

Racial discrimination in illegal aliens: a problem of law and history

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Mae Ngai writes in “ Illegal Aliens: A problem of Law and History,” 1 that the “ legal racialization for these ethnic groups’ national origin cast them a permanently foreign and unassimilable to the nation,” (8) where the categorization and favoring of one race against another grouped the races in that ethnicity as an outsider regardless of their nationality. This categorization is seen in Volpp’s “ The Citizen and the Terrorist,” 2 where she writes, “ the general public has engaged in extralegal racial profiling in the form of 1, 000 incident of violence.” (149) Even regardless of ethnicity, the color of their skin profiled these people as other and in turn, not American.

Whiteness is seen as American and regardless of a person’s history, if they’re not white, they will be grouped as an “ alien citizen.” (Ngai 8) The exclusion is apparent by the fine line between nationality and ethnicity, where a country that “ showed such overwhelming public opposition to racial profiling,” (Volpp 148) did the exact opposite after September 11. This is due to the fact that whiteness is seen as the default, Timothy McVeigh was seen as a crazy white person, an outlier, while due to the categorization of the other races, those who look like terrorists are seen as terrorists unless proven otherwise. This racial profiling separates those that can be seen as American through their skin color and those that cannot. This separation is ever present and creates the notion that a person can be identified through the color of their skin.

Whiteness isn’t just skin color, but it was also a way of life. A Christian middle-class family behind a white picket fence. Both “ the homosexual” in Stein’s “ The Stranger Next Door” 3 and “ the Chinese” in Loewen’s “ The <https://assignbuster.com/racial-discrimination-in-illegal-aliens-a-problem-of-law-and-history/>

Mississippi Chinese” 4 changed towards this lifestyle in an effort to prove that despite differences, they were just like them. The “ Mississippi Chinese increasingly made their way into white society” (Loewen 153) and “ the lesbian and gay men in town were strangers were not all strange,” (Stein 217) they “ looked and acted very much like them” (Stein 217). These two groups of people shared the goal of achieving the recognition of whiteness, but the obvious difference between the two is that the Chinese are not white and the homosexuals were white. Despite this difference, even though both groups embodied the lifestyle perfectly, the differences these groups had with the standard white person never made them white.

These two groups embody each other in that they both carry the idea that they “ want to show Middle America that they’re mature people who work, just like them,” (Stein 227) while in doing so, revealing the fact that there isn’t a way to truly be white without actually being white in both appearance and actions. Both began at a grey area and were both seen negatively as their lifestyles were not white, but when both changed and lived a white life style, the fact became known that they can never be white.

The false presumption of “ equality” and an “ equal playing field” creates the American dream where the underdog can rise to the top through sheer effort. This has created the idea that regardless of social economic status or skin color, everyone can make it to the top as long as they work hard. In Loewen’s “ The Mississippi Chinese,” the Chinese rose from their low status and through this, gave the notion that the reason why the Black Americans weren’t rising in status was because of their innate inability, while this was

not true at all. The Delta Chinese had the benefit of a culture in which there is a “ history of a “ push” toward independent business enterprise,” (Loewen 40) and familial social structure of the Chinese. This coupled with the benefit of not having a historically established view of the Chinese race, where the Chinese were in a “ grey” area, made it much easier for the rise in status.

In Karen’s “ How Jews Became White Folks,” 5 he dismisses the myth of Jews pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps by highlighting the fact that the reason for the rise of Jews in professional fields was not because of hard work, but because “ changing views on who was white made it easier for Euro-ethnics to become middle class.” (37) Specifically, the GI Bill of Rights, which was “ aimed at and disproportionately helped male, Euro-origin GIs” (38). Through discrimination Black Americans veterans did not receive much and even though some did succeed, the overcrowding of the Black colleges and the honorable discharges made it impossible for many to gain the benefits White American received. By referencing the minuscule number Black Americans that succeeded, it created an illusion of an equal playing field.

Religion maintains the social hierarchies by creating a system of morals where those that do not following the said morals will be looked down on from those that do follow these morals. As seen in Stein’s “ The Stranger Next Door,” Jeri states that things would be different “ If we have good morals in this country and family values,” (106). Where these values include having a mother and a father. This hierarchy is seen by the view of gay people, where they are “ an antithesis of moral individuals, the embodiment

of a world in which rules, order, self-discipline, and stability are severely lacking” (106). By looking at the other as unmoral humans, it lowers the status of the other while keeping their own as the normal. In Volpp’s “ The Citizen and the Terrorist,” it reads “ majority were identified to the government through...perceptions of their racial, religious, or ethnic identity” (148). In other words, a person was defined through their religion and used a means for identification and separation.

Class also plays a crucial role in social hierarchies. In Loewen’s “ The Mississippi Chinese,” it reads that even with people of common race, the class of the people separated the two. “ Some Chinese merchants feel that they can and must be nasty to the lower class blacks to get business from the middle class.” (47) As racism was rampant among the white citizens and whiteness had a high status, the behavior was then seen as sign of high status and to emulate high status, “ middle class blacks had no sense of solidarity with the black storeowner” (47). This

division is also seen with the white upper and lower class as “ the white establishment has little to do with them,” (49) with the white establishment being the lower class and them being the upper class. Karen’s “ How Jews Became White Folks” also talks about class and how “ economic prosperity also played a big role in the whitening process,” (37) where being middle class helped Euro-ethnics become white.

Politics can be separated into the conservative and the liberal, the “ Strict Father” and the “ Nurturing Parent model” as outlined by Lakoff’s “ How Liberals and Conservatives Think.” 6 The “ Strict Father morality assigns

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highest priorities to such things as moral strength, respect for authority, the setting and following of strict guidelines and behavioral norms..." (35) while the Nurturing Parent " requires empathy for others and the helping of those who need help" (35). The separation of social hierarchies can be best seen by the Strict Father Model, where there is " dysfunctional society, filled with people who are trying to get something for nothing, who don't know the value of discipline and hard work" (Stein 104). As shown, through the eyes of the equal playing field, people who are worse off were there through their own lack of drive, seeing their own benefits as a given and separating themselves from the " lazy" worse off people.