

**WORLD  
GOODWILL  
COMMENTARY**

**RACE RELATIONS:  
RACE – GENES – CULTURE -  
CONSCIOUSNESS**

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# WORLD GOODWILL COMMENTARY

*A bulletin on current trends in world affairs*

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## **No. 26 RACE RELATIONS: RACE – GENES – CULTURE - CONSCIOUSNESS**

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*...any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous... there is no justification for racial discrimination, in theory or in practice, anywhere.*

From the Preamble to the International Convention  
on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

*The nature of all men is identical; what divides them is their customs.*  
Confucius (551-479 B.C.)

*I ask you to drop your antagonisms and your antipathies, your  
hatreds and your racial differences, and attempt to think in terms of  
the one family, the one life, and the one humanity.*

Alice Bailey

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## RACE RELATIONS

### RACE – GENES – CULTURE – CONSCIOUSNESS

“It is inevitable that racial differences, national quarrels and caste distinction exist, but it is equally imperative that they disappear. The world is one world. Humanity is one unit in the evolutionary process. Differences are man-made and engender hatreds and separation. When the children of the various races are taught from their earliest years that there are no differences, that all men are brothers, and that the apparent distinctions are essentially superficial, then future generations will approach the problem of world interrelations unhandicapped by prejudice, by pride of race, or by instilled historical resentments.”

Alice Bailey. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* pp.195-6

Humanity's perception and promotion of racial and ethnic division has probably caused more exploitation, more misery, more frustrated human potential, more death and genocide than any other single thing. It is really important, therefore, that people of goodwill spend time and energy to think deeply about this problem, to help vision a better future for all of humanity, and help to build it.

By definition, people of goodwill see the goodness in every individual and every group, and want to draw out the best in everyone. People of goodwill recognise that to resolve a problem we have to first penetrate through to the root cause. People of goodwill also know that identifying a problem and discovering its cause is only the start of the process. The main work is helping to build a vision of a better future that is realistically possible, and grounding that vision in the practical work of daily living – that laboratory of the soul which reveals to each of us our strengths and weaknesses and enables us all to grow into more effective servers.

Many people these days have grasped the vision of a world where racial and ethnic consciousness is not a barrier to good human relationships. A few can even sense the possibility of a doorway opening for us all into a post-race and post-ethnicity world – in fact, to a world of the one humanity. That people can think, talk and behave in these terms is a wonderful affirmation

that the paradigm of the one humanity is beginning to emerge as a powerful conditioning factor in world affairs. But this observation must not blind us to the fact that many people and institutions still cling to the old emotional patterns and habits of thought that maintain the sense of division in society and foster racial discrimination, keeping alive hatreds which ought to have died out long ago. We need to honestly recognise the extent and persistence of racial and ethnic divisions, of racial hatreds and conflicts. We also need to celebrate the many examples where a new sense of vision and the courageous actions of various individuals and groups around the world have helped to overcome entrenched prejudices, unjust laws, and ethnic violence, and have helped to release communities and nations into more enlightened habits of thought and into more inclusive patterns of relationships and living. It is right for us to celebrate the huge progress that has been made in race relations: but it is vital that we recognise that there is still a long way to go.

It is a surprising fact that the concept of race, as “natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences”, is actually of recent origin. According to the Oxford Dictionary the first known use of the word ‘race’ with this modern meaning was in 1774. This was during the period we now call the Age of Enlightenment, which gave birth to the scientific method and to an almost universal enthusiasm to label and classify. From this period we have inherited the seminal ideas of people such as Linnaeus, who proposed five races of human beings. At first Linnaeus based these groupings on the place of origin, and he described each race in terms of the qualities of character that he considered defined the individuals belonging to it. It was only later that skin colour and other physical characteristics became an increasingly important factor; and eventually, of course, they became exclusively defining.

Throughout history, human beings have demonstrated strong patterns of socialisation. These naturally arose from the need to ensure the welfare and survival of the tribe or group whose needs were empowered through shared rituals and community structures. But they could also be reinforced through viewing the outsider as foreign, untrustworthy and, by implication, less than human. The concept of race reinforced this pattern, and, used as a labelling mechanism, it quickly conferred the status

of superiority on one apparently identifiable portion of humanity by defining others as naturally inferior.

The combination of the scientific method with the separative behaviour patterns that humans have established over millennia created a lethal brew that facilitated belief in group superiority, justifying slavery, exploitative colonialism, xenophobia, and the various genocides that have left such a dark stain on our history. These have led to the poisoning of many aspects of human relationships – individual, group, national and international – for so long.

