

Whiteness
differences and
relations of power
sociology essay



Racial hatred is defined as a behavior which is offensive, intimidating, insulting, humiliating and is carried out in public toward a certain people on the basis of their color, creed, race, nationality or ethnicity (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010). Racism is a belief that certain genetic traits are the determinant of human abilities and capacities. Racial differences lead to the belief that certain races have inherited the traits of superiority, most prominently skin color. Racism creates effects like “ racial discrimination” which affects the life of many people. The advantaged race enjoys privileges, and receives preference in every aspect of life.

How Racism Occurs?

Racism materializes in a society when negative meanings and messages are instilled into racial categories. In other words, racial categories are loaded with unconstructive and harmful inferences. The fundamental nature of racism which segregates groups is imbued with negative appraisal which hinders the discriminated group’s participation into various social areas like economics, politics and cultural practices (Pettman, 1983). The philosophy of racism requires identification and assumption of certain physical traits like color to be inferior. This racism then validates the inferiority of these traits in a manner which makes the victims feel responsible for it, therefore creating firm and rational basis for inequality to exist and sustain.

History:

It was in 1788 when the first settlers from Europe came to Australia. At this time, the only inhabitants in Australia were the Aboriginal people. Over a century, Aborigines were suppressed by the whites in every aspect of life so

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much so that the Aborigines no longer live in much of the continent as the overpowering white settlement spread rapidly. Since a long time, the relationship between the Aborigines and whites had been a hostile, with the former being subjugated and looked down upon by the later on the basis of their race-or skin color to be precise. They could never adjust peacefully and there had been a lot of violent incidents and bloodshed carried out on Aborigines. Some of the whites even treated the colored people as animals and expressed deep hatred towards them. Although, when white people initially arrived into the continent, their number was meager but they had been colonizing the entire world, so they greatly influenced the Aborigines. White people considered themselves to be gifted with natural abilities of intelligence and considered themselves to be more civilized than any other race of the world. They humiliated the Aborigines, offended them from time to time and over a passage of time, successfully dominated them. Thus whiteness, as an ideology tied to social status was constructed in Australia in order to justify the racial discrimination carried out against the Aborigines. The power of whiteness did not remain confined to influence the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but as non-white people started migrating to Australia, racism was carried out against all non-whites. In 1901, whiteness was politicized with the adoption of ' White Australia Policy, by the government. These policies imposed deliberate restrictions on non-white immigration to the Australian territory and continued from 1901 to 1973. This constitutionalized policy had damaging racial aspects because it not only restricted immigration of non-white to Australia but also worsened the condition of existing non-whites and Aborigines in Australia (Corris, 1990).

What is 'whiteness'?

The term "whiteness" implies the state of being 'white' the term has racial connotation. The term has gained a social identity and is viewed as a standard by which other races are judged on the lines of being inferior, abnormal and deviant. In other words, there is significant power and privilege associated with the identity of whiteness.

White Privilege:

White Privilege, as it is described by the critical race theory, is to conceive inequalities on racial grounds which occur in many societies. The concept of white privilege throws light on the advantages that white people enjoy and mount up from the society, but it does not focus on the drawbacks that colored people experience within the society. There is a difference between the racial concepts of prejudice and explicit racism which enables people of a certain race to dominate and suppress other racial groups to its own advantages, white privilege theories propose that white people consider their own social, economic and cultural experiences to be 'the normative experiences' and that every one should relate to those norms. The White privilege theories assert that racial inequality can only be resolved by ringing out the hidden advantages that whites enjoy in the society (Stratton, 1998).

The Power of Whiteness

The power of whiteness comes from both cultural and structural forces and practices in a society. When it comes to structural forces, white racism is outlined as a result of economic development, legal assessment and

governmental involvement. Cultural practices have helped whiteness to occur because through the social relations that exist between people are structured in such a way that significance is attached to the biological trait of color. Thus it can be said that 'race' is a socially erected dogma. Whiteness is not just a term but it has some dangerous characteristics which makes it the dominant race in Australia. The state of being white is classified on the basis of social and political sense as it's not just a matter of skin color but leads to social subjugation and the victims become subordinates (Corris, 1990). When the racist ideology becomes deeply rooted in the society, white people start considering they to possess superior qualities of compassion, honesty, ethical soundness, fairness and good-will and have a sense of possession of advantage over non-white people (Hage, 1998).

