



Writing About Race: Anthropology 101

By

Michael McCollum

I was born in 1946, and therefore, am forever imbedded in the leading edge of the Postwar Baby Boom. Having nearly reached retirement age, I am struck (as I suspect every generation is at this point in their lives) with how things have changed since I first became aware of my surroundings. The world I was born into was rising from the ashes of a terrible war; one great evil, the Nazis, had been eliminated, and another, the Communists, were on the rise. My parents, who lived through the Great Depression and then fought the bloodiest war in all of history, barely had a chance to catch their breath before they were plunged first into Cold War, and then into a hot war, in Korea.

The first I became aware of all of this was when my Grandmother made an offhand comment about “the war,” and I asked her what she meant. “I thought the war was over years ago,” I remember saying.

“Not that war,” she replied. “The one with the Red Chinese.”

That left me even more puzzled. Somehow, I had picked up the impression that Chinese people were yellow, not red.

Later, about the time I went off to school, I became aware that there were two other colors of people in the world — black and white. I vaguely remember that they used two different sets of drinking fountains. This arrangement bothered me not at all. After all, at age six, one takes the world as one finds it. If black people drink out of one set of fountains and white out of another, well how is that different from the fact that men and women use separate bathrooms? Except, of course, my mother insisted on taking me into the ladies' room with her, even though my friends told me it was not right. Exactly *why* it was not right was something of a mystery, but of the impropriety, I was quite certain.

One thing we baby boomers are of an age to remember clearly, however, is the Civil Rights Revolution. It began on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama (when I was 9). That day, a maid by the name of Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, and was jailed for the offense. In 1956, I remember the grainy television pictures of the integration of Little Rock High School, thinking that something exciting was going on as I watched armed troops escorting black students to school. It continued in 1960, with the lunch counter sit-in at Woolworth's in Greensboro, South Carolina. The pictures in *Life Magazine* showed a row of black students perched on those little round stools, refusing to budge until they were served.

At age 14, I felt that something was wrong, but could not quite put my finger on it. My attitudes about race had yet to gel. They did so in 1963, at age 17, when I fell in with unsavory companions. In the summer of that year, I attended a Summer Science

Institute at Arizona State University. There I met a group of fellow students who were strong advocates for civil rights. One these was Jesus Trevino (now a Hollywood director). Jess told me that racial discrimination was not only wrong, it was evil! I was naïve enough to believe him.

Come to think of it, I still do. Those who know me as a strong conservative are sometimes surprised to discover that, when it comes to civil rights, I am a 1963 liberal.

By the time I graduated from college in 1969, the civil rights struggle had been pushed off the front pages by the escalating Vietnam War, and I went to work as a rocket engineer at Pratt & Whitney's Florida Research and Development Center in West Palm Beach, Florida. Then, in March of 1972, I married a young lady from my hometown of Phoenix and decided the time had come to return home. My new bride and I drove from Florida to Arizona at the end of March, in an olive-green Ford Maverick with an orange U-Haul trailer in tow.

Once home, I obtained a subcontract engineering position at the AiResearch Manufacturing Company of Arizona, where I had worked as a student technician for two years while finishing school. After being laid off twice in a span of six months as a subcontractor, I finally obtained a permanent position as an engineer building valves for aircraft engines and air conditioners.

Valves? Yuck! Here I was, a seasoned rocket and jet engineer, and I was working on something as mundane as valves. What a letdown! On the other hand, my new bride had recently announced that we could expect a third mouth to feed early in 1973, so I was not very particular about what I did, so long as I had a job.

That was 37 years ago and I am still in the same department. Despite my misgivings, being a valve engineer has actually been very interesting. In 1978, we began to cast about for new markets to conquer. What we decided was that nuclear power plants use a lot of valves that, like their aerospace equivalents, require a high level of technology in their manufacture. So, showing the sense of timing for which we have become famous, shortly before the Three Mile Island accident, we decided to get into the nuclear valve business.

It was during this time that I first met Ike Ezekoye.

