

BACKGROUND

No. 3339 | AUGUST 15, 2018

The Census Advisory Committee on Race and Ethnicity Must Be Terminated

Mike Gonzalez

Abstract

Why does the Trump Administration continue to allow the U.S. Census to be co-opted by well-organized pressure groups devoted to identity politics, such as MALDEF and Asian Americans Advancing Justice? This stranglehold began in full force in the 1970s. Without authority from Congress to amend the Census's constitutionally enumerated powers—to count people so as to apportion electoral seats—networks of activists and academics, so-called stakeholders, have turned the enumeration into a vehicle for dividing the country into identity groups based on racial, ethnic, and sexual identity, helping dispense special benefits to them. To obtain this outcome, these organizations intimidated Census officials into abandoning objective measures of counting the population, by asking Americans whether they self-identify, for example, as “Hispanic” or “Asian”—pan-ethnic categories that the pressure networks themselves had created. These groups then were designated official minorities entitled to special treatment. Along the way, these organizations greatly benefited, too, using the numbers the Census Bureau churned out at their behest to secure grants from government and private foundations. Both Republicans and Democrats have gone along with this rewriting of the American social order. Identity politics is a growing threat to liberal democracy and the American social contract, and the time has come to extricate the bureau from these networks of “stakeholders.” The first step is to disband the Census Bureau’s National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, the main nexus of stakeholders, something the Secretary of Commerce has the authority to do with the stroke of a pen.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/bg3339>

The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 546-4400 | heritage.org

Nothing written here is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of The Heritage Foundation or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before Congress.

KEY POINTS

- The Census Bureau’s National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, which consists of 32 members, expands and perpetuates the influence of identity-based special interest groups that for over four decades have completely altered the republic whose citizens the Census is tasked with enumerating.
- Special interest organizations such as La Raza and MALDEF quickly understood that in order to receive attention and the special benefits they sought for Mexican Americans they had to get the Census Bureau and other federal offices to change how they gathered information. When they succeeded, they used this new data to fatten their coffers, which allowed them to lobby even harder. It became an incredible feedback loop.
- Why do these organized pressure groups seek to create pan-ethnic groups, such as “Hispanic,” “Asian,” “Pacific Islander,” and “MENA”? A short answer would be the desire for power and money, combined with an animosity toward the nation’s original design.

A sort of collective amnesia sets in as organizations begin to refer to the new category's long history and develop narratives about the rich cultural basis of the classification. By then, the category is completely institutionalized, and the new classification is, like other classifications, assumed to have existed.

—Cristina Mora, *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American*

In a June 18, 2010, executive memorandum, President Barack Obama pledged his Administration's commitment "to reducing the undue influence of special interests that for too long has shaped the national agenda and drowned the voices of ordinary Americans."¹ As all executive memorandums do, this one had the force of law; it also appeared alongside the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) due to its relevance. As was the wont of the 44th president, his actions soon contradicted his own stated lofty ideals. Less than two years later, on March 2012, his Secretary of Commerce established the Census Bureau's National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations (NAC).²

As constituted, the NAC does precisely what President Obama warned against: It expands and perpetuates the influence of political pressure groups based on identity that for over four decades have not just shaped the national agenda, but completely altered the republic whose citizens the Census is tasked with enumerating, thereby rewriting the social order. The NAC's 2012 charter contains a poison pill, however. It states that the Secretary of Commerce established the NAC in accordance with the provisions of the FACA.³ The act makes clear

that the executive has the authority to terminate a committee established by the President or an officer of the federal government.

The NAC presently consists of 31 members. Four of these seats are held by so-called partner organizations, all of which tilt decidedly to the left—Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC), the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), and the National Urban League.⁴ Two of these organizations, NALEO and AAJC, are ethnic-affinity-interest organizations that purport to represent two pan-ethnic umbrella groups created by the federal bureaucracy and formalized through the Census—"Hispanics" and "Asians."⁵ In addition, 10 more members of the NAC represent organizations devoted to ethnic or sexual identity groups: the Alliance of Iranian Americans, the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, Asian American Decisions, the Japanese American National Museum, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the Native American Rights Fund, the Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander National Network, Plataforma Afrodescendiente, the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network, and the Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns. The other 17 members are mostly academics involved in the left-wing fields of ethnic studies, critical race theory, and multiculturalism. These are pedagogies that the Marxist academic, Frankfurt School disciple, and former militant Angela Davis has aptly described as "the intellectual arm of the revolution."⁶

With this background it is hardly surprising that the NAC consistently arrives at the decisions it does. The opening day of its two-day spring session on June 14 and 15, 2018, saw every attending member

1. Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended October 7, 2010, §2 Findings and Purpose, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2010-title5/html/USCODE-2010-title5-app-federalad.htm> (accessed June 25, 2018), and news release, "Presidential Memorandum—Lobbyists on Agency Boards and Commissions," June 18, 2010, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/presidential-memorandum-lobbyists-agency-boards-and-commissions> (accessed July 31, 2018).

2. U.S. Census Bureau, "Census Advisory Committees (CAC): National Advisory Committee," <https://www.census.gov/about/cac/nac.html> (accessed June 26, 2018).

3. U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations," Charter Section 2. Authority, <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/nac-charter.pdf> (accessed June 25, 2018).

4. U.S. Census Bureau, "National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations Membership List," April 2018, <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/nac-full-membership.pdf> (accessed June 26, 2018).

5. These two groups incongruously bring together peoples from different countries, races, ethnicities, language groups, and religions, the first all-Americans with ancestry from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego, including the Caribbean, and the second all-Americans with ancestries from the Philippines to the Pakistani-Afghan border, including Japan, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and India.

