

## RACISM IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY: IS IT REALISM IN MODERN JAMAICA?

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### ABSTRACT

Western philosophy has been brought to us as ideal by a specific master race of people. These people were the Greeks. This was noted as a fact because it was believed that no other race had the “capacity” or the “education” to think or reason as the Greek man. This paper examines the issue of racism and evidence exists of its currency in contemporary Jamaica, with reference to its international currency. The principal aim of the white man (race, including women) was the creation of the condition for separating the non-white person from his/her ancestral personality and culture and implanting in them a mind of servility, domesticity, self-hate and inferiority which made them the perfect fodder to feed their insatiable greed and lust for more of anything held valuable through exploitation of others. European ideas and policies towards the enslaved Africans, Indians and Asians were nothing short of brutal and inhumane. What the concept of skin pigmentation has done to civilization is to destroy man’s innate capabilities, retard creativity, create confusions, and perpetuate exploitive personal agendas and warped ideals instead of widening options equity and for all to attain their fullest potential. There is evidence that racism is in the Jamaica social consciousness and that this is expressed in terms of social exclusion.

**KEYWORDS:** Classism, Constructivism, Europeans, Racism, Slavery, Social Consciousness, Jamaica.

### INTRODUCTION

*Racism is one of the most profoundly important and disturbing traditions to have arisen in Western philosophy in general and Western political philosophy in particular. Racism begins with the need of one people to exploit another and the development of an ideology to justify this exploitation. When logic and truth stand in the way of even the most spurious racist*

*dogma, they are simply brushed aside. Racism not only outlived slavery but took on a dynamic trans-systematic life of its own, owing to Europeans perpetuation in various forms of the core value of their relation with the non-white i.e. White supremacy. (Jan Carew, Rape of Paradise pg. 211)*

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Western philosophy has been brought to us as ideal by a specific master race of people. These people were the Greeks. This was noted as a fact because it was believed that no other race had the "capacity" or the "education" to think or reason as the Greek man. As such for the past 2500 years' people in the western world have been dominated by a particular school of thought entitled by Charles Mills as the Racial Contract. This contract describes the continued period of white supremacy over non-white peoples. This philosophy has been so pervasive that it has justified slavery, the eradication of the Native American Indian and Jews, the drugging of the Chinese and the bombing of the Islamic nations and Afghans. It is most ironic as for centuries; we have been fed on an intellectual diet of the glories of that period while its surreptitious crimes, its monstrous cruelties, its racism, sexism and the genocidal holocaust it unleashed have been covered or ignored. If we had paid more attention to the **dark** side of the Renaissance, then perhaps Hitler would have never risen. Hitler's actions were clearly indicative of racism and so too were apartheid; slavery; segregation; social exclusion; stratification; classism, and ghettoization. This paper examines the issue of racism and evidence exists of its currency in contemporary Jamaica, with reference to its international currency.

## **DISCUSSION**

Ebenstein and Ebenstein clarify for us the western values and outlook. They stated that the three Cardinal Principles of the western world are the belief in reason (credited to the Greeks), Monotheism or belief in one God and the Christian conception of Love (Love thy neighbour as you, and all men are created equally). Western values cherish democracy, freedom, Christianity, political, social and economic rights, civilized behaviour, and freedom from discrimination are it ethnic,

racial, religious or political. They go further to argue that not all European nations have consistently demonstrated this western outlook and that Nazi Germany provides the most glaring antithetical example (pg. 4). This is in regards to the Germans brutal treatment, imprisonment and eradication of the Jews in 1939-1945 in pursuit of Hitler's pure white or Aryan race agenda. This period of history is by far the most contradictory as the Jews were the closest set of people to the 'white' classification that was so brutally decimated. Many historians, scholars and philosophers argue that Adolph Hitler's treatment of the Jews was the most outstanding as technically Jews were white people with the same physical characteristics of many Germans and also Jews shared the second cardinal principle of the belief in one God. The third principle-The Christian conception of love proved to be a direct and explicit contradiction not only in light of the Jews but also all non-white people. It however would seem a bigger deal in regards to the Jews as it must be remembered that the Africans, Indians and Asians were not viewed as people but mere property and sometimes they were even equated to animals or beasts of burdens. More often than not we have been lead to believe that racism and racially structured discrimination have been deviations from the norm. Mills states "The white power broker cannot see themselves doing anything wrong by practicing racial discrimination, as it was their way of life."