Dr. Ike Ezekoye, PhD, was principle engineer for safety systems at the Westinghouse Nuclear Power Division in Pittsburgh. Ike was born in Nigeria and speaks with a typical central-African accent. At the time I met him, he had been an American citizen for many years, was married to a beautiful African-American woman, and the two of them had a young son named Obi, who was about two years old at the time. Obi had the biggest brown eyes I think I have ever seen.

I first met Ike's wife (whose name I have unfortunately forgotten) and Obi in Denver, Colorado, where we were all attending a trade show for the American Nuclear Society. We arranged to have breakfast together one morning and I found myself sitting in the lobby of the Hyatt Hotel, waiting for the Ezekoyes to come downstairs. I remember that moment with special clarity. While lounging in the hotel's cavernous lobby, I passed the time thinking about the plot for my new science fiction novel, *Life Probe*. It was at that moment when I turned my attention to deciding who it was that I would assign the honor of being the book's villains.

One of the problems facing science fiction writers is the need to convince the readers that they are in the future. There are a number of techniques for doing this, but

one way is to imply that a great deal of history has taken place between now and the future moment when the story takes place. The best way to leave this impression, I decided, was to rearrange the geopolitical map of Planet Earth. Specifically, I would make the nations of the southern hemisphere as strong as the older nations of the north, and then I would assign one of them the role of antagonist/villain. Having made this decision, I had two obvious candidates for “villain hood.” I could use either the Africans or the South Americans.

I was still pondering the choice when Ike and his family joined me and we all trooped into the hotel restaurant for breakfast. We sat in a booth, with Ike and his wife on one side, and me on the other, bouncing Obi on my knee. We talked of inconsequential things, but while we talked, I mulled over my problem. Finally, with Obi looked upwards, his wide brown eyes regarding the strange white man with the red hair, I thought to myself, “You know, the Africans aren’t used for villains much. I think I will bestow the honor on them.”

Thus was born the Pan-African Federation.

For those who have not read *Life Probe*, the Pan-African Federation is a black-ruled nation that occupies what was, in 1979, Afrikaner South Africa. In those days, apartheid was in full force and there was no indication that it would ever end. This presented no problem to a science fiction writer. I overthrew apartheid with the tap of a computer key! In its place, I built a strong nation ruled by native Africans, a young nation that was brash and intent on expanding its influence.

I peopled my new nation with some of the best characters I have ever written. There was Donel Kenyatta Bailey, the heroine’s partner and fellow smuggler. There was Colonel Yorubi M’Buto, the Pan-Africans’ James Bond, and his boss, General M’ava Yaruanda. Finally, there was Angai Yahaya, the spy; named after Lieutenant Yahaya, my commanding officer in my second year of Air Force ROTC in college. [Like Ike Ezekoye, Yahaya was a Nigerian and we spent the whole semester mispronouncing each other’s names. I was Mr. Mukulum and he was Lt. Ya-ha-ya (the name was actually pronounced Ya-HI-ya).]

I poured my soul into these characters. I gave them courage, intelligence, drive, and motivation. As I have discussed before in this series, I do not like villains who are nasty merely because that is their function in the plot. My preferred approach is to write the villains as though they are the heroes; at least, from their point of view. In the case of the Pan-Africans, the antagonists are engaged in a project to increase their power in the world, and while it will advance their cause immeasurably, they use methods intended to raise the ire of the readers. They are not bad people; they merely have goals with which the readers are not supposed to sympathize. That is what makes them the *antagonists* rather than the *protagonists* of the book.

I finished my masterpiece, submitted it to the publisher, and waited the required year for it to be published. My excitement grew as the publication date grew near, and finally, there it was — three copies in every B. Dalton and Waldenbooks in America.

My excitement increased when my agent told me that *Locus*, the *New York Times* of science fiction, would be reviewing my book. I waited for the review, and finally, that issue showed up at my house and my wife called me at work to read the review over the phone. “Book reviews by Dan Chow,” she began. “*Life Probe* by Michael McCollum.” Then there was a gasp on the other end of the phone.

“What is it?” I asked.

“You aren’t going to like this.”

I steeled myself and ordered her to read.

“‘Here is a book that leaves a very, very bad taste in my mouth,’” she began. “‘It has all of the racism of a 1950’s Cowboy and Indian movie ...’”

Needless to say, I was not happy. In fact, I was pissed. However, I also learned an important life lesson.

