

The article below was first published on Roker's blog, which he describes as "an intimate view of progressive urban sounds and landscapes in print and online." The piece was then posted again on *The Huffington Post's* online blog.

## My View of *The Atlantic's* "The End of White America?"

02/11/2009

**Raymond Leon Roker**

*The Atlantic's* ["The End of White America?"](#) won't be the last time the changing demographic tone of the U.S. is given front cover status. But with the historic events of next week on our mind, its timing and resonance is extra sticky. Writer [Hua Hsu](#) (who, I can proudly say, spent some time in the pages of my magazine *URB* back in the day) touches on several of the major components of the racial recalibration going on in America. It doesn't take a census taker to notice the trends in this country as we evolve into a beige nation, but Hsu does a great job looking under the hood.

Unapologetically and without any cheerleading, Hsu cuts a careful balance between handing out muted props (Diddy, Russell Simmons, Tiger Woods) and empathetic examinations (the discarded aging white worker; white guilt; the defensive NASCAR crowd). But the sharpest tone of the piece comes in his thread between the fictional character Tom Buchanan, from *The Great Gatsby*, to modern day confrontationalists like [Pat Buchanan](#). The MSNBC commentator is known to utter what some of the lighter hue think to themselves, that brown means down. That group points to regions like California, which leads the nation in diversity, but is also a state that struggles with a crumbling infrastructure and the perceived societal stresses of a dramatically diversifying population. In California, fears of what Pat Buchanan called a "Third World America" have been brewing for the last decade.

Part of what I always suspect comes out of articles like this, is the affirmation from some that a browner America should also mean minorities can finally stop complaining about inequalities. You've already seen the media discussion of Obama's presidency signaling [the end of black politics](#) or some sort of hopeful leap into a "post-racial" society. Don't tell this to the protesters taking to the streets of Oakland over the recent--and virtually absent from the mainstream media--[police shooting](#) of an unarmed young black man. Young, gifted and black still equals black. And we're probably a generation away before someone sharing Hsu's ancestry takes residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The end of white demographic dominance doesn't mean the same as a relinquishment of status.

But just the fact that Hsu, an Asian American that honed his early writing skills discussing black hip-hop music, wrote this piece, is evidence of the new paradigm he's discussing. *The Atlantic* itself represents white hegemony, maybe not through any overt force, but in its default setting. Any look into the workforce diversity in media ([and advertising](#)) over the past several years bears this out. Though as evidenced by the swift but still too token tinting of cable news over the past year, the rise of ethnic voices is a very noticeable plus in the so-called Obama generation.

A friend recently asked me why blacks claimed Obama as theirs when it's clear he's a racially transcendent president, and not only due to his ethnic mixture. It's a question that, beyond the pat answer (Well, he's black, so why can't we?), I find it hard to address. Especially since the vast majority of people that inspired me to believe in Obama were not black. In fact, just as many Asian, white and "other" friends of mine saw the landmark ascendancy of a brown faced man to the most powerful job in

the world as a shattering of the constrictive racial shackles of this country. And no matter where they fit in the American chromatic graph, Obama's face in the White House is a liberating intoxicant.

But nobody's singing "Kumbaya" just yet, still so fresh from a political race that was as revealingly divisive as it was communal. As Hsu asserts, "It's possible to imagine white identity politics growing more potent and more forthright in its racial identifications in the future, as 'the real America' becomes an ever-smaller portion of, well, the real America, and as the soon-to-be white minority's sense of being besieged and disdained by a multicultural majority grows apace."

No ethnicity ever cedes control gracefully. And in modern times, only in America has the shift towards integration been so rapid. There are bound to be increased tensions and cultural backlashes for decades to come. The gulf between Sarah Palin the clown and Sarah Palin the VP-in-waiting is only growing, much to the delight of Limbaugh fans everywhere, who don't so much as fear the changes in society, as dismiss them. Diddy may get his home in the Hamptons but his music can still get [hailed in front of congress](#) or vilified for every ill of urban (and suburban) America.

Whatever the end of white America eventually means will continue to spawn debate. But one thing that seems sure is that no one group of present day minorities is power hungry enough--or monolithically in sync--to battle for some new title. My guess is that the way whites have governed thus far won't be the model for the next generation of ethnic majority stakeholders. The coming wave will be so diffused and blended into such a racial and cultural stew, that even using the simplistic anthropological definitions of the past will seem silly. Regardless, for whites and non, none of this eventuality should seem scary. In his piece, Hsu puts the future in simple nonthreatening terms for all: "This moment was not the end of white America; it was not the end of anything. It was a bridge, and we crossed it."

Can I get an Amen?