

PREFACE

In many ways, the authors of this book represent Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream. One of the authors of this book is a White man, the other a Black woman. We went to graduate school together at Duke University, where this project first began to take flight. We each have a doctorate. We both live comfortable, upper-middle-class lives as college professors. Ostensibly, we are equals in an American society that promises benefits for all who work hard. As we were both born in the early 1980s, we are also *millennials*, members of a generation that is markedly different from those that have come before us. Millennials, ourselves included, have lived their entire existence in an America where two people like us can work together and be friends with one another without any pushback from our peers or our families. Most people in our generation were socialized to believe that all people are equal despite race or gender, to value diversity, and to appreciate multiculturalism. We were inculcated to believe that America's deep racial divisions had been healed. We belong to a generation that was lectured about the history of American racism where everything was presented in the *past tense*. Indeed, what makes millennials different is that most of our experiences of overt racism primarily come secondhand, usually in the form of history lessons taught during the month of February. We have been tasked by our predecessors to put the final nail in racism's coffin, to be color-blind, and to help America finally reach its post-racial goal.

Without a doubt, America has made great strides in terms of racial progress. Those who seek to provide evidence that race is becoming a less divisive issue in American politics can point to the two of us, or people like us in their own lives. They can point to Oprah, the Carters (Beyoncé and Jay-Z), and LeBron James as successful, über-rich Black Americans. They can point to Sonia Sotomayor, Marco Rubio, and Julián Castro as signs that Latinx

people are politically incorporated. Americans today can point to Lisa Ling, Mindy Kaling, and Jackie Chan as household names while being shocked at the poor taste Hollywood executives showed when casting Whites to portray characters of color only a few decades ago.

In the political realm, many Americans point to Barack Obama's 2008 election to the presidency as the ushering in of a "post-racial" America. Not only was there a high turnout of African Americans and Latinx people, the overwhelming majority of whom voted for Obama, younger Whites also turned out in record numbers and also gave the majority of their votes to Obama. White Americans under the age of thirty preferred Obama to Senator John McCain 54 to 44 percent—the reverse of the aggregate White population, which gave 54 percent of its vote to McCain while only giving 44 percent of its vote to Obama (Dahl 2008; Keeter, Horowitz, and Tyson 2008). For some, this fact served and still serves as *prima facie* evidence not only of a significant decline in anti-Black racial attitudes among White Americans but also that America has begun realizing its post-racial dream (Nagourney 2008; Thernstrom and Thernstrom 2008; Tolson 2008). So why are so many Americans, especially the two of us, *still talking about race*?

For every story that fits the post-racial narrative, there is another that shows there is still progress to be made. Again, consider the two of us. Research shows that 75 percent of White Americans do not have a non-White friend. In a scenario where a White American has a hundred friends, ninety-one of them would be White. In the same scenario for Blacks, eighty-three of those friends would be Black (Ingraham 2014). Furthermore, of all of the doctorates awarded in the United States, only 7 percent of them were earned by Black Americans, and among the 10,595 members of the American Political Science Association, 338 of them are Black, and only 173 of those are Black women. The chances of us interacting, no less being friends, were really quite low.

What's more, Christopher began studying race in American politics because he was constantly receiving mixed messages regarding racial progress from his friends, his family, and the media. Growing up in a working-class household in Pennsylvania, he was often around folks who were not hesitant to express what scholars now refer to as "old-fashioned" racial animus. Friends and family alike would unapologetically characterize Blacks as lazy, unintelligent, dishonest, and prone to criminal behavior and would use the N-word when talking about African Americans. These comments were relayed as matters of fact, rarely examined by many adults in his early life. In graduate school, when he began working on racial attitudes, many of his

White classmates would ask him a question that Candis never got: “Why do you work on race?”

We acknowledge that we are just a small sample, an anecdote. Looking through a wider lens, we find many more signs of inequality. Of the 540 Americans who have acquired the status of billionaire, there are only 3 who are Black: Oprah Winfrey, Robert Smith, and, most recently, Michael Jordan. While there are some very wealthy Blacks in the United States, White Americans own about ten times more wealth than Black families, and optimists calculate that if the average Black family accumulates wealth at the same rate Black families have in the previous three decades, it would take that family about 228 years to amass the same amount of wealth that the average White family has today (Asante-Muhammad et al. 2016). Meanwhile, about 6.4 percent of non-Hispanic White families are living in poverty, in contrast to the 20.2 percent of Black families who are in the same condition (US Census Bureau 2016). We should add that many (conservative White) Americans also rely on the “model minority” myth to deflect attention from the ongoing discrimination that Asian Americans face, and movie executives *still* cast White actors to play roles written for Asian and Asian American characters.