But our world has now shrunk. Human mobility has increased out of all recognition over the last two centuries, to the point now where global travel has become commonplace for significant numbers of people. Our towns and cities are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan, and the intermingling of people from all over the world is now greater than at any time in history. As with all human phenomena, this is producing both good and bad results. On the one hand, travel gives a tremendous opportunity to broaden the mind and open the heart to the millions of people who can avail themselves of the opportunity because they have enough money and live in at least moderately free countries. But for the poor, the dispossessed and the politically oppressed, the refugee and the asylum seeker, travel to other parts of the world is often synonymous with exploitation, victimisation and tragedy. The problems of economic migrants, and those seeking political asylum, to give two examples, have now been well documented and publicised, but sadly, for the most part those in positions of responsibility have been unwilling or slow to address this problem with the needed generosity.

All this presents us with both a unique opportunity and an urgent necessity to face squarely the issue of race, to acknowledge wrongs, to do what we can to remedy them, and to promote a new sense of racial equality and harmony that can only be good for all the peoples of the world. With knowledge of the facts, with courage and with generosity of spirit, these relationships can be – and indeed in many instances are already being – redeemed and transformed into healthy and supportive examples of right relationship.

Humanity is a complex being. In addition to being capable of the most monstrous cruelty and selfishness, we also witness extraordinary lives of selfless love and practical goodwill. It is a puzzle to many how such extremes of motive and behaviour can co-exist. But, as the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn put it, "...the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being". And such is the beauty of the human spirit that whenever there is an infringement of the spiritual law of right human relationships, groups of people will emerge to tend the wounds, to heal the suffering, and to restore decency and kindness to relationships anywhere and everywhere in the world.

## **Race and Genetics**

The discoveries in the field of genetics, and especially the decoding of the human genome, have been some of the most exciting scientific developments of the past two decades. So, as race is popularly defined in terms of distinguishing physical characteristics, it will be interesting to see what insights the new science of genetics has to offer. It is most instructive to learn from this new science that the concept of race has almost no meaning at all from a biological point of view. Naturally there are very tiny genetic differences between every human being, which means – unsurprisingly – that every person is physically unique. Even identical (monozygotic) twins display small genetic variation. But when we compare any two randomly selected people, their genomes will be 99.9% genetically similar to each other. While some of the world's important spiritual traditions posit a history for humanity that stretches back over millions of years, with the cyclic rise and fall of successive civilisations, the current consensus of opinion among mainstream paleobiologists and anthropologists is that humanity is very young. They propose that we emerged as a species in Africa about 200,000 years ago and, through sequential patterns of migration, gradually settled in the rest of the world. The genetic structure of humanity is like a nested hierarchy with the populations in the Americas and the South Pacific being a subset of the genetic diversity found in Eurasia

which itself is a subset of the diversity found in Africa.\* In 1998, the American Anthropological Association produced a 'Statement on Race' which contains the following passage:—

With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge in [the twentieth] century, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics . . . indicates that most physical variation, about 94%, lies *within* so-called racial groups. Conventional geographic “racial” groupings differ from one another only in about 6% of their genes. This means that there is greater variation within “racial” groups than between them. In neighbouring populations there is much overlapping of genes and their phenotypic (physical) expressions. Throughout history whenever different groups have come into contact, they have interbred. The continued sharing of genetic materials has maintained all of humankind as a single species.\*\*

Genetics is in its infancy and is consequently developing at a rapid pace. As is usual under such circumstances, new discoveries pile into public consciousness on an almost daily basis, and the tendency is for people to take these and distort them into dogmatic theory. At the present time simplistic claims abound for ‘a gene for this’ and ‘a gene for that’, only to be dismissed a short while later as new discoveries overturn yesterday’s certainties. Another feature is that people who hold a particular view of human nature fall into the trap of uncritically accepting discoveries that bolster their position, conveniently ignoring information which might alter, undermine, or perhaps even transform their views.