With the end of the 1960s, I figured that the civil rights fight was over, that we had won, and that the United States was well on its way to a colorblind society. What I learned from the *Locus* incident was that the war was ongoing, that there was no longer agreement as to the ultimate goal (if there ever was), and that some people have a far different view of race relations than do I. As a writer, one who studies the human condition, I should have been more prepared for adverse reactions when I chose Africans as my villains. In some quarters, black people can only be accepted as heroes. “Equality” it seems, has many meanings.

My experience should be a cautionary tale for every writer. Whether you agree with me (that making the Africans strong antagonists was a way to celebrate their equality), or with the reviewer (that showing them in a negative light was racist), you need to handle “taboo” subjects with sensitivity. For it is our job to trigger desired reactions in readers, not inadvertent reactions such as the one I triggered in the *Locus* reviewer.

Here in the United States, that means that we must learn to write honestly about race. (A note to our foreign readers, who may be mystified by all of this. While the United States has had its problems with race relations, we are far from alone in this respect. Ethnic tensions exist in every society, as conditions in the former Yugoslavia demonstrate. So, if your particular society has no black-white sensitivities, feel free to substitute Serb-Croat, Iraqi-Kurd, Russian-Chechnian, or whatever hyphenated problem is peculiar to your own situation.) The lessons we are about to learn are universal. Only the pigmentation of the contending groups is different.

So, with that excessively autobiographical buildup, let us take our first step into the minefield of race relations. Let us explore exactly what the term “race” means. As it turns out, that is a surprisingly complex question and one that will occupy us for the rest of this article. In our next installment, we will get into the specifics of how one tiptoes through the minefield without getting one’s foot blown off.

Anthropology 101

When writing about a subject about which people feel strongly, you can be sure that readers come to your work with emotional baggage. The problem with emotional baggage is that simple words mean vastly different things to different people. So, before we get into the techniques one should use when writing about race, let us define what we mean when we speak of “race.” To do that, I need to delve briefly into another episode in my life, namely how I came to take Anthropology 101 while in my fifth year of engineering school.

At the beginning of the fall semester, 1968, my advisor pointed out that the requirement to graduate was nine credit hours of social studies and that I had

accumulated only eight. Since I wanted to learn all I could in my major field of study, I petitioned the school to waive the requirement and allow me to graduate anyway. After all, as an engineer, I would have little use for social sciences in my future career.

Word came back that the school administration had denied my request, and thus it was that a very disgruntled engineering student dropped Aerospace Structures to sign up for Anthropology 101. Even though I was dragged kicking and screaming into the class, however, I soon discovered that anthropology was the single most fascinating subject I took in college.

Because racial tensions were running high in those days, the professor immediately set out to minimize (and hopefully eliminate) any residual racial prejudice that we students might harbor. He began with skin color, which was a hot issue in 1968. He explained to us that skin color is the least interesting thing when it comes to determining a person's race.

"Huh?" you ask. "Isn't skin color the primary determinant of race?"

Sorry. While the most obvious characteristic of human beings, skin color is not directly related to either race or ethnicity. In fact, people are not different colors at all. They are different shades of the same color. This is because all human beings have a chemical called melanin in their skin, and it is the concentration of this chemical which determines skin color. If you have a low concentration of melanin in your epidermis, then you are light ivory in color, with translucent skin that allows the blood to show through, giving you a pinkish hue. If you have a high concentration of melanin, then you are a dark brown, which can appear black, especially when viewed against a lighter background.

The purpose of the pigment is to give the skin protection against the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun, and since it is an evolutionary adaptation to sunlight, unrelated populations around the world have developed the degree of pigmentation that gave them the optimum protection from the local sun. Thus, not all "white" people are of European descent, or "black" people of African descent. People whose ancestors evolved in a cloudy climate have light skins; and those who evolved in a sunny climate, have dark skins. In fact, once migrations have been eliminated from the picture, skin shades form a nearly continuous spectrum with latitude. The farther north you go, the lighter the skin color; the closer to the equator, the darker.

