

# **The 10 Lenses**

Your guide to living & working in a multicultural world

By Marks A. Williams

# Assimilationist

**Assimilationist:** Incorporate, Absorb, Fit in, Standardize

**Summary Definition:**

Assimilationist wants individuals to submerge their individual and cultural identities in favor of nationalistic and patriotic ideals. They believe that our primary allegiance should be to the welfare and unity of our nation.

**Motto:**

“When in Rome, do as the Romans.”

**Quote:**

“It is one thing to offer guests a welcome; quite another to have them take over one's house, lock, stock, and barrel. This is especially true when the guests have entirely different ideas about housekeeping. The thought in back of the original invitation was that the new races would become Americanized- not that America would be made over in the image of the new race.” Carleton Putnam, *Race and Reason: A Yankee View* (Washington D.C Public Affairs Press, 1961), 104.

**Belief System:**

Immigrants and other subcultures should adopt the lifestyles, values, customs and language of the dominant/majority culture.

# Colorblind

**Blind:** Sightless, Unseeing, Inattentive to color.

**Summary Definition:** The Colorblind see people as individuals and ignore race, color, ethnicity, and other external cultural factors. They want to look at a person's individual qualities and character. They believe that ignoring race and color will have an equalizing effect.

**Motto:** “When I see you, I see a person, not your color”

**Quote:** “To ignore race and treat as an individual is the spring of justice and the river of hope” Leigh Van Valen, “On Discussing Human Races.” *The evolution of Racism.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) prologue.

**Belief System:** All men and women are created equal.

# Culturalcentrist:

**Centric:** Core, Heart, Focal, Central

**Summary Definition:** Culturalcentrist seek to improve the welfare of their cultural group by accentuation their history and identity. They argue that institutions that are detached from the mainstream are an important ingredient to the success of their culture because they encourage cultural pride and create a support network and a safe environment where tolerance and prejudice are not daily issued.

**Motto:** “My culture is central to my personal and public identity”

Quote: “Many people of color are isolated or have no sense of identity in the mainstream, for example, at work, at school, or in social settings. They need their ethnic community to develop a sense of self. Their communities may provide a better chance to learn about and develop a respect for their own race and culture...for many the ethnic community makes a huge positive difference. At the very least, the availability of the option is vital.” *Bill Ong Hing, To Be An American: Cultural Pluralism and the Rhetoric of Assimilation. (New York University Press, 1997), 173/*

**Belief System:** Racial minorities and ethnic groups should detach from the dominant culture to survive, rebuild, and/ or maintain their cultural norms, customs, and traditions.

# Elitist

**Elite:** Privileged, Select Few, Superior, Predetermined

**Summary Definition:** Elitist believe in the superiority of the upper class and embrace the importance of family roots, wealth, and social status. They believe it is their destiny to perpetuate their advantages through inheritance or social ties.

**Motto:** “Membership has its privileges”

**Quote:** “Elitism – meaning a disproportionate role in government and society by small groups – is inevitable. The question for any society is not wheatear elites shall rule, but which elites shall rule. The problem for any democracy is to achieve consent to rule by suitable elites” *George Will, The Leveling Wind: Politics, the Culture and Other News. ( New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 131*

**Belief System:** Lineage and innate qualities and abilities entitle some members of the culture to be advantage within society.

## **Integrationist:**

**Integrate:** Mix, Incorporate, Combine

**Summary Definition:** Integrationists support breaking down all barriers between racial groups by merging people of different cultures together in communities and in the workplace. They believe that we can replace our ignorance of each other's culture with a greater understanding and knowledge if we live and work together. Integrationists want our nation's laws to reinforce this idea.

**Motto:** "Ebony and ivory live together on my piano keys ...shouldn't we?"  
*"Ebony and Ivory," lyrics by Paul McCartney. MPL Communications, 1982.*

**Quote:** "Men often hate each other because they fear each other; they fear each other because they do not know each other; they do not know each other because they cannot communicate; they cannot communicate because they are separated."

*Martin Luther King Jr., "Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story.", (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959, 33.*

**Belief System:** We can achieve greater racial and cultural equality, understanding, and harmony through, living and socializing side by side.

## **Meritocratist**

**Merit:** Deserve, Worthy of, Earned, Accomplished

**Summary Definition:** Meritocratists believe in the individualist credo of America: If you have the abilities and work hard enough, you can compete with anyone to make your dreams come true. Meritocratists disapprove of programs that use race, culture, ethnicity, class, or any cultural attributes as criteria for opportunity, believing instead in personal merit.