When it is put this way it becomes more understandable the treatment of non-whites by whites, however their intellectual myopic stance (cognitive short-sightedness) is not excusable. Ebenstein and Ebenstein failed to point out the extreme harshness that was dealt to the non-whites at the hands of those who claimed to follow and practice Western values and outlook. The finger is pointed solely on the Germans whilst the Spanish, Dutch, French,

British and Portuguese were just as guilty or perhaps even guiltier. Jan Carew's *Rape of Paradise* (pg. 232) reads that Modern colonialism began with the holocaust against Native Americans, 12-20 million who died in the first forty (40) years. The genocidal pace increased with the Africans, a hundred (100) million who were uprooted from their homeland and more than half (1/2) of who died during the centuries of Atlantic Slave Trade. Also additional countless deaths of Asian people as colonialism spread its tentacles across the globe.

The principal aim of the white man (race, including women) was the creation of the condition for separating the non-white person from his/her ancestral personality and culture and implanting in them a mind of servility, domesticity, self-hate and inferiority which made them the perfect fodder to feed their insatiable greed and lust for more of anything held valuable through exploitation of others. European ideas and policies towards the enslaved Africans, Indians and Asians were nothing short of brutal and inhumane. According to Clinton Hutton, in *Manufacturing Violence Shaping Social Psychology* (pg. 3), the construction and maintenance of the plantation system in its slavery epoch were achieved with the use of a carefully planned out and persistently applied violence, psychological warfare and racist propaganda. Fredrich Douglas postulates that the psychological impact of plantocratic violence had a more profound effect on black people than its physical effects on them. Douglas holds that though the physical cruelties are indeed sufficiently revolting it is only when the slave is viewed as moral, intellectual and human can we adequately understand the enormity of slavery.

In Carew's *Rape of Paradise* (p. 253), the Spanish conquistadors, settlers, slave hunters had in their employ disease, hunger and

despair like harbingers of the Apocalypse raining death and destruction upon the innocent heads of most of the inhabitants of the Greater Antilles. Carew maintains that the holocaust and annihilation that engulfed the Tainos of the Caribbean archipelago has been deliberately glossed over, ignored, under explored (researcher) and rationalized as an inevitable phenomenon in European expansion.

"The hospitable Tainos did not suspect for a moment that the doomsday clock had moved dangerously close to the hour of oblivion for them."

Columbus like many white men of that period claimed the Indians as well as Africans had no religion and that it was their duty as God fearing men to Christianize the pagans. This was one of the instants in which they attempted to justify their actions by use of the bible. Ironically anyone who dared not accept the teachings of the white man was gelded, chopped, lynched or wickedly beaten into submission. How is it that one can claim to be Christian, while being involved in the dichotomy of upholding all Christian principles while destroying and obliterating others through systematic bigotry and racism?

Hutton explains that the harsh treatment of the non-whites was normal as it was the only way they knew to keep them forever submissive to white power. The white power (supremacy) is a justification of racism by particular race over another and there is no empirical basis upon which this is done; but it is predicated on preference, selfishness and immorality. William Dubois' work on the Philadelphia Negro as well as other publication empirically proved that racism is not scientifically based and is more a social construction than in science. DuBois accounts with racism are examples of the subjectivity of the concept and prove its humanity instead of the claim of positivism. In fact, he went into the science of racism and

empirically establish its subjectivity (Zuckerman, 2004; Katz, M. et al. 1998; Bourne, 2006). Bourne writes that:

Although he was experiencing segregation and blatant racism, he was still able to surround himself with educated African-Americans and liberal whites who were instrumental in awakening a social consciousness within him that influenced his life thereafter. He later posits that, "I was tossed boldly into the 'Negro Problem'. I suddenly came to a region where the world was split into white and black halves, and where the darker half was held back by race prejudice and legal bonds, as well as by deep ignorance and dire poverty" (DuBois, 1976, 108). This may have begun the social consciousness of his race and may even have propelled that willingness that he displayed in using himself as that vehicle for the black and white halves of society—that there is social equality in competency of the races irrespective of their skin pigmentation. (Bourne, 2006, 5).

While DuBois was at Harvard University, he distanced himself from the system as he felt the purpose of him being there was to "improve the condition of the race as a whole" (McKissack, 1990, 30). DuBois was so obdurate about social segregation, exclusion and racism that while at Harvard, he chose not to socialize with many of the other Harvard students, choosing instead to spend his time with the African-Americans in Boston, encasing himself in a completely coloured world. It was during that period that DuBois solidified his belief that education was the cure for his people. This undoubtedly would have been as a result of his early socialization with his mother and which would justify why, he believed that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the seas" (Weinberg, 81). As such, Dr. DuBois theorized that education was the only way the African-

