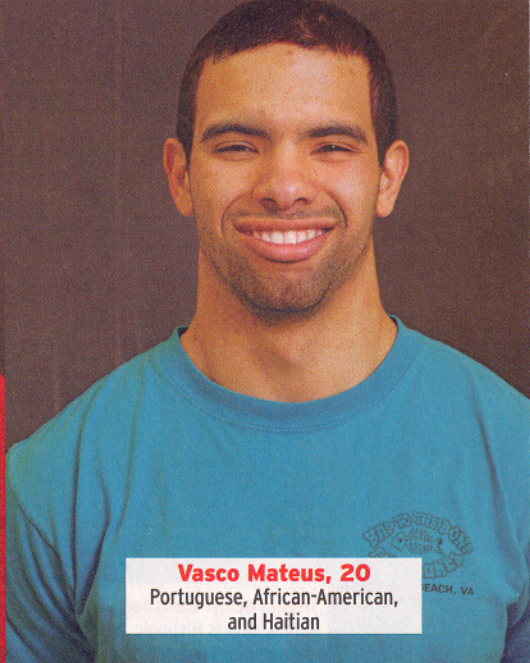




Sabrina Garcia, 19
Palestinian and El Salvadoran



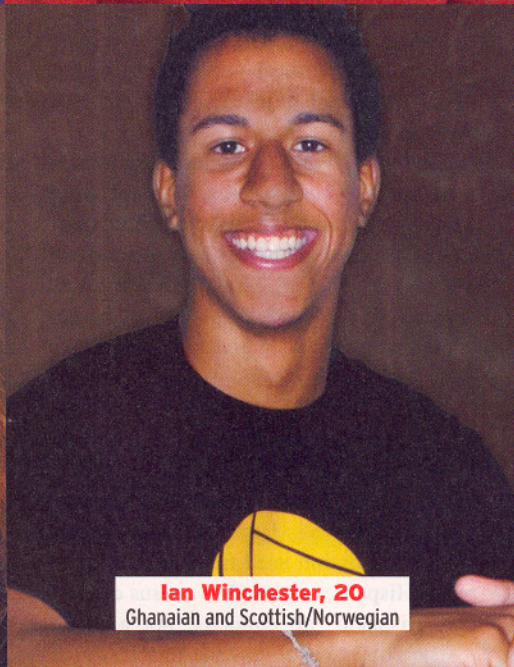
Lisandra Achaibar, 19
Guyanese and Dominican



