

## Race, National Ideals, and Civic Virtue

Civic virtue is generally understood as relating to a specific polity and in that way to be distinct from virtues appropriate to a human being as such, the subject matter of most “virtue theory.” This conception does not rule out “universal” civic virtues—ones appropriate to membership in a “world community”—and some theorists speak of and advocate some form of such “world citizenship.” Nevertheless, I will consider civic virtues in the context of an individual national political community, the United States in particular.

### Work and Public Space: A Broad Conception of the Civic Domain

Civic virtue is sometimes understood as engagement with the polity as such. On this conception, civic virtues might include appropriate regard for fellow citizens, being well-informed about public issues, a disposition to offer reasons for one’s position on such issues, and being disposed to participate in political institutions and processes. But I will use a somewhat broader conception of civic virtue that also encompasses forms of public interaction and engagement with public modes of life. It will encompass, for example, relations in the workplace and in public spaces. These matters are appropriately regarded as “civic” because they bear on civic standing. As Judith Shklar, among others, has pointed out, in the United States having a job is a mark of a good citizen; other things being equal, the jobless are seen as civically deficient.<sup>1</sup> How one is treated at work is also one mark of civic regard.

How do we decide which qualities or traits are civic virtues on this broader conception of the “civic”? The virtues presuppose some normative conception of the civic order—some notion of how that order oper-

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<sup>1</sup>“It is in the marketplace, in production and commerce, in the world of work in all of its forms, and in voluntary associations that the American citizen finds his social place, his standing, the approbation of his fellows, and possibly some of his self-respect. The spheres designated as public and as private, respectively, are always shifting, and civil society, which combines both, has no set contours.” Judith Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 63.

ates when it is operating properly or well. Civic virtues can then be understood as qualities that engage in the appropriate way with that civic order and its norms.

### **Aligning Civic Practice with Civic Ideals**

Some accounts of civic virtue emphasize that civic traits are necessary to reproduce (good) institutions and their concomitant political cultures. Citizens must, for example, participate in the appropriate manner, through voting, petitioning their elected representatives, and defending protections of vital liberties against internal and external threats. One might call this the “upholding good institutions” model of civic virtue. This model must form a part of any conception of civic virtue in contexts in which the institutions of the nation are worth upholding. But I am interested in a different, though related, dimension of civic virtue. That involves the ability of citizens to recognize when the practices of their political society fail to live up to the professed ideals of that society. Such a virtue requires a capacity and disposition to know what the ideals of one’s society are, which in turn depends on some knowledge of the national history; an ability to recognize when the current reality fails to accord with one or another of those ideals; a recognition of (some aspect of) what it would take to bring that reality into conformity with those ideals; and a disposition to do something oneself along those lines.

The conception of the civic order that allows for such virtues must, then, include not only the actual functioning of institutions in society, but also a set of norms and ideals that might partly animate those institutions, but to which the institutions might also fail to live up. The assessment that current institutions fail to align with civic ideals is not necessarily the same as the assessment that they fail to meet some appropriate moral standard. For example, it is plausible to think that the current political order in the United States, and, indeed, in most nations of the world, violates minimal standards of social justice, and this is a reason for attempting to align them with such standards, generating civic virtues required to do so. But the civic ideals I am concerned with are not simply reasonable moral standards, but ones that are (perhaps also) specific to a particular civic order. Those standards can, indeed, fail to include some basic moral standards that should govern a given order, and they can equally go quite a bit beyond minimal standards. They can also overlap substantially with those minimal standards. Let us call the virtues I am pointing to here “aligning institutions with ideals,” or “aligning virtues,” for short.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>I am assuming that the ideals in question are worthy ones, so that it would be a good thing if the society were to move further in their direction. One can imagine a morally

## Critical Reflection

Some writers on civic virtue have emphasized one virtue that appears to be involved in the aligning virtues in liberal democratic polities, and that is the ability to engage in critical thinking; they have generally argued that schools should teach critical thinking as part of citizenship education. Such critical thinking has been emphasized in two contexts in the civic virtue/education literature. One is connected with personal autonomy, and the ability of each individual to subject a way of life with which she is presented (either as that within which she has grown up, or an alternative one in which she might choose to engage) to critical scrutiny. A good deal of this literature has been concerned with a balancing of this virtue with others with which it might be in tension, such as the right of parents to pass on their way of life to their children, or the right of a cultural community to reproduce itself without the state attempting to weaken its hold on its children.

A second, less common, way that critical thinking or critical reflection comes into the civic education literature is in the idea that students should be taught the ability to criticize their own society. This virtue is often emphasized as a counterweight to what is taken by its proponents to be an emphasis on an uncritical or insufficiently critical loyalty to one's nation.

I agree that such critical thinking is important, but my conception of the aligning virtues involves critical thinking or reflection in a somewhat different way from either of these concerns. Both of these views of critical reflection leave it entirely open what standards the individual will choose to use to evaluate what she is evaluating, whether ways of life or aspects of her own society. Indeed, it would be contrary to the spirit of the advocates of both these sorts of critical thinking if certain standards of assessment were ruled out. This would be seen as denying autonomous critical reflection itself. However, the aligning virtues *do* restrict the standards for critical reflection; they restrict them to the ideals of a particular political society. The aligning virtues concern the ability of citizens to think critically in the sense of discerning whether the actual practices of their society align with the ideals of their society and, if not, to try to bring them into such alignment.

Suppose, for example, that an American citizen thinks it would be better for the American people if the U.S. were to become a Soviet-style

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neutral use of "ideal" in which a society adopts as aspirational morally bad ideals—fascist ideals, for example. In addition I would not regard abandoning or ratcheting down a worthy ideal in order to bring it more in line with current reality an example of the aligning virtues. What makes them virtues is not simply that they bring two different things into alignment (reality and ideals), but that they improve the society by bringing reality closer to worthy ideals.

communist state, another, a Muslim theocracy, and a third, a Christian theocracy. Suppose advocates of each of these proposals proffers a set of arguments for her proposal. Those arguments could not appeal to the actual political ideals of U.S. society.<sup>3</sup> Communism, Muslim theocracy, and Christian theocracy are clearly not within the range of plausible interpretations of American political ideals. And so those candidates for standards against which to assess the functioning of American practices cannot be part of the aligning virtues, even if good normative arguments could nevertheless be given on their behalf.