The mechanism that drives evolution to select for a particular skin color is surprisingly simple. In sunny climates (like the deserts of Arizona), light-skinned people tend to contract skin cancer more often than dark-skinned people do. As a result, the genes for dark skin are passed on more frequently than those for light skin. Likewise, people with dark skins in cloudy climates tend to develop vitamin deficiencies more often than do light-skinned people. That is because sunlight shining through our skins provokes the chemical reaction that produces Vitamin D, the "sunshine vitamin." These vitamin deficiencies produce rickets, which in turn causes a higher death rate, and the genes for dark skin are not passed on as often.

Author's update, 2010: The above explanation is the classic one I learned in anthropology class. It explains skin pigmentation to a degree, but has always had a problem. Skin cancer attacks late in life, after an individual has passed on their genes to their offspring, so how can it be evolutionarily significant? The classical explanation

was that if the parent dies before the children are grown, they, too, will suffer a high death rate.

However, the mechanism for generating skin pigmentation in human beings was finally identified and it is much more direct than the skin cancer-vitamin deficiency model that we all learned in school. The mechanism that drives concentration in the skin is related to the production of sperm in men and ova in women. The reproductive system, it turns out, works best when a specific amount of UV light shines through to catalyze a complex chemical reaction in the bloodstream. This reaction is less efficient if it receives either too much or too little ultraviolet light, and the human body has an automatic control mechanism to let just the proper intensity of light pass through the skin. It does this by increasing or decreasing the amount of melanin in the outer layers of the epidermis. In other words, the human body darkens when exposed to sunlight (i.e., people tan), or lightens when sunlight is absent for long periods.

Obviously, the ability of a single human being's skin to darken and lighten is limited, so for entire races, evolution has provided an average amount of melanin that best matches the amount of sunlight that occurs in the climate where that race developed. In cloudy climates, entire populations trend toward light skins that brown moderately when exposed to sun, and in sunny climate, they trend toward dark skins that lighten moderately when sunlight is absent for long periods.

An individual with a non-optimum degree of melanin in their skin suffers a low fertility rate. It is this reduction in the number of offspring that is the engine that drives skin color in human beings. No wonder people from similar sunny climates have similar skin colors, even when they are basically unrelated to one another.

The Complexities of Race

Biologists define a race as “a biological subspecies, or variety of a species, consisting of a more or less distinct population with anatomical traits that distinguish it clearly from other races.” This definition works well for the animal kingdom, but becomes confusing when applied to human beings. That is because our intelligence makes human beings more than the sum of our genes. Overlying our physical characteristics is our culture, and it is both culture and genetics that determine *ethnicity*.

Because of this, we often find people who are genetically similar (Africans and African-Americans, for instance), but who are very different from one another in terms of cultural outlook. It is this cultural component that confuses the issue of “race” and tends to cause anthropologists to pull out their hair in clumps.

To avoid becoming confused, we will ignore cultural differences for the time being, and concentrate on the biological aspects of race. Even these are complex enough to start arguments among specialists. However, the one thing we know for sure is that all human beings are members of the same species, and that the physical differences between us are largely superficial and of little consequence in the long run. Rather, they would be if we would just stop making such a big deal about them.

Of course, that is one of the definitions of what it means to be human — namely, that we make big issues out of inconsequential differences. In the days of the segregationists, for instance, many people maintained that the descendents of African slaves were not even the same species as the descendents of the European settlers. They believed that the various races of humanity had all developed through parallel evolution (except, of course, they really didn't believe in evolution either). This view was utterly preposterous, but that did not prevent those who felt that way from advancing the argument.

The formal definition of a species is, “a group of animals who are biologically isolated from all other animals.” What this means is that a male and female of a species can produce viable offspring, i.e., those that can themselves reproduce. Thus, horses and donkeys, while closely related, are *not* the same species since their offspring, the mule, is generally sterile. Now we could perform the experiment on the various races of humanity, getting a male and female from each subgroup and then checking out the various combinations to determine whether they can produce viable offspring. Luckily, the experiment is not necessary. Sailors between the 15th and 20th centuries did all of the experimentation required. They proved conclusively that all the “races” of humankind are indeed a single species, one whose technical name is *Homo sapiens*.

