

Post-race: the dialogue that negates racial inequality



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Post-race thinking emphasizes de constructive approaches to identities, and draws on theories of performativity and ethnicities. Race prejudice is based upon racial identity, whereas color prejudice is based upon skin color. The act of racializing the other seizes differences that are “ ethnic” in some sense. Racializing is something that all of us do all the time. There are fine reasons why we do it, and there are also good reasons why we require to make an effort not to do too much of it. Free societies and particularly free markets encourage profound forces that lean to curb illogical racial stereotyping.

These mechanisms positively do not work perfectly, but they do work. Governments are extremely prone to extreme racial stereotyping and are mostly immune from the forces that keep this practice in ensuring in the private sector (Joel Greenberg, 2002). For that reason, government policies that involve racial profiling must be treated with the utmost skepticism. Not simply do they intimidate the legitimate interests of diverse racial groups, but they tend to divert government agencies from alternative policies that are probable to work at least as well (Dana Priest and Susan Schmidt, 2002).

Ethnicity at its mainly general level means belonging to a particular group and sharing its conditions of existence. This not only was regarded as having the right credentials for membership, but also being able to muster ethnic resources which can be used for struggle negotiation and the pursuit of political projects both at the level of individuals making their way, but also for the group as complete in relation to other groups.

Ethnic resources can be economic, territorial, cultural, and linguistic amongst others. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993: 8) It is these, the group constructions of belonging and not-belonging, of being integrated and excluded, that are most pertinent to the analysis of inter-ethnic, 'mixed-race', international identities, not because they ease ethnic belonging but precisely because they are challenging in their centralization of communities, groups and boundaries.

One could say that culture of a certain sort is at least as old as nation-states, particularly if the exclusion of some cultural difference that resides on national ground, but is considered alien to it, is taken as a founding moment for a national polity. Yet the present manifestation of culture represents a recognition by the state of a certain discrepancy between the fictitious unity proclaimed by the nation-state, and the multiplicity of identity which that state must now contain if it is to retain its legitimacy as the warden of a national entity. In this way, culture marks and divides a double relationship.

From the perspective of the state attempting to police a national monoculture, it is the refusal of any given identity to be contained within the center, to abide by the institutional boundaries by which the state allots recognition (a predicament from which social movements they are by no means immune, insofar as recognition and other material resources are mutually constitutive). From the perspective of those multiple identities, it is the insistence on the unruly polyvocality of difference that hints at what is formative not of nations but of society.

Between these two perspectives lies the politics of recognition -the state seeking to determine the form of what gets recognized, versus the multicultural forces that are themselves agencies of self-recognition. In the present context, cultural is not only the name given to cultural diversity but also the terrain was opposing ideologies of culture are in contention. When multiculturalism is deployed as a negative point of reference (a bad other or and an ontological threat) to consolidate the new order, it is as a discourse and as a political economy of racialization.

This political economy wields race in word and deed as a principal means for dividing society, seeking legitimation in no small part by treating the divisions within society as natural consequences of the differences among cultural groups. By means of these racial divides, those who are as authentically domestic as any others are linked to the foreign, both in terms of their origins and therefore fidelity to the national way of life and in terms of some putative cultural association to whatever ails peoples in fewer resource-full parts of the world.

Hip-hop culture has taken on the profile of a cottage industry because of aggressive corporate commodification. The post industrial declines of United States urban centers, a downward turn that ironically spawned hip-hop's developments, has been co-opted by corporate America and represented as a glossy, yet gritty, complex of music idioms, sports imagery, fashion statements, racial themes, danger, and pleasure. While history shows us the persistence of the exploitation of African American culture in the United States, hip-hop represents an exemplary case in this regard.

Thus, a new pattern is beginning to emerge across a variety of subjects, a paradigm that takes race, normative whiteness, and white supremacy to be central to U. S. and indeed recent global history. The rate of emergence is by no means uniform—far advanced in cultural studies, retarded in other areas such as political philosophy (unsurprisingly, thinking that philosophy is one of the very "whitest" of the humanities) nor are the theoretical presuppositions always the same. If the latter feature is a precondition for paradigm hoods, therefore, one might want to speak more carefully of an "orientation" or a "perspective" instead.

Some authors draw on deconstruction and discourse theory, on Derrida and Foucault. Others seek to adapt and update old-fashioned Marxist frameworks to give race an autonomy—and perhaps even a "material" status—not typically conceded to it in more class-reductivist accounts. Still others would think themselves traditional liberals, though with a nontraditional admiration of how racialized actual liberalism has been. And a few views themselves as working toward new theorization that do not willingly fit into any of the standard meta-theoretical taxonomies.

What they all have in common, though, is that they see race as central (though not foundational) and as socio-politically "constructed," thus distinguishing themselves from earlier theorists of race, who typically took race to be a trans-historical biological essence and whose suppositions were in fact often simply racist. The idea that notions of black inferiority and white superiority serve as a rallying marker for American society is not a new one. For example: According to Derrick Bell: Black people are the magical faces at the bottom of society's well.

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Even the poorest whites, those who must live their lives only a few levels above, gain their self-esteem by gazing down on us. Surely, they must know that their deliverance depends on letting down their ropes. Only by working together is escape possible. Over time, many reach out, but most simply watch, mesmerized into maintaining their unspoken commitment to keeping us where we are, at whatever cost to them or to us. (1993) Indeed, we do not even agree whether we still have a "Negro problem" or, if we do have a "problem," what exactly it might be.

Some scholars, like Derrick Bell, argue quite eloquently that any discussion of race must acknowledge that America is still at its core the racist country it has always been and that this racism affects life chances for African Americans. (1993) Thus according to Cornel West "To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society -- flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes.

