

# Types and forms of racism: exploration of the us



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Racism has been around for a long it and it is quite difficult to point out whether it is going to end today or in the near future. Many people would think of racism in terms of Whites oppressing the Blacks but there are various forms of racial discrimination that we will analyze shortly. Racial discrimination overall is not a good thing. Those who practice it should put themselves on the shoes of those being oppressed and try to visualize how good or bad it is. From there we would have an equal platform of reasoning together. In the United States, there are different groups of people that are discriminated against. This includes; the Native Americans, African Americans, Latin Americans, Arabs and Muslims and Iranians.

## **Introduction**

Racism in simple terms can be described as the hatred one human being has towards another human being (Human Rights Watch May, 2008). This hatred is based on the differences in skin color, language, place of origin and cultural customs. One group of individuals believes that their group is better than the other. An example of the worst racism is that of the Whites towards the Africans. Some, even up to today believe that Africans are incomplete creatures. This is what led to the early slave trade and the present enslavement. Racism also exists among the Whites themselves depending on whether one is an Easterner or a westerner. This is influenced by the superpower capability that a country possesses. Racism has led to slavery, war, splitting of nations and formation of new ones and drafting of legal codes.

## **Types of Racism**

There exist different types of racism as described by Human Rights Watch (May, 2008); the first type is the historical racism. This comes about due to a person's lineage and decent. People with common historical origins, but not necessarily biological characteristics, fall under this category. It is used to categorize nation states in Europe. For example the Nazi eagle, Aryan cross; was believed to be superior to other nations. The second type of racism is the institutional based racism. This is put in place to protect the interests of a certain group and maintain the status quo of inequality among the society members. This can best be expressed by the apartheid rule that was in place in South Africa. The third type of racism is the scientific type of racism. This classifies people to have superior characteristics than the other for example intelligence due to brain size, a fore head which is sloping. It is believed there is a hierarchy of races and this is what was used a justification to colonize others. The last type of racism is new racism. This is based on new expressions. This encompasses immigrants, integration and cultural values.

## **Forms of Racism**

According to Human Rights Watch (May, 2008), racism can be classified into two categories: Minority racism and majority racism. Minority racism is practiced by affluent minority groups that look at themselves as special and in some circumstances; you find that they have support from some external powers. This kind of racism tends to be closely linked with imperialism. It is usually y called minority racism from above. Western imperialism falls under this category as well as the former colonials that practiced apartheid in South Africa. The Whites were unable to exterminate the local Africans as

they did with the natives of North America. The Chinese nationalism also falls under this group. The Chinese Diaspora views themselves as a superior ethnic group especially in Southeast Asia. Jews, in Israel, view themselves as a minority group surrounded and oppressed by the Arabs. However, the Jews are many in number in Israel. This emanates from the Arabs desire to oppress the oppressor. This view of the Jews is what is known as minority racism from below.

Majority racism from above is a populist in nature usually based on racial reversal for example the Hutu and Tutsi genocide in Rwanda or Sinhala, who discriminated the Tamils (Human Rights Watch May, 2008). There is usually a divide and rule force behind this kind of discrimination. In the United States, this can be illustrated by the hatred the natives had against the immigrants. Racism from below is the common form of racism experienced in the West. This is illustrated by discrimination against the African Americans or discrimination against the Native Americans. African American is the most hated group due to the poverty levels they exhibit and the crime rate levels they are involved in. Racism can be more dangerous and hurtful if its forces are being propagated by a well social-economic class. Anti-racism in many cases is involved in trying to distribute power equal in terms of economy, employment opportunities, access to social amenities and education thus eliminating ethnic tensions that may arise

## **Overview of Racism in the United States**

Racism in the United States dates back as far as to the colonial era (Anthony 34). Inequality in human rights has been witnessed by the Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans and Asian Americans. Racial

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discrimination dates as far back as the 17th century up to the 1960s. Only the White Americans enjoyed access to literacy, the right to acquire and own land, citizenship, and the right to vote, immigration and a right to a fair trial in court proceedings. Other European groups like the Jews and the Irish have experienced major social exclusion. Even though racism was officially banned in the mid 20th century, it continues to be experienced in areas of employment, housing, education, lending and government institution. Many people have not accepted the ban and thus racism continues to be experienced in terms of segregation, slavery, reservations, residential schools, internment groupings and Indian wars. Discrimination is also evidenced in terms of religion. Muslims are discriminated against due the activities of extremists and are thus, widely viewed as terrorists (Alvin Poussaint, par 3).

