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Abstract. *The present article discusses the political and cultural implications of the demographic shifts in the United States in the 21st century. White Americans are going to be a demographic minority in several decades. The article argues that the US empire is divided between two political options: neo-apartheid or decolonization. A new form of apartheid – different from the past – is emerging as an option for white elites to keep their privileges and power in a context where they no longer represent the demographic majority.*

Key words. *Coloniality of power – Decolonization – Dussel – Huntington – Latin@s – Migration – Neo-apartheid – Transmodernity – United States empire – Wallerstein*

Résumé. *Cet article évalue les implications politiques et culturelles des différents changements démographiques aux Etats-Unis au 21ème siècle. Dans plusieurs décennies, les Américains Blancs deviendront une minorité démographique. L'article postule que l'empire américain se trouve à la croisée des chemins entre deux choix politiques: néo-apartheid ou décolonisation? Une nouvelle forme d'apartheid – différent de celui du passé – apparaît comme une option possible pour les élites blanches afin de conserver leurs privilèges et leur pouvoir dans un contexte où ils ne représentent plus désormais la majorité démographique.*

Mots-clés. *Colonialité du pouvoir – Décolonisation – Dussel – Empire des Etats Unis – Huntington – Latin@s – Migration – Néo-apartheid – Transmodernité*

Immanuel Wallerstein (1991, 1998) characterizes the first 30 years of the 21st century as a transitional moment, a bifurcation towards the end not only of US hegemony but also of the present historical system. During the coming century we will witness the demise of the US empire and of capitalism as a world-system. Both are in terminal crisis after more than 500 years (Wallerstein, 1991, 2003). Depending on our social agencies and our interventions in this moment of bifurcation, the transition towards a new historical system could lead to a better or a worse system than the present one. Nothing is predetermined or guaranteed about the future. The new historical system could be more fair, just and egalitarian or more exploitative and coercive. If Wallerstein (1998) is correct in this assessment, then we need urgently to address our collective agencies and to rethink our utopias in order to create alternative worlds.

As Wallerstein has shown in his historical sociology, the transition from feudalism to the modern world in Europe was not as the Marxist and liberal narratives have portrayed it: a bourgeois class that emerged in the cities and displaced the feudal aristocracy through reforms or revolutions (Wallerstein, 1974, 1979). On the contrary, it was the same feudal aristocracy that, in looking for a solution to the crisis of the old system, created a new historical system, the 'European modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system' (Grosfoguel, 2004). Wallerstein's provocative thesis argues that the new historical system that emerged in the late 15th century was worse – that is, less egalitarian and more discriminatory – than the old system it replaced (Wallerstein, 1991). However, like the transition between the previous historical system and the modern/colonial world in the late 15th century, today we are facing another moment of bifurcation. The 21st-century transnational capitalist elites can follow a strategy similar to the feudal aristocracy of the late 15th century and create a new historical system worse than the present one in order to keep their privileges alive. Or – another possible scenario – subaltern groups around the globe can create a new and/or diverse historical system better than the one we now live in. A major historical process in this transition is the ongoing transformations within the metropolitan centers of the capitalist world-system. These transformations are crucial for the future bifurcation. One of these is the significant growth and political/cultural impact of Latin@ populations in the United States, the most powerful core country in the capitalist world-system today.

Latin@s and decolonization of the US empire

In the year 2000, non-Hispanic whites were a demographic minority in 70% of US cities, while Latin@s were the fastest-growing population. Latin@ populations increased 50% between 1990 and 2000. The majority of them

are working-class and racialized subjects (Chicanos, Salvadorians, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, indigenous, Afro-Latinos, etc.) coming from colonial and neo-colonial experiences in the periphery of the world-economy. They are among the groups with the worst poverty rates in the country (see Table 1). Today the Latin@ population constitutes the largest minority in the United States – around 12.8% of the total population. Conservative estimates made by the 1998 US Census and based on the 1990 Census, project that by the year 2060 non-Hispanic whites will be a demographic minority in the US (see Table 2), and Latin@s will be the largest minority in the group (25% of the total population). Recent estimates based on the 2000 Census project that non-Hispanic whites will comprise half of the US Population in 2050 (see Table 3). Alternative estimates suggest that, if the Latin@ population grows at the same rate as in the 1990s, they will represent at least half, if not the majority, of the total population of the US sometime in the 21st century.