Geographic vs. Local Races

The subject of “race” is so complex that some anthropologists deny the very existence of such a thing. This, however, would seem to be an overreaction to the current political climate on most college campuses. Over the last 20 to 30 years, there has been a lamentable tendency for entrenched orthodoxies to attempt to silence those who disagree with them by classifying dissenting opinions as “hate speech” or “being disruptive to the sense of community.” This is the misnamed “politically correct” movement, and it should be resisted at every opportunity. One suggestion: The next time your local college academic harangues you about the need for “diversity,” ask him how many Republicans occupy the school's Sociology Department.

To deny the existence of race would seem to deny the obvious. We all have an inherent understanding of what we mean by the word, even though we cannot be precise in our definition. Nor is it possible to absolutely categorize the race of each person we meet. Still, it is important that we have more than an “inherent” understanding of the term. If we are to make intellectual progress, we need some generally agreed method for categorization, even while we recognize the limitations of such an approach.

So, let us try to define “race,” and to avoid the difficulties of culture, do so in terms solely of biology. Therefore, our working definition is: A race consists of a group of people who 1) have a particular distribution of physical characteristics throughout their population, 2) evolved in a particular region of the globe, and 3) whose characteristics were caused by specific environmental pressures on the population over a long period of time.

Note that our working definition involves a *distribution* of physical characteristics, a specific *geographical* location, and a long period of *isolation* to give evolution the time it needs to do its work. This latter is especially important. Of necessity, racial populations must have had enough geographic isolation from

neighboring populations to inhibit the mixing of the two gene pools. Otherwise, the distinctive racial characteristics of each group would have merged over time.

When I took anthropology some 34 years ago, anthropologists had divided the human race into five major “geographic races” and hundreds of “local races.” Modern anthropologists have identified as many as nine major racial divisions, but for simplicity’s sake, we will stick to the older model.

Before we get too deeply into racial classification, however, we need to understand that there are no hard and fast rules. When we talk about a “distribution of physical characteristics in a population,” what we are really discussing is probability and statistics. For example, the Japanese are a very homogenous subgroup of the most numerous geographic race on this planet, namely the “Orientals” or “Mongoloids.” One of the characteristics of Japanese is that they are “short,” at least as compared to “Europeans” or “Caucasoids.” However, having been to Japan several times, I can tell you that Japanese are only “short” on average. Some of them are quite tall, even by my 6’ 5” (that is almost 2 meters for you metric people) standard. Therefore, the things that define the Japanese local race must be spoken of in terms of averages, not absolutes. It is the same with all races.

When one studies the distributions of characteristics in a human population, it is important to note that the way we categorize the group depends on the characteristics we choose to do the categorizing. Some characteristics are better than others for deciding what constitutes a particular race. As noted previously, skin color is a particularly bad characteristic to study. There have just been too many independent groups that have developed increased melanin pigmentation to protect against the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun to learn anything useful from skin color.

So, having issued the proper caveats, let us list the five basic geographic races of humanity, as explained to a 22-year-old engineering student in 1968. The five geographic races are:

- **Caucasoids** — Caucasoids are Europeans, people with generally light skins. As a race, they are relatively unspecialized in evolutionary terms. They are characterized by their relatively craggy facial features (noses and ears tend to protrude prominently) and they are nearly the only people on Earth whose hair comes in colors other than black.
- **Negroids** — Negroids are sub-Saharan Africans, people with generally dark skins, whose physiology is adapted to hot, sunny climates. Examples include their hair structure (which acts as thermal protection for the brain case) and the elegant fat storage system of the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. They may well be the oldest of the human races because humanity appears to have first evolved in Africa. The Negroids of Africa are noticeably different from their cousins, the African-Americans, primarily because the latter tend to be Caucasoid-Negroid hybrids in various ratios. The two are also dramatically different in their cultural outlooks, with the African-Americans being much more “European” in their outlook than their African cousins.
- **Mongoloids** — Mongoloids are Asians, people with facial features designed for cold climates, including round heads, epicanthic folds in their eyelids, flat noses, and ears that lie close against the skull. Unlike Caucasoids and Negroids,

Mongoloid features tend to prevent frostbite. The race is characterized by a high occurrence of a form of tooth known as the “shovel-shaped incisor.” Mongoloids are currently the most numerous of all the geographic races.

