

# Trump Has Changed the Face America Presents to the World; News Analysis

The New York Times

September 12, 2020 Saturday 12:11 EST

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**Section:** US; politics

**Length:** 1885 words

**Byline:** Helene Cooper

**Highlight:** The people who now represent the United States, interacting with visiting foreign leaders in Washington and at the highest levels abroad, are overwhelmingly white and male.

## Body

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WASHINGTON — For two decades, the United States presented an official face to the world that reflected the power and promise of a land of immigrants.

Madeleine K. Albright, Czech-born and the first woman to become secretary of state, arrived at Ellis Island in 1948. Colin L. Powell, the first Black man to be this country's chief diplomat, is the son of Jamaican immigrants. Condoleezza Rice, President George W. Bush's second secretary of state, grew up in segregated Alabama.

When Hillary Clinton succeeded Ms. Rice, State Department officials joked that the post was closed to the white men who had held a monopoly on the job for more than 200 years. But even the patrician John Kerry, Mrs. Clinton's successor and President Barack Obama's second secretary of state, was seen overseas as working for a man who represented a personification of the American dream to people around the world.

"A Luo man," people in Mr. Obama's father's home country of Kenya marveled, "became president of America before one could become president of Kenya."

In less than four years in office, President Trump has taken that American face back in time. The people who represent the United States at the highest levels abroad are overwhelmingly white and male: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper, Attorney General William P. Barr and Robert C. O'Brien, Mr. Trump's national security adviser.

At the Republican National Convention last month, a series of speakers tried to present Mr. Trump's presidency as one that has been inclusive of all colors at its top ranks. In fact, the opposite is true.

Although a woman, Kelly Craft, is Mr. Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, she replaced Nikki Haley, an Indian-American, who was the only person of color in the top national security ranks of the Trump administration.

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Joseph R. Biden Jr., the Democratic nominee, signaled his readiness to put forth a diverse American face abroad in choosing Senator Kamala Harris of California as his running mate and potentially the next vice president. If he is elected, he will have to make up ground lost on diversity during the Trump administration.

A study by the Government Accountability Office published in January found a higher attrition rate for women and people of color in the State Department in 2018 than in the preceding decade. The study also found that racial or ethnic minorities in the State Department's career Civil Service were less likely to be promoted than their white co-workers with similar education, occupation or years of federal service.

State Department data provided to The New York Times show that 80 Black Foreign Service officers and specialists were promoted in the 2019 fiscal year — 1 percent of 8,023 diplomats who competed. Of the remaining 1,496 diplomats who were promoted, 108 were Hispanic, 106 were Asian and 90 were from other minority groups. An overwhelming majority of promotions went to white men.

Stung by criticism that less than 25 percent of American diplomats are people of color, the State Department announced on Sept. 1 that it was increasing the number of fellowships for minority applicants by 50 percent. In a statement, Mr. Pompeo noted that the fellowships were devised to "attract highly talented and qualified candidates who represent ethnic, racial, gender, social and geographic diversity to the Foreign Service."

But the lack of diversity is most pronounced at the highest ranks of the department.

Of 189 American ambassadors currently serving in embassies overseas, only three career envoys are Black and four are Hispanic, according to the American Academy of Diplomacy. During Mr. Bush's first term, there were 19 Black ambassadors. During Mr. Obama's first term, there were 18.

"Even our most dedicated adversaries still understand the power of the idea of America," said Reuben E. Brigety II, a former United States ambassador to the African Union. "And when you have a diplomatic corps that not only does not look like the reality of America, but can't speak to that reality from a place of deep authenticity, it hurts the cause of America abroad."

In response, a spokesman for the National Security Council said that under Mr. Trump's fourth national security adviser, Mr. O'Brien, half of the senior leaders of the group are women for the first time in history. The spokesman also cited Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., an African-American, as the newly appointed chief of staff of the Air Force.

American foreign policy officials acknowledge that even with Ms. Rice or Mr. Powell at the top, the State Department was still largely white. But, at the least, they say, they contributed to an image abroad of a country that was making an effort to include all of its citizens in its national experiment.

"Obama and Bush at least did hiring searches and tried to look at increasing the diversity numbers," said Chris Richardson, an African-American diplomat under Mr. Obama and Mr. Trump. "Trump was just like, 'Whatever.'"

One of Mr. Trump's choices, Mark Burkhalter, who was nominated to be the U.S. ambassador to Norway, admitted in a lawsuit in the 1990s that he had helped produce a campaign flyer distorting the physical features of a Black candidate in a local election in Georgia. Mr. Burkhalter is white. In July, Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged the White House to withdraw the nomination.