### **Recent Day Racism Situation**

According to a United Nations Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination report (March 2008) reported by Anthony (38), the United States has or it is failing to meet international standards on racial equality. The equality disparities are being witnessed education, housing, criminal justice and healthcare. In March 2006, the same committee criticized the United States for not upholding the right of land ownership policy by the Native American. The committee wanted the United States to enforce the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous communities. The United States was also to provide a detailed report on what it had done to promote the culture of indigenous Hawaiian, Alaska and Indian Americans (Alvin Poussaint, par 3). The committee also observed that there was

indiscriminate environmental racism and environmental degradation of spiritual areas and also areas that held certain cultural significances. The environmental degradation in question includes mining on sacred lands.

Anthony (37) reports that racial discrimination was also observed in the judicial system. This was so especially with the death penalty and life imprisonment sentence. It was observed that minors were sentenced to either of the two harsh sentences as compared to their other counterparts who received a more lenient sentence having been convicted of the same crime. The committee was outraged by the government's comments that black kids get life without parole because of the many crimes they had committed. The committee was also not happy in the way the United States continued to hold non-U. S. suspects of terrorism in the Guantanamo Bay prison. They wanted the United States to expose the prisoners to a judiciary review. To them, this was just another form of racial discrimination. Ajamu Baraka of the Human rights network observes " Racial discrimination has been normalized and accepted as a way of American life" (Anti-Defamation League, par 4). The committee advised the United States to set up a Human Rights body that will keep track and oversee racial discrimination or disparities. The committee went ahead to warn the United States that it is not above the law.

## **Racism in the Criminal Justice System**

According to Anti-Defamation League (par 4), the United States' criminal justice system has been mentioned negatively in various print and news media. It is said to be racial based. It is said that African Americans are usually targeted and severely punished as compared to their white

counterparts. The following few incidents go on to show the extent to which the criminal justice system is said to be rotten. According to a Human Rights Watch (May, 2008), the Whites and Africans who are involved in drug trafficking are fairly the same. The United States African American population is made up of only 13% and those using drugs are made up of 14%. However, when it comes to arrests made on those dealing with drugs, the majority are African Americans. It beats the logic how come it is only the African Americans who are arrested the most.

It is also reported that stops that are made by police involves mainly Blacks and the Latinos (Anthony 62). It is said that 80% of the stops made by NYPD in New York involved either Blacks or Latinos. For these stops, 85 % were frisked while only 8% of the white stops made were frisked. The same happenings are reported to be the same elsewhere in the country. In California, for example, it was found that Blacks were stopped times more compared to the Whites. It has also been revealed that once arrests are made, the Blacks are more likely to remain in jail awaiting trial as compared to the white counterparts. In a 1995 review report on the rate of trial of felonies carried out by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice, it was found out that 33% more Blacks would be detained awaiting trial as compared to their White counterparts 80 % of people convicted of a crime seek a public defender. The higher numbers of people seeking a public defender are Blacks. The public defenders are an overworked lot who are underpaid and effectively, it means the poor Blacks who cannot afford the services of a private attorney will contend with the services of a tired and

disgruntled public defender. In the end, the Blacks stand a big chance to lose their cases (Anti-Defamation League, par 3).