- Proto-Caucasoids — Proto-Caucasoids are also known as Australian Aborigines. Although they have relatively dark skins, their other traits are much more reminiscent of Caucasoids than of any other race. That is because they are physiologically similar to the ancestors of modern-day Caucasoids. Occupying their island continent, Proto-Caucasoids were not subjected to the same evolutionary pressures as their mainland cousins, and therefore, had no need to adapt further to their environment. They are characterized by craggy features and skull bones that tend to be thicker than other races. Never hit an Australian Aborigine over the head with a club. You will just make him angry.
- Proto-Mongoloids — Proto-Mongoloids are also known as American Indians, or Native Americans. They are people who crossed the Bering Strait from Asia thousands of years ago, and like the Australian Aborigines, largely retain their original characteristics, while their cousins, the Mongoloids, continued to evolve into a different geographic race. Their features are craggier than Mongoloids, but they possess the same high incidence of the shovel-shaped incisor.

So, how did all of these different types come about? Races are not closed packages. The “big three” of human groups — the Caucasoids, Negroids and Mongoloids — have no inherent advantage over other kinds of human beings. They owe their dominance (in terms of numbers) to the invention of agriculture, which resulted in rapid population expansion and increased gene flow over wide areas.

Nor did this rapid expansion in population cause these groups to become completely homogenous. Caucasoids, for instance, further subdivided into a variety of local races, including the “Northern Europeans” and the “Mediterraneans.” For instance, my own particular local race is the Celtic tribe known as the Irish. Even though I have as many French and German ancestors as Irish, all of my genes seem to have come direct to me from the Emerald Isle. Thus, I possess red hair, a round face, and chipmunk cheeks (which I really hate, but can do nothing about). If you are a Caucasoid, you undoubtedly have inherited characteristics from some local variation of the breed. The same is true if you are a member of one of the other geographic races. Unique local races such as Pygmies, Lapps or the Ainu of Japan exist because special circumstances inhibited their participation in the general homogenization that went on around them.

The Driving Factor behind Racial Divisions

Most people are surprised to learn that the primary thing that creates racial subgroups among human beings is the existence of physical barriers between populations. The explanation is no more complex than that. The Sahara Desert, the mountains and dry steppes of Central Asia, and the various oceans, all kept our ancestors apart, which meant that they could not interbreed and wipe out the local differences that appeared between isolated populations. If there had been no barriers, there would be no races, since long

experience has shown that, given the chance, human beings will reproduce enthusiastically with anyone they encounter, regardless of racial differences.

Of course, none of these barriers has ever been an impenetrable wall between the races. There was always some “leakage,” specifically on the part of the aforementioned sailors. Often, the people in between major geographical races acquire the characteristics of both, as the people of Egypt did when they were the buffer between Europeans and Africans, or the people of Central Asia, when they were a way station on the caravan routes between the Middle East and Central Asia.

In fact, when one compares the various characteristics of each geographic race and study the statistical occurrences of each “factor” that defines that race, you discover that the races are related proportionately to their proximity. In other words, Caucasoids and Negroids are more closely related than either is related to Mongoloids. The reason for this is that there was much more communication between Europe and Africa over the millennia than there was for either with Asia. This was due to simple physical proximity and lesser barriers between the races than there are with Asia.

We're All Brothers under the Skin

Unfortunately, when people concentrate on their differences, they magnify those differences to the point where they seem all encompassing. The truth is that variation within a race far exceeds the variation between races. To illustrate this point, we will again use the common, but misleading, factor of skin color. If one plots skin color vs. the percent of people who have that color on a graph, you will discover that not only is there wide variation within a race, but also that the graphs for the various races overlap. That means that the difference among Caucasoids between the lightest-skinned and the darkest-skinned is greater than the difference between the average Caucasoid and the average Negroid. Moreover, the lightest Negroid is actually lighter-skinned than the darkest Caucasoid.

One of the things that I liked about Anthropology 101 was that it tended to eliminate any vestige of latent racial prejudice among the students. You could see it actually working as the semester progressed. At the beginning, certain white students objected strongly to the idea that they were related in any way to their black colleagues. As the weeks went by, however, as the professor pointed out the sheer elegance of the various evolutionary adaptations to which the human race is heir, students came to marvel at the variety of human beings, rather than to fear them.

