

MINORITIES IN THE USA

What is a minority ?

In the United States, the term minority refers to members of the non-white population, but as the numerical, social, economic, political and cultural influence of whites erodes over time in the US, and the "browning of America" is now an irreversible process, the wisdom of using the term "minority" to identify non-whites is increasingly questioned and considered offensive.

The census in the USA lists people by race. The United States asks for race and ethnicity on its official census forms, which thus breaks up and organizes its population into different sub-groups, but primarily on racial origin rather than national one.

Latinos : America's largest minority group

The word "Latino" is used to refer to people from more than 20 different countries of origin, some of whom are recent immigrants, some second or third generation, and some whose families have been in the USA since it was first created.

The most significant change occurred in 2003 when the Afro-Americans ceased being the largest minority group in the USA. According to the 2003 census (= *recensement*), the Latinos, or Hispanics comprised 13% of the population while Afro-Americans comprised 12.7%. For the first time, Latinos outnumbered African-Americans. In numerical terms, this represents 37 million Latinos in a nation of 285 million people, but the true figure (= *chiffre*) is probably much higher because there are millions of Latinos living and working illegally in the USA.

According to projections, in 2050, the population of :

- Latinos will be 25%
- Afro-Americans will be 16%
- Asians will be 10%
- Indians will be 1%

The Whites will then be a "minority". In some parts of the country, such as California, the population of non-Hispanic Whites now already comprise less than half the total population. There are cities in Texas that are 90% Spanish-speaking.

On all fronts, Latino influences have been permeating American culture in music, cinema, clothing, and cuisine.... In the past decade, a new generation of popular

Latino actors and singers has arrived, including Salma Hayek, Jennifer Lopez, Andy Garcia, Benicio Del Toro...

In 2005, Antonio Villaraigosa, the son of Mexican immigrants, was elected mayor (= *maire*) of Los Angeles.

However, many Latinos or Afro-Americans remain underprivileged, generally excluded from the "melting pot".

Evidences of persisting inequalities :

- Poverty : in rural America, 34% of Afro-Americans are poor, 25% of Hispanics are poor whereas 13% of whites are deprived.
- Life expectancy is 7 years shorter for blacks than it is for whites (health-related and crime-related mortality)
- Infant mortality rate for blacks is much higher than it is for whites.
- AIDS-related deaths : 32% for blacks, 12% for whites.

But Afro-Americans are twice less likely to commit suicide than whites.

- Achievement gap between blacks and whites : in 2004; on average, black students scored 104 points lower than whites on the math SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test : a test taken in the US to measure students' abilities before entry into college or university).
- Students from ethnic minority backgrounds make up less than 4% of intakes (= *admissions*) at old traditional universities. The student population is segregated on racial lines.

In 2005, the devastations of Hurricane Katrina have shed light on the wounds of America : ghettoization, poverty and racial tensions. It especially brought into plain view the sad lot of black Americans.

Asian-Americans

The exception is that of Asian-Americans. They suffer much less from poverty and sometimes do better than whites. Read the following extract from an article published in *The Economist* in December 2004 :

According to a new study from the Public Policy Institute of California, Asian women born in the United States outstrip all their sisters in terms of earning power.*

The average hourly wage for American-born Asian ladies in 2001 (the latest year for reliable* figures) was \$19.30, with American-born whites coming next.*

On the bottom rungs of the ladder came Latinas : if born abroad they earned a mere* \$10.40 an hour [...]; if born in America, they managed \$15.10 an hour.*

Education is the biggest reason for the ethnic disparities. Some 55% of California's American-born Asian women have at least a bachelor's degree and an impressive 84% of them have either jobs or are looking for them.*

Vocabulary from the article :

- outstrip = *dépasser*
- hourly wage = *salaires horaires*
- reliable = *fiable*
- on the bottom rungs of the ladder = *en bas de l'échelle sociale*
- a mere \$10.40 = *seulement \$10.40*
- bachelor's degree = *diplôme équivalent à la licence*

Native Americans

About the terms used to describe native Americans :

- "Indians" was the name given by Christopher Columbus who mistakenly believed that he had arrived in Asia.
- The Spanish called them "Red Men".
- In the 19th century, they were called "Red Indians" or "Red Skins".
- In the 1970's, the phrase "Native Americans" appeared.
- Nowadays, the word "reservation" (= *réserve*) is being replaced by "community". The word "tribe" is being replaced by "people" (*dans le sens de peuple*).