As reported by Anti-Defamation League (par 3), the Equal Justice Initiative released a report on June 2010, arguing that African American are underrepresented or excluded from the criminal jury services. It is reported that in Houston County, Ala, 8 of the 10 African American juries have been barred from participating on death penalty cases. It is said only few cases end up in the trial chambers. The main reason being, the African Americans plead guilty to a crime they did not commit so as to avoid the flawed court process that can sentence them for a long period for a crime they did not commit. It is also reported that Blacks found guilty are likely to receive a sentence that is 10% longer than their white counter parts for a similar crime. The report still goes on to say that 20% more Blacks are likely to be sentenced to prison on drug offences as compared to the Whites while 21% more will receive the compulsory minimum sentence.

According to Anthony (2009), in July, 2009, the sentencing Project reported that more people who are not Whites were receiving the long term serving sentences. It reported that 2/3 of the people servicing life imprisonment were either the Blacks or the Latinos. According to the Congressional Testimony for The Sentencing Project report mentioned by Anthony (34), 56% of those in prison convicted of drug offences are the Blacks. This is a big contrast compared their population of 13% and drug users of 14%. The United States Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that a male by born it the year 2001 is likely to go to jail five times and three times for Latinos more than a white boy born in the same year. There are about 16% juvenile Black

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American youth in the whole population and about 28 % juvenile arrests are made. 37% of the juveniles are imprisoned in juvenile jails and about 56% are sent to adult prisons (Anti-Defamation League, par 5).

The United States has the highest percentage of population in prison than any other country in the world (Anti-Defamation League, par 5). However, the majority of the prisoners are Black males. This is according to the ABC News report. It is reported that even after the prison stint, racial discrimination continues to be felt outside prison. Whites who have criminal records are treated better than Blacks who do not have a criminal record. Whites who are released from prison have a higher percentage likelihood of being called back compared to Blacks also who have a criminal record.

## **Impacts of Racism**

Racism has some negative psychological effect. Delivering a key address, Allavian Poussaint (1993) said; “ to be black in America is to be a suspect” (par 2). A black has to prove that he/she has no ill motive. Competence also has to be proved beyond reasonable doubt. Thus a black will not walk comfortably in the streets with long over his/her shoulder due to security reasons. Racism can impact negatively on one psycho-politically. Black in general has been considered to be evil. Lucifer is depicted to be black. Thus African Americans are considered to be of a dark ancestry. This in other words is promoting white purity and stigmatizing the black race. Overall, the implication is that the Blacks should be segregated, oppressed and enslaved.

Racism has led to genocide. Allavian Poussaint (1993) also says that according to the white Americans, “ the only good Indian is a dead Indian”

(par 6). This shows how life has been devalued. During the civil rights struggle, several people were killed. Anthony (2009) reiterates that the law is not applied in equal terms. This is especially with the death penalty. It is said that minorities who are sentenced to death are highly likely to be executed as compared with their white counterparts. According to the anti-death penalty Organization Amnesty International, murderers of white people are 6 times likely to be executed as compared to the killers of the black people. It goes to show that the judicial system values White lives than that of Blacks and other minority groups.

Global Research (2008) has indicated that racism has led to formation of attack gangs. In Southern California for instance, there are African American and Mexican American gangs. The gangs have special mafias who attack each other i. e. the Mexican kills the Blacks and the Blacks kill the Mexicans on sight. This has also been witnessed in the prisons where riots have been reported due to one group attacking the other. The Black Americans have not had a cordial relationship with the black immigrants. This is based on the cultural and social differences that exist between them. Anthony (37) argues that there is disparity in wealth creation. The tax policies have restricted people on how to acquire wealth. The Social Security Acts excludes some sectors of the economy such as agriculture where most minority groups work and rewards other groups like the army. This has a disparity of wealth of acquisition by a factor of 1 to 10.