6. Mike Gonzalez, "Angela Davis and the Distortion of Diversity," *Heritage Foundation Commentary*, May 4, 2018, <https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/commentary/angela-davis-and-the-distortion-diversity>.

chastise the Trump Administration for requesting that a question on citizenship be added to the 2020 decennial Census.⁷ Another main complaint that day was about the Trump Administration's refusal to accept a NAC-endorsed proposal to place the artificially created ethnic group "Hispanic" on the same footing as races recognized by scientists. They also complained that the Trump Administration had prevented the addition of yet one more group, this one for Middle East North Africa (MENA). The next day, the NAC then voted unanimously to oppose the citizenship question.⁸ Yet, despite this clear bias in the NAC, the Administration has to go through the pretense of consulting NAC members when it makes Census decisions. Secretary Wilbur Ross, for example, thought it necessary to call NALEO executive director Arturo Vargas on March 13 to ask him for his view on including the citizenship question, even though he must have known well in advance what the response would be. "I gave him the advice that I would give the Census Bureau: Don't do it," Vargas said at a speech a month later.⁹

Combining the ethnic question on Hispanics that the Census has asked since 1980 with a separate question that is asked on race and creating a new MENA category have been Holy Grails of the NAC since its creation. The expansion of group creation fulfills the prophesy of Senator James Buckley of New York, who warned on the floor of the Senate in 1973 that "our colleges and universities will find themselves forced to punch into their computer cards more and more categories of human beings so that they may achieve the exact mix of sex, race, religion and national origin that will be required to satisfy their evermore

fastidious inquisitors."¹⁰ MENA was one of the NAC's recommendations in 2014,¹¹ when it said its working group "supports that nationalities reflective of MENA populations (such as Lebanese, Egyptian, Libyan, and Moroccan) be disassociated with 'White' on the combined race and origin write in box. Furthermore, the WG [Working Group] requests that OMB [Office of Management and Budget] consider including a MENA category as an official designation, thus updating the 1997 OMB Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity."¹² The same NAC report called for research on combining the race and ethnicity questions.

Video from a brainstorming session the Census Bureau held with stakeholders at its Suitland, Maryland, headquarters on May 29, 2015, makes amply clear that racial categories, such as "MENA," "Hispanic," and "Asian," are results from the top-down decisions imposed by the stakeholders, with little demand from—and sometimes even resisted by—the unwary individual Americans about to be so lumped together. One of the leading "stakeholders" participating on that day was none other than the anti-Israel radical Linda Sarsour, later one of the organizers of the Women's March against the Trump Administration, a Muslim activist who has shown a weakness for one of America's leading anti-Semites, Louis Farrakhan.¹³ Sarsour made clear what the new category MENA was about—political power and dollars:

When we look at accessing federal, you know, any types of federal support, for example, we lose out dramatically because we don't have a separated category.... [B]ecause we are quote 'white,'

7. U.S. Census Bureau, "6/14/18 National Advisory Committee (NAC) Spring Meeting (Day 1)," June 14, 2018, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfZNEthzMPI&feature=youtu.be> (accessed June 27, 2018).
8. U.S. Census Bureau, "6/15/18 National Advisory Committee (NAC) Spring Meeting (Day 2)," June 15, 2018, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h6BXg_5Elo&feature=youtu.be (accessed July 26, 2018).
9. NALEO Educational Fund, "Census 2020 Briefing-April 17, 2018," April 24, 2018, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbwQyKjRDd4> (accessed on July 9, 2018).
10. Senator James Buckley, "What Does Affirmative Action Really Affirm?" 93rd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record*, pp. 16429-16432, May 29, 1973.
11. U.S. Census Bureau, "Final Recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations Made as a Result of the Meeting on March 19-21, 2014," https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2014-08/nac_final_recommendations_06-10-2014.pdf (accessed July 26, 2018).
12. National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic and Other Populations, "2020 Census: Race and Hispanic Origin Research Working Group," *Final Report*, June 10, 2014, https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2014-08/rho_final_report_06-10-2014.pdf?sec_ak_reference=18.e0fd7171508998083.9e05627 (accessed June 27, 2018).
13. John-Paul Pagano, "The Women's March Has a Farrakhan Problem," *The Atlantic*, March 8, 2018. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/womens-march/555122/> (accessed July 9, 2018).

we are not seen as a priority area for city or state or federal funding.... At the end of the day it's self-identification.¹⁴

Participants expressed the hope that even though there was little or no grassroots push for the creation of a MENA category, just as there had been none for any of the previous pan-ethnic categories, once people understood that they would receive benefits for ticking the box and identifying as MENA, they would accept it. One, Khaled Beydoun, a critical race theory professor at the University of Detroit Mercy, put it this way:

There might not be considerable buy-in immediately after the classification is framed and adopted. But there's a cascading effect, right? These classifications are going to be adopted on college applications, on employment forms. You know, different mediums that are going to adopt and endorse this classification. And when that happens, and people tie in ticking that classification with a specific interest, then there's going to be buy-in.¹⁵