Until recently, native Americans have suffered from chronic unemployment, poverty and dying communities. But things are changing gradually.

★ 1988 : Indian Gaming Regulatory Act

Before that 1988 Act, some tribes were already taking advantage of the fact that federal gambling laws did not apply on their reservations. They were organizing bingo games. But the new law opened the way for Native Americans to open casinos.

The example of the Pima community in Arizona : the tribe got permission from the state to open 3 casinos. The revenues have helped the community to slowly gain economic strength (= *force*), providing nearly 2,000 jobs, 60% of which are held by community members. This has also attracted back some members of the tribe who had deserted the reservation. This new prosperity has made reservation life seem attractive. In the past, Native Americans wanted to leave the reservation, now there is a movement back to the reservations.

Originally the casinos paid no tax, but at the end of 2003, Native Americans gave millions of their revenues to the state. Arizona uses it for schools, emergency services, conservation. In turn tribes are allowed to expand their casino activities.

Casinos have mushroomed in reservations. Politicians now court the tribes because they have the financial power of donating large amounts of money to political parties. Since 1988, they have donated around \$120 million.

Affirmative action

Affirmative action (U.S. English), or positive discrimination (British English), is a policy or a program promoting the representation in various systems of people of a minority group who have traditionally been discriminated against, with the aim of creating a more egalitarian society. This typically focuses on education, employment, health care, or social welfare.

In the 1960s and 1970s, affirmative action became overwhelmingly popular on campuses across America as mass student protests spurred schools to actively recruit minority applicants. National excitement died down in the late 1970s, and quickly turned to national controversy. Today, Republican opponents of affirmative action want to forge a third stance (= *position*) called "affirmative access", promoting policies they claim lead to diversity without specifically targeting race.

TD 1

Sum up the following article :

BBC News website

Saturday, September 11, 1999

TV boycott call for US minorities

A coalition of Hispanic groups in the United States is calling on its members to observe a two-week boycott of the country's four major television networks in protest at the "invisibility" of minorities in their programmes.



Jimmy Smits - One of the few Hispanic stars on American TV

The boycott, or "brownout", targets ABC, CBS, Fox and NBC, and is timed to hit the first fortnight of their new autumn TV season which starts on Sunday 12 September.

African Americans, Asian Americans and American Indians are also being urged to participate, representatives from dozens of civil rights organisations announced at a news conference in New York.

They are advising members to read books or rent videos during the boycott.

'Don't take us for granted'

"What we seek is that big networks stop taking us for granted," said Raul Yzaguirre, president of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic coordinating organisation whose 240 affiliate groups claim a membership of some three million.

Mr Yzaguirre, whose group sponsored the conference, said the major networks' autumn schedules are inundated with white actors, and failed to reflect the "rich multi-ethnic, multi-cultural" US population.

His group had counted just one Hispanic - Martin Sheen, on NBC's "The West Wing" - among the lead characters in the 38 new series opening this autumn. Three others continue on returning series.

Unacceptable 'injustice'

He added that the boycott was the first of a series of actions that would be taken to compel the networks to address the lack of minority representation on television.

Sonny Skyhawk, who founded the American Indians in Film group, said the networks' exclusion or misrepresentation of minorities was an unacceptable "injustice".

Figures show that Hispanics, set to be the largest minority in the US by 2025, make up about 11% of the US population, but provide fewer than 1% of characters on TV.

Networks' response

Minorities in the USA

Some networks have already made cast changes, though executives insisted they were in the pipeline before the outcry, which started in July when the NAACP, the nation's largest and oldest civil rights group, said it would begin monitoring minority representation on TV.

The networks have all issued statements in response to the boycott. ABC, NBC and Fox say they are making it a priority to look at diversity on screen. CBS says it does have minority roles in its prime-time programmes.

But the boycott organisers say they are not going to lift their pressure until they see the melting pot that is America reflected on the small screen.

