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Transatlantic Commission on Ethnicity, Race, Immigration, and Citizenship

The Transatlantic Commission on Ethnicity, Race, Immigration, and Citizenship is about problems associated with racism, xenophobia, immigration, and migration. These are issues central to the future of democracy as well as effective and humane governance. The Commission intends to highlight and effectively respond to the pernicious effects on society of racism and xenophobia which have a long-term impact on countries and societies on both sides of the Atlantic. The Commission recognizes that citizens and societies need to understand how to create a harmonious society in which we all benefit from the richness of experience and perspectives that comes from a multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural society. The commission will formulate strategies and recommendations to advance parity among the races and ethnic groups. It will promote international dialogue focused on what can be learned from successes and failures on both sides of the Atlantic.

Commissioners will be policy makers; scholars; business, civic and labor leaders; foundation officers; journalists; and non-governmental representatives. The expectation is that participants, as leaders in the areas under discussion, will shape and direct the Commission's work and its products.

Background

There have been prior examinations of the centrality of race, specifically in American society. In his seminal book about 19th century America, European visitor Alexis de Tocqueville said about race: "The danger of a conflict between the white and black inhabitants perpetually haunts the imagination of the Americans like a bad dream." (*Democracy in America*.) Since that time, other studies about race in America have included Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma*, the Illinois Governor Otto Kerner Report, *Common Destiny*, and, most recently, President Clinton's initiative, which was headed by historian John Hope Franklin.

European scholars have written extensively about race, xenophobia and anti-semitism. Antonio Gramsci's writings on Italian fascism, France Neumann's book *Behemoth*, Anthony Smith's works about nationalism, Berndt Ostendorf's work on immigration in Europe and the U.S. as well as the current journal from Great Britain, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, come to mind. And we are aware of studies from the European Union Monitoring Center on Race and Xenophobia and the United Nations.

For some time, societies in Europe, the United States and other parts of the world have been in rapid transition. This transition is characterized by changing demographic, economic, and political patterns which, in turn, raise critical issues with respect to governance, fair and just public policy, and the meaning of citizenship. In this context, questions related to ethnicity, race, religion, and citizenship as well as immigration, and migration are high on the agenda on both sides of the Atlantic. Over the past number of years, a set of new realities has emerged: the tension between Muslims and non-Muslims, the increasing political potency of Muslims (i.e., 15 to 30% in cities) in many major European countries, the fact that whites comprise a minority of the population in most major American cities accompanied by growing white militancy and religious fundamentalism are deterrents to racial and societal accord.

There is growing turmoil on both sides of the Atlantic. In France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy, there has been growing unrest and violence related to defining the meaning of citizenship and inclusion for “minority groups”. This represents a level of unrest which was apparent in the United States thirty and forty years ago. Issues of employment for younger people and family poverty are at the core of this turmoil. Unemployment and poverty are centrally related to defining notions of citizenship and societal inclusion...

By the year 2010, immigrants, people of color, and women will comprise the majority of new entrants into the labor force. In Europe, there is tension directly related to the declining birth rates in France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy along with the increasing waves of immigration of Muslims and people from Pakistan and India that are obtaining more political influence (sometimes through the ballot box). Some of this tension has to do with skewed educational and employment opportunities. Jacques Delors, the former Chairman of the European Union, noted that if a solution was not found for the problems of immigration, the European Union “could implode.” Americans such as Warren Buffett ponder the possibility of major civil disorder.

In the United States, race continues to be a critical issue, which has had a significant effect in many areas of national policy. Corporations and the Chief of Staff of the United States military have acknowledged the need for diversification (*e.g.*, General Motors, Proctor and Gamble, 3M, and IBM). They understand that multiplicity is key to a well-functioning workplace at home. These “world players” have recognized that diversity could increase their economic advantage, which could lead to new markets and work forces abroad.

In Europe, the European Union established the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia in 1997. This Center was established by the European Union to combat the “phenomena of racism and xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia” which are perceived as increasing over the past number of years. In the recent past, the European Union and the EUMC have been particularly interested in “integration policy” which focuses on newly arrived immigrants: “to assist them in their participation in society, to enable them to be self-supporting, and to give them an understanding of fundamental values and norms of society” (EUMC Newsletter, November 2002). A

critical feature of integration policies is participation by the new immigrants in the labor market and the requirements which could then lead to citizenship in the receiving countries. This has been a real issue for some Europeans and Americans who see the new immigrants as competitors for skilled and unskilled jobs, which are increasingly scarce.

The Commission intends to compare the commonalities of these aforementioned social factors in the interest of finding broad ameliorating policies.

Philosophical Orientation for the Commission

Given this background, the Commission's work is being guided by the following philosophical orientation:

- The Commission recognizes the unique histories of different countries and their unique journeys on issues of diversity and inclusion;
- The Commission will not focus on past "flawed" efforts or methods for achieving inclusion and equity; instead we will concentrate on new directions and alternative models;
- The Commission will provide assessments of best practices and levels of progress in improving harmony and equity within American and European societies

What Are the Goals of the Commission?

Up to this point in time, the planning process has identified the following goals for the Commission:

- To stimulate and produce knowledge about alternative policy models and practices.
- To foster dialogue about policy issues among policymakers, scholars and research analysts, business and labor leaders, foundation officers, non-governmental organizations, and civic leaders across boundaries that are rarely traversed.
- To identify strategies and models which can be implemented to address the problems related to racism, xenophobia, and immigration;
- To drive the Commission's findings into the "body politic" so that there may a long term impact of the Commission's work
- To forge collaborative relationships among those from different nations, different policy and occupational domains, different career stages,

different racial and ethnic backgrounds, different research and service orientations, and different methodological approaches.