We can go on and on with statistics about the disparities—many of them growing—between Whites and people of color, particularly Blacks and Latinx people, but, ultimately, we wrote this book because of what we noticed in our interactions with our millennial peers and also with our college-aged students, many of whom belong to our generational cohort. We make two central claims in this book that are controversial, and we provide a surfeit of evidence to support both. The first is that racial progress in the United States has hit a wall. When Howard Schuman and his colleagues were writing their seminal text *Racial Attitudes in America* (originally published in 1970), there was a great deal of optimism regarding the trajectory of racial attitudes in the United States. In contrast, we argue that progress has, at best, slowed. In some cases, we find evidence that progress has completely stalled. While overtly racist attitudes have certainly declined over the past several decades, symbolic racial attitudes have essentially flatlined during the past thirty years. Furthermore, we show that anti-Black stereotypes, anti-Black affect, and racial resentment are still very prevalent among the White American population, and, building on the work of other scholars, we show that anti-Black sentiment exerts a stronger influence on some Americans’ partisanship, policy preferences, and vote choice than we have seen in the past couple of decades (Yadon and Piston 2018).

It is said that you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. The second main claim we make in this book is that millennials are not part of the solution, and therefore they are likely part of the problem. This is not merely a jab at millennials. As scholars of political science, and racial and ethnic politics more specifically, we are steeped in an understanding of the history of racial attitudes in America, but we are also insiders of the millennial generation. In a way, we are bilingual: fluent in the language of race that millennials are speaking but conversant in the racial language of our parents and grandparents. This represents an important departure from extant political science work on race and racial attitudes.

Previous work has focused on racial attitudes in the language and socialization of past generations and, as a result, continues to use the same measures to estimate “racial progress.” Ours is a different approach. We show that White millennials are so removed from Jim Crow and the civil rights era that they have little understanding of the structural nature of racial inequalities in the United States and therefore lack the contextual knowledge to be actively anti-racist. So while White millennials may be open to the idea of interracial marriage or living next to a Latinx family, they do not understand why policies like affirmative action still need to exist. As a result, and like their predecessors, they are wary of supporting these kinds of policies. What we show is that even though White millennials’ language and rationale around race, racism, and racial inequalities are different from that of previous generations, the end result is the same. We demonstrate that we are in a state of *racial stasis*. We offer this argument in the hope that our readers, our peers, and our students will be persuaded that we can all be part of the solution.

Acknowledgments

During the summer of 2010, the two of us began talking to each other about many of our White colleagues and peers who claimed to be anti-racist but weren’t actually working toward dismantling a system marked by White supremacy. In fact, we could provide several examples to the contrary; one that still stands out involves the use of racial humor wrapped up in a cloak of “I’m so not racist that I can make racist jokes.” We thought about producing a project to out these kinds of shenanigans, paint a more accurate portrait of the so-called progressive millennial, and pin down a measurement to get at the aspects of their racial attitudes that the traditional political science literature has heretofore failed to capture. What all of this means, in the context of giving thanks to those who have supported us through the process

of writing this book, is that we have been working on this project for the better part of a decade, and a whole lot of people have shared insights, feedback, words of wisdom, and encouragement along the way. Consequently, we have a whole lot of thanks to share. If we have failed to mention you by name, please charge it to our exhausted heads and not our hearts.

In the years that we've worked on this project, we've presented at a half dozen conferences or more and had posts at a total of five institutions: Duke, Oberlin College, Williams College, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Indiana University. At each of these places, our colleagues (often turned friends) have been tremendously helpful. We'd like to say thank you to John Aldrich, Antoine Banks, Frank Baumgartner, Andrea Benjamin, Bill Bianco, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Ted Carmines, Cassandra Davis, Vivian Ferrillo, Colin Fisk, VaNatta Ford, Matthew Fowler, Bernard Fraga, Matthew Hayes, Kerry Haynie, Margie Hershey, Vince Hutchings, Jeff Israel, Ashley Jardina, Christopher Johnston, Cindy Kam, Aaron King, Rebecca Kreitzer, Michael MacDonald, James Manigault-Bryant, Rhon Manigault-Bryant, Natalie Masuoka, Paula McClain, Nicole Mellow, Jennifer Merolla, Jacob Montgomery, Ngoni Munemo, Brendan Nyhan, Diana O'Brien, Efrén Pérez, Rene Rocha, Debbie Schildkraut, Eric Schmidt, Brigitte Seim, Regina Smyth, Michael Tesler, Isaac Unah, and Nick Valentino. Our gracious colleagues at Washington University in St. Louis, Penn State University, the American Politics Research Group at the University of North Carolina Department of Political Science, and the American Politics Workshop at Indiana University invited us to present our work and provided productive and constructive criticism. We appreciate you. We must also give a huge thanks to Amber Ellis, Gabby Malina, and Corey Michon—our three wonderful undergraduate research assistants.

