



## America's Multicultural Heritage and Cultural Assimilation in Takaki's

### “A Different Mirror”

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#### Abstract :

In the first chapter of A Different Mirror, Takaki laments the historical neglect of non-European cultural contributions to the United States. He claims that much of the history of the other people who have contributed to American culture has been erased from textbooks because of the exclusion of information that throw a bad light on the European-majority ruling elite. In his alternative history, he recounts the experiences of several major cultural groups that have made significant contributions to the United States, including European colonialism, Native American resistance, African American history, and others.

Forgoing a Eurocentric view of history in favour of an ethnic history of the United States, this book effectively retells the nation's past from a hitherto unexplored angle. In this recounting, Takaki takes into consideration pivotal moments to restore the history of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, the Irish, Mexicans, and Jews. Separate chapters examine one ethnic group at a time, providing information on that group's history, culture, politics, and legislation. By include the complete spectrum of immigrants that make up the multicultural society, it rewrites the conventional account of American history.

#### Introduction :

The book's main theme is American variety, stressing the need of appreciating the country's rich mosaic of cultures. The fabric of the country is woven by the diverse traditions of its many varied peoples. Yet, this facet has been badly integrated into its past, therefore Takaki uses this occasion to draw attention to this problem. Because of his minority status, he is able to provide insight into the past that is distinct from that of his White Anglo-Saxon Christian compatriots. His message is that it is important for schools and communities to preserve the heritage of the many ethnic and racial groups that make up the United States of America. Statements like "The study of variety is vital for understanding how and why America became what Walt Whitman termed a teeming country of countries" serve to highlight this core element of multiculturalism.

#### America's Multicultural Heritage



A Different Mirror's most significant contribution is Ronald Takaki's choice to compare and contrast many ethnic groups rather than concentrating on just one. By making this choice, Takaki is emphasising the need of interethnic harmony, urging individuals of all backgrounds to stand together against bigotry and discrimination. He explains how individuals who gain from white supremacy take advantage of racial tensions. A strong feeling of togetherness founded on shared struggle is necessary if the people are to regain power.

While Takaki stresses the need of solidarity, he makes it apparent that there are numerous factors that might lead members of various ethnic groups to feel estranged from and sceptical of one another. To begin, the groups he defines are here for a wide variety of reasons. The Native Americans, who have always lived in North America, the African Americans, whose ancestors were taken here against their will, and the Irish and Muslim communities, who fled here to escape conflict and persecution, are all quite different from one another. Furthermore, these communities were so culturally, religiously, and linguistically distinct from one another that even the most fundamental exchanges were sometimes impossible. It's not hard to see how this may result in miscommunication, suspicion, and even animosity.

Even among ethnic groupings that seem to have a lot in common from the outside, Takaki is cautious to stress out that there are glaring disparities. For instance, he highlights the fact that the United States was already a culturally and linguistically varied continent before to colonisation. Indeed, after the US settler colony was established, there were considerable differences among Native American tribes on topics like whether or not to identify as American. While many Navajo participated in WWII, proclaiming their "proud to be Americans" status, members of other tribes strongly opposed the prospect of serving in the "white man's war," and instead remained at home. It's maybe not unexpected that people from diverse groups in the United States can wind up feeling so little in common with one another, given the vast differences in how each group views the country itself. In addition, Takaki notes that even when common ground and unity did emerge, it was not always maintained. His main point is that the Irish recognised similarities between their status as a degraded people and that of Africans in bondage. Many Irish Americans believed that slavery should be abolished in the United States because they had always considered themselves British "slaves." However, it seemed that Irish compassion for African slaves faded throughout the Atlantic journey. Once they arrived in the United States, many of them developed racist attitudes. Cases like these



illustrate how challenging it may be to sustain unity even in settings where it seemed achievable at first.

### **Racism and Xenophobia**

Takaki also highlights the systematic efforts made by white people to incite ethnic tensions and keep white supremacy in place. (Irish, Jewish, and Southeastern European immigrants are not included in the category "white" during the most of the time period covered by the book.) White upper and middle class individuals were worried about the consequences of working class people banding together across racial lines. During the time of slavery, for instance, it was not unusual for both black slaves and white indentured servants to attempt an escape at the same time. Slave owners feared uprisings of this kind and actively fostered anti-black bigotry among their white employees. To further strengthen management's grip on employees, sugar plantations in Hawaii "were systematically building an ethnically heterogeneous labour force."

### **Cultural Assimilation**

Takaki stresses the need of racial and cultural groups working together to increase their influence, better their living circumstances, and combat white supremacy. When given the opportunity to break the strike of another ethnic group, for instance, employees of that group must reject to act as "scabs" (strikebreakers). The Mexican-Japanese strike in Oxnard, California, in 1903 is an even greater example of employees of diverse ethnic groups choosing to strike together. For the first time in California's history, a union was created by people of different races who "felt a kinship based on class." For Takaki, it is only when ethnic communities work together that the ruling elite understand they are not invincible.

Takaki also notes instances in which white supremacy serves as a unifying force rather than a separating one for people of different backgrounds. The intercultural marriages between Punjabi Sikh men and Mexican women in California are one such instance. In the United States, Punjabi males were not allowed to acquire property or marry white women, but they could marry Mexicans. As a result of a confluence of discriminatory legislation, two groups of people who would not have otherwise interacted have found common ground.

Overall, Takaki stresses the need of ethnic communities working in partnership with one another without erasing their distinctions. Without this kind of unity, white supremacy will continue to subjugate everyone who does not fit its racial criteria.



## Conclusion

A Different Mirror, written by Takaki, presents the multiethnic history of the United States. This book gives the reader a well-rounded view of American culture by telling the lives of a wide range of people, including Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Irish Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Jews. At this time, the Master Narrative and the American idea of manifest destiny were at their peak. In their "white purity" mindset, these persons were seen as a threat to the white race. As compared to those other civilizations, the United States stands head and shoulders above the others. I owe a great deal of what I know about the outcomes of manifest destiny and the Master Narrative to the writings of Takaki.

Throughout the novel, Takaki also addresses the subject of the oppression of people of various races and cultures by the ruling class. He claims, for instance, that Thomas Jefferson would have seemed cordial to nonviolent Native American communities. He was also attempting to mould them into submissive farmers who shared the same values as the upper class. As noted by Takaki, Jefferson "insisted that the transfer of Indian lands to Europeans had been done honestly and lawfully," despite his belief that the Indians were to blame for their own collapse. This is one example of how the white European elite acquired vast tracts of property and hence a greater foothold in society.

In addition, Takaki explains how factory owners disrupted strikes by dividing employees by racial group. To play off black and white workers against one other, a corporate official handed out brochures to the tune of twenty thousand that discouraged black employees from joining white labour organisations. The only individuals who benefited from this were the firms' upper management.

Takaki discusses cultural integration, a closely connected topic. He describes the difficulties that persons of other races and nationalities had in integrating into white American culture. Assimilation was a problem for people of colour in the United States since the dominant white society tended to perceive them as backwards, lazy, uneducated, or dishonest. The forceful removal of Native Americans from their homelands is only one example of how these prejudices helped legitimise the implementation of discriminatory policies that harmed vulnerable populations.



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