These processes announce important challenges, which are at the heart of contemporary debates about the political transformations going on inside the US empire and the future transformation of the world-system into a new historical system. A struggle for the decolonization of the US empire is at the top of the agenda for the 21st century. The term decolonization has been traditionally used to characterize the transition from colonial administrations to the formation of independent states in peripheral regions of the world-economy. Part of the Eurocentric myth is that we live in a ‘post-colonial’ era and that the world and, in particular, metropolitan centers are in no need of decolonization. In this conventional definition, coloniality is reduced to the presence of colonial administrations. However, as the work of Anibal Quijano (1993, 1998, 2000) on the ‘coloniality of power’ has shown, we still live in a colonial world and we need to break with the narrow ways of thinking about colonial relations if we are to accomplish the unfinished and as yet unrealized 20th-century dream of decolonization.

The coloniality of power and the incorporation of Latin@ migrants

In order to understand the transnational processes of migrant and minority incorporation into the metropolitan societies it is important to make some conceptual distinctions among the diverse migration experiences. The application of the ‘coloniality of power’ perspective to migration studies would allow us to arrive at a different conceptualization from the rest of the literature. Migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space. Migrants arrive in metropolitan spaces that are already ‘polluted’ by a colonial history, a

TABLE 1
Poverty status of people in 2001 by household relationship, race
and Hispanic origin (in thousands)

USA	All races	White, not of Hispanic origin	Blacks	Hispanics
Total individuals:	281,475	194,538	35,871	37,312
% below poverty line	11.7	7.8	22.7	21.4
% above poverty	88.3	92.2	77.3	78.6
Married couple:	182,212	133,990	1,234	23,544
% below poverty line	5.7	3.6	8.2	15.3
% above poverty line	94.3	96.4	91.8	84.7
Female householder, no spouse present:	39,261	18,365	4,694	6,830
% below poverty line	28.7	19.9	37.4	37.8
% above poverty line	71.3	81.1	62.6	62.2
Male householder, no spouse present:	12,438	6,823	461	2,736
% below poverty line	13.6	9.9	20.8	17.6
% above poverty line	86.4	90.1	79.2	82.4

Source: US Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2002. [web page: http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/pov/new04_001.htm]

colonial imaginary, colonial knowledges, a racial/ethnic hierarchy link to a history of empire, in other words, migrants arrive in a space of power relations that is already informed and constituted by coloniality. There is no neutral space of migrant incorporation. If we were to apply the coloniality perspective, we would need to distinguish between three types of transnational migrants: ‘colonial/racial subjects of empire’, ‘colonial immigrants’ and ‘immigrants’ (Grosfoguel, 2003). Latin@s are no exception. Within the Latin@ category there are multiple experiences of incorporation in the United States.

‘Colonial/racial subjects of empire’ are those subjects that are inside the empire as part of a long colonial history – African-Americans, Native-Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Pacific Islanders, Chinese-Americans, etc. The metropolitan colonial imaginary, racial/ethnic hierarchy and racist discourses are frequently constructed in relation to these subjects. There is a long history of racialization and inferiorization towards ‘colonial/racial subjects of the empire’ that informs, constitutes and determines the present power relations. The ‘coloniality of power’ of the metropolitan country is organized around and against these colonial subjects with a long history inside the empire. They are frequently at the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy.

TABLE 2
Projections of the resident population by race, Hispanic origin and nativity: middle series, 2000–70 (in thousands consistent with the 1990 estimates base)

	2000	2050	2055	2060	2070
USA	275,306	403,686	417,477	432,010	463,639
Non-Hispanic whites	71.4%	52.8%	51.1%	49.6%	46.8%
Hispanics	11.8%	24.3%	25.5%	26.6%	28.6%
Non-Hispanic Blacks	12.2%	13.2%	13.3%	13.3%	13.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islanders	3.9%	8.9%	9.3%	9.8%	10.6%
Non-Hispanic American Indians	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%

Source: National Population Projections, I. Summary Files, Total Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity: (NP-T5) Projections of the Resident Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity: Middle Series, 1999 to 2100. Population Projections Program, Population Division, US Census Bureau (1998). [web page: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/natsum-T5.html>; internet release date: 13 January 2000]

TABLE 3
Projected population of the United States, by race and Hispanic origin: 2000–50 (in thousands; as of 1 July 2004; resident population)

	2000	2050
US total population	282,125	419,854
Non-Hispanic whites	69.4%	50.1%
Hispanics	12.8%	24.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2004. 'US Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin'. [<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>; internet release date: 18 March 2004]