Cristina Mora, a Latin studies professor, at the University of California, Berkeley (and whose comprehensive study of the early years of the creation of the Hispanic identity, *Making Hispanics*, is quoted at length in this *Backgrounder* because of the high quality of its scholarship), was another stakeholder in attendance who recognized that ethnic activists and their allies in the media would make people believe in it.¹⁶ MENA, Mora said, would follow the same history as the Hispanic category: "When the Hispanic category—Latino category—was being discussed in the 1970s, lots of people did not know what this was. This is a huge effort throughout the '70s to get people

to actually recognize this. It involved the media. It involved activists. So, if we're unsure about whether it exists or not, these things will take on a life of [their] own."¹⁷ In her book, Mora lucidly describes what transpires over time in this manner: "A sort of collective amnesia sets in as organizations begin to refer to the new category's long history and develop narratives about the rich cultural basis of the classification. By then, the category is completely institutionalized, and the new classification is, like other classifications, assumed to have existed."¹⁸

Nor is this intentional creation of groups the work only of stakeholders. In a display of the near uniformity of views between the activists and key Census Bureau officials, Roberto Ramirez, the chief of the Bureau's Ethnicity and Ancestry Statistics Branch, who moderated the discussion, agreed with Mora. He had invited Mora, he said, because MENA would follow the same path as the Hispanic category, and her research would help inform the discussion. "As she mentioned in the 70s, where you had Cubans and you had Venezuelans and you had Puerto Ricans, who said, 'I'm not Hispanic. I don't know what the heck that is. So why are you trying to put me under that umbrella?' So...there's a lot of parallels," Ramirez said.¹⁹

All of this makes clear that when the stakeholders and the Census insist that they are just striving to account for America's changing demographics, they are being, to say the least, modest about their achievements. The NAC makes this claim with such regularity that one wonders whether it is trying to conceal the key role it played in changing (by creating them) those demographics. In 2017, the NAC said that the "demographics of the country have changed significantly over the last decade and continue to change. The country is more diverse, more multiracial."²⁰ In 2014, it said virtually the same: "The changing U.S.

14. U.S. Census Bureau, "Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East and North Africa," May 29, 2015, <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2015/demo/2015-MENA-Experts.html> (accessed July 26, 2018). For a Heritage Foundation transcript of the discussion, see "Forum on Ethnic Groups from the Middle East & North Africa (MENA), 5/29/15," http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2017/CensusForumonMENATranscript.pdf.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. G. Cristina Mora, *Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and Media Constructed a New American* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 159.

19. Ibid.

20. U.S. Census Bureau, "National Advisory Committee Fall 2017 Recommendations," November 3, 2017, <https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2017-11/2018-05-01-census-response.pdf> (accessed June 27, 2017).

population demographics and the fluidity of people's perception of their identity contributes [sic] to the issues that respondents have with finding themselves within Census Bureau race and Hispanic origin categories."²¹ In reality, the NAC and its predecessors have not been mere bystanders, helping the Census takers record a new multiracial reality. From the start, it has been they who have convinced, sometimes even intimidated, Census officials to create a new taxonomy that birthed, and then perpetuated, the notion that America is a nation of groups. From the start, they have taken over the process, as the record bears out.

The Grip of the Special Interest Groups

In 2012, President Obama's Secretary of Commerce created the NAC out of five Racial and Ethnic Advisory Committees (REACs)—(1) African American, (2) American Indian and Alaska Native, (3) Asian, (4) Hispanic, and (5) Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. From the moment these REACs were created in the mid-1970s, they used the Census to convert the Civil Rights movement from a crusade for color-blind justice for all Americans into a spoils system in which the government gives members of designated subnational groups the supposedly "compensatory" benefits that Sarsour, Beydoun, and Mora still crave decades later. Because organized pressure groups, such as the National Council of La Raza (NCLR)²² and MALDEF, were not created until the late 1960s (both by the liberal Ford Foundation), they could do little with the 1970 Census and had to wait a decade. They used the early years of the 1970s

to organize, and were lucky to find an easy target in a beleaguered Nixon Administration. That is how the first three REACs were created in preparation for the 1980 Census.

On October 10, 1974, the Secretary of Commerce thus authorized the creation of the Census Advisory Committee on the Black Population for the 1980 Census.²³ In 1975, the Department of Commerce chartered the Census Advisory Committee on the Spanish Origin Population, and one year later in 1976, the charter for the Census Advisory Committee on the Asian and Pacific Americans Population was issued.²⁴ In 1985, the Census Bureau created the Census Advisory Committee on the American Indian and Alaska Native Populations.²⁵

In 1997, after the Office of Management and Budget had created a sixth group, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Populations, for the 2000 Census, the fifth committee was formed for this group.²⁶ It was these committees that the Obama Administration re-chartered into one single National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations in 2012.²⁷

The run-up to the committee creation is a case study of how ethnic affinity organizations such as La Raza and MALDEF flexed their new muscles and bullied successive Administrations and bureaucrats into dividing the nation into groups. It is important to give a brief description of the era to get the full measure of what took place. Much of this analysis relies on what happened with the Hispanic groups, for which the greatest amount of scholarship exists.

21. U.S. Census Bureau, National Advisory Committee Race and Hispanic Origin Working Group, "2020 Census, Final Report," June 10, 2014, 4. Recommendations, https://www2.census.gov/cac/nac/meetings/2014-08/rho_final_report_06-10-2014.pdf?sec_ak_reference=18.e0fd7171508998083.9e05627 (accessed June 27, 2018).

22. *La raza* is "the race" in English. In 2017, the group changed its name to UnidosUS.

23. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Advisory Committee on the Black Population for the 1980 Census*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 1974).

24. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Advisory Committee on the Spanish Origin Population for the 1980 Census*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 1975), and U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Advisory Committee on the Asian and Pacific Americans Population for the 1980 Census*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 1976).

25. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Advisory Committee on the American Indian and Alaska Native Population for the 1990 Census*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 1985).

26. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Advisory Committee on the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Populations*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 2000).

27. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Charter of the Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations*, Library of Congress Federal Advisory Committee Collection (Washington, DC, 2012).

In the late 1960s, both MALDEF and La Raza had tried to get the Census Bureau to create a pan-ethnic category for the 1970 Census for residents whose forebears came from Latin America or the Caribbean, or who were themselves immigrants from those countries. The Census Bureau refused, and added a question only on the long form that went to about 5 percent of the population. The question only asked whether the respondents’ “origin or descent” was from, say, Mexico, Puerto Rico, or Cuba, not how they identified themselves.

These special interest organizations wasted no opportunity to vent their disapproval. In 1971, MALDEF sued the Census Bureau in a federal district court in California seeking to prevent it from releasing the “origin or descent” information that had been gathered by the 1970 Census. The Commission on Civil Rights then piled on, releasing a report using intemperate language, criticizing the bureau’s approach to counting the Spanish-origin population as “disastrous” and “confusing.”²⁸ Representatives Edward Roybal (D–CA) and Herman Badillo (D–NY) fired off letters to Census Bureau Director George Brown demanding a recount.²⁹ La Raza—which had adopted early on the concept of a pan-ethnic Hispanic group whose members stood to gain compensatory benefits because of their status as a disadvantaged minority—lobbied all segments of the government intensively to follow its lead. Its representatives testified before Congress in 1973 that “Hispanic Americans’ were a disadvantaged minority group that deserved representation in data sets and government reports.”³⁰ This concept was also “most prominent in NCLR’s Census Bureau lobbying.”³¹

Seeking to avoid a fight, President Richard Nixon replaced Brown with the far more pliant Vincent Barabba, who had worked on his campaign. A couple

of months after being named, Barabba sent letters to what he viewed as leaders of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban origin, inviting them to a meeting to plan the 1980 Census. The attendees at the March 1, 1974, meeting supported the creation of a formal Spanish Origin Advisory Committee (SOAC), formally established in August 1974 (also with a grant from the Ford Foundation).³² The SOAC was re-chartered as the Census Advisory Committee on the Spanish Origin Population, and the die was cast. In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget gave official sanction to all these groups by issuing Directive 15, which crafted the pan-ethnic groups of Hispanics and Asians and divided the entire country into five groups (with blacks, whites, and American Indians added to the two pan-ethnic groups).³³

The birth of these committees and their exploding influence (through their successor the NAC) up until the Inauguration of Donald Trump in 2017 tell the tale of how America was changed from the previous Lockean model of individual rights and the ideal of “All Men Are Created Equal” into what the social scientist Alice Robbin has termed “an interest group society” and the historian Benjamin Francis–Fallon called “a multicultural republic.” As Robbin puts it, ethnic interest organizations have become “influential beyond their numbers in the public policy process, as well as in influencing administrative policy regarding rules for statistical and administrative data collection and reporting.”³⁴ This is how Robbin describes how these organizations were able to give the spark of life to corporate identity groups that had not hitherto existed: “Federal statistics have created a similarity of identity where none existed, as with ‘Latino’ identity based on shared language rather than culture and as with an ‘Asian’ identity based on shared discrimination and ethnic stereotyping.”³⁵

28. Mora, *Making Hispanics*, p. 93.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

33. U.S. Office of Management and Budget, “Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting,” Directive No. 15, May 12, 1977, https://transition.fcc.gov/Bureaus/OSEC/library/legislative_histories/1195.pdf (accessed June 11, 2018), and The White House, “Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity,” October 30, 1997, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards (accessed June 13, 2018).

34. Alice Robbin, “The Politics of Representation in the U.S. National Statistical System: Origins of Minority Population Interest Group Participation,” *Journal of Government Information*, No. 27 (2000), p. 432, <http://eprints.rclis.org/11385/1/RobbinPoliticsOfRepresentationJGI2000.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2018).

35. *Ibid.*, p. 434.

The grip of these interest organizations on the Census ethnic process continued through the late 1980s, when they became “a visible presence in congressional and OMB hearings.”³⁶ They fought hard to make new gains (and often won) and, once made, fought hard to maintain them. “The political stance of the American Indian, Hispanic, and black interest groups throughout nearly all this period was that the classification system could not be altered or the gains they had made over the last two decades would be jeopardized.”³⁷ One can read in the Congressional Record from hearings held in late 1997 how hard a representative of La Raza—claiming to speak on behalf of the recently aggregated Hispanic community—fought the addition of a “multiracial” box. The reason was simple: The more Americans saw themselves as multiracial, the less salience the Hispanic identity would have and the less individuals would receive government benefits (or probably feel the need to seek it). According to the La Raza representative,

As the U.S. population becomes increasingly bi- or multiracial, or as people begin to view themselves as multiracial, fewer people are likely to be considered protected as they fall into an ambiguous all-encompassing and heterogeneous category for which few public policy initiatives, civil rights, or otherwise can reach them.³⁸

Jacinta Ma, with the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, also opposed the addition of a multiracial box for the same reasons: The number of those counted as “Asians” would drop.³⁹ When the Census subsequently allowed respondents in the 2000 and 2010 Censuses to tick multiple boxes or one for “some other race,” the bureau allocated those responses to one of the six OMB-approved categories.⁴⁰

Power, Money, and Ideology

Why do organized pressure groups seek to create pan-ethnic clans, such as Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and MENA? A short answer would again be the desire for power and money, combined with an animosity toward the nation’s original design.