An example of this is in the newly developing field of pharmacogenetics, which is the study of how people’s genetic make-up affects their response to medicines. A press release from the Sanger Centre, Cambridge University, announced to the world in June 2000 that the human genome had at last been decoded. “Information from the Human Genome Project is already being applied in the fight against specific genetic

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\* See for example [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recent\\_single-origin\\_hypothesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recent_single-origin_hypothesis)

\*\* [www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm](http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm)

diseases such as muscular dystrophy, but knowledge about the whole genome will eventually lead to better diagnosis and treatment for a range of conditions from cancer to heart disease. The first fruits are likely to be in the field of new, more accurate, diagnostic tests, and later the development of personalised medicine, where treatments and drugs are based on a person's individual genetic make up.”\*

It has since been found that a patient's genetic profile can indeed sometimes indicate how he or she will respond to a specific drug treatment. Further investigation has revealed that certain conventionally perceived racial groups have a higher likelihood of having particular genetic patterns. These predispose them to particular diseases, Sickle-cell Anaemia and Tay Sachs Syndrome being the two usually mentioned, and also influence the degree to which they will react to specific drug treatments. This has re-introduced the idea that conventional racial divisions might have more of a genetic basis than has recently been thought, which in turn has propelled the community of people working on the study and application of genetics into a self-confessed state of turmoil at the present time, and for several reasons.

As we have already noted, genetics is a new science and this does not make for comfortable certainties, and most human beings – scientists included – yearn for certainty. Also, there is an understandable fear amongst many that genetics might after all re-ignite the fires of racism by proving that if one racial group is identifiably different from another, then it is only a short step back to the separative nightmares of imagined superiority and inferiority. This is leading to a desperate search for the evidence that points in the opposite direction, plus a downplaying or neutralising of the evidence that apparently supports this position.

### *Genetics and Free Will*

Many subscribe to the view that genetics validates biological determinism. This holds that everything about us, not only our bodies, but also our thoughts and feelings as well as our moral

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\* [www.sanger.ac.uk/HGP/draft2000/mainrelease.shtml](http://www.sanger.ac.uk/HGP/draft2000/mainrelease.shtml)



and religious values, even consciousness itself, is explained by our bio-chemistry which in its turn is determined by a combination of inherited traits and predispositions. A moment's thought will show that this presents a particularly bleak view of the human condition – our values, thoughts, feelings, moral sense, the ability to make creative choice and so on, are simply illusory projections of synaptic activity. If true, this means that we have no more ability to influence the course of our lives than the figure on a cinema screen can influence what film is being fed through the projector.

Then there is the view that sees people as strongly but not exclusively conditioned by their genes: the natural and social environment has an important influence as well. The care that our parents give us, the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, our cultural and social environment, all help us to become more than our genes predict. A bit of thought will reveal that this is still a bleak view of the human condition, for environmental influences are still external to the Self. The dilemma this presents us with has been neatly summed up in the following short poem.

Nature or Nurture? The  
debate goes on. Yet either  
way we are the will-less puppets  
of mechanism or circumstance.

Does the miscreant before the magistrate  
speak truth when he says, 'It's not my fault,  
it's my genes,' or 'my dad hit me'?

Or can he play the cards that nature  
dealt and circumstances bestow  
and say, 'I am my true self, I'm sorry.  
I *will* not to do that again'.

This line of thought leads people to ask what one's true Self is and what part does it play in the great scheme of things? This forces us to look seriously at consciousness and to investigate the relationship between the brain and consciousness – which is cause and which is effect? This is not a new problem: it has been explored and discussed by philosophers, psychologists, scientists and spiritual people for centuries. Even taking into

account the many very serious problems that face us in the world today, it is in fact the most important one now confronting humanity, as it defines whether or not we can approach the challenges, problems and opportunities that we all face with free will and redemptive creativity. It is obvious that the ramifications of this issue affect every aspect of our lives and values, but mainstream society, certainly in the West, has hardly begun to acknowledge or address it yet. In addition, the current polarised extremes of a fanatical materialism and an equally fanatical religious fundamentalism are not helpful. Nevertheless, the possibility of a way forward in achieving a new understanding about this issue is revealed in the ageless wisdom teachings, which view the physical body, including the brain of course, simply as a vehicle for the incarnating individuality or Self. To begin with it is a vehicle for experience, and later on, towards the end of the long cycle of incarnations, it becomes gradually transformed and redeemed into a vehicle through which the soul can express itself in creativity and service.

