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Research Paper: Systemic Racism in America
CD770: Introduction to Racial Reconciliation – Professor Dr. Nathaniel Perez ATS

Introduction

The concept of Systemic Racism is arguably challenged as a construct in the United States. Most progressive theorists believe that systemic racism is in every facet of our cultural and societal existence. Whether in education, housing, policing, economic development and other domaines, racism, discrimination and partiality are present.

Historically, "in the late 1700s, Thomas Jefferson and the other white founders of the new United States advocated strongly an 'all men are created equal' perspective. Yet their broadly stated phrasing was hypocritical, for they intentionally and openly excluded African Americans, indigenous peoples and women from the scope of this ideal."[1] The challenge now is exposing what systemic racism is so that it might be reconciled because as Fegan purports"… the well entrenched Systemic Racism is not in the official tour of this society."[2] Those in authority, predominantly white, are uncomfortable with this truth and therefore attempt to keep it quiet. That being said, we must pointedly define systemic racism.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, generally, Systemic Racism is defined as, "… policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race." Specifically, Derrick Johnson, President of the NAACP defines systemic racism as, "…systems and structures that have procedures or processes that disadvantages African

1 Joe R. Feagin, *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2006), 34.
2 Feagin, *Systemic Racism*, 34.

Americans."[3] I argue that these definitions would not be necessary had we followed God's directive and defined humanity as it truly is; One Race!

In Genesis; **"***Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground…So, God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them."*[4] God did not speak of humanity in the context of 'Races'. God spoke of humanity only in the context of gender. Yet, German physician, naturalist, physiologist, and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach argued that there were five races. Considered to be the founder of the study of human beings and their natural racial variations, he proffered that racial categories were as such: Caucasian (white), Mongolian (yellow), Malayan (brown), Ethiopian (black) and American (red). He surmised that Caucasians were the original human form because their skulls had the most beautiful form and represented a "mean type" and because their skin color was white.[5] None of his arguments gave credence to what he proffered or presented as scientific evidence to prove the construct of different races. The conclusions only provided data related to humanities color tapestry. With understanding the nuances of race, one must be directed back to the beginning. Humanity began from the biblical framework within the garden where race was not a construct or a consideration. However, understanding that as the first nuance builds the foundation of understanding how race and racism must be positioned in order to unpack systemic racism and the need for humanity to be to itself. We must return to God's directive.

Systemic Racism's Reality in Education

3 N'dea Yancey Bragg, What is Systemic Racism? *USA Today,* June 15, 2020.
4 Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)
5 Nicolaas Rupke and Gerhard Lauer, *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach: Race and Natural History*. (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 2019), 271.

Though progress has been made, Systemic Racism, because of the color of one's skin and who's in power, remains very prevalent in our contemporary time. We see it for example in the area of education. Historically, racist scientific theories were used to try to prove black intellectual inferiority, as well as laws passed to prevent black people from learning to read and write. The ironic contradiction is clear; if black people's intellectual inferiority can be shown scientifically, why would it be necessary to pass laws to prevent them from learning to read and write?[6] These laws are no longer covertly applied but are overtly enacted. After Brown v Board of Education outlawed segregation in public schools, the Federal Government subsidized the development of suburbs with policies that Excluded black people. The result is that for many years housing patterns have been a major reason that schools are becoming more segregated than they were in 1954.[7]

Another way systemic racism was used against people of color in education was through the curriculum. For centuries students of color have sat in classrooms never seeing their culture, history or language. The life, love and creativity of history has only been presented to students as the White man's visions, dreams and contributions.[8] W.E.B. Du Bois said this in 1920, "… through emphasis and omission, children have long been educated through a Eurocentric lens." Therefore, no matter the ethnicity of the student, the education taught had only to do with white society. Again, though laws have changed and emphasis has been placed upon the value of all students in the classroom, the likelihood of a significant change in curriculum is none. Just the data of the teaching force of the United States holds the present curriculum in place. The

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6 Robbie W.C. Tourse, Johnnie Hamilton-Mason, Nancy J. Wewiorski, *Systemic Racism In The United States: Scaffolding As Social Construction*. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 11.

7 Tourse, *Systemic Racism In The United States*, 12.

8 Bree Picower, *Reading, Writing and Racism*. (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2016), 13.

teaching force of the United States is over 80% White, and almost half of US schools do not have a single teacher of Color on staff, even though students of Color now outnumber their White counterparts.[9] We can shout out for justice as much as we desire, but until more people of color go into the teaching profession the integration of curriculum to educate students equitably will continue to be unlikely. As a black teacher, I advocate for adjustments in curriculum to educate our children equitably. Though I am one of only Four black teachers in our entire high school. It remains important to advocate even when the numbers and odds are against you.

Conclusion

Conclusively, As Latasha Morrison entitled her book, we must work to "Be the Bridge" that reconciles us to God and to each other when appropriate. She implores us to help those in power to become aware of the truth of their oppression. As she spoke to a white couple in the context of awareness, "Diversity doesn't disrupt systemic racism."[10]

She then shares that once aware, the guilty is invited to empathize. For awareness of the truth is useless without acknowledgment of our complicity or its effects on us.[11] Next Confession must take place for healing and a turn towards change. In the context of education, one needs to see and confess that the student of color needs to be taught the value of themselves. Not just the value of others, specifically whites. Then finally, participate in advocating for change to bring reconciliation and harmony to the whole. Doing these things step by step will bridge the gap and cause teachers, administrators, principals and the like, to work together in developing curriculum and education that would benefit all students not just white students.

Bibliography

9 Picower, *Reading, Writing and Racism. 21.*

10 Latasha Morrison, *Be The Bridge*. (Colorado Springs, Col: WaterBrook, 2019), 40.

11 Morrison, *Be The Bridge. 67*

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