Racism has affected negatively the health of the minorities. It is observed that the number of minorities that who visited psychiatrists was much higher as compared to Whites (Anti-Defamation League, par 3). Stress levels have

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also been discovered to be higher in the minorities groups. Frequent physical diseases and common colds have also been discovered to affect the minority females as compared to the white women. Inadequate health care is blamed for the many deaths observed in the black race than the white race. The Blacks lack or have inadequate medical insurance cover, reluctance to seek medical attention and poor medical service. It is said that many lives would be saved if the minority groups received proper medical attention as that of their white counter parts. The minority are no privileged to receive adequate health care if the treatment in question involves the very most recent technology.

### **Affirmative Action**

Though he has been critical in highlighting the plights of the minority groups in America, Anthony (2009) adds that affirmative action has been put into place to address the historical injustice imposed on groups that were discriminated. This includes access to education, employment, health facilities. Most universities and employers are using affirmative action while admitting new students or employees respectively. Historically disadvantaged groups are given priority or a quota system is used. Opponents of affirmative action have displayed openly their discontent and would like people to be taken on merit and not on the basis of other methods.

### **Fighting Racism at Individual Levels**

There exists ways that can help to fight this racism vice. A few of the ways as held by Global Research (2008) as such that could be to the sense that whenever one makes a racist joke, we are not supposed to laugh at it.

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Laughing encourages one to go on. Instead, we should make the person understand that the joke was not funny or we do not appreciate such kind of jokes. The worst thing is to keep silent. Instead we should speak over minds out but cautiously and politely. We should strive to learn about others and understand their cultures; the differences in our culture call for appreciation and celebration. We can learn from them and appreciate why some things are the way they are. There is no culture which is considered superior than the other. It helps in enriching our own cultures.

We should always use the correct language. It is not prudent to mention races in a conversation. Some people get offended when you use a language that it, there is an implication of racial discrimination. We should never use words haphazardly when we are not sure where one ails from. As much as possible, we should try to be role models. We should speak against but not criticize comments that are racist in nature. Educate others the negative effects of racism and narrate your own experiences to them if any. The other best thing though it can be uncomfortable is to venture into areas where one is not of the other kind. However, one should take his/her safety issues into consideration. If one learns in a White institution, one should try to venture into a Black institution or if she/he is a Christian, she/he should find time to visit a Muslim mosque. The experience will certainly be enlightening than one might expect (Global Research, par 7). If presented with projects, one should try to do them with people who are not from their own kind. Playing at an equal level enhances the confidence of the minority and helps to cancel the bitter discrimination injustice feelings they might be harboring in their hearts.

According to Anthony (2009), If one is a parent, he/she should at an early age try to mingle his/her children with the children from the other groups. One should strive to discuss TV programs and movies that could be of stereotype. This will help children to understand other people and their culture. This will help in suppressing racial discrimination traits from creeping in. As much as possible one should help and support organization that voices their ideas against racial discrimination. This will help in fighting against it and by joining these groupings; you will have a more powerful voice at the local level. People will be ready to listen to you. As they say, “ united we stand and apart we fall”. Thus being in an organization with a common goal, great strides of achievements will be made.

## **Conclusion**

It is safe to say that racism has drastically reduced with the continued legislation and having an informed populace. Religion also has played a major role in eradicating it as people believe that racism is a sin and practicing or helping in its propagation is sinning against God. Affirmative action programs have majorly benefitted the minority even though the white feel that they should be done away with total. They feel that they are the ones at the losing end. As always people try to resist change to the old ways they are used. Racial spats these days are not common. If one does an act implying racism, it is usually unconscious, unintentional and not malicious. With the reduction of racism, some things are yet to be achieved like equal employment opportunities and wages. The economic status of the minority still is wanting. This could be one of the reasons why hate crimes are still in the increase. The best way to reach a conclusive end to race disparities is to

find a way of eliminating institutionalized discrimination. This kind of discrimination maintains the status quo of the society and thus the groups that have historically been disadvantaged continue to be on the losing end. As Martin Luther King Junior said that we as a nation need to undergo a radical revolution of values. Thus the United States criminal justice system must check the main cause of the problem. It should not rely on what it calls reforms; reforms of having nice beds in good position.