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AFRICA IS COMING TO THE CAPE*

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ABSTRACT. At the southern tip of Africa, culmination of one of the world's great population shifts is there for the witnessing: a southward movement of Bantu-speaking Black Africans, previously stalled in South Africa's Eastern Cape first by climatic factors and later by European-imposed racial segregation. Cape Town, throughout its demographic history a "Coloured" and "White" city, is now Africanizing. Liberation from apartheid has brought rapid African influx, and the metropolitan population has more than doubled in less than twenty years. Sociocultural tensions and sociocultural possibilities ensue. *Keywords:* Africa, Cape Town, demographic change, migration, racism.

After years of pretending that it was not part of Africa, Cape Town is finding that Africa is very much part of it.

—Christopher Hope, 1998

*M*anifest Destiny: The phrase imputes inevitability to the march of Europeans across the North American continent from Eastern Seaboard to Pacific Ocean. It sounds today disquietingly triumphalist, reducing as it does any peoples already in its path to objects whose only role is to be brusquely shoved aside. During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century Manifest Destiny was, nevertheless, a generally accepted public interpretation of U.S. westward expansion.

When I first arrived in North America as a graduate student in 1970, this conventional view of courageous westering pioneers settling virgin land was being vigorously challenged by a popular book, Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970). In it, Brown offered a different take on the grand saga of the U.S. West: that of the Native Americans who stood apprehensively on the land they believed to be theirs, with which they were one and inalienable, and who were looking grimly eastward toward an inescapable force majeure seemingly set to dispossess them.

Postulate a parallel in the contemporary South African context: the millennium-long southward migration of Bantu-speaking peoples from north of the equator. Having been apparently stalled for some centuries in the Eastern Cape, this migration of Africans is now reenergized. One of the world's great population move-

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