

Cornel west' views on liberalism essay



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West is of the view that blacks in the United States are different from those in other parts of the world because of the exceptional levels of unregulated and uncontrolled violence that is always directed towards them. In this regard, the black people are socialized to hate themselves, something the author terms as psychic violence, which is reinforced by the state apparatus. He suggests that the government has been collaborating with the owners of the means of production to exploit the black by forcing them to work without adequate compensation for over four-hundred years. The conditions that blacks are taken through are compared to terrorism since they are often lynched without sufficient reason while the state is reluctant to formulate strong policies to contain the problem. In addition, he underscores the fact that American barbarism is real since the state allows slave trade to go on while people are forced to work without pay, yet the government does not intervene (West 67).

Because of continuous oppression and inhuman maltreatment, blacks are forced to resort to crime, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, money laundering, and carjacking for survival. Unfortunately, America is perceived as a representative of democracy due to the structure of its government, the performance of the economy, establishment of a stable criminal justice system, enhanced education system, the development of the mass media, and the diverse culture. While other people view these as important rudiments of democracy, West is pessimistic in the sense that they simply help the white race to subjugate the blacks. He concludes that the biggest challenge facing the country in the twenty-first century is the problem of color line.

West goes on to suggest that economic structures have tremendous effects on the performance of blacks since they deny them an opportunity to participate in economic matters given the fact that modern politics can only be played with adequate money. In this case, he suggests the role of any government should be to prevent the excessive use of economic powers against the poor because influential economic institutions in the country serve the interests of the white race while the black race exists at the mercy of the rich. While commenting on the liberalist /conservative debate, he claims that people should go beyond the simple discussions and look at the real issues that face the poor who are mainly blacks in the country (Mahoney 43).

For instance, many blacks are faced with the major challenge of unemployment owing to the fact that the education system is unfavorable to them, as it simply presents opportunities to the white race. Various states report depressing statistics about the blacks as regards infant mortality rates, imprisonment, adolescent pregnancies, and violent crimes. The idea of freedom and the right to own property is a mirage for many blacks since the state does not provide equal opportunities as suggested by liberalists who claim that the main role of any political system is to facilitate an enabling environment that guarantees individual fulfillment.

West ends up claiming that the ongoing liberalist/conservative debate simply conceals the real problem facing the American society, which is a nihilistic threat to its existence. Apart from subjecting blacks to conditions that deprive them of their economic and political rights, they are taken through depressing situations that affect their physical and psychological health

(West 87). Depression, individual worthlessness, and social despair are some of the features that characterize the lives of black Americans.

West observes that supporters of liberal structuralism are wrong because of two major reasons, one being their overemphasis on economic and political problems implying they neglect cultural aspects, which are very important in understanding human relations. Structural liberals view people based on their egos and rational decisions implying people are simply driven by their selfish interests. Unfortunately, depressed individuals are concerned with the issue of identity and the sense of worth. Secondly, structural liberals cannot be relied upon because they fail to attach meaning to the lives of people, as they avoid talking about people's values and belief systems.

Conservatives are concerned with the way people interact in any given society, especially concerning their cultural aspects. Without the understanding of cultural issues, such as religion and value system, it would be difficult to comprehend their expectations, aspirations, and desires in life (Grady-Willis 12).

For structural liberals, the government is always perfect in what it does because it aims at achieving the public good, which is not always the case. The reality is the state exists to fulfill the interests of the owners of the means of production and its officials are a committee of the ruling class. To this extent, the views of West are accurate because structuralism does not facilitate the understanding of groups and their aspirations leading to violation of individual rights and freedoms. The mass media, the governmental machinery, and religion are some of the instruments

employed effectively in extending oppression against the blacks in the United States. The democratic principles do not help the minority blacks since they deny them an opportunity to participate in governmental decision-making.

Grady-Willis, Winston A. Challenging U. S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

Mahoney, James. The Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America. Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr, 2001. Print.

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