Special interest organizations, such as La Raza and MALDEF, quickly understood that in order to receive attention, and the special benefits they sought for Mexican Americans, they had to get politicians to stop thinking of the issue as a regional one that only concerned Mexican Americans and Southwestern states. When they finally got the Census Bureau and other federal offices to change how they gathered information, they used this new data to fatten their coffers, which allowed them to lobby even harder. It was an incredible feedback loop. As Mora explained:

Put simply, NCLR found that it could best secure more resources from state and private grant-making agencies if it could frame its constituency as a sizable *national*, rather than regional, minority group that stretched from coast to coast. To make its claims about panethnicity seem credible, NCLR built networks with federal bureaucrats, especially those within the Census Bureau.⁴¹

By the mid-1970s, NCLR had started using the newly developed Spanish-origin data to apply for grants from various government agencies and to create policy reports.⁴²

Certainly, the special interest pressure organizations did not just lobby the Census Bureau. According to the historian of the era John Skrentny, “Affirmative action for Latinos developed with no resistance whatsoever. Bilingual education moved easily through Congress, and language rights devel-

36. *Ibid.*, p. 433.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Hearing, *Federal Measures of Race and Ethnicity and the Implications for the 2000 Census: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight*, Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology, Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, U.S. House of Representatives, 105th Cong., 1st sess., April 23, May 22, and July 25, 1997, p. 317.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 412.

40. Edwin Meese III and Mike Gonzalez, “Trump Can Help Overcome Identity Politics,” *The Wall Street Journal*, February 27, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-can-help-overcome-identity-politics-1519772254> (accessed July 5, 2018).

41. Mora, *Making Hispanics*, p. 51.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

oped quickly at OCR,” the Office for Civil Rights.⁴³ Such lobbying efforts were made all the easier by the cozy relation between lobbyists and bureaucrats. As Skrentny put it, “MALDEF worked closely with OCR, coordinating activities and sharing information. This was not difficult because many MALDEF lawyer-activists previously worked in the federal government and vice versa.”⁴⁴

As for ideology, as Francis-Fallon suggests, “ethnic leaders and elected officials sought to forge several peoples into one” because they recognized that ethnic solidarity was “an instrument of political power, one that could produce the society that they desired.”⁴⁵ The society they desired was not the liberal social order bequeathed by the Founders. The special interest groups sought to prevent immigrants from Cambodia, China, Colombia, Cuba, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Peru, or Vietnam from going through the assimilationist process that a century ago made millions of Armenians, East European Jews, Greeks, Irish, Lebanese, Sicilians, and Swedes into Americans who are not first subdivided into pan-ethnic clans.

A new ideology derived from Marxism was imposing itself: an ideology opposed to the idea of individuals from diverse nations being transformed by the melting pot that instead emphasized the alleged victimization of collectivities. Its theorists worked through the Racial and Ethnic Advisory Committees, and later the NAC, to get the Census to change how it asked questions—in order to change the very character of America. Some of the most influential founding members of these committees were already imbibing the radical ideas that preoccupy the NAC of 2018. The leaders that Barabba gathered included MALDEF lead attorney Robert Gnaizda; a founder of La Raza, Julian Samora; Puerto Rican activist Raquel Creitoff (a pioneer of the Puerto Rican Studies program at City University); and a rare Cuban American who led a La Raza affiliate in Miami, Arturo Hevia.

Proponents of ethnic studies, critical theory, and the like want to change the American system

because they claim that it cannot address the structural marginalization of members of what they have identified *a priori* as minority groups. According to theorists, individuals who are disadvantaged must compete for rights collectively, not as individuals. Thus, ethnic collectivities must be organized, even if they are artificial and even if the individuals in question must be coerced into submitting to the group. As Courtney Jung, one of the school’s pre-eminent theorists, recognized in a 2006 paper, “a political identity does not arise spontaneously. Instead, by using categories of race, gender, and class to define an unequal distribution of rights and privileges, liberal democratic societies compel some of their members to identify with others of a similar ethnic, sexual, or economic character.”⁴⁶

Critical theorists believe that those individuals who resist the compulsion to identify with the group to which they have been assigned, but instead adopt mainstream American ways and mores, are guilty of something they call “false consciousness.” These refuseniks’ perception of their own interest has been systematically distorted by “negative scripts” articulated by “the oppressor class” about minorities—so the thinking goes. “False consciousness” can only be rectified through “consciousness raising” or endless ideological indoctrination until the individual submits.

If these ideas sound Marxist it is because they are cultural reinterpretations of the economic Marxism of yesteryear, a reformulation led by mostly German professors associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt (known simply as the Frankfurt School) who emigrated to America during the interwar period and became very influential in America’s leading universities. This link between the earlier, economic-based version of Marxism and today’s race-based analysis was recognized recently by Professor Jason Barker in *The New York Times*, on the bicentennial of Karl Marx’s birth this past April: “Such movements recognize, as did Marx, that the ideas that rule every society are those of its ruling class and that overturning those ideas is

43. John Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 259.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 422, footnote 143.

45. Benjamin Francis-Fallon, “Minority Reports: The Emergence of Pan-Hispanic Politics, 1945-1980,” dissertation submitted to Georgetown University, June 22, 2012, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/557625> (accessed June 28, 2018).