In saying this, I take no stand on whether it might in some sense be better for the United States if it abandoned its own ideals and attempted to live up to some other ideals, such as the ones just mentioned. I am not privileging a political society's own ideals in any *absolute* sense. I am merely trying to distinguish one type of civic virtue from others, and, more specifically, one sort of critical reflection from others. I recognize that the aligning reflection that I am defending could be seen as too limited from the vantage point of these more expansive visions of critical reflection. Nevertheless, there is a recognizable civic integrity to the idea of critical reflection on the practices and institutions of one's own society in light of that society's own ideals. "Are we living up to what we profess to stand for?" is an important question for a citizen to attempt to answer; and providing the cognitive and moral wherewithal and knowledge to do so seems to me arguably a legitimate goal of civic education.

I do not mean to imply that it is a simple matter to discern what the ideals of a given polity are. There is generally room for disagreement about this, although some interpretations will be more plausible than others. Civic ideals are not merely a cover for ideals held on other grounds. Also, there may be agreement on an ideal's formulation at a certain level of generality—"freedom," in the American context, for example—yet disagreement as to how to understand that ideal in a form closer to practice and policy. Moreover, the same civic order may generate competing civic ideals. Rogers Smith's influential work on civic traditions within the U.S. finds a liberal tradition, a republican tradition, and an exclusionary and hierarchical tradition.<sup>4</sup> But I am not sure that every tradition can rightly be called an "ideal." I imagine that most Americans, if asked which of equality and liberty on one side, or exclusion and protection of privilege on the other, they regarded as ideals of American political tradition, would select the former, even if some of their responses to public

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<sup>3</sup>Of course there may be some overlap at a sufficiently high level of generality; communists could appeal to equality, Muslims to justice. But this level would be too abstract for the practice-connected virtues I am concerned with here.

<sup>4</sup>Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997).

issues are in line with the latter. In any case, one can also regard liberty and equality as the “best traditions” of the nation, and as representing the appropriate ideals against which current arrangements are to be assessed.<sup>5</sup>

### Racial Equality as a Civic Ideal

I want to discuss the aligning virtues in the context of one particular American civic ideal, and that is racial justice, conceived of as a particular application of the American ideal of equality. Racial justice or racial equality is arguably an ideal embodied in various amendments to the U.S. Constitution (13th–15th); in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that has been taken to be a good deal more than simply a Supreme Court ruling but to have defined and helped to secure an important civic ideal;<sup>6</sup> and in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and later elaborations, reaffirmations, and reiterations of it. I will not engage with the admittedly complex historical and political issues related to the standing and character of this ideal. Equality more generally has some claim to be an American civic ideal; but racial equality has a standing that is not *simply* an application of the more general ideal of equality. Because the U.S. political order was secured on a foundation of racial *inequality*, the repudiation of that foundation has generated a specific concern with and commitment to racial equality.

I will proceed with what I take to be a plausible if not universally accepted notion that racial justice is an ideal of the American polity, yet one against which current practices can be found seriously wanting.<sup>7</sup> If so, then the aligning virtues will engage with the project of bringing

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<sup>5</sup>I develop the idea of “best traditions” in “Best Traditions Patriotism: A Commentary on Miller, Wingo, and Ben-Porath,” *Theory and Research in Education* 5 (2007): 61–68. See also n. 2, above.

<sup>6</sup>347 U.S. 483 (1954). The Supreme Court’s majority decision in the 2007 school integration case, *Crystal D. Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* (docket 05–915), signals a retreat from the ideals of *Brown*; but only the majority’s perverse understanding of the *Brown* decision as concerned only with race neutrality and not at all with racial inequality enables them to claim the mantle of the *Brown* legacy.

<sup>7</sup>That gap can be seen in the fact that blacks lag behind whites on almost every indicator of social well-being—for example, education, health, wages, income, home ownership, and wealth, generally by a substantial margin. (For many of these, there has not been much progress since the 1970s, and in some cases there has been regress, e.g., in college attendance.) The margin is substantial enough that in the absence of any agreed-upon standard for assessing such disparities from the vantage point of racial justice, it should be plausible to take them as indicators of racial injustice. One striking figure is that the median black family possesses about 10% of the assets of the median white family, in context of the fact that assets are significantly related to the ability to acquire other important social goods. See Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 204.

practice into greater alignment with this ideal. Thus, I will be discussing a specific instance of the meta-virtue of aligning reality with ideals and will refer to that instance (aligning reality with racial justice) as itself a virtue; in this sense there will be several, or even many, aligning virtues each tied to a distinct (worthy) ideal.

If there are virtues connected with creating a more racially just society, at least some of these virtues will be identity-sensitive. That is, they will concern the treatment of some groups in a way that the identities of these groups matters for the virtue in question. If blacks, or African Americans, have been treated unjustly, then the aligning virtues will at least partly encompass a recognition of African Americans as a distinct group. Yet a recognizable tradition in the literature on civic virtue is unwelcoming to the idea that civic virtues could be identity-sensitive, for the status of "citizen" is the operative one in thinking about civic virtue, in a way that contrasts with other identities that might exert some claim on the individual. Being a citizen does not require us to *deny* that we are also white, Christian, African American, gay, and so on, but it does ask us to put those identities aside in the context in which we act *as citizens*. And in doing so, we treat others not as members of specific ethnic, religious, or racial groups, but as citizens.

A moment's reflection will reveal that this picture requires qualification, if not complete abandonment. Civic life often involves particular groups treating and being treated in certain ways. Historically the way whites have treated blacks is importantly distinct from the way that Chinese have treated the Irish, and is distinct in a way that has affected the civic standing and treatment of all these groups. If racial justice is to be a standard against which particular practices and institutional processes are to be assessed, we will sometimes have to take the identities of members of particular racial groups into account both as agents and recipients of the civic aligning virtues.

Defending the civic relevance of social identities against civic identity-neutrality can leave the misleading impression that all social identities operate very similarly to one another in civic contexts. This impression is also left by the public discourse of "diversity" in which it is implied that all types of diversity are relevant to whatever context is in question, be it course offerings, programs for students, or hiring. Of course there is also a different discourse around "diversity," in which everyone takes it to mean racial and perhaps gender diversity, rather than, say, religious, economic, or ideological diversity; this latter discourse is encouraged by those who wish to defend traditional affirmative action as aiming to rectify historical (and perhaps contemporary) racial and gender exclusions but who recognize that from a legal standpoint in the U.S., this justice-based understanding of affirmative action is no longer

regarded as legitimate. The Supreme Court, in its *Bakke* and *Grutter* decisions,<sup>8</sup> has permitted universities to utilize racial preferences in admissions, but only insofar as this is understood as serving a “diversity” rationale, not an historical rectificatory or social justice one. This situation has encouraged people to talk vaguely about diversity without attempting to, or wanting to, clarify exactly what this means and how it is legitimately used—yet while using it as cover for race and gender preferences in admissions, hiring, and the like.

