

DIMENSIONS

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AMERICA IN BLACK & WHITE

David Morse

In one of my favorite episodes of *Seinfeld*, Elaine is dating a man named Darryl who looks like he could be either African American or White. Elaine is obsessed with determining Darryl's race, and in this scene, she asks George for advice.

George: "Why don't you just ask him?"
Elaine, rudely and giving him a 'duh' look:
"Because if I ask him, then it's like I really want to know."
George: "Maybe he's, um... mixed."
Elaine: "Is that the right word?"
George: "I really don't think we're supposed to be talking about this."
Laughs

The scene vividly portrays our awkward obsession with race, and the discomfort that so many Whites feel in discussing the subject. When we are confronted with it in conversation, we look over our shoulders to see who might be listening. Maybe it's the fear of being thought a racist, an epithet to be dreaded. Or maybe, like George, we just don't know what is permissible in today's society.

In contrast, African Americans have had their racial identity forged by slavery and Jim



NEW AMERICAN
DIMENSIONS

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are excited to bring you the latest edition of *Dimensions*, our marketing resource that keeps you in tune with the ever-morphing meaning of the New America.

In this edition of *Dimensions*, we feature:

America in Black and White, David Morse's tribute to Black History Month, which explores the role of race in the New America and how it is experienced differently by Blacks and Whites.

Thomas Tseng's interview with Leon Wynter, author of *American Skin: Big Business, Pop Culture and the End of White America*. We finally offer you a profile on the essayist whose book forms the bedrock undergirding our vision of a transcultural America.

From Sikorsky to Kournikova: Anna Todorova's detailed analysis of the Russian American community. This insightful piece not only sheds light on what is a virtually untapped—and potentially lucrative—market but also marks New American Dimension's entry into the Eastern European consumer segment.

Check out our video on newamericandimensions.com/the_russian_americans.html

We hope you enjoy this edition.

With gratitude,
All of Us at New American Dimensions

Crow. Race is lived daily and its derivative, racism, is experienced in a myriad of forms: unemployment, incarceration, drugs, and missed taxicabs. It's a subject that demands to be addressed.

When once asked to define Jazz, Louis Armstrong replied: "Man, if you don't know, don't mess with it." The same could be said about race. It's a prickly subject because Whites and Blacks see it so differently.

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Two Americas

Though our histories have been intertwined for centuries, African Americans and Whites have lived in distinct worlds for a long time.

My formative years were spent outside of Boston in the early seventies, one of America's most segregated cities, then in the throes of a violent bussing experiment. My team, the Red Sox, had been the last major league baseball organization to integrate –an African American ballplayer wasn't hired until 1959. As late as 1985, Tommy Harper, a coach and former Sox player whose wife Bonnie was a friend of my grandmother, was fired for blowing the whistle on the team's practice of giving White players passes to a segregated club in Florida.

Things are changing. More Black families than ever are middle class, and public opinion polls demonstrate that Americans are becoming less tolerant of racial injustice. Still, disparities abound. Median household income for Blacks is \$29,000 per year compared to \$45,000 for Whites. According to the National Urban League, African Americans have only a fifty-fifty chance of graduating high school and are twice as likely as Whites to die from disease, accident and homicide. Blacks are denied mortgages at twice the rate of Whites, and a third of Black households have a net wealth that is negative; in other words, their debt exceeds their wealth.

As amply documented in the book *By the Color of Our Skin: the Illusion of Integration and the Reality of Race*, Blacks and Whites live in separate neighborhoods, go to separate schools, worship at different churches, watch and play different sports and consume different media.

Living apart, we see the world in different ways, particularly on issues of race and racism. Numerous studies show that far more than Blacks, Whites tend to describe themselves as "color-blind" and downplay the existence of discrimination.

A 2000 study conducted by *The New York Times* found that Blacks were four times more likely than Whites to say they thought Blacks were treated less fairly. The study found that both Blacks and Whites tend to deny being racist, though projecting it onto others. For example, 85% of Whites said they would not mind living in a neighborhood with a large Black population, though two-thirds said they thought other Whites would object.

Differences were so profound, it led the authors to conclude that on issues of race and inequality, Blacks and Whites "seemed to be living on different planets."

African Americans on TV

Nowhere is the country's schizophrenic relationship with race more telling than on television.