46. Courtney Jung, “Why Liberals Should Value ‘Identity Politics,’” *Dædalus*, Vol. 135, No. 4 (Fall 2006), p. 32, <https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/daed.2006.135.4.32> (accessed July 26, 2018).

fundamental to true revolutionary progress.⁴⁷ Consciousness raising was, of course, practiced at its most extreme in the re-education camps of Maoist China and Pol Pot's Cambodia and openly identified as such.⁴⁸ One can find milder forms of it throughout corporate America today.⁴⁹

Identity raising and group formation as remedies for subjugation by the oppressor class were ideas already nascent among some members of Spanish-origin and Asian-origin committees. Luz Cuadrado, for example, was involved with the Areito school program, which sought to instill Puerto Rican identity into young children of Puerto Rican heritage in Boston. "We bring young children in and, starting with the very young, we teach them to develop a sense of identity and self-awareness. We feel that the most important part of the community is to be aware of, sure of and proud of what we are."⁵⁰ Leobardo Estrada, another committee member, was later instrumental in the creation of a student-led Critical Race Studies course at the School of Public Affairs at UCLA.⁵¹ In the Asian committee, meanwhile, Lillian Fabros was a founding member of the Asian-American Political Alliance, a group that was formed at Berkeley in 1968 to unite Asians of all ethnicities under one political banner for the sake of partaking in political action. Yuji Ichioka, the radical Berkeley student who first coined the term "Asian-American" in 1968, was a socialist enthusiast.⁵²

But no committee member evinced the language and thoughts of identity politics and critical race theory more than Julian Samora, and the evidence can already be gleaned in the dissertation he wrote in 1953. It is important to take a more in-depth look at the forces that influenced his actions because of the oversized

influence he later himself had, not just on the Census Bureau's advisory committee, but in lobbying other agencies in the academy and through La Raza.

Of the three original founders of La Raza, Samora was the one most influenced by the academy and its ideas, according to many who have written on the three, including Samora's daughter Carmen Samora in her 2011 dissertation for the University of New Mexico.⁵³ Herman Gallegos was a community organizer who was mentored by the radical Saul Alinsky; Ernesto Galarza earned advanced degrees from Stanford and Columbia and then joined the National Farm Labor Union as director of research and organizing farm laborers with the legendary union leader Cesar Chavez. Samora rose from poverty, fatherlessness, and intense discrimination in Colorado to become the first Mexican American to earn a PhD in sociology and anthropology at a major university, Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. He then founded Notre Dame's first Department of Mexican-American Ethnic Studies—with a grant from the Ford Foundation.

As he began to write his thesis, Samora was chastised by one of his academic mentors, George I. Sanchez of the University of Texas at Austin, for seeking a pan-Latin identity with shared perspectives where there was none. "For gosh sakes, don't characterize the Spanish-American with what is obviously true of the human race, and then imply, by commission or omission, that his characteristics are peculiarly his and, OF COURSE, radically different from those of the 'Anglos,'" Sanchez wrote to Samora in the early 1950s.⁵⁴ Sanchez went on to point out the evident silliness of lumping "Germans, Italians, Jews, Catholics, Baptists, hill-billies, Bostonians, poor whites" and so on into the generic term "Anglos."⁵⁵

47. Jason Barker, "Happy Birthday, Karl Marx. You Were Right!" *The New York Times*, April 30, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/30/opinion/karl-marx-at-200-influence.html> (accessed June 29, 2018).

48. Margaret Slocomb, *The People's Republic of Kampuchea, 1979-1989* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2003), pp. 133 and 142.

49. Sam Fulwood III, "As Starbucks Closes Stores for Racial Bias Training, Experts Warn the Effort May Fall Short," ThinkProgress, May 29, 2018, <https://thinkprogress.org/starbucks-closes-stores-for-racial-bias-training-2445e0f21835/> (accessed June 29, 2018).

50. Carmen Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, *The Puerto Rican Diaspora, Historical Perspectives* (Temple University Press, 2008), interview with Luz Cuadrado, p. 212.

51. "UCLA School of Public Affairs, "Critical Race Studies: Backstory," <https://spacrs.wordpress.com/history/> (accessed on June 28, 2018).

52. Yuji Ichioka, "A Historian by Happenstance," *Amerasia Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (2000), <https://longbui1981.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/ichioka-a-historian-by-happenstance.pdf> (accessed August 7, 2018).

53. Carmen Samora, "Los Tres Grandes—Herman Gallegos, Ernesto Galarza, Julian Samora: Rooted in Community, Guided by Friendship, Cultivating Leadership," University of New Mexico dissertation, August 31, 2011, http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1038&context=amst_etds (accessed July 27, 2018).

54. Quoted in Francis-Fallon, "Minority Reports," p. 1.

55. Ibid.

He also urged Samora to consider that the poor all shared the same societal dysfunctions, no matter their race and ethnicity. “The characteristics that distinguish the Spanish-speaking group in any part of the United States are much less ethnic than they are socio-economic.... [T]here is no real ethnic sameness among the various subdivisions of the same Spanish-speaking group.”⁵⁶ For Sanchez, “It takes a veritable shotgun wedding to make Puerto Ricans, Spanish–Mexicans, and Filipinos appear to be culturally homogenous.”⁵⁷ Sanchez, in other words, belonged to the last of the Mexican American leaders who saw their origin in terms of nationality, not pan-ethnicity, and their future in joining the American mainstream. “They argued that material improvements in jobs, housing and schools would not only allow them to live better but would reveal their fundamental similarity with other Americans.”⁵⁸

Samora saw things differently. Recognized today as the founder of Hispanic ethnic studies, Samora’s main contribution was not in the creation of pan-ethnicity. He saw its advantages, to be sure. (“Hispanic is a good bureaucratic term,” he once said.)⁵⁹ Where he had his biggest impact, however, was in repudiating assimilation as an option. He went out of his way to separate Mexican Americans first, then Hispanics, from the mainstream and claim they were a racial group apart. He also convinced wealthy donors and federal officials to see these individuals as members of a subjugated group who could only succeed, and in the process alter the American social order, by acting as a racial collective. And his perches in the Census Advisory Committee in La Raza and in the academy gave him incredible sway.