### Race as a Social Identity

All of these developments keep us from attempting to get a grip on the important civic differences between different sorts of social identities. Since my view of the aligning virtues depends on taking racial identity seriously, let me say something to clarify what sort of identity a racial identity is. This is important to do in part because racial identities can seem insubstantial and even illusory compared with, say, ethnic, cultural, or religious identities. In my discussions of these matters with undergraduate students, there is a good deal of confusion concerning how to think about races, racial groups, and racial identities. One source of that confusion is the idea that the notion of “race” is an illegitimate notion and, if so, how can there be actual races? I am in sympathy with the view that “race” is a scientific idea—that is, that it refers to a fundamental biological division of the human species—but that this idea is a false and invalid one. In this sense I agree with the critique, now standard fare among most (not all) scientists and philosophers, that there are no “races” strictly so called.

Nevertheless, while there may not be actual races, there are certainly groups that have been viewed and treated by others, and often amongst themselves, as if they were races in the biological sense. These groups are ones that it is useful to call “racialized groups,” as a way of indicating that they are groups that have come to be what people (who believed in race) saw as races.<sup>9</sup> In this article, I will use the more neutral “racial groups” to carry that implication. African Americans in the United States are a racial group in this sense; they were treated by people of European ancestry as if they were inferior sorts of beings, possibly not even human, and were relegated to an inferior social position, both during slavery and also the regime of segregation in the South and to some extent in

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<sup>8</sup>*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978); *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

<sup>9</sup>I defend and develop the idea of a “racialized group” in “*I’m Not a Racist, But...*”: *The Moral Quandary of Race* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), chap. 8.

the rest of the country as well, until fairly recently. Racial ideology “constructed” African Americans as a racialized group, providing a rationalization for inferior treatment, to the benefit of whites, and creating African Americans as a distinct people, with an identity as those who were seen by the dominant group as inferior. As part of that identity, African Americans found ways to challenge their inferior treatment, or to provide comfort and solace in the face of it, and to challenge the racial ideology that rationalized it. African Americans developed religious, social, and political forms, institutions, and movements that spoke to these needs, and that helped to shape “black” as a positive identity to be embraced, even while recognizing that it was one that was socially demeaned and stigmatized. To acknowledge oneself as “black” (or, in earlier periods, “Negro” or “colored”) was often a way of acknowledging that social positioning but challenging its moral legitimacy.

Apart from the issue of the illusoriness of race, there are three points that seem to many to be reasons for a group to embrace an ethnic identity but to reject a racial one. The first is that “race” seems based on a superficial characteristic, namely, external bodily features such as skin color or hair texture, while ethnicity seems based on something substantial, namely an ancestrally based culture (an “ethnoculture”). The second is that race can seem to be something imposed by others, by those claiming that one is to be classified a certain way as reflecting certain inherent and undesirable characteristics; ethnicity, by contrast, seems to be internally created, created by one’s own people, as it were. Ethnicity comes from the inside, while race comes from the outside. Finally, “race” can seem a negative identity, while ethnicity seems a positive one. Race is negative because the characteristics associated with race are ones that render a group inferior; that is the point of the racialization.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, “ethnoculture” is seen positively. This is especially true in the post-multicultural world where ethnoculture is almost always viewed as something to be embraced and celebrated.

Each of these three alleged contrasts between race and ethnicity is misleading in a way that the idea of a “racialized group” helps to clarify.

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<sup>10</sup>Racial identities are, however, asymmetrical in one important respect—that under the racial schemes most familiar to us in the U.S., “white” has historically been an honored identity, or at least a privileged one, while all others have been seen as less worthy. Even in the contemporary U.S., in which much of the racial ideology that in the past informed the popular use of these categories has been abandoned, whites are still a privileged group. At the same time, in part in recognition of the very injustice of this fact, many whites do not wish to claim a “white” identity (preferring instead an ethnic one, or a vague pan-ethnic one such as “European American”: see Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005)); in that sense “white” too becomes in some sense a negative racial identity.



While the phenotypic characteristics associated with racialization are indeed superficial in the sense that, outside of a social context, they have little importance, the basis for identity in a racialized group is not those phenotypic characteristics themselves, but the shared social experience of being treated as if one were an inferior sort of being, plus the shared experiences of responding to that treatment in ways that attempt to maintain dignity in the face of it. The phenotypic characteristics remain as a social and historical marker of presumed shared experience and hence are not actually superficial. Second, while it is true that racialization is imposed by others, it is not true that the peoplehood of blacks is simply imposed by others. That peoplehood is importantly a matter of the self-creation of blacks in response to that treatment by others. Blacks, or African Americans, created an identity worthy of being embraced by recognizing the despicable treatment to which they were subject and finding ways to challenge that treatment and the view of themselves that was taken to justify it, and to attempt to live with dignity in the face of that treatment. It is that living and challenging, and the cultural, social, and institutional forms that express them, that make "black" a self-created and self-chosen identity. This is not to say that it is same as an ethnocultural identity; it isn't. But it is to say that the contrast between "imposed by others" and "chosen by one's own people" that was alleged to be a point in favor of ethnic identities and against racial ones does not hold. Finally, race is not necessarily a negative identity, although it is an identity that recognizes that others see it, or at least have seen it, negatively. But it is as a positive response to that negative view by others that renders it a positive identity that is a legitimate source of pride and value.

In sum, then, both racial group and ethnic identities are based in a sense of peoplehood in the groups so identified. Ethnic identity, roughly, is based on a shared ethnoculture and ancestry, while racial identity is based on shared treatment and experience though also connected to ancestry. This difference potentially makes a normative difference in the appropriate ways ethnic and racial groups are treated in society, and therefore in the civic virtues appropriate to them. (Remember that when I refer to "racial identities" here, I mean more precisely "racialized identities," or "identities as racialized groups.")

That race and ethnicity are distinct and ground distinct types of identities does not, of course, prevent a particular group from being both racial *and* ethnic, and having both identities. Haitian Americans may have an identity as a distinct ethnic group as well as being racially black; Italian Americans are ethnic as such but also racially white. Certain virtues might be appropriate to group X in respect to their ethnicity, and others in respect to their race. African Americans occupy a distinctive place within the U.S. in relationship to racial and ethnic identity. More so than any

other ethnoracial group, their ethnic and their race-related characteristics are deeply intertwined and often difficult to prize apart. This is because the ethnoculture of African Americans was forged almost entirely from “materials” related to their race-related treatment. In contrast to every other group whose origins lay outside the United States, African Americans were not able to pass on significant elements of a distinctive home-based culture to their progeny, since these cultural forms were deliberately suppressed by slave owners. (That this suppression was not entirely successful accounts for a small degree of African culture-of-origin elements in African-American culture.) At the same time, the treatment to which African Americans were subject was so deeply racialized that the cultural forms arising from this treatment have been much more marked by that context than was the case with other groups. African-American religion and music, for example, especially forms originating in slavery and segregation, can only be understood in relation to this context of racial inferiorized treatment. (This is less true of later forms that grew out of, say, Northern urban experience, such as jazz and rhythm and blues.) Despite this intertwining, there remains a difference between African Americans considered as an *ethnocultural* group, and considered as a *racial* group, where the latter highlights historical and social positioning in a race-based social order, and the former the purely cultural dimension.