In the conceptualization used here, 'immigrants' are those migrants who are racialized as 'white' (other European migrants or migrants coming from other regions but of European origin, such as Euro-Australians, Euro-Latin@s, Euro-Africans, and so on) and who experience upward social mobility in the first or second generation. These are migrants who, once they adopt the metropolitan language, accent, demeanor and manners, are assimilated in the public domain to the dominant metropolitan populations. They pass as 'whites' or are designated 'honorary whites'. These comprise the following: European migrants who after one or two generations become

incorporated into the mainstream as ‘white’; Japanese executives invited as ‘honorary whites’; or the 1960s cohort of Cuban anti-communist refugees who, through a combination of US foreign policy and Federal government policies, were made into a Cold-War showcase and incorporated as ‘honorary whites’ (Grosfoguel, 2003).

‘Colonial immigrants’ are those migrants from peripheral locations who, although they were never directly colonized by the metropolitan country to which they migrate, at the time of arrival are ‘racialized’ in similar ways to the ‘colonial/racial subjects of empire’ that were already there. I refer here to the ‘Puertoricanization’ of Dominicans in New York City, the ‘Chicanization’ of Salvadorians in Los Angeles, the ‘Africanamericanization’ of Haitians and Afro-Cuban *marielitos* in Miami, the ‘Algerianization’ of Turks in Paris, the ‘Antillanization’ of Dominicans and Moroccans in Amsterdam, the ‘Arabization’ of Dominicans in Madrid, the ‘Afro-Caribbeanization’ of Africans in London, and so on. When racist discourses constructed with regard to the ‘colonial/racial subjects of empire’ are transferred to migrants recently arrived from the periphery, we have a reproduction of the experience of ‘colonial immigrants’. Thus, many migrants from the formally ‘independent’ Caribbean, Central American and South American countries become ‘colonial immigrants’ in the United States, even though they were not directly colonized by the country to which they migrate, and they have higher class backgrounds than the ‘colonial migrants’ who are part of the colonial/racial subjects of empire.

The conceptualization provided here is a response to the ‘immigrant analogy’ that informs many migration studies. This analogy takes the successful European migration experience and extrapolates this experience to the rest of the migrant groups. Consequently, if a migrant group is not as successful as the European migrants, this is attributed to a ‘cultural’ problem inside the migrant community (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963). By flattening the diverse modes of incorporation and experiences of the migrant groups, the hegemonic population in the racial/ethnic hierarchy avoids confronting their own racist discrimination and colonial legacies.

Something similar could happen with recent migration theories such as the transnationalist approach (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton-Blanc, 1993). Although the transnationalist literature avoids the ‘immigrant analogy’ based on the early European migration to the US and has a more complex understanding of the dynamics of race, class and gender, it still falls into a form of analogy with immigrants from the South. In this case, the ‘immigrant analogy’ is that of a Third-World migrant who circulates between two nation-states and whose political, cultural and identity allegiances are divided between two nations. This is not a rejection of the transnationalist

approach but a call for a more sophisticated understanding of the transnationalist migratory experience in relation to colonial legacies. The transnationalist literature has challenged the most static models of migration that persisted in thinking in terms of a unidirectional mobility from sending to host society. It shows a more complex and multi-directional immigrant interaction between country of origin and country of arrival. Migrants do not only themselves circulate but they also circulate money, commodities and resources across borders. This has important implications in terms of their identification processes, political strategies and economic survival. The old thinking about migration is obsolete today given the compression in time and space. However, despite its important insights, the lack of a notion of 'coloniality' – and the multiple migrant distinctions it implies – could lead the transnationalist literature to a kind of 'immigrant analogy' that homogenizes the Third-World migration experience as though all lived the same process of incorporation to the metropolitan centers. It is not an accident that most transnationalist studies of international migration are based on the Caribbean migration experience. The Haitian, Grenadian and St Vincentean migration experiences to the US were the first case studies used to sustain the new transnationalist paradigm. By neglecting to distinguish between different types of transmigrants in relation to the coloniality of power of the metropolitan center, this literature runs the risk of reproducing an 'immigrant analogy from the South' – as opposed to the 'immigrant analogy from the North' of the old migration literature. Not incorporating the 'coloniality of power' perspective into its approach means that this literature could flatten the diverse experiences and be unable to account for the different processes of migrants' success and failure.

Furthermore, a more nuanced distinction among transnational migrants would offset the celebratory transnationalist approach to international migration. The celebratory approach, as articulated by Alejandro Portes (1996), basically looks at transnational migration as a successful strategy of upward mobility. It takes the few success stories of transnational entrepreneurs and makes them a model for transnational migration, while underestimating the 'coloniality of power' in both the host society and the home countries. Despite the fact that the majority of the transnational migrants from the periphery end up as 'colonial immigrants' in the core (Grosfoguel, 2003), the celebratory approach to transnational migration overlooks the complex reality that immigrants confront.

The diverse distinctions between migrant incorporations provided by the 'coloniality' perspective are crucial to avoiding culturalist explanations of the failure or success of migrant groups. These culturalist explanations are complicit with the transnational hegemonic ideology that is so popular in the

new forms of ‘anti-racist racisms’ in the core of the capitalist world-economy, which is linked to what has been called ‘new racism’ or ‘cultural racism’.

From biological racism to cultural racism

A crucial Eurocentric myth in today’s world is the argument that colonial structures and racist ideologies are a ‘problem’ of peripheral regions but not of core zones. However, what we see today is the reproduction and consolidation of the old colonial/racial hierarchies of Europeans/Euro-Americans vs. non-Europeans and the hegemony of racist ideologies inside each metropolitan center. In order to understand this process, we need to link the present racial/ethnic hierarchy to the colonial history of each empire. Otherwise, it makes no sense to ask why people coming from colonial or neo-colonial experiences remain at the bottom of the social structures and are the targets of metropolitan racism. It is not an accident that, in London, Amsterdam, Paris or New York, colonial Caribbean minorities share the bottom of the city’s racial/ethnic hierarchy with other colonial/racial subjects of these respective empires. In London, West Indians are – together with Pakistanis and Bangladeshis – at the bottom of the racial/ethnic ladder. In Amsterdam, Dutch Antilleans and Surinamers share the experience of racist oppression with Moroccans and Turks. In Paris, French Caribbeans share the racial discrimination produced by French colonial racism with Algerians. In New York’s racial/ethnic hierarchy, Mexicans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and African-Americans share the bottom of the hierarchy, while Euro-Americans are at the top. A constant feature of coloniality is that white European/Euro-American groups are always at the top of the racial/ethnic hierarchy despite the changes over time of racist discourses, racial dynamics and the groups that share the bottom of the hierarchy. The same could be said of Latin@s in Los Angeles, Chicago or Philadelphia. Those groups coming from colonial or neo-colonial experiences have the highest poverty rates. Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, together with Salvadorian, Guatemalan and Mexican migrants, share the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy of these cities with African-Americans, Native-Americans, Filipinos and Pacific Islanders.

Other migrant groups, due to their particular class origin, a process of favorable state policies or dominant groups’ political strategies of ‘divide and rule’, experience upward social mobility very similar to the ‘immigrant experience’ of early European immigrants. These groups are usually portrayed by the mainstream as ‘model minorities’. This is the case of migrants coming from Korea, Cuba, Hong Kong or Taiwan. By creating a middle stratum of

successful minority groups (model minorities), the dominant white-Euro-American groups can create racial/ethnic symbolic showcases and thus avoid accusations of racial discrimination from colonial immigrants and colonial/racial subjects of empire. This contributes to the invisibility of persistent racial discrimination in America.

For metropolitan populations racism is invisible. The denial of racism is a common feature of metropolitan discussions about racial minorities. The prevalent ideology holds that racism and colonial relations are a thing of the past. Such invisibility and denial are linked to the switch from biological racist discourses to cultural racist discourses (Balibar, 1991; Gilroy, 1993; Essed, 1996; Grosfoguel, 2003).

A major transformation in racist discourses occurred after the Second World War. We need to make a distinction between those metropolitan core countries that were occupied by the Nazis – like France and the Netherlands – and those that were not. After the war, biological racist discourse was so associated with the Nazi occupation in the mainstream of these core countries that it was legally forbidden in public discourse. Nevertheless, racism did not disappear just like that, but instead shifted from biological to cultural forms. Cultural racism is a pervasive form of racist discourse in which the word ‘race’ is not even used. Cultural racist discourses use ‘culture’ as a marker of inferiority and superiority, reinstating the old colonial/racial hierarchy of the European colonial expansion. However, cultural racism is indirectly linked to biological racism in that the former naturalizes/essentializes the culture of racial/colonial subjects.

In Great Britain and the United States the story is different. Due to their victory in the Second World War and the fact that they were never occupied by the Nazis, the postwar biological racist discourses were ‘business as usual’. The victorious forces were not forced to change their own racist discourses. It took another 20 years for this to happen in both countries. As a result of the civil-rights struggles of the colonial/racial subjects of these empires, laws against racial discrimination were passed: the Civil Rights Amendment in the United States in 1964, and the Race Relations Act in Britain in 1965. Similar to continental European countries, since the mid-1960s, it has been forbidden in both Britain and the United States to overtly discriminate based on a biological racist discourse. Thus, racist discourses took on new forms, and cultural racism became the new hegemonic racist discourse in the core of the capitalist world-economy.

The difficulty in the struggle against the new cultural racist discourses is its denial of its own racism. Because it does not use the word ‘race’ in its discourse, cultural racism claims to be non-racist. Thus, if colonial/racial subjects experience higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, higher

dropout rates, lower-quality education, lower pay than a white worker for the same jobs, or are always getting the 'dirty' jobs, it is because they are 'lazy', 'unassimilated', 'uneducated', have 'bad habits', 'bad attitudes' or an 'unadapted/inadequate culture'. By placing the 'causes' inside the discriminated communities and explaining their social situation in terms of their own cultural features, cultural racist discourses conceal the reproduction of racism and the old colonial/racial hierarchies inside core countries. By essentializing and naturalizing cultural features or habits, cultural racism indirectly reproduces a form of biological racist reduction. 'Meritocratic' discourses in public spaces and 'culture of poverty' discourses in academia contribute to the invisibility and perpetuation of the problem. Metropolitan centers do not have a 'minority problem', as it is called in the Netherlands and Great Britain, or an 'immigration problem', as it is termed in France and the United States, but a 'racism problem', which needs to be addressed in order to make the claim of equal opportunities for all a reality and to create more egalitarian societies.

The United States' coloniality of power

In the United States, coloniality of power is constituted by the supremacy of white males. The founding fathers of the country were all white plantation owners, who wrote into the US Constitution the seeds of racial and sexual discrimination, exclusion and hatred of women and minorities. The United States achieved 'independence without decolonization', that is, a 'colonial independence', in 1776, with white male elites in the ruling position. These paradoxical terms used by Quijano to describe the independences of the Americas refer to the fact that the old colonial/racial hierarchies put in place during several centuries of colonial administrations were left intact after independence. The 1964 Civil Rights Amendment did not eradicate the racial and gender inequalities of the country. As Table 1 shows, poverty in America is still constituted along racial and gender lines. Over one-fifth of the total Black and Latin@ populations live below the poverty line, while less than 8% of white people of non-Hispanic origin live in poverty. Female-headed households live in the worst conditions. Around 20% of all individuals in households headed by white females of non-Hispanic origin live in poverty; while 37% of those living in African-American or Latin@ female-headed households live in poverty. In sum, poverty is racialized and sexualized in America. This shows how the unequal colonial relations between Euro-Americans and non-European peoples – males and females – are still constituted through ideological and institutional forms of racism and sexism.

However, given the demographic transformations of the United States foreseeable in this century, if the legacy of white supremacy in the United States continues, we will move very rapidly within a few decades to a 'neo-apartheid' form of democracy where the demographic majorities are politically excluded and disempowered and a demographic minority rules the country. Neo-apartheid refers to a new form of apartheid different from the Jim Crow laws that existed in the US South until the 1964 Civil Rights Amendment and from South African forms of apartheid. The 21st-century forms of apartheid will come with a multicultural face, similar to that of the Bush Administration, where the Black and Latin@ faces in the top elites of the administration do not mean significant social change for the majority of people from those same racially discriminated populations. We see a new system of apartheid institutionalized with the massive incarceration in the prison-industrial complex of a whole generation of Black and Latin@ youth, the policing and militarization of discriminated communities, persecution and deportation of immigrants, etc. In making cosmetic changes to the face of white supremacy in the US – by becoming liberal – multiculturalism will only contribute to conceal and render invisible the persistence of white supremacy structures. The social majority – by which I mean the population controlling the economic, political and cultural processes of a country even if they are not necessarily the demographic majority – will lead the social minorities as it has for the last two centuries, but with the aggravated fact that now non-Hispanic whites will be the demographic minority not just in a few states but in the entire country.

So far, the United States' elites have managed to legitimize the characterization of the country as democratic due to a one-to-one correspondence between the demographic majority and the political majority as represented in the state structures. The correspondence between the Euro-American origin of the political, economic and cultural elites and the Euro-American demographic majority in the country has been the main argument used to justify the characterization of the United States as a democracy. Even though minorities were always second-class citizens and their participation in the democratic process of the country was always constrained due to white supremacy and institutional forms of racism (the most recent example being the disappearance of thousands of African-American voters in Florida, lost in cyberspace, thus giving the 2000 Presidential election to George W. Bush), still the large Euro-American demographic majority were always represented in the structures of power. It is with this rhetorical argument that white Anglo-Protestant elites have claimed that, despite all the problems of discrimination existing in the country, the US is a democracy. This is a questionable premise that could be challenged, but conceding to

this argument the benefit of the doubt there are several questions that need to be raised. What will happen when the social majority, that is, white America, is no longer the demographic majority? What will happen when the economic, political and cultural structures are still dominated by white Anglo-Euro-Americans while the demographic majority are non-white groups? Can this be called a democracy? This scenario for the near future of the country is already a reality in California.

Right-wing California dreams

Since the 1990s, California has become a laboratory for the US Right Wing. It is the first state facing what is coming to the rest of the country in the 21st century: large growth of numbers among the non-European populations replacing white Americans as the demographic majority. Most of the legal propositions submitted to a vote in California in the last decade have been directed at how to contain the power of the new non-white demographic majority (for example, Proposition 187, cutting fundamental social services to illegal immigrants). These propositions serve as a model to extend to the rest of the country. From the beginning, the idea behind the Republican Right has been to make California a showcase for the rest of the country. States where white Americans become a demographic minority can look to the California model for an answer to the challenge of how to keep control of power structures given the new demographic shifts in the country. Right-wing intellectuals, such as Harvard University's Samuel Huntington, are building their own neo-apartheid and racist utopias for the future of the US empire (Huntington, 1996, 2004a). Samuel Huntington is to the 21st century what Alfred Mahan was to the 20th, that is, the geopolitical strategist of the US empire (Grosfoguel, 2002). The main difference is that Mahan was the strategist of an ascending and growing empire, while Huntington is the ideologue of a declining one.

Huntington's recent hysterical article, entitled 'The Hispanic Challenge' (Huntington, 2004b), is bringing his 'Clash of Civilizations' home and providing a right-wing response to the challenges I have been describing. 'Clash of Civilizations' is Huntington's ideological strategy for the US empire to retain Euro-American domination abroad, while the 'Hispanic Challenge' is his ideological strategy to maintain white supremacy in the domestic arena. If white America's demographic majority in the United States is not going to last long and Latin@s are becoming the fastest-growing population, how can white America justify an exclusive and exclusionary leadership of the country? Samuel Huntington provides a

culturalist-racist, xenophobic response to this white-Anglo-Euro-American challenge. In his view, Latin@s are foreigners that do not speak English and are not willing to assimilate. But assimilate to what? Who decides on the racial and cultural features that define an 'estadounidense'?¹ Huntington argues that cultural and linguistic assimilation should favor Northwestern European populations, Western culture and in particular the English language or English-language speakers. He provides the political discourse with which the current and future white elites of the country can respond to the 21st-century challenge – that they will no longer be the demographic majority. For Huntington, if white Americans cannot claim to be a demographic majority, they can at least claim to be the most apt and capable population to represent the nation's values and culture by privileging white-Anglo-Protestant Northwestern European culture and identity as the defining criteria for national identity. In sum, according to Huntington's logic, the main claim that white Americans could make to keep their domestic position and to lead the country in a context where they are no longer the demographic majority is to foster a Eurocentric racist-culturalist argument. The political consequences of Huntington's white-Anglo-Euro-American identity politics are more frontier walls, more border patrols and a cultural and linguistic assimilationist policy. The agenda here is not that far from that of the right-wing, xenophobic and racist politician, Pat Buchanan.

While the US Right is building its utopian scenarios, the Left has been reacting without offering any positive proposal to the country. Given this context, there are several questions I find crucial for the challenges that white-Euro-American males pose for a future non-racist, radical and diverse democracy in the United States. Can white identity politics provide an answer to the present challenges or is it part of the problem? What forms of democracy can offer a solution to these dilemmas? Can a progressive multiculturalism – as Walter D. Mignolo (2000) has argued – contribute to the challenges of the 21st century? How can equality be reconciled with fraternity given our epistemic, class, gender, racial and colonial inequalities? The increased representation of minorities in government structures is important but not sufficient – as the examples of General Colin Powell, General Ricardo Sanchez and Dr Condoleezza Rice demonstrate – to challenge the ideological and political hegemony of non-Hispanic white males and US imperial power around the world. So the challenge that we face in the 21st century is: either we decolonize the country by transforming, deracializing, demasculinizing and radicalizing its democracy, or we will rapidly move to a neo-apartheid form of democracy with a white demographic minority leading the country and a non-white majority excluded from the structures of power, resources and democratic decision-making – with the exception of a few

token elites from minority backgrounds in the administration of the state and corporations to mask the continuity of white supremacist structures. The latter could be articulated with the creation and cooptation of model minorities as 'honorary whites', something that is already happening with Japanese, Koreans and Cubans as well as a few Black and Latin@ elites such as Condoleeza Rice and Alberto Gonzalez. This strategy of divide and rule could be successful if a white supremacy in the US is not challenged and if prejudices/stereotypes within the minority communities are not confronted.

Following the notion of transmodernity, developed by Latin American philosopher of liberation Enrique Dussel (2002), we need to think of 'alterative' ('from 'alterity', a rupture, a discontinuity, as opposed to 'alternative' or changes within the same') forms of democracy in the United States that could contribute to decolonizing the power structures of the country. For Dussel, an alternative to the present Eurocentered modernity is to build a transmodern world. Eurocentered modernity defines a unilateral and unidimensional form of democracy, citizenship, liberty, human rights, authority and economy. While a transmodern world – a world beyond modernity – is open to a diversity of definitions of democracy, citizenship, liberty, human rights, authority and economy from the ethical-epistemic perspectives/historical projects (Maldonado-Torres, 2004) of the silenced, subalternized and dominated side of the colonial difference. Euro-American white supremacy traditionally operates by taking one single form of democracy, that is, the European liberal form, and imposing it, domestically and internationally, as a global design on the rest of the non-European peoples. From the European conquest of Native American territories in the North American West, to the US annexation of North Mexican territories, to the recent war in Iraq, the Euro-American project of democracy has always been one of imperial/colonial global designs devoid of respect for Indigenous, African, or Islamic forms of democracy. The liberal form of democracy is the only one accepted and legitimized. All forms of democratic alterity are rejected. If the non-European population does not accept the Euro-American terms of liberal democracy then they are imposed by force in the name of civilization and progress. Democracy needs to be reconceptualized in a transmodern form in order to be decolonized from the white supremacy form of racialized democracy in the United States. For example, Native Americans cannot continue to be ruled by the Federal Government's colonial Bureau of Indian Affairs. Native Americans have their own forms of indigenous democracy and should have the right to self-determination. African-American and Latin@ communities cannot continue to be ruled under the coloniality of power of urban regimes. They should have the right to organize *alter-ative* forms of democracy in their own communities – and in the whole country – that are not only inclusive of non-European peoples but also of a qualitatively

different nature. However, how can all this diversity of alter-ative projects conflate? The common agenda is one of anti-capitalist, anti-imperial, anti-patriarchal and anti-racist forms of social equality. This leads to my initial concern about the urgency of discussions about utopias and collective agencies in this moment of bifurcation: What does decolonization mean in the 21st century? In what terms can we think about the decolonization of the American Empire? How can Latin@s contribute to developing a qualitatively different relationship from the tradition of white supremacy between the different ethnic/racial groups of the United States and contribute to a qualitative relationship with the world that is different from the traditional imperial relations that the US empire developed with the rest of the world?

Decolonization and Latin@ legacies

In the 20th century, decolonization was limited to the juridical-political decolonization of a country. Given the persistent international division of labor, where core power continues to exploit peripheral regions, and its entanglement with a racial/ethnic hierarchy of Europeans/Euro-Americans and non-European peoples, in addition to a gender hierarchy of male and female, the 21st century needs to think of decolonization in broader terms. This approach is what Quijano (2000) calls the global coloniality of power. Twentieth-century juridical-political decolonization did not decolonize the global economy, the gender/sexual hierarchies, the racial/ethnic hierarchies, the epistemic hierarchies or the religious hierarchies (Grosfoguel, 2004). My conception of decolonization is broader and more complex than what is commonly held (Grosfoguel, 2004; Maldonado-Torres, 2004). Thus to decolonize the US empire would require an intervention in many spaces of power relations that have historically been colonized by European/Euro-American conceptions of gender, sexual, racial, epistemic, religious, economic and political power relations. Latin@s are not exempt from these practices and conceptions.

