

The persistence of racism

Sociology



The Persistence of Racism Despite the claim that racial discrimination has declined in recent years, it appears that it still persists and permeates in American society today. Since the 1960s, America has promptly enforced reforms in response, in large part, to the civil rights movement, instituting policies that sought to eradicate racial discrimination. Initiatives such as affirmative action complemented laws enacted to make discriminatory practices illegal. Through the years, racist behavior came to be considered immoral and unethical. Even Blacks concede that racism considerably declined. There was the growth, for instance, of the Black middle class, brought about by policies such as the equal employment legislation, which Wilson stressed “ virtually eliminated the tendency of employers to create a split labor market in which black labor is deemed cheaper than white labor regardless of the work performed (110). However, such decline did not completely eliminate racially-motivated attitudes. The truth is that many whites still harbor racist behaviors and this is not entirely surprising. Racism is embedded in the social fabric and could be difficult to entirely eliminate. Several social theories consider it as a tool by which society maintains order, perpetuates stability, reinforces power systems and maintain the authority of the dominant group, among other related concepts. This can be found even in Wilson’s argument underpinning the decline of racism. He argued that the economic factor became more important than the issue of race in the manner by which Blacks in America live and work, pointing out that variables such as income are what prevent Blacks from having better life chances (120). The idea is that such economic incapacity meant that they have poor training and inferior schooling. Wilson failed to see that many of the Black’s economic conditions are defined by incidence of

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discrimination.

The society dictates norms and practices that marginalize and disadvantage groups such as African Americans or norms and practices assimilated that are not representative of their identity or their character. For example, there is the persistent reinforcement of the ideas that blacks are ugly, violent and uneducated. As people are at the receiving end of the systematic racist attacks, they came to accept their plight. The practices, norms and negative messages institutionalized by white dominated society have caused the people of color to doubt their own abilities, identity and self worth to the extent that they believe it, expect it and act on it towards others as well. What is worse is that, people imitate and imbibe practices in order to belong even if such practices are harmful to themselves. Consider the case of a Black individual who has had assimilated into a white-dominated environment. The extensive dealings with them would lead him or her to display racist attitudes even to his own people.

The theories of internalized oppression and assimilation that define the variables are aligned with the theoretical underpinnings of discrimination against other groups such as that one based on gender. Here, people within a community have to play roles specific to their sexes because that is what has worked and, hence, accepted. So the dominant perspective is that it must be maintained and those who wish to belong to a community that perpetuates it must adhere to such norm or social practice. In addition, those who grew up in such society behave according to such norms because they constituted and defined the daily interactions that shaped their character. It is clear, hence, why racism will simply not go away today or in the future. It is a tool and ideological device to exploit people, perpetuate the authority

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and the power structure and also as a device in a convenient attempt to make society more efficient. It has been institutionalized. It will take a huge amount of effort in order to change this trend.

Work Cited

Wilson, William. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.