**Motto:** "Cream rises to the top"

**Quote:** "I want it repeated because I hope it will give inspiration to young African Americans coming along, but beyond that, all young Americans coming along, that no matter where you began in this society, with hard work and with dedication and with the opportunities that are presented by this society, there are no limitations upon you."  
*Colin Powell, Secretary of State Acceptance Speech, January 2001*

**Belief System:** Opportunity should be based only on an individual's initiative, competence, and accomplishments.

# Multiculturalist

**Multi:** Many, Varied, Mixed, Choices

**Summary Definition:** Multiculturalists celebrate the diversity of cultures in the United States and the contributions they make to our national character and history. The Multiculturalist wants to retain the customs, languages, and ideas of people originating in other cultures. The Multiculturalist believes these retained characteristics combine to create an appealing and colorful mixed salad, a metaphor often used to describe this perspective.

**Motto:** “The more cultural diversity, the better”

**Quote:** ....a real and vital multiculturalism requires a mutual commitment to the constant search for common ground in the midst of our diversity....For without genuine and substantive respect for diversity, there can be only continuing oppression."

*Maulana Karenga, "Black and Latino Relations: Context, Challenge, and Possibilities," Multi-America: Essays on Cultural Wars and Culture, Peace, ed. Ishmael Reed. (New York: Viking, 1997), 196-197.*

**Belief system:** We are enriched by the diversity of races and cultures in our country. Our future is based on allowing each of our cultures to contribute to the mosaic.

# Seclusionist

**Seclusion:** Isolate, Disconnect, Protect, Fragment, Partition

**Summary Definition:** Seclusionists feel strongly that they should protect themselves from racial, cultural, and/or ethnic groups that diminish the character and quality of their group's experiences within the society. They believe that the only viable solution to our societal challenges related to race and culture is for different groups to live and work apart.

**Motto:** “Birds of a feather flock together”

**Quote:** “... we're a nation of professional, religious, ethnic and racial tribes-the tribes of America-who maintain a fragile truce, easily and often broken ..We were never able to conquer our atavistic hatreds, to accept our widely diverse past, to transcend them, to live together as a single people." *Paul Cowen, The Tribes of America. (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 15.*

**Belief System:** It is best for our race to remain separate from other racial groups to preserve our position and control.

# Transcendent

**Transcend:** Rise, Above, Sacred, Inspire

**Summary Definition:** The Transcendent Lens focuses on the human spirit, our universal connection, and our shared humanity. The Transcendent elevates our belief in each soul in relation to the divine and to one another. Race, ethnicity, and nationality are a part of God/the Universe's plan and contribute to, the richness of humanity.

**Motto:** “There’s s really only one race- the human race”

**Quote:** “Who can separate his faith from his actions, or his belief from his occupations? Who can spread his hours before him, saying, “This for God and this for myself: This is my soul, and this other for my body?”

*Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet ( New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951),77*

**Belief System:** Our common divine origin transcends racial, national, ethnic or cultural identity.

# Victim/ Caretaker

**Victim:** Injured, Persecuted, Abused, Exploited **Caretaker:** Custodian, Guardian

**Summary Definition:** People who see through the Victim/Caretaker Lens see their liberation as a crucial goal. Victim/Caretakers feel that they are still suffering from the generational impact of previous oppression. Therefore, they continue to deserve compensation from society and the dominant culture. Victims/Caretakers see oppression as not only historical, but also contemporary, still producing overwhelming odds for their group's survival and prosperity.

**Victim Quote:** "It is unnecessary in 20th-century America. to have individual Negroes demonstrate that they have been victims of racial discrimination; the racism of 'our society has been so pervasive that none, regardless of wealth or position, has managed to escape its .impact." *Justice Thurgood Marshall, in Kimberle Crenshaw, Critical Race Theory ( New York: The New Press, 1995), 263.*

**Caretaker Quote:** "Until the great mass of people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained."  
*Helen Keller, Treasury of Women's Quotations, ed. Carolyn Warner. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992)*

**Motto:** “We shall overcome”

**Belief System:** People of color and ethnic minorities are systematically victimized by the dominant culture and exploited in ways that have crippled their ability and opportunity to be successful.