

The Origins of Racism

Timothy Jessie

Where did Racism come from? Why is it still here today?

People of very different races and cultures have been asking themselves these kinds of questions for centuries. Racism has probably been around for as long as there has been a different race or species of semi-humans on this planet to compete with, and it will be here long after this current generation of homo-sapiens have met their life span. However, that does not mean that people, no matter their pigmentation, should continue to allow racism to grow and flourish like a cancerous growth.

Racism may have started around 36,000 years ago. This is quite possible. For one, prominent and well-respected anthropologists and archaeologists have recently determined that the Neanderthal version of homo-sapiens co-existed with the newer, improved Cro-Magnon. There must have been great friction between the Neanderthal and the Cro-Magnon, as the latter began to see themselves as superior to the now obsolete former. Hate and loathing could have come next, leading up to actual physical clashes that may have hastened the

departure of the Neanderthal from the face of the planet. A scenario like that is probably how racism first came to rear its ugly head and show its nasty effects. Possible yes, but this argument is still pure conjecture.

Conversely, the next outbreak of racism can be substantiated. As the medieval period came to a close, Western man (Europeans) had been through the black death of the biological plague, the blackness of the devil that was the plague within the spirit, and other crises that actually primed them for regarding blackness with awe, horror, and loathing. As a result of this conditioning, when Western man comes upon Africans they are viewed with irrational intensity, as appropriate subjects for less-than-human treatment. Thus, Africans were lead into slavery, an offshoot of racism.

Additionally, racism became associated with the thriving cultural revolution and tremendous challenges that emerged as pioneers began their exploitation of the "New World". As the book *White Racism: A Psychohistory*, by Joel Korel, explained, "The wilderness that stimulated Americans

into their expansion was also an ambivalent symbol of darkness -- a darkness which combined with the color of enslaved skin to stimulate the particular American response to blackness. And it was a response that swept the history of racism- indeed much else in American history- along with it. Here we have the nuclear creation: the radical dehumanization - the 'thingification,' with all the excremental implications it involves- of black people." And so, Africans (not yet African Americans) were turned into property and this gave the Caucasian an almost mystical stranglehold on the African and created a foundation built by property. This dangerous way of thought became ingrained indelibly and increasingly in American history.

Furthermore, as recently as 1964, at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, racism has been identified as a large problem. A Ms. Mary Ellen Goodman conducted an experiment using a sample of 104 small children, both African American and Caucasian; it revealed the uniform fantasy that a), African Americans differed from whites in being

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dirty and that b), this implied a sense of basic inferiority. These beliefs were ingrained during the impressionable years of childhood and had become cemented by the age of four. These beliefs result in a very low self-image for the African American and a growing nucleus of superiority for the Caucasian.

Finally, no matter what race one may happen to be, you must realize that racism must end. Through tests and studies, it is clear that children notice the color difference after playing with children of another race. When this occurs, it is the duty of the parent to explain that race is simply people being shaded differently and that all people are the same where it counts, underneath. If parents did this, we could close the book on racism and leave it forever to sit on a shelf and collect dust.

- Timothy Jessie

Educational Racism In Contemporary America

Dr. LLOYD V. HACKLEY



The classical definition of racism has two important components: attitude and behavior. The attitude derives from the belief that one's own race is inherently superior to other races as determined by genetic, social or cultural considerations, or all three. As behavior, racism is the pacing of artificial obstacles between the "inferior" race and valued objectives. In the case of education, we have a double value of the highest order. Education is an end in itself; and it is a means to a better life through material gains.

The classical definition of racism in education, with both its components, attitude and behavior, is best illustrated by George Wallace's stand in the university door to block access by Black students. The question, however, in the context of today's situation, is whether classical racism in any way helps to explain the problems Black students are now having in higher education.

There is an intense debate going on right now with respect to Civil Rights, the duration and outcome of which will have significant, fundamental and far-reaching consequences for Black Americans. The crux of the issue is over the means considered to be most effective in closing the glaring gaps which remain between Black America and white America in most aspects of the American socio-economic spectrum. Succinctly put, the question is what strategies ought we employ in dealing with obstacles to progress which exist for Black Americans, in view of today's social, economic and political milieu? Again, to put the question in terms of education, are the efforts that were used to remove the governor from the school-house door relevant to an integrated educational environment?

Numerous educational agencies have stated recently that the education gaps between minorities and white students are pervasive, persistent and increasing. The Education Commission of the States stated that the number of minority students participating and succeeding in higher education is declining; the only question is whether it has already become a crisis or soon will be one. It is critical, therefore, for those of us who claim to be intent upon reversing the decline taking place in Black participation in higher education to be clear about our objectives.

Two major concepts must be kept in mind when we talk about and hopefully think about educational reform and excellence in contemporary America, since testing has become an increasingly important component of educational reforms and since testing remains a requirement for employment in many private and governmental enterprises. The first is cultural bias and the second is educational deprivation.

I do believe that there remains cultural bias in most standardized tests, and those who are trained to deal with such matters should continue their efforts to remove such bias. Also, experts ought to redouble their efforts in scrutinizing the manner in which tests are used in placing and advancing students. I urge the most extreme caution, however, against eliminating tests for fear that we will very likely end up protecting those who are depriving students of quality education. Tests do, in fact, reveal educational disparities or deprivation.

For example, poor performance on standardized examinations by Black students has long been blamed on racist graders and culturally biased tests. I will admit that there may be some validity in the assertion. However, admission to college and success in college are both dependant on whether one has been enrolled in college preparatory courses in high school. Similarly, scores on

academic achievement examinations, such as the SAT, are conditioned by core course enrollments.

Numerous studies show wide gaps in Black enrollments in grade-level core courses as compared with white students throughout the kindergarten through twelfth-grade spectrum, especially in mathematics and science courses. Efforts that were successful in eliminating physical obstacles to equal access, will not be equally effective in maximizing educational outcomes in our new educational environment.

In a segregated environment, racism denotes in the main, acts of commission, wherein actions are taken to prevent physical access to places where quality education is imparted. In an integrated environment, acts of omission are the norm, whereby knowledge and skills are withheld so that those so cheated are not able to succeed in subsequent educational levels or in life. For example, even in elementary schools where placement in levels of academic rigor is less predicated on prior achievement, nevertheless, the higher the percentage of minority students in a school, the

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