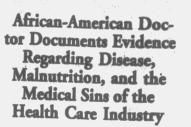
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larriage gaining more acceptance

By Jim Lobe WASHINGTON, DC (IPS) - The number of inter-racial marriages in the United States increased more than ten-fold between 1970 and 2000, ac-



Rhonda and Tom Butler of Gastonia are among the rising number of inter-racial couples in the US. Not less than 40 years ago, this type of marriage would have been against the law in many states, including North Carolina. Photo/curtis wilson

cording to a new report which concludes that U.S. attitudes towards inter-racial dating and marriage have undergone a "sea change" over the past

Owing in part to increased im-migration and higher education levels, the percentage of inter-racial couples grew from under 1 percent in 2000 to more than 5 percent of the estimated 57 million couples recorded in the 2000 Census, according to the report by the Washington-based Population Reference Bureau (PRB).

That translated into an increase from roughly 300,000 inter-racial couples in 1970 to 1.5 million in 1990 to more than 3 million in 2000, according to the 36-page report, "New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Inter-marriage."

That trend, which shows no sign of slackening, suggests that the United States is shifting increasingly from a "salad bowl" - where racial groups maintain their separate identities and resist marrying outside their groups -to an updated "melting pot," where they are far more open to relations, including marriage, with people of a difference race.

And inter-racial marriage means more bi- or even multi-racial children. Of the 281 million people enumerated in the 2000 Census, more than 2.4 percent, or 7 million people, reported "multiple race," a figure that PRB suggested probably understates the actual number.

The 2000 Census was the first in

which the "multiple race" category was listed as an option for respondents to check, along with 15 other categories, including 11 Asian and Pacific subgroups.

The "melting pot" metaphor became even more popular years ago when advertising executives on Madison Avenue remade the image of "Betty Crocker," a brand name of General Mills, Inc., according to Rochelle Stanfield, writing in The National Journal.

"Betty's portrait is now in its eighth incarnation since the first composite painting debuted in 1936 with pale skin and blue eyes," she wrote in 2000. "Her new look is brown-eyed and dark-haired. She has a duskier complexion than her seven predecessors, with features representing an amalgam of white, Hispanic, India, African and Asian ancestry. In fact, a computer created Betty in the mid-1990s "by blending photos of 75 diverse women."

For purposes of the new PRB study, inter-marriage is defined as inter-racial - that is, between people from different racial groups, including white (75 percent of the total population), black (12 percent), Asian and Pacific Islander (4 percent), American Indian (1 percent), "some other race" (almost all Hispanics) (6 percent), or multiple race (2 percent) - or inter-Hispanic - which applied to in-dividuals of Hispanic origin who married a non-Hispanic partner.

Those who identified themselves as Hispanics, who could also choose any race, constituted a total of 13 percent of the total. (Not all Hispanics chose the some other race [SOR] cat-

Aside from the more than fivefold increase in the percentage of inter-racial married couples, key findings of the report included:

The typical inter-racial couple is a White person with a non-white spouse, while inter-marriage between two people from minority racial groups is relatively infrequent.
Whites and Blacks have the low-

est inter-marriage rates, while American Indians, Hawaiians, and multiplerace people have the highest. Asians

and SOR people fall in-between.
Black men are more likely to intermarry than Black women, while Asian women are more likely to intermarry than Asian men. Men and women from other racial groups, on the other hand, are equally likely to

About one-fourth of Hispanic couples are inter-Hispanic, a rate that has been fairly stable since 1980.
Younger and better-educated

people in the U.S. are more likely to intermarry than older and less-educated citizens. U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics

and foreign-born whites and blacks are more likely to intermarry than foreign-born Asians and Hispanics and U.S. born whites and blacks. Between 1970 and 2000, the

number of children living in inter-racial families increased nearly fourfold from 900,000 to 3 million, while the number in inter-Hispanic families increased nearly three-fold, from

800,000 to 2 million.

The study noted that changes in racial attitudes over the last 30 years clearly played a major role in the mushrooming of inter-racial marriages, which were illegal in most states at the end of the 19th century. As recently as 1945, the legislature of California which, next to Hawaii, has become the country's most multi-racial state, passed a law that banned marriage between whites and Negroes, mulattos, Mongolians (which included

Chinese and Japanese), and Malays. After World War II, however, the law began to change as U.S. service-men married Japanese women, and as the civil rights movement began challenging anti-miscegenation laws in the courts. In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all such laws were unconstitutional, although it took Alabama until 2000 to repeal its ban.

According to a recent Gallup study, the percentage of whites who favored laws against marriages between blacks and whites has declined from 35 percent in the 1970s to 10 percent in the early 2000s.

A late-2003 Gallup survey found that 86 percent of blacks, 79 percent of Hispanics, and 66 percent of whites said they would accept their child or grandchild marrying someone of a different race. As recently as 1990, two out of every three whites said they would oppose any relative marrying a black person.

Yet another 2003 poll found that 77 percent of respondents had no objection to blacks and whites dating each other.

Inter-marriage rates, according to the report tend to increase with education for most groups. Nine per-

cent of blacks who have graduated from college, for example, intermarry, compared to 5 percent who have less than a high-school education. Similarly, inter-racial couples

are more likely to live in populous areas where the population is racially diverse, in part because opportunities for people to meet at work or school are greater.

The western U.S., with its population centers and high racial diversity, had twice the proportion of in-ter-racial couples (10 percent) as other major regions (5 percent), according to the report. Hawaii, Alaska, California, Nevada, and Oklahoma led the rest of the states.



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