Americans could save themselves from poverty, exclusion and racism—could this be an explanation for monographs such as 'The Talented Tenth', 'The Souls of Black Folk', 'The Philadelphia Negro', 'Dark Princess', 'Colour and Democracy', 'Black Reconstruction in America', 'Black Folk Then and Now', 'Darkwater' and 'John Brown' (Bourne, 2006, 6) Furthermore, in Tony Monteiro's view (in Bourne, 2006, 15): In retrospect, DuBois's scientific effort has prevailed over both Herbert Spencer's and Francis Galton's; that is, the research programme of scientific racism. This in spite of the fact that scientific racism continues to rear its ugly head, as revealed in the publication of *The Bell Curve*. DuBois's emphasis upon class and social structure as the primary causal factors of social behaviour, social action and social conflict, subsequently propelled a tradition in American social science that stretches from

Franz Boas, to the Chicago School of Sociology and up till the present. Professor E. Digby Baltzell argues that Franz Boas in *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) was echoing the findings of DuBois when he wrote that "the traits of the American Negro are adequately explained on the basis of his history and his social status...without falling back upon the theory of hereditary inferiority." DuBois's historical research, beginning with *Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1895), through *Black Reconstruction* (1935), *Black Folk Then and Now* (1939) and *The World and Africa* (1947) laid a materialist foundation in American and African historiography. His masterwork in philosophy *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) remains a central achievement in moving American philosophy beyond the strictures of pragmatism and positivism.

"Wednesday 26, 1756, Derby an enslaved Blackman was caught singing gospel in his native tongue, was flogged, seasoned and another slave was made to defecate in his

mouth and the gagged while his mouth was full" (Hutton's Manufacturing Violence Shaping Social Psychological pg. 3). Native American women were treated as if they were mindless sexual playthings, breeders of slaves, household and field labourers and beasts of burden. Carew's title Rape of Paradise is significant as like a rape the Europeans savagely stripped the islands of the New World, Africa and the Asian continent of everything that was theirs. The Chinese holocaust created by the Japanese during the Second World War is so unprecedented in history. For fourteen years (14 yrs.) the Japanese wreaked havoc upon the Chinese killing no less than 35 million and enslaving Chinese women. However, a great deal of attention seems to be repeatedly paid to the Jewish holocaust, automatically attempting to elevate one evil above another apparently colour of skin trumps the obvious and dubious cataclysmic content of that era.

The rape of Vietnam by western powers, which occurred in 1888 when French Troops established colonial rule in Vietnam, is regarded as the most brutal and exploitative colonial regimes in Asia including slavery and other forms of oppression. The weight of the argument inevitably leads to the conclusion that the Jewish Holocaust of the 1930s was brutal, animalistic, and inhumane. It was shocking especially because the Jews were white people with similar beliefs and practices as the Germans having existed in that society and culture. People will argue a number of reasons why Hitler would have wanted to decimate the Jews. However, one fact recorded by most Historians is that Hitler and other Germans felt undermined by the Jews, whom they believed were not truly white people and who held two thirds (2/3s) of the positions of prominence in German society at that time such as: judges, business men, civil servants, doctors, and lawyers-Marlon Kaplan's-Between Dignity and Despair (pg. 3).Regardless of why

they did it, the act is not pardonable however to make it seem more important an evil than any other is also wrong. Factual, Historical and Ideological evidence of European policies towards Native Americans, Africans and Asians proved that Nazi Germany is not the most glaring example of renunciation of ethical worldviews on which western systems of values are based. This anomaly which undergirds the era of discovery, colonial expansion and slavery. The beginning and perpetration of the ideological allowing for justification of the exploitation of millions of people of colour. Therefore, the only value/s of racism and results thereof are segregation, division, separation, identity-crisis, social-disillusion, social inequality and lack of equity.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, forced labour and the destruction of non-European cultures and civilizations are subsequently described as an inevitable consequence in a civilizing mission. All colonizers, no matter how atrocious their deeds, are portrayed as cultural bringers and the divine instruments of a Christian God and at the same time the colonized people are depicted as infidels, pagans, savages and lesser beings. The great difference lays in the fact that one man's complexion is a shade lighter or darker than the other. What the concept of skin pigmentation has done to civilization is to destroy man's innate capabilities, retard creativity, create confusions, and perpetuate exploitive personal agendas and warped ideals instead of widening options equity and for all to attain their fullest potential. Among the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century are **Racism**, its legacy of destroying, dividing and providing personal gratification over practicality and empiricism. Some people are so desperately trying to define themselves, working effortlessly to prove superiority that they have missed the value of equality in difference. So when Michael Barnett

examines 'Intra-Racial Encounters in Defining African Identity in the Americas' this is another challenge in the racism discourse that we have not comprehensively addressed this concept and that it is alive in today's plantation societies (Barnett, 2003). In the Caribbean and Latin America, particularly Jamaica, racism is equally alive as one's thirst for water and a desire to have sex by adults. The ghettoization of the mind-set of many black people in Jamaica is an indicator of racism and its continued leverage over them by a superior class, the high skinned coloured Jamaicans who precede over the proverbial plantocracy.

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