"TV boycott call for US minorities"

The ideas that should be found in the summary :

- ◆ *Opening sentence* : A British news website reports on a TV boycott organised in 1999 by Hispanics groups to protest against the lack of minorities on American television.
- ◆ The boycott is organised by several Hispanic organisations.
- ◆ The boycott targets America's four major TV networks.
- ◆ It is scheduled during the first two weeks of the new TV season in September.
- ◆ Civil rights organisations urge the other minority groups to join the boycott.
- ◆ Those organisations recommend to read or rent videos instead of watching TV.
- ◆ Minorities want to be represented on screen.
- ◆ They protest against the monopole of white actors on TV and the blatant (= *flagrant, criant*) under-representation of minorities, especially in the new series scheduled for the new autumn season.
- ◆ Minority groups threaten to take further action to force TV networks to restore the balance.
- ◆ An American Indian organisation regards this exclusion as an "unacceptable injustice".
- ◆ Networks' response : all the networks have answered :
 - some have made cast changes
 - some others claim that diversity on their network will be a priority.
 - One network denies the accusations and claims that minority roles are present in its prime-time programmes.
- ◆ Nevertheless, the boycott organisers are determined to go on with their actions until American TV represents the multi-ethnic American population.

What is the situation on American TV at the end of 2005 ?

For six years, minority groups have monitored their portrayal on U.S. television, and demanded that the networks show the full diversity of American life. Media watchdog groups say the networks are making progress, but see room for improvement both on-screen and behind the camera.

ABC - the American Broadcasting Company - is now seen as a leader in promoting diversity on the air. Several of the network's shows, including *Commander-in-Chief*, which concerns a woman U.S. president, have Asian-American writers, producers and directors. ABC is also the only network with two Hispanic-themed programs, *The George Lopez Show* and *Freddie*.

American Indians are still the most poorly represented of all groups.

TD 2

Sum up the following article :

USA Today

June 15th, 2005

Spotlight skips cases of missing minorities

Tamika Huston's family reported her missing a year ago this week.



Tamika Huston has not been seen since June 2004. She disappeared from the Spartanburg, S.C., area.

When police in Spartanburg, S.C., began investigating the 24-year-old woman's disappearance, her loved ones swung into action. They distributed fliers, held news conferences and set up a Web site. Huston's story became a cause célèbre in the local media. Huston lived alone and obviously hadn't been home for days, if not a week or two. Her dog, Macy, had given birth to puppies.

Rebkah Howard, Huston's aunt and a public relations professional in Miami, tried to get the national media interested in the case. "I spent three weeks calling the cable networks, calling newspapers — even yours," Howard said this week.

Not much happened.

Last August, Fox News Channel's *On the Record with Greta Van Susteren* briefly noted Huston's disappearance. Fox network's *America's Most Wanted* did a story about the case in March (it will be repeated this Saturday). National Public Radio did a report last month that, like this story, focused on the lack of interest in Huston's case.

Now, the disappearance of Alabama high school student Natalee Holloway, 18, in Aruba is getting lots of airtime on the cable news networks and morning news shows. Those networks, which drive such stories, are being asked a tough question: Do they care only about missing white women?

Holloway, like "runaway bride" Jennifer Wilbanks, murder victims Laci Peterson and Lori Hacking, kidnap victim Elizabeth Smart and several other girls and women whose stories got significant airtime in recent years, is white.

Tamika Huston is black.

Cable news executives say they don't pick stories based on the race of the victims. "The stories that 'go national' all have a twist or an emotional aspect to them that make them interesting," said Bill Shine, senior vice president of programming at Fox News. "When the Aruba story broke, I didn't know if she (Holloway) was white," said Mark Effron, vice president of news/daytime programming at MSNBC. He said he saw a story about "a parent's worst nightmare."

'Victims of a certain type'

Others say race has to be at least a subconscious factor:

- "Something is at work here, at a conscious or at least subconscious level, that leads them to choose victims of a certain type" to report about, said Eugene Robinson, syndicated columnist and associate editor at *The Washington Post*, who recently wrote about the issue.
- "Sometimes we become advocates for their families," said Philip Lerman, co-executive producer of *America's Most Wanted* and a former editor at USA TODAY. "It's stunning sometimes how hard it is to get the national media interested when it's a minority."

Why would national media ignore minorities? Among the most important reasons is a lack of diversity in newsrooms, say Robinson, Lerman and Keith Woods, dean of faculty at the Poynter Institute, a school for journalists.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors estimates 13% of journalists at newspapers are minorities (including Hispanics). In TV newsrooms, minorities make up about 22% of the workforce, according to the Radio-Television News Directors Association. About 32% of the U.S. population is non-white or Hispanic.