### Tolerance in Relation to Religion and Race

Let us look at some qualities plausibly seen as virtues in the context of racial injustice, and in the larger context of social identities. One often mentioned is “tolerance,” that is, tolerance of social identity differences. A good deal of current work on civic virtue concerns the “fact of pluralism” about which Rawls spent so much of his later work theorizing. The fact of pluralism is the existence in advanced democracies of many distinct modes of life with their distinctive value commitments—Rawls called them “conceptions of the good”—often, though not necessarily, rooted in distinct groups within their societies. Much literature concerns accommodation that liberal societies should make to these groups and especially to groups that lack commitment to various liberal values. The idea of tolerance or toleration arises in this context. Tolerance can be understood minimally to mean merely a refraining from attempting to use the state to suppress or internally modify the practices of groups of which one disapproves. (Whether tolerance constitutes a virtue in that context depends on whether the group of which one disapproves *should* be suppressed or modified.) Let me call this “basic tolerance.” However, understood as a civic virtue, tolerance involves the way one views and treats such groups in one’s interaction with them as members of a shared

polity, not merely whether one refrains from trying to get the state to suppress the group. For example, suppose Jones regards Islam as a degraded, worthless religion—a view that a Muslim student of mine said she has experienced from numerous people—but does not think the state should suppress it or modify its practice in any way. Jones exemplifies basic tolerance; but her regarding Islam so negatively in the first place is an objectionable and intolerant way of regarding a major world religion. The virtue of tolerance should be understood as requiring the attempt to see some sort of value in religions in which one does not believe. Alternatively, one might say that religious identities demand something beyond this sort of tolerance, something more demanding on the part of fellow citizens—perhaps a sort of respect for the other in light of her religious commitments, a respect that requires some sort of general positive regard for the other's religion (beyond merely "some sort of value"). There is a good deal more to say about what such virtues beyond tolerance might be, but let us suppose that some sort of regard for the other's identity beyond basic tolerance is warranted.

What I want to note here is that these sorts of virtues seem appropriate to the case of religion in a way that they do not to the case of race. This is because what generates the need for religious tolerance is that, given their comprehensive conceptions of the good, people may have reasons to object to other groups with their differing conceptions. If I believe that Jesus Christ is divine and that this fact is central to the way I live my life, I have a strong reason to dissent from views that reject Christ's divinity, either other religions that do so, or atheism. Virtues related to toleration and respect are meant to help us contend with our sharing a polity with persons about whose views we have such apparently strong reason to object and differ. We assert a civic tie that preserves some sort of relation to someone whom we have reason to regard as importantly misguided, even deeply, and the influence of whose views we have reason to oppose.

Racial difference does not present a comparable situation. Races do not differ in beliefs or fundamental values in the way that religions do. So there is not the same reason to object to other races as there is to religions. If someone has a problem with a racial group as such, we think that this is essentially prejudice, and entirely without justification. Of course there can be religious prejudice as well; but the mere objection to another religion is not sufficient for an attribution of prejudice. The Christian who objects to Judaism for its rejection of the divinity of Christ is not "prejudiced" against Judaism (or Jews for believing in Judaism). This is not to say that a final stance of opposition to Judaism is *justified*; the whole point of the virtues of tolerance and recognition is to find ways of showing appropriate regard for identity groups other than one's own pre-

cisely when one has some reason to object to them. But in the case of race, there is no analogous reason for objection, and so the virtues of tolerance and recognition lack that natural setting.

This is not to say that the notion of “racial intolerance” is without meaning; indeed we do speak of this as a vice. But I think this is an importing to the context of racial pluralism language naturally used in religious pluralism contexts. Racial dislike, hostility, or prejudice would be a more accurate way to express this vice. Someone who dislikes or thinks ill of members of another racial group as such (even if, as is typical especially in the contemporary U.S., she leaves room for many exceptions—members of the group whom she does not dislike or think ill of) is racially prejudiced, and this is a civic vice. It is odd to talk of someone being “tolerant” of someone of another race as a way of saying merely that she lacks prejudice, since tolerance implies a background in reasons to object that is absent in the case of race.<sup>11</sup>

Ethnicity presents a case somewhere in between religion and race in this regard. Ethnic groups are not like religious groups in having a set of distinctive beliefs and value commitments. But, unlike race, ethnicity does involve cultural practices linked to a shared ancestry. The cultural practices present a situation somewhat comparable to the religious situation, in that someone might have reason to object to the cultural practices or values of another group. But the ancestral dimension is more like race; just as some people dislike others because of their race, others do so because of their ancestry; although some may dress this dislike up as an objection to specific cultural practices, because there can be some justification for such objection, often it is just prejudice based on ancestry. They don’t like Haitians, Italians, Greeks, and so on.

This discussion suggests that different kinds of identity function differently in relation to particular civic virtues. Tolerance, or, more generally, virtues concerned with sustaining civic and human relations with those with whom we have reason to profoundly disagree about matters of the deepest importance, has its natural home in contexts of religious pluralism. But it is a faulty model for thinking about civic virtues related to race.

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<sup>11</sup> John Horton argues that unless the objection to the other is actually justified, it is not a virtue to countenance the other, so that, for example, countenancing of homosexuals on the part of homophobes does not count as (the virtue of) tolerance, since there is no valid basis for objecting to homosexuals or homosexual behavior. This view seems to me unnecessarily restrictive of what should count as virtuous, although there may be a minimal standard of “reasonableness,” well short of “justified,” in the stance toward the other that makes the virtue of tolerance required. See “Toleration as a Virtue,” in David Heyd (ed.), *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 28–43.

## Racial Injustice and Civic Virtue

Let us turn, then, to the overarching context of racial injustice. That context does not exhaust race-related virtues.<sup>12</sup> But it is a vital one for a society that is racially unjust, as ours is.