Samora admitted that the harsh discrimination he had suffered informed his academic thinking. “I tried to be equal to, and as good as, the Anglos. I

wanted to make as much money, speak as well, and have all the goodies as the dominant society. But no matter what I did, I was always a ‘Mexican.’”⁶⁰ The nomenclature of “dominant” and “subservient” groups, so integral to critical theory and the Frankfurt School, suffuses his academic work. His dissertation itself is titled “Subordinate Leadership in a Bi-cultural Community, an Analysis.”⁶¹ Indeed, the very first “problem” that Samora identifies in his thesis is that, according to him, Mexican Americans (the “subordinate group”) cannot succeed if the goals are defined by American society (the “dominant system”). This makes for terse reading, but here is what it looks like in full flower: “In situations of dominant–subordinate relationships where the goals of the subordinate group are largely goals to be achieved within the dominant system, the in-group cohesion of the subordinate group will be considered inadequate by members of the subordinate system.”⁶² It should surprise nobody that one of the thinkers who influenced Samora was the German sociologist Kurt Lewin, who was associated with the Frankfurt School and is quoted in Samora’s thesis.

Samora did suffer discrimination. When he ran for student president in college, his own roommate voted against him, and told Samora he could not bring himself to vote for a Mexican.⁶³ His mentor, Professor Sanchez, too, was no stranger to harsh treatment. Because of his own crusade against racism, Sanchez and his wife feared an attack against them or the kidnapping of their children. The fears were real enough for police to watch their home, and Sanchez himself carried a gun. “During a desegregation case, Sanchez recalled, a pipe bomb appeared in their yard.”⁶⁴ Yet, Sanchez clearly abhorred the idea of lumping all the different national origins into a corporate identity and thought assimilation was the answer.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Quoted in Samora, “Los Tres Grandes,” p. 171.

60. Samora, “Los Tres Grandes,” p. 163.

61. Julian Samora, *Minority Leadership in Bi-Cultural Communities*, PhD thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1953.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

63. Samora, “Los Tres Grandes,” p. 144.

64. Ronnie Dugger, “Integration Hero and Education Legend George I. Sanchez Gets a New Biography,” *Texas Observer*, 2015, <https://www.texasobserver.org/george-i-sanchez-biography/> (accessed on July 13, 2018).

The Birth of Identity Politics

It was Samora who convinced the Ford Foundation to provide the seed money to found La Raza. In his book *La Raza: Forgotten Americans*, he argued that Mexicans comprised a different race, the product of the fusion between the Spanish and Indians, and thus should no longer be counted as white by the government, as they had been since the end of the Mexican War in 1848, but merited consideration as a minority. Census data on Mexican Americans should therefore not depend, as it did in some states until then, on questions on last names, country of birth, or language spoken at home, but on whether the respondent identified as a member of a Mexican “race” (*raza*).

This was of course stretching the truth. While many Mexicans are indeed the product of such a fusion, many are not. (One need only watch some Mexican TV from a hotel in Mexico City or see portraits of Mexican presidents to recognize that many individuals are mostly or entirely of European origin.) Much more importantly, the shift away from questions on surnames, birth, or home language signified a momentous jump not only because it racialized an entire pan-ethnicity comprised of many different people, but because it also marked the leap from objective measurements of the population to measurements based on self-identity. Anyone searching for the mouth of the Nile of Identity Politics would exclaim “Eureka!” upon arrival at this juncture. Those who insisted then, as the members of the NAC do today, that all they seek is a full counting of the population would have to reckon with this record, because, as Mora explains, “It is one thing to classify the population and another to count it.”⁶⁵ What the advisory committees have sought from 1974 to the present is the former; the Census was already doing a good job with the former. Mora quotes Conrad Taeuber, associate director of the 1970 Census, arguing with MALDEF’s attorney Gnaizda during Taeuber’s deposition in the MALDEF suit:

I’m not sure what you mean by Mexican-Americans. Let me tell you what we have. We will have in the [Census] report...the number of persons born in Mexico, who are living in the U.S. and Cal-

ifornia. We will have the number of persons born in the U.S. who have a parent born in Mexico. We will have this figure, the Spanish-language population, and we will have the number of persons who reported Mexican in response to the question of origin. That’s who we have.⁶⁶

As we know, Taeuber’s thinking lost. La Raza’s first president Raul Yzaguirre wrote that federal agencies had to stop classifying Hispanics under objective national origin groups because “there is a difference between a minority group and a national origin group—a difference recognized in terms of national economic and social policies, as well as a lengthy broad-ranging legal history relative to civil and minority rights.”⁶⁷ In other words, race-based justice and special benefits appertain to minority groups, but not to Americans of a given national origin (that is, the entire population).

Yzaguirre, Samora, La Raza, and MALDEF et al. won, all with the financial support of the Ford Foundation. Once the categories were created, all that was left was to convince its unsuspecting would-be individual members that they had to tick the box, identify with the new category, and perhaps in due time learn to love it so much that they would give it primary allegiance. Consciousness raising was employed to induce the subjects in question to accept the status of a disadvantaged minority and victim in need of government assistance. Relentless refinement of the categorization process by the advisory committees for the past 40 years, and the repositioning of the Census questions in ways that guided residents toward the desired response, took care of the rest. Soon, as Mora has so artfully explained, new generations begin to think that the artificial category is organic and had been around forever.