As race is usually defined in terms of physical characteristics, it becomes clear why it is necessary to have made this little detour. The concept of the Self offered by the many interwoven strands of the ageless wisdom teachings is like Ariadne's golden thread that can lead us out of the maze of intellectual impasse into which the materialistic view of the universe and of the human being has led us. It presents the possibility of a Self, enriched by the qualities gained through many diverse incarnations, that can consequently interact creatively with both the genetic predisposition of the physical body it has to operate through, *and* the envioning circumstances in which fate or choice has placed it. This immediately puts the whole race issue into a quite different perspective: it now becomes an issue of creative engagement with life and relationship. The outer physical world is characterised by difference. No two people are ever the same. Every family is different from every other family. The many groupings within society and the larger groupings of people, which we call nations, are all unique. We need to acknowledge that difference and diversity and the multicultural vision have great importance. It is through the celebration and enjoyment of difference that we truly achieve an understanding of what human unity really means. It is not

an intellectual doctrine, or an imposed uniformity; it is an experience of the heart and consequently an acceptance of reality. Where we have gone wrong in the past and continue to do so now is to turn difference into a separating wall. Once such a barrier has been built it creates distrust, jealousy, selfish competition and conflict. Much suffering is caused by it, and, we might add, much suffering is incurred in its destruction.

## Race and Culture

We have shown how modern science demonstrates that humanity is a single species. This affirms the spiritual experience of enlightened people around the world that the reality is one of a “true brotherhood of man, *based on the one divine life, working through the one soul and expressing itself through the one humanity*”.\*

So how do we account for the differences between people and groups? It is clearly not genetic diversity, as we have seen. But could it be explained by cultural diversity? This question takes us into the world of emotion and thought, into the realm of myth and archetype, and into the spiritual reality which we call the soul. Despite the fact that these are intangibles as far as much of modern humanity is concerned, they are powerfully real and embody energies and forces which condition all our lives in comprehensive ways. As individuals we all experience a huge variety of thoughts and emotions. But where do these ideas come from? Are they our own, or have we tapped into thoughts that have already been pondered over and elaborated by many minds? The feelings we have; are they unique to us, or are they part of a tide of emotion that is sweeping a population into a shared experience of enthusiasm or fear, of triumphalism or the desire for revenge? And beyond thought and emotion, we should acknowledge the existence of the soul, which is the reality behind all forms and which bestows quality on them. For example, the distinctive quality of a nation is an expression of the energy coming from that nation's soul. Do we not recognise that the art, music, literature, architecture, the

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\* Alice Bailey. *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* p.595

intellectual and spiritual life of a nation is coloured by a distinct 'note' which enables people to recognize it for what it is? Russian literature, for example, whether from the pen of a Solzhenitsyn, a Tolstoy or a Dostoevsky, is unmistakably Russian. In the world of opera, Verdi can never be mistaken for Wagner.

We would like to suggest that similar energies and forces are at play when it comes to racial groupings. These have generated their own unique thoughtforms and identities, and the self-chosen members of particular racial groups have "tuned in" to their specific patterns of thought and feeling which find expression in numerous and recognisable ways. This is particularly interesting to observe when the protagonists are physically indistinguishable from each other, yet there is an explicit and consciously recognised distinction of their different notes. Consider for example the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland, whose conflict has historically created separating walls not only in the psychological sense of barriers of understanding and conflicting loyalties, but literally as well down the streets of Belfast and Londonderry/Derry. We see the same happening in the Middle East, with walls of hatred dividing Israeli and Palestinian, both of whom are conventionally typed as Semitic people, yet whose oppositional identities have created one of the most dangerous conflicts in the modern world.

What this means is that the principal locus of racial identity is not physical at all. It is in the patterns of thought and emotion that a people resonate with. And if racial and ethnic identity is an emotional and mental reality rather than a physical one, this presents us with a real opportunity to deal with it, for it is a problem of attitude, of habits of thought and of patterns of emotion. Let us look at this for a minute. As individuals, many of us make a discipline of periodically reviewing our life. If this is done in at all a deep way, it is found that behind the actions and speech of daily life lie discernible motives, patterns of thought and emotional moods ranging from the highest soul-inspired ones to the basest of selfish instincts. Many people – perhaps the majority even – are not consciously aware of these at all. But as soon as we have become aware of them, it becomes possible to deal with them in a creative way. We learn to foster what is good and progressive, and to substitute better

ones for those motives or thoughts or emotional patterns which are clearly harmful and retrograde. This sounds easy to do, but in practice it takes a long time of self-observation and self-discipline to nurture the desired changes into existence and transform them into firm habits. Even then, after years of believing that a particular reaction or behaviour pattern was a thing of the past, circumstances inevitably occur which bring it unwelcomely back to life. This of course is the very stuff of counselling and psychotherapy.

