Like everyone, I greatly appreciated the opportunity to “talk” with one another and speak somewhat more spontaneously. Inge, your comments about the naming of one’s heritage being a form of self-identification was insightful and created more reflection; then, your note about the missing piece of reconvening our commonality – the “American” in the identification term – resonated for me as well and I think is key. We have become a nation of difference-articulation, and while it’s important to recognize and celebrate those differences (Dr. Baily points out in her youtube video that this identification is helpful when individuals sharing a common characteristic are trying to express a shared experience, e.g. Asian-Americans experiencing ostracization after COVID, among others, and so create a name for those sharing that characteristic), we seem to have lost or forgotten to reconvene over our common citizenry, values, and cultural traditions.

Abby responded to my question on the role of international aid, which was complemented by her response to Diamond’s question on the more unified tradition of African-Americans, but the apparently less unification of Africans. Here I’ll offer a comment made to me by a former professor and eventual colleague at the University of Zimbabwe in the mid-1990s. He cautioned me to not apply my perception of racism to the continent. He went on to say that then he arrived in Alabama a few years before on a university professor exchange program, he perceived a victimhood (his word) among many of the African-Americans he encountered. He came to realize and understand that “racism” in the United States was unique; he had not experienced racism in Zimbabwe previously, but rather what he called socio-economic discrimination. I asked him about the Ian Smith years (1965 to 1980) when UDI was declared and white rule was put in place (UDI = Unilateral Declaration of Independence). His response was that the “white rule” was principally an elite cadre of Brits who assumed dominance over everyone who was not of that elite class regardless of color; further, Africans were divided by tribe, and his tribe, the Shona people who make up about 70% of black Zimbabweans, carried more weight and privilege than the less pervasive Ndebele people, about 30%. Certainly the prejudice advocated by Smith was horrific, but my professor’s point was to look at the prejudice and situation within its context and not apply my definition of racism to Zimbabwe, and by extension, to the sub-Saharan African context. Interestingly, as USAID today designs and implements education programs in Zimbabwe with consciousness of many of the helpful points Abby made (particularly local co-design and local partners), we are observing an escalating divide and sharp prejudice that began some 25 years ago: the divide between the ruling party combined with the PRC, and everyone else.