How does racial injustice come into an understanding of civic virtue, and what bearing do racial identities have on that understanding? Let me begin with the notion that in the U.S., black people, and especially African Americans, remain a stigmatized population. The idea of "stigma" is a complex one, and it is beyond the scope of my paper to give it the attention it deserves here. Glenn Loury has recently argued that stigma plays a large role in the continuing disadvantage of the black population.<sup>13</sup> Two areas of life stand out in the operation of anti-black stigma. One is housing. When the black population of a neighborhood goes over the "tipping point," whites will move out, and other whites will not move in.<sup>14</sup> This process reflects and contributes to the stigmatizing of black populations; they are seen as undesirable, unfit neighbors. The stigma operates on middle-class and professional blacks as well as poor, urban ones, though not necessarily to the same extent. This is an important part of why the black population is still so segregated, across class differences within the black population. Whites find Latinos and Asians more acceptable as neighbors than they do blacks.

One might reply that this stigma would be reduced if poor blacks were less involved in crime and drugs. Much of the reason that whites move away is that they fear a reduction in their property values if a neighborhood becomes "too black" and the behavior of poor blacks contributes to this dynamic.<sup>15</sup> Whether change in the behavior of poor blacks

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<sup>12</sup>I discuss other non-justice-based types of race-related virtues in "Racial Virtues," in Rebecca L. Walker and Philip J. Ivanhoe (eds.), *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 225-50.

<sup>13</sup>Loury explains stigma, or "racial dishonor," as "an entrenched if inchoate presumption of inferiority, of moral inadequacy, of unfitness for intimacy, of intellectual incapacity, harbored by observing agents when they regard the race-marked subjects." See Glenn Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 70.

<sup>14</sup>Figures differ on the tipping point. Iris Young says 25% (see *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 200), but this is expressed preference of whites rather than actual behavior, which in race-related domains, are often quite different. Andrew Hacker says less than 10%, citing G. Jaynes and R. Williams (eds.), *A Common Destiny* (but no specific page). See his *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York: Scribner, 2003), pp. 48-50.

<sup>15</sup>Middle-class blacks, according to some evidence, are no less eager to avoid living near urban, lower-class blacks, whom they, like whites, associate with crime, poor schools, and declining property values. See Peter H. Schuck, *Diversity in America: Keeping Government at a Safe Distance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003),

would have some effect on the stigmatizing of all blacks is irrelevant to my specific point. Blacks are stigmatized as a group, and those who are entirely upstanding citizens, including many residents of deteriorated urban neighborhoods, are thus unfairly presumed to be unworthy. It is this fact that I wish to highlight.<sup>16</sup>

### Stigma and the Black Cashier

A second area in which anti-black stigma operates is in the workplace, one example being the interaction between customers and those who serve them. A small but significant way that this workplace form of stigma operates is in a reluctance that black cashiers sometimes experience from some white customers to place money directly in their hand (or the reverse—the white cashier will not put money in the black customer's hand). I do not know a distinct study of this phenomenon, but have seen references to it, and want to quote an incident from one in detail. Monica McDermott is a white sociologist who took a job as a convenience store clerk in a white working-class neighborhood in Atlanta that bordered a black working-class neighborhood.<sup>17</sup> McDermott observed racial interactions and expressions of racial prejudice and racial consciousness. The workforce was racially mixed and after working there for a time, her black co-workers expressed sentiments and views to her about these matters. One time a white customer threw his money on the counter rather than put it in McDermott's outstretched hand. Her black co-worker, "Telika," exclaimed, "I hate it when they throw their

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p. 214. Despite this fact, they are much less able than whites to realize this preference, precisely because the stigma is placed on them as well as on urban, lower-class blacks.

It should also be kept in mind that in poor, urban, black neighborhoods, while crime and social deterioration may be high, many residents of these neighborhoods are hard-working, non-criminal people who are trying as hard as anyone else to make a decent life for themselves. Not only are they much more victimized by the crime and poor schools in their neighborhoods than are the middle-class whites, blacks, and other groups who are trying to avoid contact with those neighborhoods, but they are further victimized by the stigmatizing of their neighborhoods' occupants as a whole.

<sup>16</sup>My remarks about the stigmatizing of blacks in the area of housing is not meant as an analysis of the full range of causes of the extreme segregation (what has been called "hypersegregation") of blacks in housing and neighborhood. This is a complex issue, much debated among scholars. See Alice O'Connor, Chris Tilly, and Lawrence D. Bobo (eds.), *Urban Inequality: Evidence from Four Cities* (New York: Russell Sage, 2001); Schuck, *Diversity in America*, chap. 6; Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, chap. 6. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993; updated ed. forthcoming) remains the most comprehensive and widely cited work on this subject.

<sup>17</sup>Monica McDermott, *Working-Class White: The Making and Unmaking of Race Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

money down like that. At least it's not because you're black."<sup>18</sup>

Let us make the plausible assumption here that Telika has experienced this same sort of behavior from whites because she is black. How is this related to stigma? One would only know the connection if one were aware of the history of U.S. black-white interaction and white racist ideology, which portrayed blacks as unclean and contact with them as contaminating. This stigma was a deep part of segregationist ideology and practice. Telika distinguishes between the same behavior done out of simple rudeness or disrespect, as to McDermott, and done with a consciousness of racial stigma (even if she could not necessarily discern the difference in every case).

The respectful treatment of cashiers and other such service workers should be seen as part of the civic enterprise. As mentioned earlier, work is an important reflecter of civic standing; being treated disrespectfully in work settings diminishes, and often reflects an already diminished, civic standing of the person so treated. Expressing behavior mandated by an ideology that devalues blacks and declares that physical contact with them is contaminating is thus particularly demeaning. It is more deeply demeaning than the disrespect McDermott experienced from her white customer.

What virtues can we derive from this? In one sense, we can derive an entirely race-neutral virtue—treat all customer-service workers with respect.<sup>19</sup> In the case at hand, this means that if the cashier puts her hand out, the customer should put the money in her hand, not simply leave money on the counter because she is in a hurry. But this is not all of what we would want from civic virtue in this context. We would want the customer/civic agent to recognize why it is important to engage in this behavior, and for her behavior to reflect that understanding. So we should want the customer to know why Telika would have reason to be concerned that what seems a minor transaction might well be fraught with the kind of significance that she expresses in the statement above—that is, why a black cashier would have reason to experience failure to put money in her hand as demeaning and stigmatic beyond the disrespect that McDermott experiences.