Beulah (1950 - 1953)

In the early days of television, things were clear. Blacks were either absent or they were caricatured as stereotypes left over from radio and the movies; roles author Donald Bogle classified as *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies* and *Bucks*. The seeds of protest, however, were beginning to blossom by the early fifties. Two programs, *Beulah (1950-53)* and *Amos 'n Andy (1951-53)*, were cancelled in 1953, largely due to protests from the NAACP for portraying African Americans as "inferior, lazy, dumb and dishonest."

By the early 1970's things had changed so much that *All in the Family's* Edith Bunker, when asked how she felt about Black people, replied: "Well you sure gotta hand it to 'em."

I mean, two years ago they was nothing but servants and janitors. Now they're teachers and doctors and lawyers. They've sure come a long way on TV."



The Jeffersons (1975 - 1985)

Not all television Blacks were professionals. Shows like *Sanford and Son (1972-77)*, *Good Times (1974-79)*, and *The Jeffersons (1975-85)* all featured characters with ghetto roots, "full of jivin', jammin', streetwise style stuff that is the worst kind of stereotyping," as one Black critic wrote. Stereotyped, perhaps, but popular among Blacks and Whites.

The debut of *The Cosby Show (1984-92)*, based on a sophisticated upper-middle-class African American family, would change the dialog forever about the portrayal of "blackness" on television. The program was immensely successful with both Blacks and Whites, in large part to its positive representation of African Americans, though it was hotly criticized by many for the same reason. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and others felt the show portrayed African Americans in too positive a light, as "doing much better on TV than they are in real life." This rosy representation was seen to be harmful, reinforcing the view held by many Whites that racism was over.



The Cosby Show (1984 - 1992)

Television today is more multi-ethnic than ever, reflecting the networks' response to pressure to have more inclusive casts. In terms of viewership, however, America remains largely segregated. According to Nielsen Media Research, in the 2003-2004 television season, only American Idol and NFL Monday Night Football were in the top 10 programs for both Blacks and Whites. UPN had 6 shows in the top ten for African Americans, none of which appeared in the top ten for Whites.

James Baldwin wrote that "the country's image of the Negro, which hasn't very much to do with the Negro, has never failed to reflect with a kind of frightening accuracy the state of the mind of the country." On television, African Americans have achieved a presence that though segregated, reflects their veritable influence on America, something that cannot yet be said about Hispanics or Asian Americans, who remain relatively absent from English language programming.

Black, White and the Color of Money

African Americans have been the vanguards of American cultural trends since before the Civil War, a fact that was little discussed until the last decade or so. As if to make up for lost time, companies are clamoring for the attention of African Americans – as spokespeople and as consumers. And in this zeal to capture their business, it is not surprising that mistakes have been made.

A few years ago, Jesse Jackson called for a boycott of Toyota, after the company issued postcard ads featuring a smiling African American man with the image of a gold RAV4 on his tooth. Toyota called the ad a form of tooth art, aimed at a "young and very trendy audience." Jackson's response: "The only thing missing is the watermelon," he said. Toyota should have known better. In 1999, they had run an ad in Jet Magazine with the caption "unlike your last boyfriend, the Corolla goes to work every morning."

Gaffes like those made by Toyota are not isolated incidents; they are common blunders which can easily be avoided by hiring a good African American advertising agency. A practice not so fixable, however, is the singling out of African American customers or employees for substandard treatment.

This January, Macy's East agreed to pay New York State \$600,000 to settle a racial profiling suit. According to the complaint, African American and Latino shoppers were routinely followed, questioned and searched by security guards. Macy's is not alone. Suits against J.C. Penney and Dillard's are also pending. Last June, retailer Abercrombie & Fitch agreed to pay \$40 million for focusing its employee recruitment on White fraternities and sororities, relegating minority applicants to back-of-the-store jobs.

The most notorious example is Denny's, which made national headlines after asking a group of African American Secret Service agents to pay for their meal in advance. In 1994, the restaurant giant paid \$54 million after being hit with two class-action lawsuits filed by more than 250,000 customers. Denny's learned from its mistakes, hiring a diversity guru and spending millions on its diversity initiative.

In consumer studies, African Americans tend to rank "respect" as second only to price in terms of importance. Given the reality of race in the marketplace, it's easy to see why. Denny's is proof that good intentions coupled with effective action can lead to results. In 1996, they found that a third of African Americans gave Denny's a positive rating for respectful service; today, they estimate that number to be around 80%.