Vasco Mateus, 20
Portuguese, African-American,
and Haitian



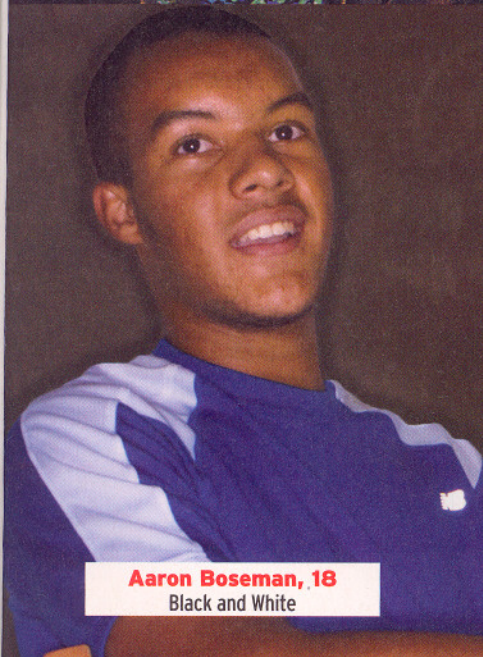
Shannon Palmer, 19
Japanese and Irish



Ian Winchester, 20
Chanaian and Scottish/Norwegian



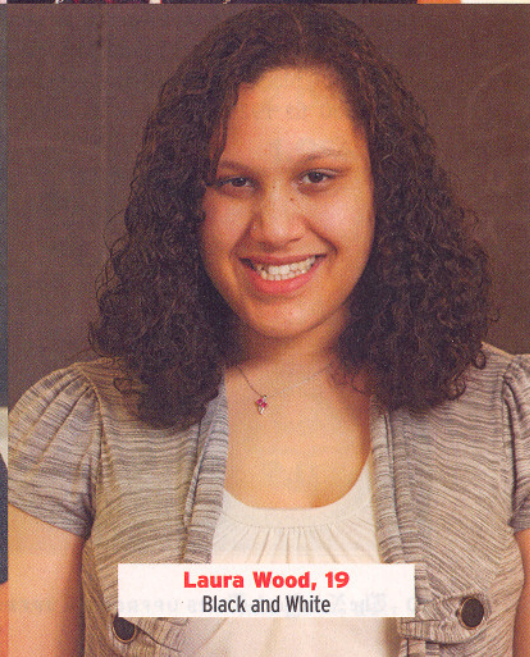
Vicky Key, 22
Greek and Black



Aaron Boseman, 18
Black and White



Michelle López-Mullins, 20
Chinese, Peruvian,
American Indian, and White



Laura Wood, 19
Black and White



Interracial couple: Julicia Coleman, who is black and Indian, and David Banda, who is Hispanic, are dating and considering having children someday.

Who's Marrying Who

Percentage of men and women in each group married to someone of another race or ethnicity

	MEN	WOMEN
White	5%	4%
Black	13%	6%
Hispanic	36%	37%
Asian	10%	23%
American Indian	55%	57%

SOURCE: THE NEW YORK TIMES; NUMBERS HAVE BEEN ROUNDED

of multiracialism as a panacea for the nation's age-old divisions.

"The mixed-race identity is not a transcendence of race; it's a new tribe," he says.

Americans mostly think of themselves in singular racial terms. Consider President Barack Obama's answer to the race question on the 2010 Census: Although his mother was white and his father was black, the President checked only one box, black, even though he could have marked both races.

'One-Drop Rule'

Of course, some portion of the country's population has been mixed-race since the first white settlers had children with Native Americans. What has changed is how mixed-race Americans are defined and counted.

A century ago, the nation saw itself in a range of hues: The 1890 Census included categories for racial mixtures such as quadroon (one-fourth black) and octoroon (one-eighth black). And all the censuses from 1850 to 1920, with one exception,

included a mulatto category, which was for people who had any perceptible trace of African blood.

But by the 1930 Census, terms for mixed-race people had disappeared, replaced by the so-called one-drop rule, an antebellum (pre-Civil War) convention that held that anyone with even a bit of African ancestry was black, period. (Similarly, people who were white and Indian were generally counted as American Indian.)

By the 1970s, Americans were expected to designate themselves as members of one officially recognized racial group: black, white, American Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Korean, or "other," an option used frequently by people of Hispanic origin. (The census considers "Hispanic" an ethnicity, not a race.)

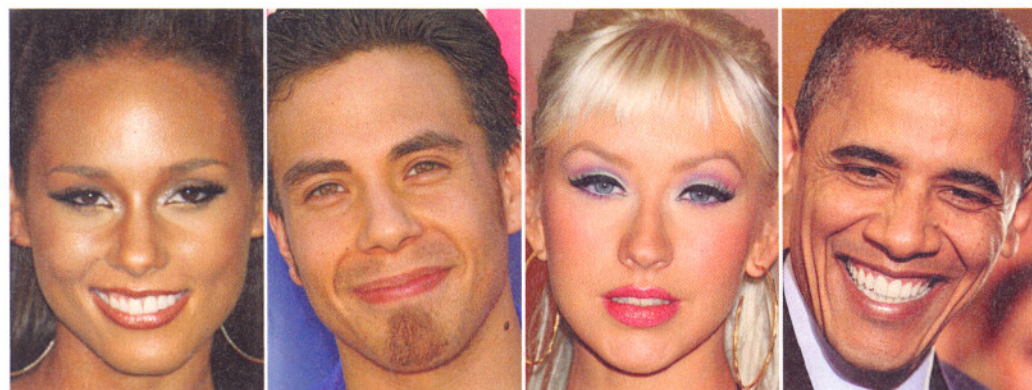
The 2000 Census was the first in which Americans were allowed to choose more than one race. The multiracial option came about after years of complaints, mostly by the white mothers of biracial children who

objected to their children being allowed to check only one race. In 2000, 7 million people—about 2.4 percent of the population—reported being more than one race.