So, I am suggesting, it is a part of the civic virtue that we would want from someone in this situation to have sufficient knowledge of the racial history of the United States that would enable them to recognize the potential for hurt and stigma in this situation. The virtue could perhaps be expressed in terms of a sensitivity to the black customer-service worker

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>19</sup>I am using the expression "customer-service worker" to refer to anyone who serves and comes in contact with customers, not only the smaller group generally designated "customer service" who work in a specific part of a store and answer customers' questions.

in light of the racial history of the nation, at least being especially mindful of putting the money in the black cashier's hand. But it would also express itself in responses to other customers who violated that behavioral norm—perhaps expressing regret and sympathy at the disrespectful treatment, or, more minimally, a look of knowing sympathy to the cashier.<sup>20</sup> In her book *The Faces of Injustice*, Judith Shklar describes what she calls “passive injustice,” which occurs when someone in a public situation sees someone else commit an injustice or do something that harms “the informal relations on which a republican order depends and which its ethos prescribes” and does nothing about it, when she could do so at little cost to herself.<sup>21</sup> Shklar places her example of passive injustice in the same setting I am discussing—a customer/cashier interaction. Her example is of witnessing a cashier give insufficient change to a customer and then brushing off that customer's protest. Shklar says that civic virtue (which she includes as part of “justice,” and more specifically, “avoiding passive injustice”) would require a protest of some sort on the part of the customer in line witnessing this interaction. One can imagine a similar situation of a racial character, in which a customer acts in a racist manner toward a cashier, for example, using a demeaning racial expression while telling her to hurry up.<sup>22</sup> In such a situation, it would be proper and required by virtue for a second customer to protest the customer's action as violating the civic order, and to express solidarity or sympathy with the cashier.

The situation I have been discussing from McDermott's book differs importantly from Shklar's because in the former the second customer does not *know* that the disrespect shown by the first customer reflects racism on his part. In cases of such ambiguity, protesting the customer's action seems inappropriate. However, showing some recognition for the understandable reaction of the cashier is appropriate.

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<sup>20</sup>This situation shows the complexity of appropriate conduct in these sorts of racially charged situations. The ideal is to express recognition and perhaps sympathy to the black cashier, yet in a way that does not further shame or embarrass her by making that recognition too public, calling too much attention to it. Clearly it would be easier for a co-worker (such as McDermott) who is known to the cashier and has established some degree of trust with her to do so than it is for a customer unknown to the cashier to do so.

<sup>21</sup>Judith Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 41.

<sup>22</sup>Flat-out racist treatment of this sort is not actually very common among whites. McDermott does not report any instances of it. McDermott instead reports white co-workers' and occasional customers' fairly frequent expression of demeaning attitudes towards blacks, but not in their presence. Public culture in most contexts in the U.S. discourages flagrant expression of racial prejudice, but what McDermott and many others report are blacks who feel that a certain interaction has involved racism of some sort on the part of the other party, though not in a blatant form—one involving a kind of “plausible deniability.” See *Working-Class White*, discussions on p. xx and n. 19.



### **“White” and “Black” Virtues in the Cashier Situation**

There are three larger points I want to pull from this discussion. First, a purely identity- or race-blind virtue of a respect that involves putting money in the outstretched hand of cashiers is an insufficient (though necessary) expression of the civic virtue appropriate to such situations. That purely behavioral disposition must be accompanied by and set in a broader context of an understanding of the racial historical dimension of such interactions, of perceptions of possible racial harms and dangers, appropriate empathy for parties to the transaction, dispositions to respond to other agents in the situation, and so on. Discussion of civic virtue, here as elsewhere, needs to avail itself of the resources that virtue theory as articulated within moral theory provides. There the value of virtue theory as an approach distinct from, say, Kantianism, deontology, and utilitarianism importantly includes the fact that virtues are not bare behavioral dispositions but involve forms of perception, knowledge, emotion, attention, and sensitivity to persons and to situations. The civic virtue literature with which I am familiar has not fully recognized the complex and multiple psychological capacities often involved in civic virtue, as in other kinds of virtue.

A second point is that the ambiguity and unclarity about the customer's actual motivation, in contrast to Shklar's situation, in which the civic demand on the bystanding customer is tied only to the cashier's behavior and not to her motives, seems to suggest that one would hope that the black cashier—or, more generally, the black customer-service worker—would cut the customer some slack, as it were, and not assume a disrespectful racial motive in the absence of strong evidence of its presence. One might, indeed, suggest a civic virtue for blacks, namely, one of charity in the attribution of racist motives to whites (or other non-blacks).<sup>23</sup> Sticking with this suggestion for a moment, such a motive would be identity-sensitive, since blacks would not have to be concerned that black customers were avoiding physical contact with them because of the racial stigma of doing so. They would have to worry about it only in non-blacks, or anyway, whites.

One could of course construct a race-neutral version of this virtue, for example, that one should be charitable in the attribution of unsavory or dishonorable motives to fellow citizens in general. Even if one were to accept such a virtue, the actual application of it in racial situations would

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<sup>23</sup>I can't remember where, but I have read about conflicts between Korean shop owners in black neighborhoods in Los Angeles and New York in the early 1990s, in which one element was the perception by black customers that the Korean shop owners did not want to place money in their hands, while, according to this literature, the latter behavior was “cultural” for the Koreans and not targeted to blacks in particular.

require race-specific understanding, for one would be in a position to assess evidence for and against the presence of dishonorable race-related motives only if one understood something of how race operated in the society in which one was placed. In practice, then, in racial contexts this would be a race-sensitive virtue.

I have read several accounts of blacks talking about the psychic cost and drain of energy involved in trying to figure out whether a particular interaction with a white person is racially motivated.<sup>24</sup> No doubt some blacks respond to such a situation by adopting something like the proposed virtue; they assume whites are well motivated unless there is strong evidence against doing so in the case at hand. Perhaps others go in a different direction and end up with a generalized suspicion of whites. That is, essentially, they shift the burden of proof; they assume guilty until proven innocent, while the proposed virtue of charity presumes the opposite. It is worth noting that while the former stance is uncharitable, and is more corrosive to relations with non-blacks than is the stance of charity, it is not necessarily *irrational*. Whether it is so may depend on the particular agent's experience with whites, or with difficult-to-assess conjectures about the prevalence of racist attitudes. Moreover, another virtue—making clear publicly that one deserves respectful treatment—while not inconsistent with generosity in interpreting the motives of non-blacks, can lead to ensuring that one does not let a racial slight—a race-based disrespect—go by unchallenged.<sup>25</sup>

It must be noted that the normative adequacy of a principle of charity for blacks (or anyone who is a possible target of racism) does not undermine the basis for the civic virtue of sensitivity to the stigmatizing of blacks on the part of whites.<sup>26</sup> The racial dimension of the customer/cashier interaction in regard to putting money in the cashier's hand is a

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<sup>24</sup>See for example, Howard Schuman, Charlotte Steeh, and Lawrence Bobo, "Trends in Black Racial Attitudes," in *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*, revised ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 277.