How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues' shapes our perception and response to these issues. As long as black people are viewed as a "them," the burden falls on blacks to do all the "cultural" and "moral" work necessary for healthy race relations. The implication is that only certain Americans can define what it means to be American-and the rest must simply fit in. " (4-5) "The emergence of strong black-nationalist sentiments among blacks, especially among young people, is a revolt against this sense of having to "fit in. The variety of black-nationalist ideologies, from the moderate views of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in his youth to those of Louis Farrakhan today, rests upon a fundamental truth: white
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America has been historically weak willed in ensuring racial justice and has continued to resist fully accepting the humanity of blacks. As long as double standards and differential treatment abound -- as long as the rap performer Ice-T is harshly condemned while former Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl F. Gates's antiblack comments are received in polite silence, as long as Dr.

Leonard Jeffries's anti-Semitic statements are met with vitriolic outrage while presidential candidate Patrick J. Buchanan's anti-Semitism receives a genteel response -- black nationalisms will thrive. " (4-5) Race emerges as central to the polity of the United States. Instead of counter posing an abstract liberalism to unusual racism, we should conceptualize them as interpenetrating and transforming each other, generating a racial liberalism. The result is a world of white right, white Recht, a white moral and legal equality reciprocally linked to a nonwhite inequality.

At the heart of the system from its inception, this relationship between persons and racial sub persons has produced the " Herrenvolk democracy" in which whites is the ruling race. Thus, as Herbert Blumer argues, racism must be understood not as " a set of feelings" but as " a sense of group position" in which the leading race is convinced of its superiority, sees the subordinate race as " intrinsically different and alien," has proprietary feelings concerning its " privilege and advantage," and fears encroachment on these prerogatives (" Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position," 3-4).

Race and white supremacy are therefore seen mostly as a system of advantage and disadvantage, but only secondarily as a set of ideas and values. The individualist ontology is displaced or as a minimum

supplemented by a social ontology in which races are significant sociopolitical actors. The ontology here is not "deep" in the traditional metaphysical sense of being necessary and trans historical. It is a formed, contingent ontology—the "white race" is invented (Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, vol. 1, *Racial Oppression and Social Control*)—and in another, parallels the universe, it might not have existed at all.

But it is deep in the sense that it shapes one's being, one's cognition, and one's experience in the world: it generates a racial self. Biologically fictitious, race becomes generally real so that people are "made" and make themselves black and white, learn to see themselves as black and white, is treated as black and white, and are motivated by deliberations arising out of these two group identities (Ian F. Haney Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race," 191-203). Perceived "racial" group interests (not self-interest)—"racial" interests—become the prime determinants of sociopolitical attitudes and behavior. Professor Kevin Brown recognizes that "to have avoided replicating the message about the inferiority of African Americans in desegregation," the opinion would have had to articulate "how de jure segregation harmed Caucasians as well." (1993)

Race, then, becomes the most significant thing about the citizens of such a polity, for it is because of race that one does or does not count up as a full person—as someone entitled to settle, to confiscate, to be free, or as someone destined to be removed, to be expropriated, to be enslaved. As white, one is a citizen; as nonwhite, one is an anti-citizen. The two are inter defined. "Whites exist as a category of people subject to a double negative:

they are those who are not non-White," summarizes Ian Haney Lopez ("White by Law," 547).

And because race is inter subjectively constructed, so that its boundaries are more unstable than those of class or gender, battles will be fought over race and how people must be officially raced (Haney Lopez, White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race). Whites whose family trees have unappreciated roots will be terrified of losing their civic whiteness; borderline European immigrants such as the Irish will fight to have themselves classified as white; some blacks favored by the genetic lottery will seek to pass temporarily or eternally into the white citizenry.

The content and boundaries of whiteness will be shifting, politicized, the subject of negotiation and conflict, fought out in daily cultural practices and given official canonization in national narratives (histories, novels, movies) of racial superiority, segregation, and purity. Moreover, the racing of humanness entails that these political struggles will have an ontological aspect not present in European mappings—a politics of personhood.

Invisible humans unrecognized in the racial polity, blacks will also be engaged in a metaphysical contestation with whites whose own personhood is predicated on nonwhite, particularly black, sub personhood so that the apparently simple declaration on a civil rights protester's placard that " i am a man" is itself a threat to the ground rules of the racial order. But the bottom line, the ultimate payoff from structuring the polity around a racial axis, is what Du Bois once called " the wages of whiteness.

Particularly in the United States usually viewed as a Lockean polity, a polity of proprietors' whiteness is property, differential entitlement, as Derrick Bell, Cheryl Harris, George Lipsitz, and others have pointed out. The racial polity is by description exploitative. Whiteness is not merely full personhood, first-class citizenship, ownership of the aesthetically normative body, membership in the renowned culture; it is also material benefit, entitlement to disparity moral and legal and social treatment, and differential normal expectations of economic success.

For a Herrenvolk Lockeanism, whites' full self-ownership translates not merely into a proprietorship of their own bodies and labor but also into a share in the benefits resultant from the qualified self-ownership of the nonwhite population. The racial contract between whites is in effect an agreement to divide amongst them (as common white property) the proceeds of nonwhite subordination. Charles W. Mills asserted that " The rejection of the Racial Contract and the formed inequities of the white polity do not require one to leave the country but to speak out and struggle against the terms of the Contract.

So in this case, moral/political judgments about one's " consent" to the legitimacy of the political system and conclusions about one's effectively having become a signatory to the " contract," are apropos -- and so are judgments of one's culpability. By unquestioningly " going along with things," by accepting all the privileges of whiteness with concomitant complicity in the system of white supremacy, one can be said to have consented to Whiteness. " (1997, 107)