



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Skin Color Sightings

Preface to the Immigration and Emigration Series

This essay is one of several reports on immigration, emigration, and cultural assimilation issues in the United States. To be clear about my message: Only if immigrants are willing to assimilate into America's culture should they be welcomed. I am not making this claim from national chauvinism. I am making it because I believe linguistic, political, and cultural assimilation are essential to successful nation building.

To those who come to America for a better life: Keep your ties to the “old country” but foster ties with the new motherland. Keep your language, but learn English. Keep your traditions, but learn about those of America.

The American Italians did it. So did the American Chinese. My forbearers, the American Irish and Scots assimilated into our national family. As did many others.

Irish pubs are part of Americana. Little Italy in New York is a welcome respite to Manhattan's sky scrapers. The Chinatowns make our cities more appealing. The Latino citizens of Santa Fe are just as “American” as you or I, and their mariachi music is a joy to hear.

Thus goes our melting pot: a rich and diverse menu of mixed cultures, sensibly seasoned with American customs.

We are tolerant because of our diversity. We are strong because of our diversity. We are more interesting and have more fun because of this diversity.

So come, you are welcome, but with another caveat: You also embrace this idea: "America is now my country."

But I also state this idea. If you do not accept the Constitution and Bill of Rights as part of your life in America, you should not come to these shores. If you believe that religion should be integrated and holds supreme with that of law, I do not welcome you. This statement may come to you as harsh, but the very fiber of the United States is founded on the idea of the separation of church and state.

Skin Color Sightings¹ Report One

December 24-26, 2005

Hello from your on the Street Reporter. Take your choice: Happy holidays, Merry Christmas, or bah humbug.

I spent these days shopping for presents in stores around Hayden, Idaho, the city where our soon-to-be home is located. I mention this locale because several years ago, after buying a condominium in nearby Coeur d'Alene, one of my friends asked me if I knew I would soon be a neighbor to, as he said, "the Aryan Nations."

I had heard of this group, but I replied I was not aware of its location. One can choose one's friends, but one can't choose one's relatives. Also, one can't choose where one's relatives live. My mother-in-law lives in Hayden, and we were going to settle-down in this area to be near Jeanne. Anyway, I had forgotten about this brief conversation until this week.

Previous Report on "Here Comes the Neighborhood"

Let's refresh our memories on a previous report about the neighborhood surrounding our apartment in Falls Church, Virginia:

When we bought this place, the neighborhood's citizens were predominately-white Anglo-Saxons. No longer. My walk (through the neighborhood) lasted over an hour. I passed-by twenty to thirty stores, including seven restaurants. Five of these places offered Middle Eastern and Ethiopian food; one sold Peruvian fare; a lone pizza place stacked a claim for American cuisine---such as it is.

Back to the Present

Not so in Hayden, Idaho. Here are some observations I've made over the past few days. Table 1 provides a summary of the sightings I made of persons displaying different skin colors during the dates of December 20 – 23, with a brief explanation of the row entries following the table.

Table 1. Sightings for December 20-23

Color of Skin	Sightings
White	many
Brown	1
Coppertone Brown	0
Yellowish	0
Brownish-Yellow	0
Hollywood Black	0
There Goes the Neighborhood Black	0
Punk	0

¹ The signs in the reporter's thought cloud on the cover were extracted from an article in *The Economist*, "Paleocon Pat," September 9, 2006, p. 36.

How to Interpret the Sightings Table entries:

- **White:** A person with white, semi-white, glossy-white, satin-white, or flat-white skin color.
- **Brown:** A person with a skin color of various shades of tan. This person's skin takes on a white-like patina if he or she is driving a Mercedes Benz.
- **Coppertone Brown:** A white person using skin dye or sun lamps to darken the skin. Alternately, a black person using other methods to lighten the skin, known as the Michael Jackson Effect.
- **Yellow(ish):** A misnomer for people who have dark skin (semi-yellow actually) and slanted eyes, but widely used during the Cold War, because "The Semi-Yellow Horde" was not as catchy as "The Yellow Horde." Let's use the term, **yellowish**, as it is more accurate.
- **Brownish-Yellow:** A Mexican with liver problems.
- **Hollywood Black:** Just light enough to keep white people buying tickets to Will Smith movies.
- **There Goes the Neighborhood Black:** According to George Wallace: Beyond the pale, so to speak.
- **Punk:** Any other skin color.