<sup>25</sup>Bernard Boxill, among others, has explored and emphasized the connection between challenging disrespectful treatment and having a sense of self-respect. See *Blacks and Social Justice*, revised ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992), chap. 9: "Self-Respect." In her study of Afro-Caribbean immigrants to New York, Mary Waters reports these immigrants as saying that they exemplify the conjunction of these two virtues; they protest and challenge racial discrimination while not treating as racially problematic many interactions that, according to their perception, African Americans do see as racially problematic (wrongly, in the Afro-Caribbeans' view). See Mary Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (New York: Russell Sage, 1999), chap. 4: "Encountering American Race Relations."

<sup>26</sup>The virtue of sensitivity to stigmatizing of blacks can be exemplified by non-blacks other than whites. But because the history of Latino/black and Asian/black interaction is completely different from white/black, that virtue will have a different significance for these other groups.

standing (though hopefully not permanent) feature of such interactions, given the particular history of the U.S. and the still-present stigma of being black. Part of what this means is that a black cashier may well be hurt by a customer's not putting money in her hand, even if she makes the judgment that the customer is not intentionally expressing a distinct race-based disrespect or disregard for her. In part this is because stigma often operates at a level below that of conscious deliberation, so the white customer's reluctance to touch the black cashier may be racially infused even if the white customer is not aware of this and would consciously reject any negative judgment of blacks related to that stigma. But, equally significantly, the transaction itself is simply charged with racial meaning in a general way, so that the customer should be aware of this as part of his civic virtue regarding his interaction with the cashier.<sup>27</sup>

### Civic Virtue in the Housing Context

Let me return to the context of housing discussed earlier as a venue in which the stigmatizing of blacks operates. I argued, or anyway suggested, that housing is an area where unfortunately one can see anti-black stigma operating on a large scale, as whites will move out of a neighborhood that approaches a tipping point of blacks. Blacks prefer a ratio of blacks to whites in neighborhoods in which they live which is virtually never attained (between 50% and 75%), since whites will seldom countenance that ratio but will sell and move out before that ratio is reached, and whites will not move into such neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> Housing represents a vital material interest, both in the quality of one's domicile, in the fact that home ownership is a crucial part of one's assets, and also in the rela-

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<sup>27</sup>Of course, the way I have described the virtue in question, I am in a sense assuming that the possessor of this virtue is not himself a "carrier" of the stigmatizing attitudes. Rather he is to be aware that others carry these attitudes, and his virtue consists in being sensitive to that fact and how it would affect black cashiers. But obviously some white customers will carry those attitudes themselves, and a version of the virtue in question must apply to them as well. For them, it will be necessary to be aware of those attitudes and to recognize their unjustifiability. Then they must also endeavor not to express those attitudes in their interactions with blacks. McDermott says that many whites expressed anti-black attitudes privately to her, but behaved entirely appropriately (as she saw it) when interacting with blacks. The trouble is that sometimes one can betray an attitude that one wishes to keep under wraps. It is possible that McDermott is missing ways that some of the white customers are conveying disrespect to her black co-workers. This means that to exemplify the virtue in question, the white customers will have to be aware of the possibility of their participating in the stigmatizing views, simply as part of a culture that contains those views, and to do their best not to express (and perpetuate) them, while recognizing that this attempt may be only partially successful.

<sup>28</sup>See citations in n. 14 for references on black neighborhood preferences.

tionship between neighborhood and schools. Peter Schuck, a conservative writer on race and integration, summarizes the deleterious effects of racial segregation, or racial isolation, of blacks:

Racial isolation practically ensures the continuation of inequalities in education, employment, culture, personal networks, freedom from crime, and the many other opportunities, amenities, and freedoms that are related to location.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, housing is both a serious material interest and also a site in which racial stigma operates for blacks. Bernard Boxill summarizes the latter aspect as follows:

Despite the absence of laws explicitly enforcing segregation in housing, this kind of segregation persists because, when blacks move into a neighborhood, whites usually move out. Now I submit that, given the established patterns of the society, the act of moving out of a neighborhood when blacks move in is an expression of contempt for blacks. The blacks know it, and the whites know it too.<sup>30</sup>

The segregation that is largely a product of whites' decisions to move elsewhere thus contributes to a serious form of racial injustice—that is to say, to a situation in which the nation's practice falls seriously short of its ideals. It would seem, then, that this would be an arena in which civic virtue could operate for the whites who are deciding whether to move away from a neighborhood in which, say, a number of black families fewer than the tipping point have moved in. Choosing to move would contribute to segregation and inequality as well as expressing a stigmatic view of blacks; choosing to stay would, or at least could, contribute to stabilizing a racially integrated neighborhood, thus standing up against the stigmatizing of blacks, and contributing to the achieving of racial

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<sup>29</sup>Schuck, *Diversity in America*, p. 214.

<sup>30</sup>Boxill, *Blacks and Social Justice*, p. 140. Note that Boxill does not say that whites moving out is *motivated* by contempt, only that it *expresses* it. The act expresses contempt because it is a visible and powerful sign of the stigmatizing of blacks; the whites move because they associate blackness with undesirable characteristics. This is not the same as saying that the whites are *prejudiced* against blacks, a point that Loury makes very well in relation to the idea of stigma (see *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, n. 12). It is not that the whites necessarily have hostile attitudes toward the incoming blacks, although many of them probably do; it is that they associate blackness with undesirable characteristics that they do not want in their neighbors and neighborhood. Thus, when Schuck says "Sound policymaking requires a distinction between aversion to black neighborhoods and aversion to blacks as individuals, but doing so ... is morally and empirically complex" (*Diversity in America*, p. 212), he means in part to say that the aversion to black *neighborhoods* is based on fact (such as concern about property values) and is, purely in itself, not morally troubling (but aversion to individuals is). But he misses the issue of stigmatizing, which is *neither* simply a rational aversion to a black neighborhood *nor* prejudice against black individuals, but a negative association (conscious or not) with a group, and which *is* morally troubling.

justice and to more harmonious relationships in the society.

It might be objected that it is unreasonable to expect a white homeowner to risk the decline in the value of her home by remaining in a “changing” neighborhood. This objection raises a fundamental question about the way we conceive of civic virtue. For something to be a civic virtue, does it have to be something that every citizen ought to be able to carry out with little effort or cost? If so, how do we tell what meets such a standard? After all, voting, which seems a bare minimum civic responsibility, is still not engaged in by a huge number of Americans. It seems that we cannot use what people actually *do* as the sole measure of an appropriate form of civic virtue. We are forced to use some standard of what is “too much to expect” that is not simply what people do.

