

# Are You European?

Today, while visiting a health spa where I have an appointment, I interacted with a lovely woman from Mexico who asked me an innocent question. She said, "Are you European?" I replied, "No, I am American." She then said, "Oh, you look European, you are very beautiful." She said, "Even your accent sounds European."

She was very kind, and I look forward to doing business with her. During our conversation, I discussed my heritage in America, my surname, Courchene, as well as my Native Canadian and American roots. I also explained how French and Native peoples were dispersed from Canada into what was known as New France, a region that today includes New England, where my family now resides.

I find it interesting that she did not immediately recognize me as American. This made me reflect on whether the current immigration process adequately supports recognition of the American people themselves. I wonder whether some of the social tensions we experience today, what we can describe as a kind of cultural cold war, may stem from newcomers not fully understanding who Americans are, particularly Americans with deep historical and anthropological roots on this continent.

Perhaps it would be beneficial for immigration processes to include greater education on the history of the American people. It may be unhealthy for social cohesion if immigrants enter the country without recognizing Americans as a people with longstanding, varied, and legitimate identities. I find this question very interesting and worthy of further reflection.

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## Analytical Insight

### Abstract

This reflection examines a brief interpersonal interaction as a lens through which to consider broader questions of national identity, recognition, and civic integration. It explores how misrecognition, often benign and unintentional, can nonetheless prompt important questions about social cohesion in pluralistic societies.

### Discussion

Misidentification of nationality based on appearance or accent is common in multicultural contexts and typically reflects limited exposure rather than exclusionary intent. However, repeated instances of such misrecognition can prompt individuals with deep historical ties to a nation to question whether their identity is culturally legible within their own country.

The term for consideration is *Erasure*.

In the American context, this issue is particularly complex. The United States lacks a singular ethnic or aesthetic identity; its people include Indigenous nations, descendants of early

European settlers and mixed populations, Black American populations, and successive waves of immigrants. Ancestry, defines Americanness. Civic identity also defines Americanness, yet it benefits from historical literacy, an understanding that many Americans have roots predating the modern nation-state.

## **Implications for Immigration and Integration**

Focusing more on anthropological recognition, effective integration frameworks can emphasize **civic education**, including:

- Awareness of Indigenous presence and history
- Understanding early Anthropological American cultures and mixed identity
- Recognition of Americans across race, language, and lineage

Such education supports mutual recognition and social trust without imposing exclusionary standards.

## **Conclusion**

The interaction described is not evidence of social failure but an opportunity for reflection. Strengthening civic literacy, among both newcomers and long-standing citizens, offers a constructive path toward greater understanding and cohesion in modern society.

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