## **Tackling Racism**

The big question is: can these techniques of personal review and transformation be adapted for use on a collective level? While it is clear that success cannot be expected to be achieved overnight, there are good grounds for a positive response to this question.

Firstly, let us recognise that we need to make a key distinction: between race prejudice, which is a manifestation of patterns of relationship that are based on ignorance and fear, and as such is an emotional condition that can be remedied by education and greater social contact; and a malevolent racism, that consciously wishes to retain and promote the sense of separateness and the false beliefs in superiority and inferiority which is the product of a mind distorted by illusions of separateness and varying degrees of hatred. Obviously, these need different techniques to overcome, and over the past two centuries, NGOs, governments and communities around the world, the great world religions, and latterly the UN and its various agencies have tried to deal with both of these, with varying degrees of success.

To combat race prejudice, a variety of tools have been developed, which focus on educational programmes that encourage good relationships and integration, and that also address the need to ameliorate the great disparities of wealth and poverty that aggravate the suspicions and hostilities between various racial groups in societies around the world. These tools have been created because leading servers and groups of people of goodwill in communities around the world have “reviewed” the state of

their society, seen the problem, visualised something better, and worked out the means to get there. As a result, financial support from various layers of government, as well as from the voluntary and private sectors, has been made available to underpin a whole variety of local community, national and international initiatives.

One example in Britain is the Runnymede Trust. This is an “independent policy research organization focussing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society”. Runnymede believes that the way ahead lies in building effective partnerships, and it is continually developing these with the voluntary sector, the government, local authorities, and companies in the UK and Europe. The Trust works to stimulate debate and to suggest forward-looking strategies in areas of public policy such as education, the criminal justice system, employment and citizenship. Since 1968, when Runnymede was founded, it has worked to establish and maintain a positive image of what it means to live affirmatively within a society that is both multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. Runnymede continues to speak with a thoughtful and independent public voice on these issues today.

Another example is the European Network against Racism (ENAR). This promotes the cause of equal treatment for ethnic minorities and non-EU nationals who are living in the European Union. ENAR is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. The NGOs have formed National Coordinations (NCs), which constitute the membership of ENAR and include ethnic minorities, immigrants’ associations, information centres, advocacy groups, trade unions, faith-based organisations and many others. Democratically elected representatives of each NC attend the Network’s meetings where they are consulted on policy and statutory issues. One of the representatives of each NC should belong to an ethnic minority.

“ENAR is determined to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between European Union citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European Union initiatives.” (for more information, see [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org))

Another NGO, based in the UK, is Minority Rights Group International, which has over 40 years experience of working with non-dominant ethnic, religious and linguistic communities. It brings a long-term view of these issues to bear in all the work it does. MRG works with minorities as diverse as the Batwa in Central Africa, Roma in Europe, Christians in Iraq and Dalits in India and Nepal to mention just a few. Their website at [www.minorityrights.org](http://www.minorityrights.org) tells how this group “campaigns worldwide with around 130 partners in over 60 countries to ensure that disadvantaged minorities and indigenous peoples, often the poorest of the poor, can make their voices heard.” They have consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and observer status with the African Commission for Human and Peoples’ Rights.

The American Anthropological Association has initiated a project on race, making for its keynote the question, “Race: Are we so different?” The Project “seeks to expand current thinking about race and human variation and encourage an integrative and comprehensive view of this complex topic”. Through a series of activities, the RACE Project has commissioned papers and articles that examine race and human variation from varying viewpoints among scientists and scholars. These are all available on their website at [www.understandingrace.org](http://www.understandingrace.org) – in addition the ‘Activities’ part of the website features thought-provoking interactive modules that challenge race preconceptions and present humanity as a unity. The project has also created the first nationally travelling exhibition to tell the stories of race from the biological, cultural, and historical points of view. Combining these perspectives offers an unprecedented look at race and racism in the United States.

On the other side of the world there is the Indonesian Anti Racism Society which “promotes the idea and ideal of the equity of humankind, regardless their descent, religion, national or ethnic origin backgrounds”. It is “committed to create a social environment which values cultural and physical diversities and which shares equality to its members.” The Society notes that it is only by treating people with the respect they deserve that change can become possible. They believe that, “Racist individuals are not bad, not evil, not to be hated. These individuals are merely misinformed. And for us to make

any kind of change we must help to inform them – this can never be achieved with force, anger or hatred. We must be non-violent not only in action, but also in word and thought.” (see <http://insearching.tripod.com/english.html>)

### *Affirmative Action*

A still controversial tool, but effective if wisely used, is affirmative action or positive discrimination. Among other things, such as promoting a more balanced gender representation in parliaments, this can enable racially diverse communities to leapfrog the depressingly slow pace of naturally achieved race equality and integration, and get there more quickly. In this context it is interesting to note that Article 2.2 of ‘The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination’ supports affirmative action programs as a remedy for systemic discrimination. However it does insist that such programmes should end once their goals have been achieved.

