

Stuart hall - the floating signifier

Sociology, Racism



Stuart Hall - The Floating Signifier Part 1 Starting with Spike Lee's movie in which individuals throw racial slurs and insults on every race - Afro-Americans, Asians, Latinos, Jews.. Sut Jhally (University of Massachusetts) is talking about visual race differences (color, hair and bone). If we want to fight against racism, first we have to understand it and see how it works in our minds, so we could better combat it on the streets. What racism as a philosophy contains is that there is a natural connection between how people look, what they think and do, and how smart they are. Basic argument failed saying that white people are born smarter than blacks. We have to take a "discursive position" which means analyzing metaphors, anecdotes, the stories, the jokes that are told by cultures. Historically, skin color has different meanings over the past years. It changes all the time. It's not permanent, and that is why this course is called "race, the floating signifier". Sut Jhally did an interview with Stuart Hall in which he asked him to talk more about classification and why putting people into different groups is so important for us. Part 2 He continues to talk about categorization. He is mentioning that the normal game of politics is correct and that we have to take politics more seriously and biology a little less seriously. Goldsmith College - Stuart Hall in lecture * What more is there to say about the race? * * The "formal" rejection of biological racism? * Part 3 He continues with introducing W. E. B. Du Bois as a great African-American thinker and writer, but not very well known in the United Kingdom as Mr. Hall thinks he should be. Du Bois was the one who started a thesis "... the differences of color, hair and bone.." He observed those as "clearly defined to the eye of the historian and sociologist". * the survival of biological thinking * 1. There is no

relationship between race and intelligence 2. Small minority of researchers continue to try to prove a relationship between race and intelligence (" You think you're so clever" - by Gary Younge) - naziv knjige koji se prikazuje u filmu 3. Liberal thinking is also based partly on biological assumption about the race 4. Genetic definition of race are common across the political spectrum and in everyday thinking * The badge of race * 'as a BADGE for social heritage of slavery, the dissemination and the insult of that experience' W. E. B. Du Bois * Race as a language, a 'floating signifier' * Skin Colour is a SIGNIFIER which has MEANING in a Culture. The meaning of Skin Colour is Not Always the Same, and CHANGING with the Context, and can never be finally fixed. Part 4 Race is reality. You can see it in faces of other... * Two position, the realist and the textual * 1. A realist position - Real genetic differences are the basis for racial classification. 2. Linguistic position - there are no real differences. The differences are created by humans in language and culture (human diversity) 3. The discursive - differences exist in the world, but language we use and systems of thought are creating the differences, and that is what is matter. Power of knowledge. When the Old World discover the New World, Religion and Church played major role. Part 5 Fixing difference - Cultural function of science is to provide the guarantee of absolute difference. Science/Anthropology/Religion fix and secure human differences in a natural form. Nature = Culture - Thinking, Feeling, Intelligence etc. Seeing is believing - Visible differences. Genetics - making sense of differences. Part 6 Reading the body - body is a text which we can read. There are stories, images, metaphors, anecdotes which really construct the relationship between the body and social and cultural space. Part 7 What

it is in human practice, without any biology guarantee that we could conduct a ethically responsible politics around the race.