This book has been through several iterations, and we hope this one is the best. We are so pleased that Chuck Myers supported this project. While we are honored to join the ranks of University of Chicago Press authors, we must also thank the anonymous reviewer at Cambridge who provided comments that allowed us to get the book ready for prime time, the wealth of feedback from all of the reviewers at Chicago and at Oxford University Press, and also David McBride. We appreciate the glorious editorial help of Serene Yang and the indexing talents of laurie prendergast. We would be remiss to not thank Stephen Ansolabehere and Brian Schaffner for taking a chance on our FIRE measure on the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. Some of the original data collection was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF award 1122624) as well as a Collaborative Research and Creative Activity Fund grant from the Office of the Vice Provost for

Research at Indiana University. Most figures were made using Hadley Wickham's (2016) *ggplot2* package for R.

Those near and dear to us have been willing to hear all about this project and give head nods (which go a long way), high fives, and shout-outs. Candis would like to thank Mr. Cheeks alongside Kimberly Bickham, Rose Buckleew, David Cortez, Kim Yi Dionne, Chryl Laird, Deb LoBiondo, Tehama Lopez Bunyasi, Sarah Mayorga-Gallo, Julian Wamble, and the amazing scholars who uplift others through @WomenAlsoKnow and @POCalsoknow. Christopher acknowledges Andy Bell, Betsy Bell, Sam Bestvater, Scott Clifford, Scott de Marchi, Kent Freeze, Melanie Freeze, Thomas Gift IV, Marc Hetherington, Sunshine Hillygus, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Frank Orlando, Jason Reifler, Dave Rohde, Melissa Sands, David Sparks, Nathan Teetor, and Dane Wendell. Special thanks go to Christopher's brothers Peter and Paul, and to Ashley Jardina—his best of friends in the worst of times.

One thing that is "interesting" about academia is that those who go into it are people who sometimes let their work consume them. Academia can be brutal on one's mental health and one's relationships. Needless to say, we have to thank those who have been closest to us during our best and worst times: Melissa Spas and Terrell Smith, the two millennials whom we still love most. We dedicate this book to them.

Christopher adds: Unlike Candis, this is my very first book. As a result, I have a few more things to say. I have a number of people to thank for the support and encouragement that led to this book's completion. My educational journey took me to Allegheny College, where I first met our fantastic editor Chuck Myers, and later to Vanderbilt University, where I began my PhD as an aspiring political theorist. My first year in Nashville, I had the very good fortune of taking two courses that forever set me off on a different path: Quantitative Methods with Suzanne Globetti and Public Opinion with Marc Hetherington. Seeing how much I enjoyed computational statistics and methods, both Marc and Suzanne encouraged me to shift my focus and supported my applications to graduate programs as an Americanist. In 2007, I moved down the road (I-40) to Durham and began in the PhD program at Duke University. There I worked with John Aldrich and alongside Dave Rohde in Rohde's Political Institutions and Public Choice center. With the continued support of Marc, and the generosity of both John and Dave, I finished at Duke in 2012. Now that I have finally completed this manuscript, I will turn back to working on Schwartz values and partisanship in America.

For those readers who have heard either Candis or I talk about "our book" over the last six or seven years, here it is. It took far longer than either

of us would have liked, but we are optimistic that you will find our arguments interesting and the evidence compelling.

In terms of one final acknowledgment for this project, the person I would actually like to thank more than anyone else is Candis. In an occupation that puts tremendous pressure on junior scholars to publish and to do so quickly, Candis is a coauthor who demonstrated incredible patience with me while we finished this book. As someone who struggles with treatment-resistant major depression (which is *exactly* as much fun as it sounds), at times I did not want to work on this (or any) project. During these times, Candis always emphasized how important it was, to her, that I was taking care of myself. In the spring of 2015, when this book was first completely drafted, I mentioned to Candis that one of the reasons I was dragging my feet on the project was because “owing her work” was something that helped me get through each day. Understanding my meaning, Candis responded with an open heart, telling me that “if writing a book with me is going to keep you around, I think we should scrap this book and start all over from the beginning; you are more important to me than our book.” I am so glad to have her as a collaborator and friend . . . even if she really disliked me when we first met.