The truth is that we are all brothers (and sisters) under the skin. We have recently learned, for instance, that less than 0.01 percent of all the genes in the human body are involved in determining racial differences. What that means is that no matter how strange someone from another race or culture may seem, we have 99.99% of our genetic material in common. That means that our hopes, fears, and aspirations are essentially the same.

That is the most important thing a writer must convey when tackling the difficult subject of race. We must not fall into the trap of stereotyping the races in a “politically correct” way, any more than we should stereotype them as the segregationists once did. We must see the human race as it is, an infinitely complex rainbow of different individuals. Treat your protagonists and antagonists as real people and you cannot go far

wrong (even if some asshole of a book critic fails to grasp this simple truth). The writer who forgets this fact is doing a disservice to our craft.

Therefore, having gotten the theory out of the way this month, we will put these thoughts to practice in our next installment of *Writing About Race*. In the meantime, celebrate the variety of the human species, avoid stereotypes, and never, ever succumb to political correctness. Remember, Nazis come in all political stripes.

Some of them even claim that they are liberals.

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The End

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4. Antares Passage - US\$7.50

After more than a century of isolation, the paths between stars are again open and the people of Alta in contact with their sister colony on Sandar. The opening of the foldlines has not been the unmixed blessing the Altans had supposed, however.

For the reestablishment of interstellar travel has brought with it news of the Ryall, an alien race whose goal is the extermination of humanity. If they are to avoid defeat at the hands of the aliens, Alta must seek out the military might of Earth. However, to reach Earth requires them to dive into the heart of a supernova.

5. Antares Victory – First Time in Print – US\$7.50

After a century of warfare, humanity finally discovered the Achilles heel of the Ryall, their xenophobic reptilian foe. Spica – Alpha Virginis – is the key star system in enemy space. It is the hub through which all Ryall starships must pass, and if humanity can only capture and hold it, they will strangle the Ryall war machine and end their threat to humankind forever.

It all seemed so simple in the computer simulations: Advance by stealth, attack without warning, strike swiftly with overwhelming power. Unfortunately, conquering the Ryall proves the easy part. With the key to victory in hand, Richard and Bethany Drake discover that they must also conquer human nature if they are to bring down the alien foe ...

6. Thunderstrike! - US\$7.50

The new comet found near Jupiter was an incredible treasure trove of water ice and rock. Immediately, the water-starved Luna Republic and the Sierra Corporation, a leader in asteroid mining, were squabbling over rights to the new resource. However, all thoughts of profit and fame were abandoned when a scientific expedition discovered that the comet's trajectory placed it on a collision course with Earth!

As scientists struggled to find a way to alter the comet's course, world leaders tried desperately to restrain mass panic, and two lovers quarreled over the direction the comet was to take, all Earth waited to see if humanity had any future at all...

7. The Clouds of Saturn - US\$7.50

When the sun flared out of control and boiled Earth's oceans, humanity took refuge in a place that few would have predicted. In the greatest migration in history, the entire human race took up residence among the towering clouds and deep clear-air canyons of Saturn's upper atmosphere. Having survived the traitor star, they returned to the all-too-human tradition of internecine strife. The new city-states of Saturn began to resemble those of ancient Greece, with one group of cities taking on the role of militaristic Sparta...

8. The Sails of Tau Ceti – US\$7.50

Starhopper was humanity's first interstellar probe. It was designed to search for intelligent life beyond the solar system. Before it could be launched, however, intelligent life found Earth. The discovery of an alien light sail inbound at the edge of the solar system generated considerable excitement in scientific circles. With the interstellar probe nearing completion, it gave scientists the opportunity to launch an expedition to meet the aliens while they were still in space. The second surprise came when *Starhopper's* crew boarded the alien craft. They found beings that, despite their alien physiques, were surprisingly compatible with humans. That two species so similar could have evolved a mere twelve light years from one another seemed too coincidental to be true.

One human being soon discovered that coincidence had nothing to do with it...