Malevolent racism is much more difficult to deal with. It usually requires government legislation and enforcement, in addition to a continuing educational dimension. Examples of this are the various Race Relations Acts introduced by many countries. In Britain for example the 1976 Race Relations Act makes it unlawful among other things to discriminate against anyone on grounds of race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin. Additionally, this Act was amended in 2000 to impose general duties on public authorities to promote racial equality.

Countries where racism is institutionally enforced face very difficult problems. History teaches us that such systems are only overcome through a combination of an extremely clear vision of right human relationships and groups of people motivated to the highest degree and prepared to sacrifice all to make the necessary and profound changes in the system. Germany under the Third Reich was the prime example of this, with its theories of a master race that led directly to State programmes for the elimination of the undesirable which in racial terms included the



Jews, the Roma and the Poles. And it required a cruel and terrible world war to overturn.

However, at the end of the Second World War there was a great flowering of idealism with a vision of remaking the world on new and better lines. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights codified this idealism into a set of principles which still embody the aspirational goal of humanity.\* Among other things it gives primary recognition to the equality of all peoples and declares that no one should suffer discrimination because of their racial, ethnic or religious background. A review of the decades since then gives us a dual picture. On the one hand we see a process of crystallisation as the separative instincts in the human mind materialised in movements to promote segregation and maintain it with institutional deceit and cruelty. The creation of apartheid in South Africa, with its appalling treatment of the non-white populations; the entrenched racism of the southern states of the USA; and the establishing of the state of Israel in the Middle East, with its mistreatment of the Palestinians, are just three examples of this.

On the other hand, there is a heartening picture of a steady overcoming of these separative tendencies. The struggle against apartheid in South Africa triumphed with the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, and in his election as President shortly after. A particularly significant feature of post-apartheid South Africa was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up under the chairmanship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Although this was not the first such commission, it nevertheless achieved two remarkable results. It gave people on both sides of the previous racial divide the opportunity to acknowledge their guilt in some of the atrocities that had occurred, and to seek the forgiveness of those who had been wronged. It was thus an agent of a remarkable healing. It also revitalised the idea that repentance and forgiveness are practical tools to empower progress. An example of this was in 2008 when Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, made a formal apology to the aborigines for the treatment they had

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\* World Goodwill has recently produced a Commentary focusing on the Universal Declaration, entitled, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Signpost to Freedom". Copies available on request.

received from the European settlers, in particular for what has now come to be known as the Stolen Generations – “this blemished chapter in our national history”, as he put it.

We need to remember that this momentum of human progress required the conscious decision of many ordinary people to live sacrificial lives. And while we hold the names of the leaders in awe – Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela to give just two examples – there are many thousands of people, and from all races, who gave and continue to give of their utmost to the cause of emancipation and freedom, sometimes to the point of the ultimate sacrifice.

Thanks to the work of this group of world servers, much progress has been made in race relations in many countries. In Britain, on 19 January 2009, a report was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission which showed that there is a new and growing diversity among young people that makes the very concept of race increasingly hard to define. *Ethnicity and Family: Relationships Within and Between Ethnic Groups*, commissioned from the University of Essex, indicates that the percentage of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds is on the rise, as is the number of young people from families with mixed heritages. According to the report, if current trends continue, ethnic minorities and those from mixed race backgrounds will make up an increasingly large proportion of the population in the future.\*

The report also looks at the rise of inter-ethnic relationships, which it notes have often been seen as indicative of the extent of openness in different societies and of the extent to which identities are adapting and changing over time. They are, according to the report, “taken to be a thermometer of ethnic relations in particular societies”.

The report suggests that the decline in partnerships among people from the same ethnic background may reflect a general view that race itself does not provide as meaningful a basis when selecting a partner, compared to other things young

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\* The report is available to download as a PDF from the Equality and Human Rights Commission at [www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/raceinbritain/ethnicity\\_and\\_family\\_report.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/raceinbritain/ethnicity_and_family_report.pdf)

people may have in common, like education, friends, attitudes and beliefs.

