

Tiger Woods, a herald for the blending of the races in U.S

Tiger Woods, perennial winner of golf tournaments, has a unique way of describing his ancestry. When asked his background, he claims to be a "Caulblasin," i.e., Caucasoid, Black, Asian and Indian. But, in reality, the Tiger may not be unique in a country that is now moving toward becoming a blended multiracial society.

Back in the 1980s we still talked about this country being a melting pot of racial and ethnic groups that melded together to become Americans. But then came the current movement, fostered by government, to enrich and retain one's own language and traditions and still be an American, more like a salad with its individual parts rather than a melding together. So today we celebrate with these different groups who bring their backgrounds of racial and ethnic diversity to our society, whether these be Latinos, Blacks, Irish, Italians or whatever and who contribute to the richness of our American culture. In ethnically diverse Rhode Island approximately 30 such groups come together on the State House grounds in the fall of each year to demonstrate, through food and dance, their culture and uniqueness.

Even though there is now this emphasis on retaining aspects of one's own culture as well as being American, there is something happening that will bring all of these ethnic and racial groups closer together and, in time, will erase many of these differences.

First, is the increasing number of minorities. In 1990 25 percent of the American population was non-white and Hispanic. Census Bureau projections are that in 2050 that number will increase to approximately 50 percent.

Second, with this larger number of minorities there will be more contacts between various racial groups, in schools, at the workplaces, in churches and many other places. And with these contacts will come out-marriage, marriage between different racial and ethnic groups, the product of which will be a variety of mixed and diverse children.

"This is the beginning point of a blending of the races," according to William H. Frey, senior fellow of demographic studies at the Milken Institute in Santa Monica, California, writing in *American Demographics*. He further states that "in these households racial or ethnic attitudes will soften, that identities will be less distinct, and that there will be an impact on attitudes in the communities surrounding these households. And this trend has real momentum behind it because it is so pronounced among young people."

Frey's analysis of 1998 Census data sug-

gests that there are nearly 3 million mixed marriages or 5 percent of all married couples, compared with 3 percent in 1980. Mixed couples who are cohabiting, more common today than in 1980, would increase this percentage even more.

Two characteristics of out-marriages

should be noted: first, these intergroup marriages are heavily concentrated in those states that continue to draw large numbers of immigrants; and second, they are most commonly found among the young.

The four states which serve as major immigration magnets, California, Texas, New York and Florida, have almost one-half of all mixed marriages. In California, largest of the immigrant states, 10 percent of all married couples are mixed.

It is among the young that this phenomenon is most common. Among Non-Hispanic Blacks where out-marriages are 5 percent, the rate is 11 percent for the 15-to-24 Black age group; out-marriages among Non-Hispanic Asians is 15 percent, yet almost one-half of married Asians under 35 are in mixed marriages; and among Hispanics whose out-marriage rate is 16 percent, almost one-third of Hispanics under 35 are in mixed marriages.

Commentary

Chester E. Smolski

The 2000 Census recognizes this phenomenon of mixed races ancestry in section 8 which provides opportunity to from 12 different groups plus three ended questions to write in any group mentioned. Thus responding to criticism the 1990 census which made no provision for mixed ancestry and now recognizing tendency of mixed marriages and mixed spring, the Census has come up with solution.

But the question of tabulating this city has to be addressed. Although the census has decided to separate this mixed from the other groups, minorities think political influence may be lessened because of this dissolution of racial groups. The ramifications of these data will be questioned may engender some court cases.

It will not be easy for some to accept blending of people from all over the world who come here to seek a better life for themselves and their children. And while groups will preserve many aspects of different cultures, such as food, music and language; in time most will acquire particular character to be called American. It has happened in the past and it will happen in the future. And we have all benefited as a result.

Chester E. Smolski is a retired professor of geography at Rhode Island College column appears regularly. ■