At the same time, it is also not clear that we should think about civic virtue as something that is well within the range of every citizen. This isn’t the way we think about virtues generally. For example, we think of courage as a virtue but recognize that many, perhaps most, people will not exercise it, and for some it might be more than we can reasonably expect in many situations they face. Exceptional virtue is still virtue. It is reasonable, for example, for a civic education program to hold out as an ideal that every student be involved in some constructive way in his or her community; but we know that very many students exposed to such a curriculum will not end up engaging in such activity as adults. Why can’t virtues be qualities or dispositions that it is good to have but not wrong not to? This is a conception of virtue different from a “required virtue,” but the concept of “virtue” itself can go either way, and there is surely some value in articulating good qualities of character of the supererogatory sort, as well as the “to be expected of everyone as a matter of course” sort.

In that spirit, one might pursue the thought that the white homeowner should attempt to refrain from contributing in a small way to the spiral of inequality, segregation, and stigma, by trying to do something other than selling and moving. For example, she could try to encourage her neighbors to agree not to sell. That is, she could approach people whom she knew to like their house and to be inclined to sell only because they were worried about the impact on their house’s value. If enough people agree to stay contingent on others agreeing to do so, thus limiting the influx of black families short of the tipping point, the neighborhood becomes a stable one, and the market value generally does not decrease. Indeed some communities have consciously striven, with occasional success, to attain a stable, racially integrated neighborhood in this manner.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>See the account of Shaker Heights, Ohio, in Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown, *By the Color of Our Skin: The Illusion of Integration and the Reality of Race*

They do not necessarily do so primarily as a way to help the black families already in the neighborhood, or blacks in general, but because they believe in racial integration as a desirable way to live. But I am suggesting a further motive that could animate such an effort, and that is an exemplification of the meta-virtue of doing something to align the practices of one's society with its ideals—the ideal being racial equality (by way of integration).

The foregoing discussion of the housing context is not meant as a full-scale defense of a civic virtue of taking the impact on racial equality into account in making one's choice of where to live, but only to suggest a direction that a case for such a virtue might take. The customer service situation, by contrast, is one in which I have tried to make at least a *prima facie* case for such a virtue, and I have linked both virtues to the ideal of civic racial equality.

## Conclusion

I have suggested that a meta-virtue of “aligning the practices of one's society with its ideals” should be included in our set of polity-specific civic virtues. Applying that meta-virtue to the specific racial situation in the United States, I have suggested that promoting racial equality is a specific form of that aligning meta-virtue. I have suggested two domains in which the virtue of promoting racial equality can operate—customer/customer-service worker interactions, and housing. In both domains, African Americans are stigmatized and at risk of further stigmatization, and, in the latter, vital material interests are also at stake. Reducing such risk or the stigma itself is action in accordance with racial equality; reducing the stigma that African Americans suffer in the U.S. is a major racial justice challenge. Insofar as a commitment to justice is an essential part of civic virtue, virtues of engagement with racial injustice in the form of an attempt to mitigate it follow from that commitment. And, of course, often what reduces stigma also improves the material dimension of injustice, as the housing situation illustrates; whites remaining in neighborhoods with a significant complement of blacks reduces anti-black stigma, improves the housing value of the black homes, and, *ceteris paribus*, brings other benefits in its wake (better schools, reducing racial isolation of both blacks and whites).

I have used the existence of such virtues to argue for another point as well—that not all civic virtues are identity-neutral, that is, applying merely to citizens as citizens and directed toward fellow citizens merely

as citizens. Rather, some virtues are identity-sensitive; the social identity of the virtuous agent, as well as the person (or group) toward whom that agent acts, figures in as part of the virtue itself, at least as it has to be applied if not under all possible descriptions of that virtue. Without in any way denying that there are many identity-neutral virtues, I have argued that because of the specific injustice suffered by African Americans, some virtues related to that injustice will require a sensitivity to the specific identity, history, and current situation of African Americans. In addition, whites have a distinctive role in the system of injustice, and thus there will be certain virtues specific to whites in relation to that injustice (although there will be some forms of race-sensitive virtue applying to all racial groups, not only whites and blacks).

Racial equality and racial justice figure into virtues related to them in at least two different ways. One involves an attempt to bring reality into line with those ideals. The white homeowner can see herself as trying to reduce racial stigma and racial inequality by doing what she can to keep her neighborhood mixed and stable. Although it is more effective in bringing about that result to organize other people to act collectively to reduce racial inequality, an individual acting simply on her own can see her action as aimed at the same result. This case differs from someone who acts from a sense of what the principle of racial equality demands of her—say, to treat blacks equally—rather than seeing her action as instrumental to the goal of racial equality. This distinction can apply in the customer case as well. The white customer who acts with sensitivity toward the black cashier can see her action as *fostering* racial equality by means of reducing racial stigma (through delegitimizing it); or she can see her action as *exemplifying* the respect that the goal of reducing racial stigma prescribes.

The discussion of identity-sensitive, and in particular race-sensitive, virtues suggests that there are other such virtues besides ones deriving from the justice-aligning or justice-exemplifying meta-virtue. For example, there are virtues that conduce to harmonious relations between races. Such harmony does not have the normative standing that a core goal such as racial equality does; nevertheless, it is a not insignificant good in a racially divided society, and qualities that help to foster that goal should be seen as virtues. Sometimes the same behavior that aims to promote racial justice also promotes racial harmony; so a white person showing sensitivity to a black customer-service worker in a way that both challenges racial stigma and also evidences good will on the part of whites toward blacks would exemplify both goals. (I don't think we want to say that these are two distinct virtues, however.) Once the domain of race is opened up as a site of civic virtue, one can see other goals and other virtues as well. For example, there are goals related to "recognition," under-

stood here in something like the way Charles Taylor discusses in “The Politics of Recognition”—ways that people wish their distinctive social identities to be recognized by others in various social venues.<sup>32</sup> The logic of the Supreme Court’s decision in the 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* affirmative action case suggests the idea that students of all racial groups benefit from the presence of the others; one might take this a step further and suggest that showing a recognition of the value of each of those groups and its members to the shared educational enterprise would be a civic-like virtue for students in educational settings.<sup>33</sup>

Race is a fertile domain for civic virtue of many different kinds, and it is easier to see this when we recognize that some civic virtues can be identity-sensitive.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-74.

<sup>33</sup>I develop the idea of affirmative action-related virtues, and of other virtues related to race, in “Racial Virtues.”

<sup>34</sup>An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Conference on Virtue and Social Diversity at Florida State University, March 2007. I am grateful to the participants in that conference for discussion of the paper, and especially to Bernard Boxill, the commentator, for his excellent comments, although I have left standing the portions on which he commented. Thanks also to Eamonn Callan for very helpful feedback, and to Josh Gert and M. Victoria Costa for acute comments on the penultimate draft.



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