tantamount to cultural coercion—imposing one’s culture on another—no less than cultural assimilation’ one-way integration.

The only proper thing to do to avoid cultural coercion, cultural pluralists maintain, is to allow each group to develop its own mainstream institutions and to exercise cultural hegemony over them. Each group’s culture is to be respected, with one important proviso: mutual respect is to be accorded only to the *good* features of each group’s culture, not necessarily to authentic cultural traits. “Good” and “authentic” are not the same thing. Thuggery in gangsta rap may qualify as “authentic black youth music” in pop culture, but it is not necessarily a good cultural expression. In fact, it represents “bad” culture because it promotes dysfunctional, self-defeating, misogynistic, and racist behaviors and values. It restricts rather than affirms freedom and human dignity. There is no redeeming value in gangsta rap, nothing therein that saves the individual from evil or error. Similarly, although the minstrel character in black face was an unmistakably authentic part of white-middle-class culture prior to the civil rights movement, it had (and still has) no redeeming value. It was, therefore, “bad” American culture. So too was (and still is) the N-word. It was, and still is in the minds of most blacks, associated with a history of racial oppression. Although authentic, each of these cultural expressions is without any redeeming, life-affirming or freedom-giving value. None, therefore, is entitled to respect under cultural pluralism.30

There may be an element of essentialism in cultural pluralism, to which a pluralist might demur on the ground that he or she is making a true statement about the lived experiences of African Americans and other subaltern groups in today’s society. The argument is that if African Americans, for example, are to be happy and successful, they must have the *option* to embrace black identity and not feel that they are doing something untoward—illegitimate, unAmerican—when they exercise that choice. Here, a cultural pluralist might borrow from cosmopolitanist Kwame Appiah who writes, “human variety matters because people are entitled to the options they need to shape their lives in partnership with others.”31 The difference, of course, is that for Appiah universality trumps cultural identity.

Cultural pluralism is sustained by another line of logic—racial pride. There is in cultural pluralism a strong indisposition toward embracing a mainstream culture that discounts or ignores black folkways and, in some instances, is downright anti-black. Whether by instinct or intellect, pluralists feel it is an affront to black pride and heritage to force African Americans to assimilate into a culture that has treated them so poorly for so long without so much as apologizing for such treatment. To ask African Americans to lose their racial identity, to mimic white Americans, is tantamount to asking them to “sell out.” Selling out would be an ignominious surrender.

For all its appeal, cultural pluralism is not without its weaknesses. The latter are so considerable that collectively they create a major dilemma for any group thinking about following the path of cultural pluralism. If it is successful, cultural pluralism preserves cultural identity (which is important because culture is important to people) while at the same time threatening cultural balkanization. True, cultural pluralism is not cultural relativism—it does not “hold all ways of life to be equally good,”32 as it accords mutual respect only to positive cultural identities (folkways that do not harm others). It is also true that relativism has not been dominant in places where it is practiced, such as Miami’s Little Havana, Chinatowns across America, and Indian reservations. Cultural pluralism will, however, appear on a much larger scale if blacks were to pursue it en mass. With such a large psychic bubble created in the country, it could well burst into a significant bunker mentality.

Another dilemma that rides alongside cultural pluralism relates less to society *in toto* than to blacks specifically. Do African Americans want to risk an enormous commitment of time, energy, and money to a venture that may unintentionally lead them to the doorstep of cultural assimilation? Successful community-building is essential to the viability of cultural pluralism. If blacks cannot develop communities and institutions as economically strong and independent as those in Little Havana, Chinatown or Indian reservations, cultural pluralism will fail. Lacking sustainable institutions or communities that offer feasible alternatives to white institutions, African Americans will have no choice but to turn to the latter (assuming other groups do not fill the void). Hence, if black communities cannot develop strong homegrown socioeconomic structures, with or without government financial assistance, the American mainstream for blacks will remain white and middle class by necessity. Cultural pluralism, in other words, runs the risk of defaulting to cultural assimilation.

**Conclusion**

Cultural diversity can be defined as some level of interaction—from a mutual exchange of values to mere coexistence—among groups with different folkways. The critical question is whose values should control the American mainstream when cultures, or folkways, clash? Whose values should trump? Whose values should give way?

Models designed to implement cultural diversity speak to this question in ways that present no dearth of dilemmas. Cultural assimilation’s belief that white-middle-class values should control the American mainstream (out of many we are one, and the white middle class is the one) means that African Americans must accept cultural subordination (racial-coexistence, or “esthetics,” diversity) just to get a piece of the American pie. Adding to this dilemma are two other dilemmas: white society seems unwilling to accept blacks into its bosom as fully as it accepts non-black minorities, and those blacks who gain access to the mainstream may have to swallow a lot of pride just to succeed professionally and financially. These dilemmas apply with equal force to transculturalism, which offers cultural convergence, or diversity at its highest level.

Escaping to cultural pluralism, in which each group defines its own mainstream (diversity at its lowest level both in a macro and micro sense) certainly avoids these dilemmas. But this jump to freedom presents a new set of dilemmas. If successful, cultural pluralism is likely to lead to cultural balkanization in our society. If unsuccessful, it may simply result in cultural assimilation by default, in which case blacks will have wasted a colossal amount of time and energy. Clearly it is the case that the diversity models reveal cultural diversity’s dilemmas, and that these dilemmas appear at two levels: as a choice among the contraposed models *inter se* and as an attempt to successfully implement cultural diversity through any given model.