I did not start off with the intent to do a color of skin ratio analysis. A few days ago, as I was wandering around my new habitat in Hayden, Idaho, it suddenly occurred to me that I had encountered no persons of color since my arrival here. Actually, I had one sighting. The lone encounter with a nonwhite-skinned person was a brown-skinned building contractor whom we met during our house finding activities. But it turned out he was of Eskimo descent and did not fit into my classification table.

Having recently migrated from the Washington, DC area, a place of racial and cultural diversity, as well as Santa Fe, New Mexico, populated with more Latinos than Anglos, this contrast was striking. Therefore, I decided to pay closer attention to the people I encountered, which led to my creating the tables in this report. Table 2 represents the sightings I made on the days of December 24-26.

Table 2. Sightings for December 24-26

Color of Skin	Sightings
White	many
Brown	0
Coppertone Brown	0
Yellowish	1
Brownish-Yellow	0
Hollywood Black	0
There Goes the Neighborhood Black	0
Punk	0

The Yellowish skin sighting was a person manning a cell phone kiosk in a Hayden shopping center. I was startled when I came upon a human with non-white skin. I said to myself, *What in the world is he doing here?* I started to walk over and pose this very question. But he was engaged with a customer, so I let it pass.

That's it for now. I'll continue my sightings in the next report and offer some thoughts about why the table entries contain a lot of 0s.

By the way, we had a white Christmas up here.

Skin Color Sightings Report Two

December 27, 2005

Hello from your on the Street Reporter. This report continues our skin color sightings research in the Hayden, Idaho area. First, I have a comment to make about the first report. I had stated I saw no African Americans during December 24-26. Reporterette informed me we sighted a black man on December 25 at a restaurant in Coeur d'Alene:

- Reporterette, "Table 2 in your first report is inaccurate. There was an African American cooking omelets at the Dockside Restaurant."
- Reporter, "I didn't see him. I had the Eggs Benedict." (The omelets were cooked in another area of the buffet.)
- Reporterette, "Still, there was a black man in the vicinity. And you've been looking for one."
- Reporter, "Good point, but I need to actually sight one. I don't think I can put an entry in the table. Say, we could go back next Sunday, and I'll order omelets. Maybe I'll get a sighting."

Reporterette was only trying to be helpful, and I guess I was a bit defensive. But we journalists are sticklers for accuracy---just ask the *New York Times*, *FOX News*, or *CBS*.

Before we examine my latest sightings, as reflected in Table 3, let's read an encyclopedia's description of "Aryan Nations." I entered this name into Microsoft's *Encarta Encyclopedia* and retrieved:

The Klan was prominent again during the 1960s civil rights movement when Klan members murdered many civil rights activists. The 1960s and 1970s also saw the emergence of groups such as Aryan Nations, founded in the early 1970s by Robert Butler. Like the Klan, Aryan Nations aims its hatred at blacks, Jews, and other minorities. Headquartered in Hayden Lake, Idaho (Reporter's note: where we recently purchased a home), the group mixes racism with the teachings of Christian Identity, a religion that teaches Jews are the offspring of Satan, blacks are subhuman, and America is the new "Promised Land" that belongs exclusively to whites. Butler and his followers believe in a "day of reckoning" when the "usurper will be thrown out." Related groups include The Order and White Aryan Resistance (WAR).

This essay is mostly parody and meant to poke fun at various subjects and people. But let me be clear on this subject. I hope I am a person who tries to look at life from others' viewpoints---as well as my own of course. Most people have reasonable explanations for their beliefs, and with some exceptions, their beliefs have merit. But I draw the line with certain creeds and the people who espouse them. One is racism. Another is religious intolerance. These people are not welcome in my home. If they openly express this senseless drivel to me, I will ask them to leave, (which I have done with one nearby resident, making for a non-neighbor neighbor).

A White Bill Collector in Watts, California

Some of my readers know I worked one summer as a bill collector in Watts, California. Barely out of high school, a loan shark finance company hired a white kid to collect overdue loans from

black people. With 15 minutes of job training, I was given several file folders and sent out the door into the ghettos of Watts---a couple years before the riots took place.