Final Thoughts

In the Introduction to his eminent book *Race Matters*, Cornel West writes that "our truncated public discussions of race suppress the best of who and what we are as a people because they fail to confront the complexity of the issue in a candid and critical manner."

If we ignore the intricacies of race, if we shy away from the difficulties or inconveniences

that it imposes, we risk faulty judgment and simplistic understanding, something that as marketers (and human beings) we cannot afford to do.

We have inherited the legacy of Black and White from our forebears, and though biologically irrelevant, it has managed to survive well beyond the Civil Rights era.

How future generations of America relate to race, however, is uncertain. Hispanics are now the nation's largest minority, a group for whom the dichotomy of Black and White just doesn't fit. In the 2000 Census, four in ten Hispanics indicated a racial categorization of "SOR," Some Other Race. An additional five million Americans indicated that they are multi-racial.

Children born today will grow up in a time when we as Americans are redefining our identity. They will look to African Americans – and increasingly Hispanics and Asians – for their cultural cues. They will come of age in an America where Whites are no longer the majority.

Yet neither will they grow up in a vacuum. Our attitudes about race will influence them, just as we were influenced by those before us. Whether we pass on the best of who we are, or the worst, only time will tell.

David Morse is the President and CEO of New American Dimensions

INTERVIEW WITH LEON E. WYNTER



Leon Wynter has followed the transformation of American identity in the multiracial marketplace for over 20 years as a journalist and essayist. His first book, "American Skin: Big Business, Pop Culture and the End of White

America," was published in August 2002, receiving strong reviews in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and New York Times. He created the Wall Street Journal's monthly "Business & Race" column and wrote it from 1989 to 1999. His commentaries on race, popular culture and life observed are frequently heard on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," since 1993. His essays have appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post and New York Newsday, among other publications. More recently, you can catch Leon Wynter on VH1's "Black in the 80's" or read his blog at <http://theamericanrace.typepad.com>.

"American Skin" became the de facto business plan of New American Dimensions. Before launching our enterprise, the anecdotes and insights skillfully laid out by Mr. Wynter in his book fueled the early inspiration of our firm's vision. Shortly after reading it back in 2002, I went out and purchased multiple copies for colleagues and clients in the ethnic marketing industry. It continues to be prescient in nourishing our ideas about where ethnic marketing—heck, where American marketing in general—is heading. I spoke to Leon Wynter by phone last year.

~ Thomas

What prompted you to write American Skin?

I worked at the Wall Street Journal for seventeen years, where I created the "Business and Race" column. I was able to explore a wide range of topics in that column, including public policy and social issues. But more than anything, and most interestingly, it focused on marketing, advertising, and commercial popular culture. The common denominator throughout my stories was the explosion of innovation in general market advertising—in both corporate and retail brand imagery—featuring people who weren't white. The campaigns increasingly reflected images of African Americans or Latinos, and Asians to a lesser extent. The numerator was the sense that in mainstream commercial culture, "Americanness" was suddenly seen as much more than simple whiteness.

These kinds of things were popping up everywhere on the marketing scene and also in popular culture, which holds tremendous weight since pop culture intersects everything—politics, fashion and style. I really do think what we see on TV and the way things are marketed to us—whether it is in a newspaper or magazine—ultimately works its way into what becomes acceptable to us in terms of how we actually live or how we actually conduct ourselves in public.

Marketers love to talk about tapping into people's hopes and aspirations. And your book describes how aspirations are evolving much differently than before—moving beyond a notion that's purely white, homogeneous Americana. Are you now saying the center of gravity is shifting in all different ethnic and cultural directions?

It's not so much that everybody else is becoming Black or Latino, per se. But I think that the white majority is letting go of being defined solely by its "whiteness". Whites are much more receptive to seeing their identity as Americans being defined by a sense of belonging to an American culture—an American culture which is now disproportionately colored.

The white majority today is much more ready to give up its claim to cultural homogeneity, and maybe even hegemony, in favor of incorporating a transracial sensibility of America.

Can you give me an example of this transracial sensibility?

I recently gave a speech at the University of West Virginia a couple months ago. I'm there with a nice crowd of maybe 200 to 300 students and some adults. And of course, they were overwhelmingly white. I was giving the speech I'd prepared, and trying to get some rapport going in the middle. Something popped into my head I had seen the night before on the Dave Chappelle Show.