A spokesperson for the Equality and Human Rights Commission said: "Britain is changing in a remarkable way. One in five of our children are from an ethnic minority background and young people are six times more likely to be mixed race compared to adults. The old, polarising debate about black and white is changing and the next generation will not see race in the same way we see it."

A remarkable event in January 2009 was the inauguration of Barack Obama as President of the United States. This was viewed by millions of people around the world as a living symbol that the most difficult barriers can be overcome and a new pathway be created. The remarkable has a wonderful habit of becoming the commonplace, and by the time this commentary is being read the fact that he is the first non-white US president will have lessened in importance compared with the qualities of his character, his sense of vision, and with the effects of the policies and decisions of his administration.

When we look at the factors that have produced better race relations, it is clear that the techniques of personal review and transformation have indeed been extended in many instances to the community and national level. This is a most encouraging feature of contemporary humanity.

## **What Does the Future Hold?**

"The world today is very, very small and men are discovering (sometimes for the first time in their lives) that humanity is one and that all men, no matter what the colour of their skin or the country in which they live, resemble each other.... The world itself is a great fusing pot, out of which the One Humanity is emerging."

Alice Bailey. *Education in the New Age* p. 46

We asserted at the beginning of this commentary that many people have grasped the vision of a world where racial and

ethnic consciousness is not a barrier to good human relationships, and that a few can sense the possibility of a doorway opening for us all into a post-race and post-ethnicity world. We believe that this is not a utopian dream; it is not even just a practical and achievable goal. It is simply that it is now vitally and urgently necessary. The question is, how long will it take to be achieved in a significant measure? This depends on the continued and dedicated and love-inspired and love-inspiring hard work of those servers and groups within the human family whose dharma it is to get us there.

The words of Martin Luther King in his speech at the St. Louis Freedom Rally in 1957 are still as true today as they were then. "There are three basic attitudes that one can take toward the question of progress in the area of race relations. And the first attitude that can be taken is that of extreme optimism. Now the extreme optimist would argue that we have come a long, long way in the area of race relations. He would point proudly to the marvellous strides that have been made in the area of civil rights over the last few decades. From this he would conclude that the problem is just about solved, and that we can sit comfortably by the wayside and wait on the coming of the inevitable. The second attitude that one can take toward the question of progress in the area of race relations is that of extreme pessimism. The extreme pessimist ... would conclude that there can be no progress in the area of race relations. Now you will notice that the extreme optimist and the extreme pessimist have at least one thing in common: they both agree that we must sit down and do nothing in the area of race relations. ... [But] the realist ... seeks to reconcile the truths of two opposites while avoiding the extremes of both. So the realist would agree with the optimist that we have come a long, long way. But, he would go on to balance that by agreeing with the pessimist that we have a long, long way to go. And it is this basic theme that I would like to set forth this evening. We have come a long, long way but we have a long, long way to go."

Let us remember that this speech was focussing on race relations in mid-twentieth century America. Now, 50 years later, when we take a step back and look at the state of race relations in the world as a whole, we become aware that in just about every country there are situations of only partially redeemed relationships between the various ethnic and racial

groups. In some places, there are deep-seated conflicts stretching back over centuries that are aggravating racial and ethnic tensions to dangerous, and in some instances genocidal, levels.

There is also the legacy of slavery to deal with, for this has often followed the contours of racial division. Some people think that slavery belongs to a past which we have thankfully left behind. But the reality for many is quite different. For these people the pain of slavery is still raw and unhealed, occupying a high profile in the consciousness of many groups in societies around the world. This needs to be acknowledged by us all with a deep sense of humility at shared sufferings and shared wrongs before the pain can be transmuted and redeemed. In this and many other respects there is indeed still a very long way to go.

We must also factor into our considerations the knowledge that we are living now at a time when forces within humanity and in the natural world, many of which we have set in motion ourselves, are compelling an unprecedented and widespread recognition of the realities and difficulties we all face. There is now, fortunately, no evading them, no escape into a world of illusion.

### *Impact of the Economic and Ecological Crises*

Of particular importance as far as social relationships is concerned is the pressure on humanity today from the twin crises of economic and ecological instability. At the end of 2008, the international banking and credit crisis led to a collapse of consumer demand, the stagnation of industry and a huge increase in the numbers of the unemployed, and with unemployment comes heart-rending poverty. The hope that there might be a quick recovery from this crisis appears naively unrealistic. Indeed, there is a substantial body of opinion which regards it as a long-term condition that will affect humanity for many years, as it is occurring at a time when the environmental impact of human economic activity is now recognised as being unsustainable and a major concern for all thinking people. This will mean among other things much higher food and energy prices, which are basic living requirements for every human

being. For the rich it will mean that a greater proportion of income will have to go into their purchase. For the poor there is a risk that food and energy will become unaffordably expensive at times; for the very poor this is a certainty.