Woods and others say the media mislead the public about "typical" victims. FBI statistics show that men are slightly more likely than women to be reported as missing, and that blacks make up a disproportionately large segment of the victims. As of May 1, there were 25,389 men in the FBI's database of active missing persons cases, and 22,200 cases of women. Blacks accounted for 13,860 cases, vs. 29,383 whites.

Media influence

Media attention can affect how local authorities handle a case.

Detective Dwayne Baird, spokesman for the Salt Lake City police, has been through two rounds with the national media. Local teenager Elizabeth Smart, missing since November 2001, was found alive in March 2003. Last year, Lori

Hacking, 27, was murdered by her husband. Both stories brought hundreds of journalists to the city.

Did the attention spur local police to request help from the FBI?

"Probably," Baird said. "We typically would ask for help from the FBI if they have resources that we don't have access to. But national attention can drive that issue. You can't stand before the public on a national story and say, 'We've got three guys dedicated to this, and sooner or later, we'll figure it out.' "

Howard conceded it's unlikely her niece is alive. This year, Huston's blood was found in an acquaintance's apartment. No suspect has been charged. National attention might generate clues, however. What Huston's family is asking for, Howard said, is balance.

"If you were dropped on to this planet you'd think there's a strange thing going on, where only young white women are missing," Howard said. "That's not true."

By Mark Memmott, USA TODAY

★ *Voir correction du résumé page suivante*

“Spotlight skips cases of missing minorities”

The ideas that should be found in the summary :

- An Afro-American woman has been missing for a year at the date of the article (June 2005)
- Despite her family's effort to get the media interested in the case, they have not covered the case much.
- While other cases of missing young women have been all over the news. The journalist points out that those other women are white.
- The journalist raises the problem of the under-representation of minorities in the news.
- The executives (= *cadres dans une entreprise*) of major TV networks deny the accusation of picking up / choosing stories according to the race of the victims.
- In the meantime, one of the editors (= *rédacteurs*) admits that there may be a subconscious choice.
- In any case, it is difficult to get the national media interested in minorities.
- Reasons : lack of minorities among journalists. The proportion of minorities in the media business is not proportional to the minorities in the American population.
- Moreover, the news coverage does not correspond to the reality of the background of the victims. In the media, the typical missing victim is female and white whereas in reality, black men are more likely to be missing.
- The media have a lot of influence on the behaviour of police officers. The media get the police more active to solve cases.
- Finally, the missing black girl's family is asking for a more balanced coverage of news that would reflect reality.

TENSE REVIEW

Fill in the following gaps with the appropriate tense for the verb in brackets :

The opening of the National Museum of the American Indian punctuates a formidable Indian renaissance that - even though it (leave) many tribes behind - (bring) wealth, optimism and self-determination to what 30 years ago (be) a landscape of poverty, social disarray (= a state of disorder, confusion) and bad living conditions. The 30-year-old story of Indian revival (taint - *au passif*) by the atrocities perpetrated in the name of Manifest Destiny*. That narrative of swindles (= *escroqueries*), war, ethnic cleansing, death from infectious disease, land theft, broken treaties, destruction of natural resources, paternalism, racism and federal policies designed to eradicate Indian language and culture ((run + finally) its course. Its legacy endures, however, and inequity (build - *au passif*) into e a reservation system.

Extract from an article published in *The Washington Post*, Sep. 2004

★ Manifest Destiny = the American White man's belief that it was inevitable that he would expand to the Pacific.

California, with the largest number of tribes, was the state where the 1988 Indian Gambling Regulatory Act - letting tribes to set up gambling operations as a means to economic independence - (*have*) the greatest impact. Casinos, many highly profitable, mushroomed.

Last year, Native American casinos nationally (*take*) an estimated \$13 billion in revenue. With that money has come power. As the tribal casinos have sought to expand, challenging the previous hegemony of the gambling state of Nevada, politicians (*court*) them. Since 1988, the tribes in California (*make*) political donations of around \$120 million.

Adapted from an article published in *The Guardian* in October 2003

A report recently criticised France's failure to absorb immigrants into mainstream society. Although the criticism is justified, France (*pursue*) a policy of refusing to allow the development of the kind of mono-racial ghettos seen in the inner cities in Britain and the US.

Adapted from an article published in *The Independent* in November 2004

★ *Voir correction page suivante*

TENSE REVIEW

CORRECTION

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