The invisibility of whiteness

Whiteness is taken for granted by white people as it becomes normalized in the society everything associated with whiteness becomes invisible to the white people, whereas when someone the things associated to colored people are raised, the issue becomes explicit and apparent. Whiteness is not even considered a race because white people consider it to be the norm, thus whiteness becomes invisible. As against this, black and brown people are categorized into racial kind and according to this invisibility of one's own race, the 'others' are viewed as abnormal or deviant. But what white people fail to realize is that racism does damage not only to the victims, but to the racists as well. This is because they fail to establish alliance with other people which can turn out to be powerful, assuming that whites are superior and whiteness identifies itself through non-whiteness.

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How has whiteness affected the Australian society?

Racism on the basis of whiteness is rampant in Australia. Non- white people, especially the aboriginal and the Torres Strait Islander people, people of other ethnicity or nationality, face discrimination on a daily basis in various areas of their lives. For example, they can be subjected to discrimination at their work place or when they are applying for jobs. Many of them are paid less as compared to their white counterparts. Moreover, they face racism on job terms and conditions regarding incentives and dismissal. They are discriminated when seeking or renting accommodation, at restaurants, hotels and other food outlets, at educational institutions- even young children at school are discriminated on the basis of their skin color.

Non-white often face different treatment from that of whites while availing facilities and services like banks (applying for loans) and hospitals, clubs, government offices, transport, access to parks and libraries, entertainment spots and even at places of worship. Moreover, the media-television or print media- often has complete white domination, and over the internet when white people often come up with hateful and derogatory remarks for the Aboriginal people.

Sometimes, whites who are associated with people of a particular race, color, national or ethnicity are treated unfairly too. For example, as victims have reported, at many workplaces and offices, people of other nationality and religion are called offensive names like ' Muslim terrorist' which victims find to be offensive and derogatory so much so that it affects their performance. Also, whites exercise a power on other races which is evident from their

behavior; there are many websites which allow white people to leave abusive and offensive comments about the Aboriginal people in Australia. People from different African regions like Nigeria and Somalia, when go to public places or pubs, they are constantly followed by security staff and women don't talk to them on the basis of their color (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010).

Conclusion

Australia is like a bouquet of flowers. It has maximum heterogeneity because the country is home to various cultures, ethnicities, races and nationalities. Every year, hundreds of people migrate to Australia to settle there. We can see people of different cultures living in Australia but unfortunately, the white race has a monopoly over every other race in Australia and discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, nationality and ethnicity is rampant all over Australia. In every aspect of life, the whites exercise their power of whiteness over non-whites because they are lulled into being made more and more self-assured, superior, powerful and comfortable so that whiteness becomes invisible to the whites and they become insensible to the advantages they avail over non-whites because whiteness is viewed as a norm. As against this, non-white people, especially those who belong to the Aboriginal tribes and Torres Strait Islander are made to feel insecure, abnormal, unconfident, alienated and underprivileged. Racism damages a society because it hinders the concepts of welfare and humanity. It divides people and prevents them to participate in social and cultural progress. Racism destroys the harmonious balance which must exist in a society among different cultures and people.

Racism helps to assuage the feelings of guilt in shame in the oppressed but it also does damage to the white people because they are blinded into believing that they are superior and perfect -which they are not. Therefore, white people fail to be realistic and fail the process of self-realization as they remain preoccupied with belief that that whiteness is the norm. Racial prejudice comes in many forms, sometimes overt and sometimes subtle. The practice itself is irrational and ignorant because judging people and forming opinions about them on face value i. e. color is not logical. Colored people face huge injustices on everyday and the self-esteem of many people are lowered everyday because they are made to believe that whiteness is superior. Whiteness in Australia is a serious problem and it is spreading like a cancer, it must be stopped otherwise it can lead to social disorganization. It is against basic human rights and can damage the true essence of humanity so every step must be taken to educate people on whiteness and its power so that racism can be eradicated from the Australian society.