- To develop a cross-continental, interdisciplinary network of resource people for Commission participants to call upon when they have questions about topics discussed in their experience.
- To work cooperatively with international, national, and community-based institutions and organizations to enhance the process of finding solutions to the key problems addressed by the Commission.

Development of the Commission

The commission represents an extension of the “Transatlantic Conference on Race and Xenophobia” which was held in Chicago in October 2002. That conference was partially funded by the European Commission and was the first of three meetings designed to bring together U.S. and European academics, non-governmental organization representatives, business and opinion leaders, journalists and elected officials to analyze, critique and compare what we have learned during the latter decades of the 20th century about addressing racism and xenophobia politically and economically, in theory and in practice, on both sides of the Atlantic. The second conference was held at Howard University in Washington, D.C, one of the premier historically Black universities in the United States, and the third at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium in spring 2003. These meetings helped launch a planning process that produced the Trans Atlantic Commission on Race, Ethnicity, Immigration and Citizenship.

The Commission is currently in the planning phase. During this period, policy-makers, scholars, civil society leaders and business leaders are being engaged from both sides of the Atlantic. Edward Palmer, Senior Associate in the Institute of Government and Public Affairs and Co-Director of the PEOPLE Programme and Robert F. Rich, Director of the Institute of Government and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois are serving as Co-Executive Directors for the Commission. Institutions with “charter” membership status that made initial financial contributions so that the planning process could go forward include the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Michigan, the University of Maryland at College Park, and the University of the District of Columbia. The PEOPLE program is also serving as a co-sponsor of the Commission.

In addition to Edward Palmer and Robert Rich, the leadership for the planning phase of the Commission’s work is being provided by: Lord Meghnad Desai (London School of Economics); Glyn Ford, Member of the European Parliament (UK), and one of the Founders of the European Monitoring Center for Race and Xenophobia; Harlem Desir, Member of the European Parliament (France), and a founder of SOS Against Racism; Anver Versi, Editor of *African Business*; James Jackson, Director of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan; Bobby Austin, Vice President of the

University of the District of Columbia; and Alice Palmer, Co-Chair of the PEOPLE Programme and a former Illinois State Senator. In addition, David Campt (University of California at Berkeley and former Senior Advisor to President Clinton) is serving as a Senior Advisor to the Executive Directors of the Commission.

In November 2006, the Planning Committee for the Trans Atlantic Commission on Race, Ethnicity, Immigration and Citizenship held its inaugural meeting at the London School of Economics. Participants included Cedric Herring (Professor of Sociology and Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois), Bobby Austin, Meghnad Desai (Co-Chair), David Campt, Glyn Ford, Edward Palmer, Robert Rhodes, Henry English (CEO of the Black United Fund of Illinois), Dorith Grant-Wisdom (Lecturer at the University of Maryland College Park), Alice Palmer, Anver Versi, James Jackson (Co-Chair), Beate Winkler (by phone), and Robert Rich (absent). This planning group includes representation from social science scholars and analysts, policymakers, civil society organization leaders, and business leaders.

Following this meeting, the planning process has moved forward with: identifying an overall work plan, securing support for the work of the Commission from the United Nations, continuing to collect critical background information, holding meetings in Washington D.C. to secure Congressional support and a meeting in Jackson, Mississippi with former Mississippi Governor Winter, a member of the Clinton race initiative, to review past initiatives by the Clinton Administration and obtain his support.

What are the Activities of the Commission?

The target audiences for the Commission are those entities and change agents that can help ameliorate the problems associated with racism, xenophobia, and societal exclusion as expressed in public policies, customs, and immigration and migration policies. Such entities include but are not limited to governments, NGOs, civil society organizations, and businesses. . In essence, the Commission represents an effort to facilitate dialogue and exchange among leaders from Europe and North America around the key issues already identified. It seeks to help North American and European leaders understand similarities and differences in their policy-making processes and institutions.

The Commission will issue an annual report about the state of racial equity in America and in various European nations, and it will also offer opportunities for participants to see first-hand how alternative systems operate and function, to sponsor public forums, hearings, publications, and encourage media coverage. The Commission also offers the chance for participants to hear policy discussions that are informed by various vantage points. Perhaps most importantly, the Commission will provide a vehicle for leaders from various backgrounds and domains to forge relationships across national borders to improve the quality of policy making and to advance the quality of life for residents in their nations, especially in those areas that are related to racial equity and diversity.

We anticipate that the work of the Commission will include:(1) intercontinental policy

seminars; (2) visits to relevant agencies, institutions, and organizations; (3) Internet-based, asynchronous distance learning, (4) international travel to receive first-hand knowledge about comparable institutions and systems; (5) structured opportunities for networking among leaders from different domains; (6) post-visitation debriefing sessions; and (7) information exchanges.

The basic idea behind the Commission is to combine leadership development with the circulation of ideas that promote common democratic principles.

Next Steps and Schedule

The planning process should be completed by December of 2007 at which time the Commission will convene to undertake its work. We anticipate that the Commission will issue a preliminary report in December of 2008 so that it may have an impact on the Presidential transition period and will issue its final report in June of 2008.

Before the Commission can be launched, the following tasks must be completed:

- Securing the support of members of the European Parliament and the United States Congress;
- Securing support of civic, business, and university participants in Europe;
- Securing additional support from university participants , civic leaders as well as political and business leaders in the United States;
- Securing financial support for the planning process in Europe;
- Securing financial support for the work of the Commission; and
- Completing a series of white papers as background for the work of the Commission.