9. Gibraltar Earth – First Time in Print — \$7.50

It is the 24th Century and humanity is just gaining a toehold out among the stars. Stellar Survey Starship *Magellan* is exploring the New Eden system when they encounter two alien spacecraft. When the encounter is over, the score is one human scout ship and one alien aggressor destroyed. In exploring the wreck of the second alien ship, spacers discover a survivor with a fantastic story.

The alien comes from a million-star Galactic Empire ruled over by a mysterious race known as the Broa. These overlords are the masters of this region of the galaxy and they allow no competitors. This news presents Earth's rulers with a problem. As yet, the Broa are ignorant of humanity's existence. Does the human race retreat to its one small world, quaking in fear that the Broa will eventually discover Earth? Or do they take a more aggressive approach?

Whatever they do, they must do it quickly! Time is running out for the human race...

10. Gibraltar Sun – First Time in Print — \$7.50

The expedition to the Crab Nebula has returned to Earth and the news is not good. Out among the stars, a million systems have fallen under Broan domination, the fate awaiting Earth should the Broa ever learn of its existence. The problem would seem to allow but three responses: submit meekly to slavery, fight and risk extermination, or hide and pray the Broa remain ignorant of humankind for at least a few more generations. Are the hairless apes of Sol III finally faced with a problem for which there is no acceptable solution?

While politicians argue, Mark Rykand and Lisa Arden risk everything to spy on the all-powerful enemy that is beginning to wonder at the appearance of mysterious bipeds in their midst...

11. Gibraltar Stars – First Time in Print — US\$7.50

The great debate is over. The human race has rejected the idea of pulling back from the stars and hiding on Earth in the hope the Broa will overlook us for a few more generations. Instead, the World Parliament, by a vote of 60-40, has decided to throw the dice and go for a win. Parliament Hall resounds with brave words as members declare victory inevitable.

With the balance of forces a million to one against *Homo sapiens Terra*, those who must turn patriotic speeches into hard-won reality have their work cut out for them. They must expand humanity's foothold in Broan space while contending with a supply line that is 7000 light-years long.

If the sheer magnitude of the task isn't enough, Mark and Lisa Rykand discover they are in a race against two very different antagonists. The Broa are beginning to wonder at the strange two-legged interlopers in their domain; while back on Earth, those who lost the great debate are eager to try again.

Whoever wins the race will determine the future of the human species... or, indeed, whether it has one.

12. Gridlock and Other Stories - US\$6.00

Where would you visit if you invented a time machine, but could not steer it? What if you went out for a six-pack of beer and never came back? If you think nuclear power is dangerous, you should try black holes as an energy source — or even scarier, solar energy! Visit the many worlds of Michael McCollum. I guarantee that you will be surprised!

Non-Fiction Books

13. The Art of Writing, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Writing Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 72,000 words. Now you can learn about character, conflict, plot, pacing, dialogue, and the business of writing, all in one document.

14. The Art of Writing, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the Art of Writing articles published during 1998. The book is 62,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

15. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume I - US\$10.00

Have you missed any of the articles in the Art of Science Fiction Series? No problem. The first sixteen articles (October, 1996-December, 1997) have been collected into a book-length work of more than 70,000 words. Learn about science fiction techniques and technologies, including starships, time machines, and rocket propulsion. Tour the Solar System and learn astronomy from the science fiction writer's viewpoint. We don't care where the stars appear in the terrestrial sky. We want to know their true positions in space. If you are planning to write an interstellar romance, brushing up on your astronomy may be just what you need.

16. The Art of Science Fiction, Volume II - US\$10.00

This collection covers the *Art of Science Fiction* articles published during 1998. The book is 67,000 words in length and builds on the foundation of knowledge provided by Volume I of this popular series.

17. The Astrogator's Handbook – Expanded Edition and Deluxe Editions

The Astrogator's Handbook has been very popular on Sci Fi – Arizona. The handbook has star maps that show science fiction writers where the stars are located in space rather than where they are located in Earth's sky. Because of the popularity, we are expanding the handbook to show nine times as much space and more than ten times as many stars. The expanded handbook includes the positions of 3500 stars as viewed from Polaris on 63 maps. This handbook is a useful resource for every science fiction writer and will appeal to anyone with an interest in astronomy.