"How many of you watch the Dave Chappelle show?" I asked. Every hand went up "How many of you watched it last night?" I asked. I couldn't spot any hands going down from where I stood. "Well," I said, and launched into teaching from a typically Dave Chappelle outrageous race-

related skit... And you know Dave Chappelle was not pulling any punches. He's not trying to be acceptable to white folks. In fact, he's just kind of saying what he thinks and is being gratuitously outrageous.

What my little West Virginia experience proves is that there are white folks who are way more in tune to what's going on across the color lines than ever before. It's a generational thing, and they understand that. Although certain divisions still exist, and there are limitations in terms of how close they can actually be [to another race or culture], this is who they are.

It's safe to say that in West Virginia you can also watch NASCAR. I don't know, maybe many of them do watch NASCAR. But there's no reason why you can't watch Dave Chappelle and watch NASCAR in this country at the same time.

In American Skin, you cite the infamous 1979 "Hey Kid" Coke commercial with Mean Joe Green as a watershed moment in American advertising, paving the way for transracial commercial culture. Why was that ad such an important turning point?

That commercial took place when the transracial trend was really embryonic. It's no coincidence that it portrayed the interaction of a child who was around 8 or 9 years old at the time. How old would that kid be now? My guess is that he is now in his early 30s. At that age, all that kid ever knew back then was that popular culture was disproportionately influenced and driven by players, icons, and public figures who were white.

But circumstances changed in our culture. By the time that kid reached college, what we now call "old school hip hop" ruled the day. Therefore, he probably identifies with that music genre on some level. Even if that person lived in a predominately white environment growing up, there would be some level of transracial affinity created by being exposed to different types of music and diverse cultural trends.

Now, that guy might not have a Black friend, but if he lives someplace where there are Black folks, they have so much greater a common reference point. There are so many things they can now genuinely talk about, or even argue about, with a common base of reference.

(Interview continued on next page)

FROM SIKORSKY TO KOURNIKOVA

Anna Todorova

How broad would you say this transracial cultural trend is? After all, not all companies and brands are innovating in the same fashion you describe—are they? I'm sure there's some brands whose ads are still the same—ethnically or racially speaking—as they were prior to Coke's 'Hey Kid' campaign.

I honestly think some industries—certainly those that are marketing to younger people—are definitely more active players in this arena. Take, for instance, the Target commercial I was watching the other day. It could have been about a soft drink, it could have been about a beer, or for that matter any product of mass consumption. There were young people, and the imagery was multiracial and overtly hip-pop, yet the message was intended for a wide general audience.

However, there are a whole lot of other industries trying to catch up. The transracial trend is not ubiquitous. We're simply not there yet. There are still a lot of corporations testing the waters. There is also a great deal of variation on this theme—compare Benetton and..... well anybody.... to see what I mean. A lot of it seems fine tuned to meet obvious strategic goals within predictable business constraints. But some of it feels like artistic experimentation whose inspiration I don't fully understand myself.

So is this an enduring phenomenon? Will these other industries be forced to catch up?

Frankly, it seems to me this phenomenon is accelerating. Businesses are still moving forward, but they're building off a much larger base of business and consumer experience than they were thirty years ago. You had almost no Blacks or non-whites in anything that you did then. But today I walk into drug stores in my suburban New York neighborhood — not that many blacks or Hispanics in and around Larchmont— guess who's lips are selling Revlon? Halle Berry's. Or recently, I see Queen Latifah for CoverGirl. Or it's Beyonce – she's ubiquitous.

So in some ways businesses will continue to influence you through a steady stream of continued support by replacing the old icons with the new ones. It's kind of institutionalized in a way.

Thomas Tseng is a Principal and Co-founder of New American Dimensions

Russian immigrants have always been an integral part of the US social and civic fabric. How well do we know the Russian Americans of the 21st century?

In the summer of 2003 I was on my way to Miami to start a new job in Hispanic Marketing, quite an exciting opportunity for a native Eastern European. I couldn't wait to reach the city of Latin rhythm and style. I was working hard to polish my Spanish, and was looking forward to trying, for the first time, those Cuban delicacies that I heard so much about from my Cuban-trained language teachers back home in Bulgaria.