My first case was a young black man, who was hanging out at a local bar. How did I convince this person to fork over cash to a skinny white teenager? Lacking both red muscle and gray matter, I threatened the debtor with of the loss of his credit rating! He laughed at my challenge.

Why do I divert to this sidebar? Because during my time on this job, I learned about aspects of racial bigotry----aspects I did not know from the protected days of my youth.

The people in the loan company local office were white. They talked of their “low life” black clientele in Watts as if these people were from another planet.² The finance folks’ claim was that none of our customers had anything going for them, except the need for a (usurious) loan from the finance company.

I am not claiming our customers were pristine credit risks. Many of them were on the border of insolvency because of their dissolute ways. Some were dangerous and scary characters. One of them attacked me.

Abuse, violence, bill-avoidance? Blacks do not have a corner on this market. Many whites, yellows, and browns are part of this composite. Nonetheless, the pervasiveness of skin color bigotry in this office was orally and visually palatable.

If I had been black and living in Watts, I would have burned a few buildings myself. But I wasn’t, and I didn’t. As a white, my passive response was to bear witness to the emasculation of a large population of America’s citizens. Why? Because of their skin color.

Bigotry: Plain and Simple. It beats me how we continue to harbor hate toward someone who has no control over which color is on his skin when he or she emerges from mom’s birth canal. Those ancient tribal bigotries should be in our rear view mirror. I fear something seriously amiss occurred to our DNA and frontal cortexes along our way to walking erect.

Back to Hayden

Anyway, I was told by my relatives up here that the headquarters of Aryan Nations was “put out of business” by the government a few years ago. Fine by me, but I decided to continue my sightings report anyway. After all, even if Aryan Nations has ceased to exist as a formal entity in Hayden, this fact remains: The sightings tables reveal not many minorities populate this part of America. As another example, Table 3 shows my observations on December 27.

² I’m making a broad observation here. It’s generally true, but some of the employees were not bigots.

Table 3. Sightings for December 27.

Color of Skin	Sightings
White	many
Brown	0
Coppertone Brown	0
Yellowish	0
Brownish-Yellow	0
Hollywood Black	0
There Goes the Neighborhood Black	0
Punk	0

On December 27, my sister-in-law Sharleen and I visited a Radio Shack, a golf course pro shop, and a fitness center. We passed by numerous pedestrians and motorists. No persons of color were to be found.

Where is the Fence?

Why no blacks? Or browns? Why so few people from Asia? Why only one Eskimo? During our drive from the east coast, I don't recall seeing a barrier constructed across middle Idaho that would keep these people from migrating north. No patrols were in sight to catch interlopers into this land. So, what gives? I'm not an expert on much of anything, especially this subject, but it occurs to me that there is indeed a barrier that discourages minorities from living in this part of the country. Otherwise, this place would be teeming with legal and illegal immigrants because Northern Idaho is a beautiful area and has a booming economy. I'm not going to hazard a guess until I've done more homework. If you have any ideas, please send me an email; I could use some guidance about this matter.

In the meantime, I logged onto the Net and examined a Web page created by Aryan Nations (Key in Aryan Nations in your search engine). I read about the beliefs of these people, and I actually agreed with two of them---at least partially. First, Aryan Nations states, "Axe the Patriot Act." The Act is too extreme. Even conservative Republicans in Congress believe *parts* of it to be an unnecessary infringement into our private lives. Second, Aryan Nations states, "Say no to NSA spying." For God's sake, President Bush, just get a court order. That's the law, and you do have legal advisors don't you?

Selling Cars and Selling Religion

As you may recall from a Traveling America piece, during our trip to Idaho, our car was "totaled" in a collision with a deer. So, last week, I bought a new car. The man who sold me the vehicle was a pleasant, low-key salesman. While test-driving the car, we chatted about Northern Idaho. He had moved from the San Francisco area with his wife and three children because, as he said, "This is a better place to raise children."

I know nothing about the child rearing conditions of the Bay area or Hayden, Idaho. But I heard this statement uttered by several strangers with whom I've conversed this past week. Another reason is, "The fishing and hunting are great."