The latest modification was to come in the (later aborted) revision proposed in 2016 by the Obama Administration—combining the racial and ethnic questions into one to maximize the number of people ticking “Hispanic” and identifying themselves that way for life, and beyond that, for generations to come. It was the logical conclusion of a decades-long effort to trap millions into box ticking. The Trump Administration put a stop to this particular revision.

65. Mora, *Making Hispanics*, p. 83.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Recommendations

This formation of abstract identities that supersede concrete communities based on family, religion, civic association, neighborhood, or nation has transformed America in ways that go even beyond what has already been covered here. When only experience as a group member allows an American to speak about the group; when looking for people who “look like you” trumps seeking out people who share your political values, political compromise becomes impossible. Much of the impetus for what happened came as a result of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The civil rights movement was supposed to rid the country of unequal treatment; it metamorphosed into its opposite, however, when the focus shifted from ending unequal treatment to a crusade for statistical diversity in the name of compensation for past injustice. As sociologist Nathan Glazer recognized in 2002,

[O]n the noble side of the equation, the Census questions about race are in part the result of major civil rights legislation. But that legislation was interpreted by the courts and by administrative agencies, both under the pressure of ethnic groups. As we follow this process further and further into the details that have shaped the Census, the element of nobility declines.⁶⁸

There is very little nobility left in the activities of the NAC. Its pernicious actions can be seen not as a bug of the system but as a purposeful feature. They were created to divide Americans into arbitrary identity groups, and to create a new American

social order where the “oppressor” and “subordinate” groups of the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory replace the Founders’ model of a country united by shared values and the belief that all men are created equal.

The Trump Administration has already disbanded several advisory bodies and let others atrophy. In August 2017, it declined to renew the charter of the Advisory Committee for the Sustained National Climate Assessment, as well as another climate-change-related advisory board within the Department of Interior.⁶⁹ Four months later, the Administration likewise terminated the appointments of members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS, as well as two other White House advisory committees.⁷⁰ In October 2017, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that membership on its Board of Scientific Counselors, Scientific Advisory Board, and Clean Air Science Advisory Committee was open only to those not receiving funding from the EPA. In June 2018, the EPA’s Science Advisory Board shut down three advisory committees, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau disbanded three more.⁷¹ In addition, 10 of 12 members of the National Park System Advisory Board resigned in January 2018 after complaining that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke had ignored their complaints.⁷²

The Administration should follow suit with the NAC. Special identity pressure organizations should not enjoy special access and disproportionate influence via the NAC. Instead, they can present their positions like everyone else. Secretary Ross should terminate the NAC’s authority and disband it.

68. Nathan Glazer, “Do We Need the Census Race Question?” *The Public Interest*, Fall 2002, <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/storage/app/uploads/public/58e/1a4/ff9/58e1a4ff90a0e947280609.pdf> (accessed July 27, 2018).

69. Juliet Eilperin, “The Trump Administration Just Disbanded a Federal Advisory Committee on Climate Change,” *The Washington Post*, August 20, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/08/20/the-trump-administration-just-disbanded-a-federal-advisory-committee-on-climate-change/?utm_term=.cb7bf356aa6 (accessed July 11, 2018), and Michael Dolan and Brittney Patterson, “Climate Advisory Group Died Quietly,” *E&E News*, August 17, 2017, <https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060058869> (accessed July 31, 2018).

70. “Trump Administration Terminates Obama-Era HIV/AIDS Council Members,” CBS News, December 29, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-terminates-appointments-of-remaining-hiv-aids-council-members/> (accessed July 11, 2018), and Jean McGregor and Damian Paletta, “Trump’s Business Advisory Councils Disband as CEOs Abandon President over Charlottesville Views,” *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2017/08/16/after-wave-of-ceo-departures-trump-ends-business-and-manufacturing-councils/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.28733cfc0772 (accessed July 31, 2018).

71. Brian Kahn, “The EPA Just Killed Three Expert Advisory Committees,” *Earther*, June 22, 2018, <https://earther.com/the-epa-just-killed-three-more-expert-advisory-committee-1827050248> (accessed July 11, 2018), and Stacey Cowley, “Mick Mulvaney, Consumer Bureau’s Acting Chief, Purges Its Advisory Boards,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2018 (accessed July 31, 2018).

72. Sam Schipani, “Scientists Quit National Park System Board Amid Official Indifference,” *Sierra*, January 20, 2018, <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/scientists-quit-national-park-system-board-amid-official-indifference> (accessed July 12, 2018).

The NAC charter and the Federal Advisory Committee Act give the Secretary of Commerce the authority to terminate the committee. According to the FACA, “Determinations of action to be taken and policy to be expressed with respect to matters upon which an advisory committee reports or makes recommendations shall be made solely by the President or an officer of the Federal Government.” Since the Secretary of Commerce established the NAC in 2012, under the FACA, the Secretary is authorized to terminate the NAC.

From the start, the REACs were taken over not just by the left, but by the most ideological part of it. Their practices were continued under President

Obama’s re-chartered NAC. Other “stakeholder” organizations and individuals currently outside the NAC, such as La Raza (now under the name of Unido-SUS), also exert undue influence. Together, they have created a “multicultural republic” that runs contrary to the Founder’s design. To start undoing the damage, the NAC must be terminated now.

—*Mike Gonzalez is Senior Fellow in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy, of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, at The Heritage Foundation. He thanks Joseph Natali for his invaluable research help in the completion of this Backgrounder.*