You can imagine my surprise when I was greeted by a taxi driver who had a throaty and slow Russian accent, rather than by one with a soft, rolling Spanish pronunciation. He was unmistakably a Ukrainian from Kiev and had lived in Miami for four years. I must admit, it was comforting to chat with somebody so close to my own culture.

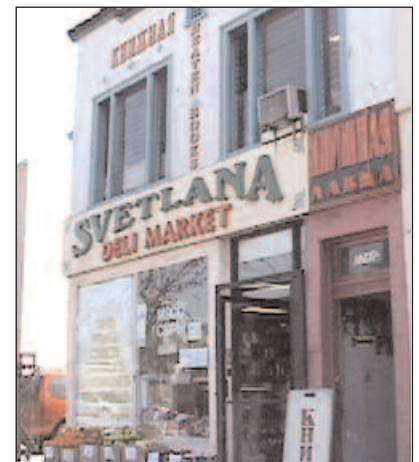
The comfort, however, soon transformed into pure amazement when the next person I met in the "US Latin Capital", my realtor, turned out to be another Slav, Vladimir from Moscow. Vladimir came to Miami three years ago and found a job in a real estate agency in North Miami Beach mainly dealing in the Sunny Isles area.

As I happened to learn in the following days, Sunny Isles has become the new hot spot for Russian-Americans¹. With 11% of its population of Russian descent, it proudly rivals the Brighton Beach area in New York City, better known as "Little Odessa," and West Hollywood in LA, two of the highest concentrated Russian neighborhoods in the US.

The Russians not only started calling Sunny Isles "Little Moscow" but have also transformed its outdated strip malls into anchors of Russian culture and cuisine. Cyrillic store signs are the standard. Now it's easy to find almost anything Russian; from the popular *Baltika* beer, to pickled fish, treated meats, old and new movies, CDs, and all sorts of gossip magazines. More and more posters of Russian celebrities touring the Southern most tip of the United States are popping up around the neighborhood.

The Sunny Isles phenomenon denotes the latest chapter in what is an old and complex tale of brave men and women who have immigrated to the United States over many centuries.

The first Russians to settle in the New World were fur traders who reached the Aleutian Islands, off the coast of Alaska, in the 1700s. In the early 1800s, they pushed south and founded Fort Ross, 100 miles north of San Francisco. Numerous Russians found homes in America throughout the 19th century, but it wasn't until the beginning of the 20th century when Russian immigration to the US took off dramatically.



The first big wave of Russian immigration found its way to the US after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which established communist rule in Russia. More than 300,000 people fled to the United States. Most of them came from prominent aristocratic families, called "white Russians" due to their opposition to the "red" communist movement.

In the 1930s, fear of a second World War brought another wave of Russians to North American shores. These immigrants were fairly affluent and well educated. They brought with them, the latest intellectual and artistic trends from Europe. Fleeing the chaos and depression of the post WWII years, even more Russians arrived, this time mainly Russian Jewish families in great num-

¹For the purposes of this article we will define Russian-Americans as adult US residents who were born in the former USSR (assuming that they would most likely be born after 1917 when the USSR was created) or are children of immigrants from the Soviet Union. We would also be using the term Russian loosely, to describe the above group.

bers who settled around New York City. Following that wave, the Cold War years brought thousands of new immigrants, many of which were Jews and Armenians.

In the 1990s, the United States experienced the greatest wave of Russian immigration to date. People from all walks of life: workers, professionals, athletes, scientists, professors, and artists came in pursuit of better life. Today there are close to 3 million Americans claiming Russian ancestry², according to the 2000 Census. The foreign-born Russian-Americans population is close to 2 million.

The geographic distribution of Russian-Americans in the United States shows a very clear preference towards the metropolitan centers. New York City has, by far, the highest concentration of Russian-Americans, followed by San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Seattle. The NY tri-state area (NY, CT, NJ) is home to 34% of the Russian immigrants, followed by California with 20%, and Massachusetts, Illinois, Washington State and Pennsylvania with 5% each. There are approximately 1 million people who speak Russian as the primary language at home.

Compared to the earlier waves of Russian immigration, recent immigrants are more likely to have higher education levels and, in many cases, came to the US with financial resources to facilitate starting a new life. Most hold professional degrees and are able to earn relatively high household incomes. Russian-Americans are strivers and risk-takers. They love and desire the trappings of success.