I've no more children to rear. I don't fish. I don't hunt. My mother-in-law is a Hayden citizen. She's my reason for taking up residence here. Anyway, as I was about to drive away in my new vehicle, the car salesman asked me, "Are you a Christian?"

- Reporter, "What?"
- "Are you a Christian?" (*Clint Eastwood, where are you? I could use a clever retort.*)
- Reporter, "Why do you ask?"
- "If you're interested, there's a Christian church up the street from here."
- Reporter, "I can find my own way, thank you." I suspect he failed to understand what I really meant.

What did his question have to do with my car purchase? Obviously, the salesman was a Christian. Perhaps he was just being friendly to a stranger. Fine, but let's do a poll. Do you find this question out of place? I did, but send me your opinion, because I would like to know if my view is too inflexible.

Before you respond, I ask you to put yourself in the following hypothetical dialogue:

- Salesman, "Are you a Wiccan?"
- Reporter, "Why do you ask?"
- "If you're interested, there's a coven for witches up the street from here."

Are the Christian and Wiccan questions out of place or offensive to you? No? Yes? Yes for one; no for the other? But consider that it's not as if I were walking past a Salvation Army kettle. Nor was I in church, or at an AA meeting. I was buying a car.

How about if someone asks, "Are you a Buddhist? There's a temple across the street. ..." How about, "Are you Pagan? There's Druid Shrine at the corner. ..." Or, "Are you a Muslim? There's a Mosque at the next light. ..." Or, "Are you an atheist? Here's a petition for taxing churches."

By the way, I am a saved but somewhat lapsed Southern Baptist.

Skin Color Sightings Report Three

December 28-29, 2005

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, who is still searching for those elusive persons of color in the Hayden, Idaho, area. I received several responses to my requests to send in opinions about (a) Why minorities are in a minority up here, and (b) During a business transaction, is it out of place to ask a stranger about his/her religious position?

An example of the second question: Prostitute to her john, as part of their business transaction, "Do you believe in the missionary position?" To my Baptist pastor: just making a joke.

Thus far, the answers have been as varied as the political and religious suasions of the people on my mailing list. Regarding the question of why so few minorities, some of you think the legacy of Aryan Nations in Northern Idaho is the main factor. For the second question, asking a stranger about their religion:

- Several of you said you had no problem with this question. These responders informed me being asked if they were a Christian was fine. OK, but none of you gave me your opinion about your reaction if you were asked if you were a Wiccan. Of course, I used Wiccan as an extreme example and a joke, but I still did not receive your opinion about being asked if you belonged to a religion different from the religion you practice.
- One person responded he believed one should not impose oneself onto another's religious turf. This person also stated, "I'm a Neo-Druid, and I celebrate major astronomical events, such as the winter solstice... ." Ha! Good one. (I think he might have been joking, but he lives in California, so who knows?)
- About 50 percent of the responses came back that it was inappropriate for the car salesman to have brought this subject into my purchase.

It is a sensitive subject because many religions, such as Christianity, are founded on the belief that Christians are obligated to not only ask about a person's religious beliefs but to convert that person to Christianity. My childhood church (Southern Baptist) holds this view, so I can understand why some of you are probably perplexed by my question in the first place. Anyway, I'll leave it at that and continue the main thrust of this Report: My skin color sightings research in the Hayden, Idaho, area.

Well-Known Hang-outs

In attempting to find a black-skinned person, I decided to pay visits to places where blacks are known to hang-out, such as (a) ghettos, (b) across the railroad tracks, (c) drug rehab centers, (d) street corners, (e) prisons, and (f) basketball courts. During my investigation, I came across no ghettos, railroad tracks, or rehab centers. Being a desultory reporter, I did not take the time to visit the local prisons.

But my athletic club in Coeur d'Alene has a fine gym with a basketball court. During my workouts, I made random observations of this court between the days of December 25-28, and encountered *not one* black basketball player! Another unusual aspect of this court was the basketball goals, which had been lowered twelve inches.

Later, attempting to find an Asian person, I looked for a China Town. No luck there either. But I did come across a restaurant that served Chinese food. By the way, in the first segment of this report, I used the word "Oriental." My good friend, Harvey Borkin, my advisor on things-Jewish and things-Asian, informed me Oriental was a politically incorrect word. Thanks Harvey, no insult intended toward anyone, Hereafter, I'll use the term "Asian."