The link between poverty and racial intolerance is now well established. In fact it is the purposely adopted theme of the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Githu Muigai of Kenya (appointed in 2008). At a Press Conference in New York at the time of his appointment, he announced that the relationship between poverty and racism lay at the centre of his mandate. He pointed out that the victims of racism, particularly minorities, tended to form the most economically marginalized groups in any society: “An unmistakable testimony of the historical impact of racism, and of its contemporary resilience, is the overlap between poverty and ethnicity across the world. A devastating consequence of the socio-economic vulnerability of minorities is the double impact that the financial crisis will bestow upon them. As many others, they will suffer from decaying wages, increasing unemployment and even more critical standards of living. But in addition, they are also more vulnerable to many expressions of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.”

This perception makes it urgently important to establish a world-wide culture of racial empathy and tolerance, to avert the resurrection of racial mistrust and hatred that at the moment is lying too close to the surface for comfort. It is not enough to preach tolerance and understanding. We have to build a world where sufficient material necessities are available for all, where education is available for all, and where the prospect of creative work is within reach of all.

Serious voices are now raising doubts that this is possible, as the achievement of the millennium development goals, despite some notable success stories, recedes into the future. But this thought brings us to the final and in some ways the most important part of this commentary.

## **Spiritual Techniques and World Problems**

At the heart of all humanity's problems, and particularly the problem of racial and ethnic divisions, lies the basic need to build right human relationships.

As has been discovered by many people down the ages, among them the very greatest that humanity has produced, when all human and material resources have failed to find a true and lasting solution to a problem, then a door is discovered that provides a passage for consciousness to the inner world of the soul and the intuition, and the spiritual will. It is through this door that we can draw on strength, evoke new insights, and direct the energy of empowering and soul-inspired thought into the heart of a problem where key workers and groups are struggling to achieve a breakthrough.

Let there be no illusion that this will make the outer work an easy ride. The hard unremitting labour has to continue, the strain is terrific, but there is a new light on the problem, and there is a new certainty that good will eventually triumph.

The work of people skilled in prayer and meditation is behind the scenes and anonymous, but it is of the utmost importance. It is literally building a lifeline into the spiritual world that enlightened beings have testified to in every spiritual philosophy and religion. So to conclude, we would like to suggest that you embark on a disciplined and regular commitment to some creative form of prayer or meditation as a specific contribution towards resolving the issues discussed in this commentary. If you do take up this suggestion, remember that you are aligning yourself with a dedicated group of people from all over the world who are working together to empower the thoughtform of right human relationships, so that it can strengthen the workers in the specific field of race issues. We suggest you might like to include the Great Invocation in your meditation. This world prayer is a wonderful formula for human and planetary integration; its relevance to the healing of racial divisions is obvious and immediate. Used by a dedicated group of people it can really help anchor the thoughtform of the one humanity in the minds of people everywhere, it can empower the workers in the field, and it can illumine a path for us all into a better world.

## **THE GREAT INVOCATION**

**From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.**

**From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.  
May Christ return to Earth.**

**From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.**

**From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.**

**Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on  
Earth.**

**OM OM OM**



## THE OBJECTIVES OF WORLD GOODWILL

To stimulate and encourage men and women of goodwill everywhere to establish right human relations between races, nations, and classes by an intelligent understanding and adequate communication.

To assist men and women of goodwill in their studies of world problems and in the effective application to these problems of goodwill, cooperation and sharing for the common good.

To cooperate with other organizations in constructive activities contributing to world unity, stability and right human relations.

To make available up-to-date information on constructive current action in the main areas of human life through the publication of a quarterly newsletter.

To establish a goodwill Commentary on issues of world interest.

To aid in establishing goodwill as the keynote of the new civilization.

To create a worldwide mailing list of men and women of goodwill.

To support the work of the United Nations and its Specialized Agencies as the best hope for a united and peaceful world.

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**WORLD GOODWILL** is an activity of the **LUCIS TRUST**, a non-profit, educational organization first incorporated in the USA in 1922.

The Lucis Trust is on the Roster of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. World Goodwill is an accredited non-governmental organization with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations.