

The Browning of a Paradigm: Latinos in Neither Black nor White

Rudy G. Hernandez

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to problematize the black-white paradigm (the binary paradigm) in ways that demonstrate how it falls short of capturing important aspects of Latino communities. Considering several ways in which the binary paradigm is manifested and perpetuated, the paper argues that the paradigm does not reflect racial reality and how its pervasive use is potentially and, perhaps intentionally, used as a source to suppress coalitions that can work against white supremacy. The paper finds that, though there are still clear divisions between certain segments of whites and African Americans in the United States, much has changed since W.E.B. DuBois prophesied that the problem of the 20th Century is that of “the color-line,” including our understanding of race. Race and racism, in their present manifestations, are far too complex to analyze and comprehend through a paradigm that posits a singular color line. Instead, drastically changing demographics are producing a social revolution wherein secular traditions of doing business, forming alliances, defining family and community, and in generating public choices and policies, will be transformed. Thus, the coming future poses a critical juncture for the nation to convert the current challenges of creating a multidimensional national identity that reflects our racial reality into future opportunities.