When Mr. Trump came into office, he moved quickly to get rid of the top African-American officials at the State Department. The White House sent letters to Ambassador Gentry O. Smith, the director of the Office of Foreign Missions, and Joyce Anne Barr, the assistant secretary for administration, saying that their services were no longer required.

White House officials also made clear to Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the assistant secretary for African Affairs, that she was expected to depart. All three had been career Foreign Service officials, and Ms. Thomas-Greenfield had been elevated to ambassador under Mr. Bush. Of five top career State Department officials that Mr. Trump dismissed upon arrival, three are Black.

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After leaving Ms. Thomas-Greenfield's position open for more than a year, Mr. Trump put Tibor P. Nagy Jr. in the job of American diplomat for Africa. Mr. Nagy joined the lengthy list of white men who represent Mr. Trump's America abroad.

In an interview, Ms. Thomas-Greenfield recalled sitting across the table from the Chinese delegation at an African Union meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2015. Next to her was a Chinese-American Foreign Service officer, who was part of the American delegation.

"I felt like we were flexing muscle when that Chinese delegation looked across the table and saw us — an African-American woman sitting next to a Chinese-American man, both representing the United States," she said.

"That is the power of our example that speaks volumes about what we can accomplish when we are an open, inclusive society," she said. "That is missing now. Now, when you look at the Trump table, it's all old white men."

Mr. Richardson, the African-American diplomat, said he loved talking to overseas audiences about the "many-sided" story of the United States, with its history of slavery, institutionalized racism, the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr., all culminating with the election of Mr. Obama.

"The idea of representing America was something that I wanted to do ever since I was a kid," Mr. Richardson said in an interview. "Going to other places and showing what America's promise is — I looked at that with a sense of reverence."

But after Mr. Trump was elected, Mr. Richardson stood before an audience in Madrid as the official representative of the American Embassy in Spain. He gave his usual talk with a heavy heart, he said.

Mr. Richardson was unsurprised when the first question from the audience was, "How can you say America is this land of promise and you have this guy in the White House?"

Shortly after, Mr. Richardson resigned, returning to the United States to work as an immigration lawyer. "I couldn't be the face of this government," he said.

Monde Muyangwa, the director of the Africa program at the Wilson Center, recalled her days working for the Defense Department during the Bush and Obama administrations.

"I spent almost 14 years at D.O.D., where I worked on African security issues and conducted programs in many an African country, including several that were struggling with diversity and inclusivity in their security sector," she said. "In some of these countries, and without our team uttering a word, the composition of our U.S. team — men and women of different racial backgrounds — clearly made a powerful impression on our African colleagues."

Ms. Muyangwa, who was born in Zambia, moved to the United States in 1995 and became a citizen in 2004. She is a Rhodes scholar with a doctorate in international relations and now runs a major department in a Washington think tank: an American story of success in a country where everything seemed possible.

African delegations, she said, often looked at her in wonder, asking "how I, a Black woman, had risen to my senior position."

But there are also practical aspects to having other colors in the room, Ms. Muyangwa said, such as giving the United States government insights into how their foreign counterparts are thinking.

In one meeting, Ms. Muyangwa recalled, "our African counterparts kept responding to us that they 'would think about it.'" Although Ms. Muyangwa's white colleagues took it at face value, she knew the Africans actually meant "no."

"From the board room to the Situation Room, bringing more diverse views to the table is proven to enhance the quality of decision-making and organizational performance," Michèle A. Flournoy, a former Pentagon under

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secretary for policy, and Camille Stewart, a former Department of Homeland Security official, wrote this month in an op-ed for CNN.

Peter Wittig, the former German ambassador to the United States, said the American story of immigrants and success had been a beacon for Germany as it grappled with its own influx of immigrants and refugees. "Twenty years ago, we in the Foreign Service were very much a homogeneous, white male group, and we looked at the U.S. as something different, something to emulate," he said in an interview.

"Twenty-five percent of our population in Germany now has an immigration background from at least one parent," Mr. Wittig said. "We look at America as the incarnation of that success story."

There is still hope that the United States can return to its aspirational role in the world, Mr. Wittig said. "One president can't erase that."

Lara Jakes contributed reporting.

PHOTOS: Colin L. Powell, the first Black man to become the American secretary of state, speaking to the U.N. Security Council in 2003. (PHOTOGRAPH BY HERIBERT PROEPPER/ASSOCIATED PRESS); From left, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper and Gen. Mark A. Milley, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, are three of the most visible U.S. officials abroad. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC THAYER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

**Load-Date:** September 13, 2020

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