A recent survey among Russians between the ages of 20 and 40, who live in the US draws a detailed profile of the contemporary Russian immigrant. 80% of all survey respondents have university degrees. Those who continue to work toward their degrees have a predilection for careers in Information Technology and Business.

According to the study, the median annual income of the Russian-American is above \$45,000 with the income of those living in New York and San Francisco being the highest. About 30% of the respondents manage one or more direct reports in their jobs, and 40% work in the field of IT. Respondents are almost evenly split between owning and renting their homes.

When asked where they have spent their last three vacations, all respondents answered that they had traveled outside of the US at least once. Preferred destinations included Canada, Mexico, Europe, Israel, Russia, Aruba, Hawaii.

Similarly to other first generation immigrants a big portion of Russian-Americans still tends to live in Russian neighborhoods and shop in Russian food stores. They are also very adamant about preserving their own culture and close family ties: 84% speak Russian to their children; 67% make a conscious effort to expose their children to Russian culture at all times; 54% of the families with kids have a Russian-speaking baby sitter, while 37% have the grandparents take care of the children. They also regularly follow news from the former USSR, read Russian books and listen to Russian music.

In contrast to other immigrant groups, however, Russians make a conscious effort to learn English fast and well. They would even hire speech therapists to help them get rid of their accent. Only 1.5% of respondents are not satisfied with their proficiency in English.

Russian-American consumers are aspirant, brand conscious and have a strong desire to out-do their neighbors in material gains. However, these consumers are adverse to propaganda-style advertising. They are more open to value advertising that draws on humor, irony and Russian themes.

Currently there are more than 100 in-language media outlets available to the Russian community in the US: 90 print publications, numerous radio stations and a 24-hour Russian language TV network, RTVi, based out of New York.

Due to the scarce knowledge about Russian culture and lifestyle few mainstream companies have dared to use the abundance of Russian-language media in addressing the Russian consumer directly. Major advertisers have been MCI, Western Union, AT&T, Verizon, and Lot Airlines. AT&T had very successfully launched a campaign in the 1990s under the slogan "Don't buy a cat inside the

bag". The ad used a popular Russian expression inviting consumers to be more critical when evaluating competitive offers and messages, a lesson they already learned from political propaganda in the former Soviet Union.

Books like *When Luba Leaves Home* by Irene Zabytco, *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* by Gary Shteyngart and *Red Blues: Voices from the last wave of Russian Immigrants* by Dennis Shasha and Marina Shron use a fresh and colorful style to tell the story of present day Russian immigrants and to open a door to their souls. In line with the new trends in immigrant literature, these stories are not shy about describing the pains of growing roots in new soil and losing the values of community, culture and history.

Shteyngart's main character, a 25-year-old Russian in New York, summarizes the feelings of more than one generation of Russian-Americans: "Immigration is a tragic thing: to give up your language, to give up your culture. It has a profound effect on the family, and the result is rarely positive." "...I grew up reading Chekhov and listening to Rimsky-Korsakov. [When I came to this country] I had to give all that up and watch 'The Dukes of Hazzard'." The author (a Russian immigrant himself) adds "Assimilate or leave, those were his options."

Fully assimilated, or not, entirely happy or torn by the life between two cultures, Russian-Americans are here to stay. Their high income levels, higher education, broad interests and infinite ambitions offer vast opportunities for those who decide to tap into that market and are adept in connecting with it.

Anna Todorova is a Project Director for New American Dimensions

To better understand their experiences, lifestyles and dreams I met a number of Russians who had arrived to the US in the last, post-Soviet, wave of immigration. To hear their stories check out our video section at:

www.newamericandimensions.com/the_russian_americans.html

²It is important to note that according to our definition of Russian-Americans, the number is most probably higher than that, as many who fall within the definition, may have claimed European, Eastern-European or any other ancestry.

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New American Dimensions will be speaking at the following conferences:

Food Marketing Institute
Orlando, FL
March 7, 2005

NFRA Retail Executive Conference
Tempe, AZ
April 18-20 2005

UCLA Extension
Marketing and Advertising Effectively to the Latino Community
Los Angeles, CA
April 27, 2005

The FMI Show 2005
McCormick Place, Chicago, IL
May 1-3, 2005

Forum Fispal Latino
Fispal Forum & Expo
Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami, FL
May 4-6, 2005