Although Latin@ cultural legacies include a diversity of world cultures (Arab, Jewish, European, indigenous peoples, African, Asian, etc.), Afro-Latin@s and Indo-Latin@s are often discriminated by Euro-Latin@s. Latin@ communities possess an enormous variety of the world's sacred spiritualities and cultures. Given their demographic growth and their strategic location at the center of the US empire, the traditions, imaginaries, identities and utopias that prevail within these populations in the 21st century will be a crucial factor in determining the future of the US empire and that of the capitalist world-system as a whole.

This brings us to another major issue: How can Latin@s build a different relationship within themselves (in racial, gender, sexual and class terms) and

with other groups (Asian-Americans, Euro-Americans, African-Americans, Native-Americans, and other oppressed peoples in different parts of the world) that could break with the legacies of white supremacy, patriarchy and coloniality, in the US and abroad? As we well know, neo-liberalism, racism, sexism and homophobia are not a white-Euro-American disease, they are global ideologies and Latinos and Latinas are not immune from them. In order to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem, we Latin@s need to deal with our own colonialities, sexism and racism (see Anzaldúa, 1987, for an example of a decolonial intervention in the United States).

If Latin@s affirmed their Eurocentric culture, they would be part of the problem rather than part of the solution. However, if Latin@s were to affirm their diverse non-European epistemic and cultural backgrounds, they could become a positive bridge between different groups and a healing anti-racist force within the country. There are already Latin@ youth spiritual movements recreating their African traditions on the East Coast and their Indigenous roots on the West Coast. Since most East-Coast Latin@s are of African-Caribbean origin and most West-Coast Latin@s are of Indigenous origins in Mesoamerica, they can rely on alternative resources and spiritualities which could provide an alternative to the mainstream Euro-American and Euro-Latin American cosmologies. These Latin@ youth spiritual movements are decolonizing in practice the hegemonic Eurocentric culture and epistemology that prevail not only in the country but also among Latin@ populations, a process that is challenging hegemonic cosmologies, epistemologies and historical narratives. There is not a romantic return to some pure and idyllic identity, but a recreation and reimagining of the present with the help of Indigenous and African cosmologies in a process of decolonization of the US empire in the transmodern sense proposed by Dussel (2002). They are directly involved in opposing the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, police brutality, neo-liberalism and destruction of the environment. These Latin@ youth spiritual movements are providing an alternative ethics for the Eurocentric 'unethical' world. They are fighting for a transmodern, decolonial, 'diversal' future beyond Eurocentered modernity.

The Black-White paradigm of race relations in the United States has contributed to the erasure of other racialized subjects of the US empire. There is a need for a transracial and transethnic dialogue about the decolonization of the American empire in the 21st century that goes beyond identity politics to include a diversity of groups. The need to adopt alternative forms of knowledge, existing cultural/spiritual movements and political projects that can provide gateways for new forms of thinking beyond Eurocentrism and fundamentalism or beyond colonialism and nationalism is at the center of the political agenda today. The kind of decolonial ethical imperatives and utopian imaginaries we are going to build in order to confront the challenges

of the post-cold war, post-socialist and post-national liberation movements in the 21st century should be the main topic of discussion among people concerned for a future world beyond Eurocentered modernity, global coloniality and capitalism. The issue of what alternative cosmologies and spiritualities can contribute to the building of what Enrique Dussel calls an ethics of liberation beyond Eurocentrism and White supremacy is part of the debate today. We need to imagine alternative worlds that could contribute to the future bifurcation of the present system towards a new historical system beyond exploitation and domination. The Dusselian concept of 'transmodernity', as opposed to Eurocentered modernity and postmodernity, is crucial to establishing a decolonial transmodern dialogue among different traditions so as to provide alternative worlds to the imperial/global designs of the present 'modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system' (Grosfoguel, 2004).

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Note

1. *Estadounidense* is the Spanish term for someone who is a national of United States of America (USA). In Spanish, the USA as a country is called *Estados Unidos de America* and the people who belong to this country are called *estadounidenses*. I used the Spanish term to show that, given the different languages and ethnic identification that characterize US citizens today, there are different ways even to name the country and its citizens. This dramatizes the racist arbitrariness of someone like Samuel Huntington that privileges the identity of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans as the sole way to identify an American in exclusion of other ethnic groups that have different languages.

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