

their fields, and could also send a surplus of young people to the city or, more rarely, frontier lands. Children were needed. They helped perform simple chores from their earliest years, and later they took care of the elderly and sick. But when families migrated to the cities, there was no work for children, and somebody needed to watch them. Over the centuries, cities have been “demographic sinkholes,” McNeill says. In premodern times, urban immigrants found marginal jobs, and many soon died of infectious diseases, leaving few or no heirs. But even as sanitation and living conditions improved, the “sinkhole” description remained apt. Urban life makes child rearing costly and difficult, and the availability of birth control makes it a matter of choice.

Since 1920, McNeill writes, “most Americans of European descent have been urbanized, and, like everyone else in that circumstance, they are not reproducing themselves.” The great cities of Europe, Canada, Russia, Japan, and China, as well as urban pockets in Latin America and Africa, are similarly affected. Where urban popula-

The settlement of more than half of the world's population in cities threatens to increase disorder.

tion growth has flagged, cities have sustained themselves by attracting immigrants, many from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

The settlement of more than half of humankind in cities not only results in a likely population decline, it also threatens to increase world disorder. In European cities and elsewhere, many recent immigrants have failed to be integrated into their new homes. They live in separate neighborhoods, poor and second class, and find themselves unable to grasp even the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. The tensions of cheek-by-jowl inequality provide fertile ground for extremism, both religious and secular. Although man is infinitely adaptable, McNeill writes, the big sociological question is whether man will “learn in time to make cities truly thrive.”

## SOCIETY

## Beyond the Black Caucus

**THE SOURCE:** “The New Black Realism” by Kay S. Hymowitz, in *City Journal*, Winter 2007.

EARLIER THIS YEAR, OPINION columnists were arguing over whether Barack Obama was “black enough” to win the African-American vote in the Democratic primaries for president. Had his white mother, his failure to grow up in the inner city, and his shortage of civil rights credentials disqualified him? Was his speech at the 2004 Democratic convention—“There’s not a black America and white America. . . . There’s the United States of America”—a naive effort to curry favor with whites? Then came the polls: Black respondents were moving out of the Hillary Clinton column and into the Obama camp in significant numbers. While it’s far too early to venture that Obama might transcend race in his campaign, it is timely to note that black

## EXCERPT

## The End of the Future

*We stopped talking about the Future around the time that, with its microchips and its 24-hour news cycles, it arrived. Some days when you pick up the newspaper it seems to have been cowritten by J. G. Ballard, Isaac Asimov, and Philip K. Dick. Human sexual reproduction without male genetic material, digital viruses, identity*

*theft, robot firefighters and minesweepers, weather control, pharmaceutical mood engineering, rapid species extinction, U.S. presidents controlled by little boxes mounted between their shoulder blades, air-conditioned empires in the Arabian desert, transnational corporatocracy, reality television—some days it feels as if the imagined future of the mid-20th century was a kind of checklist, one from which we have been too busy ticking off items to bother with extending it.*

—MICHAEL CHABON, author of *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, in *Details*, Jan. 2006

politics are undergoing radical change. “There’s a tidal shift away from the black grievance and identity politics of yesterday,” writes Kay S. Hymowitz, a contributing editor to *City Journal*. “Blacks are talking a more positive American language of self-empowerment and middle-class virtue and marking a significant turning point in America’s ongoing race story.”

Black Americans are cheering comedian Bill Cosby for his shape-up-and-stop-whining message. Pragmatist Cory Booker has become mayor of Newark—and is exploring charter schools. National Public Radio’s Juan Williams has published “*Enough: The Phony Leaders, Dead-End Movements, and Culture of Failure That Are Undermining Black America—and What We Can Do About It.*”

For more than a half-century, the narrative of race in America has come from a civil rights script. Good versus evil. Black

versus white. Bull Connor versus Martin Luther King Jr. But for a younger generation of blacks, the “I-Marched-With-Martin” school doesn’t cut it, Hymowitz says. This generation of well-educated, solidly middle-class blacks is still occasionally annoyed, even stung, by racism, but doesn’t see it as the cause of every domestic problem.

To be sure, black/white inequality remains a national blight. Black unemployment is twice that of whites. Forty-four percent of the prison population is black, and 70 percent of black babies are born to single mothers.

Nonetheless, the old presumption that oppression is at the root of every evil rings hollow to many within the new generation. In 1960, only 45 percent of blacks lived above the poverty line. Now, 75 percent do. About 40 percent of blacks have now fled the cities—just as whites did before them—and live in the suburbs.

Some 46 percent of black families

own their own homes. And black millionaires are no longer mostly entertainers or sports figures. Today, the top-grossing black-owned business in America is World Wide Technology, a Missouri-based information technology company whose clients include Dell, Boeing, and DaimlerChrysler.

The old lions of the civil rights movement still roar, and Charles Rangel and John Conyers, will have more powerful megaphones than ever as chairmen of the House Ways and Means and Judiciary committees. Jesse Jackson continues to command a following when he seizes on actor Michael Richard’s bizarre racist breakdown and demands to meet with entertainment executives. But a “surging, confident, and varied black middle class,” Hymowitz writes, is no longer content with outdated, self-limiting, race-based political leadership.

## RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

# The Other Christian South

**THE SOURCE:** “Believing in the Global South” by Philip Jenkins, in *First Things*, Dec. 2006.

WHEN JESUS PROMISED THAT his church would last until the end of time, he didn’t suggest that it might not move. The southward shift of the

Christianity’s center of gravity has been recognized for some time, but how long it has been predicted, and to what effect, is surprising.

St. Vincent de Paul, writing about 1640, in the midst of the Thirty Years’ War, said that the church of the future would be the church of South Amer-

ica, Africa, China, and Japan. Today, despite some foot-dragging in Japan and China, St. Vincent’s prediction is coming to pass, writes Philip Jenkins, a historian at Pennsylvania State University.

In 2005, the last year for which figures are available, Europe was still the leading Christian continent, with 531 million believers, followed by Latin America, with 511 million, Africa, with 389 million, Asia, with 344 million, and North America, with 226 million. By 2025, a date less distant than the span of Pope John Paul II’s reign, the largest groups of the