No barrios around Hayden. No one hanging out at 7-11 stores. In fact, this part of America is as racially homogenous as Japan---just a different skin color.

One of our readers advised me I would likely come across many native Americans (aka American Indians and Redskins), because they are prominent in this area. No such luck, at least not yet. No Redskins at the local movie theatre where we saw *Rumor Has It*. Except for the lobsters, no blatantly obvious Redskins at the Red Lobster either (where we dined last night).

However, I did come across one Asian type person at the Red Lobster. I was not certain how to classify her. She looked sort of Asian but she could also have passed as an American Indian---which the historians claim is of Asiatic descent. She might have been an Eskimo in disguise, as she sported a mini-skirt but no hooded parka. Nonetheless, she was yellowish, and slant-eyed.

Sidebar: Avoiding Law Suits from Suits of Lawyers

My consultant on these sensitive matters informs me I should not say, "slant-eyed," as this phrase connotes condescending bigotry, which makes me vulnerable to lawsuits. However using "eyes-that-slant" is deemed acceptable by "Suing-lawyers."...Make that "lawyers-that-sue."

As a person-who-is-Jewish, he knows what he is talking about.

Consequently, I made an arbitrary choice. Because I had already sighted an Asian earlier while conducting this research, Table 4 reflects my Red Lobster sighting to be a Redskin, and the addition of another row to the table. As you can see, I am an equal opportunity observer. Additionally, my entry makes for a nifty comparison: a Redskin at a Red Lobster.

Table 4. Sightings for December 28-29.

Color of Skin	Sightings
White	many
Brown	0
Coppertone Brown	0
Yellowish	0
Brownish-Yellow	0
Hollywood Black	0
There Goes the Neighborhood Black	0
Punk	0
Native American (Redskin)	1

Cheers during this cheery season. I'll wrap up this report and our 2005 Your on the Street Reporter reports on December 31. I'll also venture out once more in my quest to sight some skins of different colors.

Skin Color Sightings Report Four

December 31, 2005

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. I am happy to recount in this final report for 2005 that I made a successful sighting of a black-skinned person today in the Hayden, Idaho area. Actually, I made two sightings: a father and his son.

The sighting took place at my athletic club. I was entering the weight machine area and less than twenty feet in front of me stood two black people! The first African Americans I had seen since my arrival in this area on December 3. Frankly, I was a bit taken aback and I stared at them for a moment or two. The father turned to exit the room and in so doing, he glanced in my direction because I was still standing in front of the exit, marveling at my discovery. He noticed I was looking at him but I am sure he did not know why.

Coming toward me to exit the room, he said hello, and the following conversation took place (paraphrased, as I did not have my notepad with me):

- Reporter, "Hello. Happy New Year."
- Person of color, "Happy New Year to you, too," as he extended his hand to me.
- Reporter, "Say, do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?"
- Person of color, "Not at all. By the way, my name's Al Williams. They call me Big Al."
- Reporter, "I'm Uyless Black. They call me U....My wife and I are recent arrivals to this part of the country. We lived in the Washington, DC area, which has a lot of racial and cultural diversity. I haven't encountered much diversity up here."
- Al, "No, not very many minorities."
- Reporter, "Some of my friends and relatives say the Aryan Nations and its influence are the reasons."
- Al, "No, they ceased being a factor some time ago. One problem is the high cost of housing. The other is the low paying jobs in this area."³
- Reporter, "But Northern Idaho is booming, which usually attracts immigrants and minorities."
- Al, "Yes, and it will happen. Just takes some time."
- Reporter, "As a black, have you been treated even handedly up here?"
- Al, "Sure have."
- Reporter, "So, this Aryan Nations stuff is a myth?"
- Al, "It's just outdated."
- Reporter, "That's good to know. Thanks for talking with me."
- Al, "Here's my business card. If you want to talk again."
- Reporter, "Athletic Director at North Idaho College. My wife and I are big sports fans. We'll be at some of your events."
- Al, "Well, look me up! And let me introduce my son to you."

³ Nearby Washington state has the highest minimum wage in the nation.

I won't bother with an update to the table. But I hope you agree that this report has a fine ending. And I look forward to getting to know Al.

Your On the Street Reporter