

Good example of can we end racism essay

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



One of Dr. Seuss' most powerful stories is "The Sneetches." These yellow creatures differentiate themselves from one another on the basis of whether or not they have a green star on their stomachs. Some do, and some don't; whether or not you have one appears to be arbitrary. The people who do have stars lord it over those who don't, shunning them and showing discrimination. One day, Sylvester McMonkey McBean (a Seussian Mr. Haney) shows up with a mysterious Star-On machine. For just \$3, the Sneetches without stars can have one put onto their stomach. This agitates the original Sneetches with stars, because they are about to lose their special position in society, because there is no way to tell the difference between an original star and one of Mr. McBean's. However, McBean has an answer for them as well: his Star-Off machine. For just \$10, the Sneetches who had stars originally can get their stars removed to keep that special status. Because McBean is all about making money instead of dealing in prejudice, he lets anyone get into either machine, which means that the Sneetch society breaks down into a mob moving from one machine to the other. The process continues frenetically until the Sneetches have given all of their money to McBean. He leaves town, enriched by their silliness, with the observation that "you can't teach a Sneetch" (Seuss). However, the Sneetches do learn their lesson and determine that no one is superior. This allows them to become friends with one another, no matter what the "star" status is. Dr. Seuss was motivated by anti-Semitism to write this story, but it satirizes discrimination that takes place between any cultures or races (Cott).

The obvious question that "The Sneetches" raises is whether or not it is

really possible to overcome racism. Mr. McBean wrecks the society of the Sneetches by taking all of their money; it takes economic collapse for this group of furry yellow beings to decide that they can, after all, get along.

Oprah Winfrey, in a November 2013 interview with the BBC, lamented the latent racism in American culture, specifically referring to the disrespect that the nation has shown to President Obama during his time in office. Her perspective on ending racism is fairly pessimistic; in the interview, she said, “ There are still generations of people, older people, who were born and bred and marinated in [racism], and they just have to die”(Daily Mail Reporter). Is it indeed impossible for people to change? If not, what needs to happen for racism to end?

The elements of modern culture that threaten to keep racism permanent are those that lead to stereotypes. While stereotypes are often harmful, they are extremely difficult to dislodge. Stereotypes about people of African descent go back centuries and begin with the clear visual difference between the color of their skin and that of other races. Often, people outside the African culture have used animal references to describe their appearance. In William Shakespeare’s play Othello, one of the most unsettling images occurs when the father of (white) Desdemona hears that (black) Othello is an “ old black ram tugging your white ewe” (I. i. 90). The idea that men of African descent would do their best to “ take” the women who “ belong” to white men has been an ugly stereotype that has formed much of the basis of racism even since the beginning of slavery. This was the reasoning behind the taboo of relationships between people of African and European descent. It grew into the Jim Crow laws, which codified segregation from the end of Reconstruction

until the 1960s. While federal law protected African-Americans from civil rights violations until 1877, white Democrats in the former Confederacy began engaging in a wide variety of voter intimidation, even attacking blacks on the way to the voting booth or finding other ways to keep them from voting. The 1876 presidential election ended up in the House of Representatives, and the ensuing compromise led to the withdrawal of federal troops from the former Confederate states. After that, white Democrats took power throughout the South, enacting Jim Crow laws that did everything from instituting poll taxes and literacy tests to keep the poor and illiterate from voting, using grandfather clauses to allow whites who failed the tests to vote even though the blacks could not. Blacks were purged from voting rolls throughout the old South; just one example is Louisiana, which featured only 730 black men on the voter rolls in 1910, about 0.5 percent of the state's black male population (Pildes). Between 1896 and 1904, all of the black voters in North Carolina were purged from registration rolls. If you couldn't vote, you couldn't run for office or serve on a jury, so blacks disappeared from public and political life. The Plessy v. Ferguson case before the Supreme Court, which allowed the establishment of "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites, led to the formation of separate school systems that were nothing close to equal in terms of quality. President Woodrow Wilson instituted segregation in federal offices in 1913, despite the fact that they had been integrated since the end of the Civil War (Nordholt). In the South, separate restrooms, water fountains and restaurants were just some of the vestiges of this practice that did not disappear until the 1960s. Given the tradition of racism in American culture, how then can we get rid of

it? One answer appears in classrooms serving students in early childhood. If you spend any time watching the students in a preschool or kindergarten classroom, you will see that students congregate with their friends, irrespective of ethnic background. However, if you watch an older elementary classroom or a secondary classroom, you will see that students have a tendency to gravitate toward members of their own ethnic and cultural groups. While this is not a universal truth, it is one that is pervasive enough to merit mention. The reason for this is that children learn from their parents the language of hate and bias. Whether it is children learning that members of other ethnic and cultural groups are not their equals in terms of status, that members of other ethnic and cultural groups all follow certain stereotypes, or even that they are worthy of scorn for some reason, the truth is that members of both the majority and minority cultures pass down the seeds of racism to their children. In the minority cultures, the tradition that tends to pass down is anger at the majority culture, creating a phenomenon known as “reverse racism.” The irony of this term is that it suggests that racism can only go in one direction. While the repressive effects of racism tend to go from the majority to the minority, all members of a society are harmed by the incidence of racism.

One crucial step in the elimination of racism will be the universal rejection of many of the elements of the hip-hop culture. While the music itself does not promote stereotypes, the roles into which many of the performers sink, such as the “pimp,” the “playa” and the “gangsta,” are all roles that turn out to be divisive for society. For those inside African-American culture, these are some of the more dominant images of what it means to be a success as a

man. Outside the culture, though, there are elements of violence, toward women in particular, which make it a point of division.

This is a significant point of contention for many who view rap as “ CNN for black people” or the “ blues of the working poor” (Blanchard). Many African-Americans are resentful of the fact that others view the hip-hop archetypes as negative, while others realize the dangers of allowing those images to represent a culture. While the skill of putting a rap together is significant, the ideas that emerge in many lyrics is not part of a positive culture for anyone. Addressing that is one place to begin.

Another place to begin is by working to eliminate one of the dividing lines that makes society fractured to begin with: the dangers of economic instability. If the repressive elements of the American economy were removed, people of all cultural backgrounds would have more pathways to success. The idea that studying makes you too “ white” might well dissipate if working hard actually led to more opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

Working to combat stereotypes and create a socioeconomic system that is more equitable would go a long way toward curbing racism. We don't all have to wait for the racist generation to pass away; instead, we can create a society in which all feel empowered.

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