According to estimates from the Census Bureau, the mixed-race population has grown by roughly 35 percent since 2000. And many researchers think the census and other surveys undercount the mixed-race population. The 2010 mixed-race statistics are being released a few states at a time over the next few months.

"There could be some big surprises," says Jeffrey Passel at the Pew Hispanic Center, meaning that the number of mixed-race Americans could be substantially higher than the estimates. "There's not only less stigma to being in these groups, there's even positive cachet."

The faces of mixed-race America are not just visible on college campuses; they're in politics, business, and sports. And the ethnically ambiguous are especially ubiquitous in movies, television shows, and advertising.



Famous Multiracial Faces

(left to right): Alicia Keys, Apolo Anton Ohno, Christina Aguilera, and President Obama

“Advertisers want to make sure they’re reaching everybody,” says Robert Thompson, a professor of media at Syracuse University. “If anybody wants to be inclusive, featuring multiracial people is one way to appear diverse in a very abbreviated way.”

Not ‘Ozzie and Harriet’

And since so much advertising is aimed at young people, *New York Times* advertising columnist Stuart Elliott says, featuring multiracial Americans “is a way to say, ‘See, we get it: It’s not *Ozzie and Harriet* anymore; it’s a different America.’”

There are news, social networking, and dating Web sites focusing on the mixed-race audience. There are mixed-race film festivals, conferences, and student groups like the one at the University of Maryland, which offer peer support and activism.

“The No. 1 reason why we exist is to give people who feel like they don’t want to choose a side, that don’t want to label

themselves based on other people’s interpretations of who they are, to give them a place, that safe space,” says López-Mullins.

Not all of the 100 or so members of the Multiracial and Biracial Student Association at the University of Maryland are multiracial; the group welcomes anyone.

At a meeting in the fall, David Banda, who is Hispanic, and Julicia Coleman, who is black and Indian, came just to unwind among supportive listeners. They discussed the frustrations of being an interracial couple, even today, especially back in their hometown, Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

“When we go back home, let’s say for a weekend or to the mall, they see us walking and I get this look, you know, sort of giving me the idea: ‘Why are you with her? You’re not black, so she should be with a black person,’” says Banda, 20. “Even some of my friends tell me, ‘Why don’t you date a Hispanic girl?’”

Banda and Coleman are thinking about

having children someday. “One of the main reasons I joined is to see the struggles mixed people go through,” Banda says, “so we can be prepared when that time comes.”

Kilts and Dashikis

Despite the growth of the mixed-race population, there are challenges.

Ian Winchester, a junior who is part Ghanaian, part Scottish-Norwegian, says he has always felt both lucky and torn about being biracial. His Scottish grandfather was keen on dressing him in kilts as a boy. The other side of the family would put him in a dashiki, a brightly colored shirt common in West Africa.

“I do feel empowered being biracial,” he says. “The ability to question your identity—identity in general—is really a gift.”

But, Winchester continues, “I don’t even like to identify myself as a race anymore. My family has been pulling me in two directions about what I am. I just want to be a person.” ●

Top 10 Multiracial States

States with the most people identifying themselves as “two or more races”

Percentage of State Population

California	1,406,584	3.8%
Texas	531,152	2.1%
New York	391,649	2.0%
Florida	357,839	1.9%
Hawaii	306,306	23.6%
Washington	283,433	4.3%
Oklahoma	263,307	7.1%
Illinois	231,440	1.8%
Ohio	204,522	1.8%
Michigan	197,515	2.0%

SOURCE: JEFFREY PASSEL, PEW HISPANIC CENTER (2009 NUMBERS).