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New publication explores challenges of a rapidly emerging, multiracial population for the future of Civil Rights

As the nation marks the civil rights milestone of the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington, a new research paper published by the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles explores the rapid growth of a multiracial population in the United States, highlighting new challenges and possibilities for the future of the civil rights movement.

The paper, "[Discrimination in the 21st Century: How Civil Rights Policies Can Best Embrace the Growing Mixed-Race Population](#)," summarizes the growth of the modern mixed-race population in the United States and highlights the complications the changing population presents for the future of civil rights law and policy.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, multiracials experienced a 276% growth in population between 2010 and 2020, totaling 33.8 million, or 10.2% of the total U.S. population. (This is up from 9 million [2.9% of population] in 2010).

In analyzing this rapidly emerging population, the researchers find that distinctive among today's multiracial individuals is an assertion of a mixed-race identity, which they claim embodies a different experience compared to those who report being a single race, such as "white" or "Black." The report's authors contend this emphasis on personal identity presents a new dimension that must be considered in the development of new civil rights policy.

Among other key findings of the research paper:

- Mixed-race individuals assert a distinctive identity, but evidence shows that their experiences of racial discrimination often mirror those of single-race minorities (i.e., those who are only "Black" or "Asian")
- Mixed-race individuals often change their asserted racial identity and may downplay their mixed-race identity in response to their social or political surroundings

- Mixed-race individuals do not share the same experiences of racial discrimination. There is significant variation depending on the person's racial combination. For example, those who identify as Black-white have different experiences from those who are Asian-white or Latino-white.

"Mixed-race individuals' experiences with racial discrimination vary greatly and are tightly linked to the specific combination of their racial ancestry," says co-author Gregory Leslie. "Policymakers should be wary of policies promoting a pan-racial category or a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that may conceal discriminatory intent or inadvertently misconstrue a diverse, developing group."

Part of a new series of research papers published by the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles that illuminate future challenges confronting civil rights in our society, ["Discrimination in the 21st Century: How Civil Rights Policies Can Best Embrace the Growing Mixed-Race Population,"](#) aims to make the complexities and complications that mixed-race identities create for American race relations more visible, as policymakers, advocates and other practitioners seek to understand and address the civil rights challenges of a rapidly changing nation.

"Looking toward the future, we need to integrate and address the needs of a rapidly growing multiracial population into a body of civil rights law and policy that was originally based primarily on Black-white relationships, in a society with caste-like separation between those two groups," said Professor Gary Orfield, co-director of the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles. "This paper does not give specific policy solutions but provides essential data and analysis, prerequisites for creating effective policies for multiracials, rather than further splintering a fragmented society."

Orfield underscores that this study and others forthcoming show that -- even among multiracials -- those who are multiracial Black face distinct challenges in comparison with other multiracial identities. "Civil rights policy in our multiracial society must not lose consciousness of the unique dimensions of anti-Black attitudes and discrimination," he concludes.

[“Discrimination in the 21st Century: How Civil Rights Policies Can Best Embrace the Growing Mixed-Race Population,”](#) is researched and authored by Gregory Leslie and Natalie Masuoka.

Leslie is a political psychologist who graduated with an MS in statistics and Ph.D. in political science from UCLA in 2022 and is currently an assistant professor of political science at The Ohio State University. Masuoka is an associate professor of political science and Asian American studies at UCLA and the author of the book, *Multiracial Identity and Racial Politics in the United States*.

This paper is the third in a [series](#) of research papers on the nation, commissioned and published by the UCLA Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, exploring [a civil rights agenda](#) for the next quarter century. The full paper is available online [here](#).

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