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Unpacking the Race Talk

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Abstract

Race is one of the most contested topics. With the political victory of Barack Obama as the first African American president, discussions about racial issues in the United States have surfaced to the forefront of political debates. Yet, critics have argued that there is not much discussion about race given its significance in the history of this country. Informed by critical race theory, this paper examines the underlying reasons explaining the silence of many people about race. It goes on to examine race through a mosaic lens, pointing out various factors directly connected to it, such as racial identity politics, racism, multiracialism, and White hegemony. Finally, this paper analyzes the manner in which socially constructed racial stereotypes have contributed to and have been used to justify the poor socioeconomic situation and marginalization of People of Color, including linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Keywords

race, racism, White hegemony, linguistically and culturally diverse students, transformative educational and social change, critical race theory

Race is one of the most contested topics. With the political victory of Barack Obama as the first African American president, discussions about racial issues in the United States have surfaced to the forefront of political debates. Yet, critics have argued that there is not much discussion about race given its

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significance in the history of this country. The current U.S. attorney general, Eric Holder, for example, stated, "Though race-related issues continue to occupy a significant portion of our political discussion, and though there remain many unresolved racial issues in this nation, we, average Americans, simply do not talk enough with each other about race" (Holder, as cited in Early & Kennedy, 2010, p. 224). Therefore, expanding the discussion about race seems to be a very important first step in any effort aimed at exploring (a) its multifaceted aspects and (b) the manner in which it has been used to limit the life chances of people, especially those who have been marginalized because of their racial background.

Informed by critical race theory (CRT; Bell, 2004; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gillborn, 2008), this paper explores the underlying reasons explaining the silence of many people about race. It goes on to examine race through a mosaic lens, pointing out various factors directly connected to it, such as racial identity politics, racism, multiracialism, and the hegemony of Whiteness. Finally, this paper analyzes the manner in which socially constructed racial stereotypes have contributed to, and have been used to justify, the poor socioeconomic situation and marginalization of People of Color, particularly the poor ones.

It is worth noting at the outset that in this paper, various racial signifiers are used to refer to People of Color. Specifically, I interchangeably use the word Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and biracial/multiracial people, also called mixed people, to refer to People of Color. Because of White supremacy and antimiscegenation laws, people who are mixed are often called Blacks or People of Color, regardless of their biracial and/or multiple identities (Dalmage, 2000, 2004; Davis, 2001). I further discuss this issue later in the paper.

Examining the Race Talk

In the most recent history of racial eruption and conflicts between Whites and People of Color in the United States, the brutal Rodney King beating by some Los Angeles police in 1992 brought race talk to the forefront of the U.S. mainstream public discourse. Similarly, in 1994, race talk suddenly resurfaced in the American political debates after the former American football player O. J. Simpson was acquitted of murdering his former wife. These two high profile legal cases, among others, have shaped the United States' recent history of race relations between Whites and People of Color in profound ways.

Public intellectuals, particularly African American intellectuals, often refer to these cases to talk about race and racism in their scholarly work. For

example, in his book *Race Matters*, which was published approximately a year after the inhumane beating of Rodney King, West (1993) referred to this racial tragedy in the opening chapter of his book to build his argument as to why race matters, particularly in the United States. Many other African American public intellectuals, like hooks (1997, 2003) and Dyson (2004), have also referred to Rodney King's case to engage people in discursive analysis about race and racism, particularly racial injustice, to which African Americans and other racially marginalized groups have been subjected.

Likewise, the controversial case of an African American man, Troy Davis, added fuel to the race talk. Davis was executed on September 21, 2011, after being in jail for more than a decade. He was accused of shooting a police officer in 1989. According to popular opinion, Davis's case was nothing but a legalized lynching. His murder and that of other young Black men, such as Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Oscar Grant, and Ramarley Graham, by racist police officers, has brought to the fore the race talk.

Moreover, the brutal murder of a 17- year-old African American boy, Trayvon Martin, by George Zimmerman, a self-appointed head of neighborhood watch in Sanford, Florida, brought race talk to the forefront of national public discussions revolved around racial justice in the United States. According to what was reported in the conversation between Trayvon and his girlfriend, Mr. Zimmerman followed him and eventually confronted this boy, asking him what he was doing walking suspiciously in the neighborhood. After a few minutes of exchange of words and physical encounter between the two, George shot Trayvon dead. Apparently, the Sanford police tried to cover up this murder for about a month, which led to the resignation of Sanford's chief police, Bill Lee. Martin's murder generated many protests across the United States and beyond, and has put into question institutions such as the U.S. legal system as a whole and the Sanford police in particular.

As a social construct, race has much to do with the way many people in society are treated. Race plays a central role in the way many people have been perceived and treated in society. For people of African descent, the social construction of their race is fundamentally linked to the root causes of their ill treatment in society (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2003, 2010; Tatum, 2007). Race influences the way many of us see and define ourselves and read the world around us. Yet, race talk, although it often occurs in our bedroom, dining room, and living room, makes many of us feel uncomfortable, especially when directly confronted with it. Holder stated,

> It (race) is an issue we have never been at ease with, and given our nation's history, this is in some ways understandable. And yet, if we are to make progress in this area, we must feel comfortable enough with one another and tolerant of each other,

to have frank conversations about the racial matters that continue to divide us. (Holder, as cited in Early & Kennedy, 2010, pp. 224-225)

Moreover, people might be subsumed by and their personal selves might be wrapped up in race, yet they try to avoid engaging others publicly in discussions revolved around racial issues. Furthermore, while many people might feel safe talking about race in their private sphere with family members, close friends, and colleagues, they are afraid of talking about it in schools, churches, or in other settings. Even though we know race matters (West, 1993, 1999), we often slide it under the rug, for we fear that if we dare talk about race, we might be seen as a threat to those who have used it to "justify and preserve their privileged positions" (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2011, p. 121). It seems as if people feel more comfortable or safer talking about race in private settings than doing so publicly, as public discussions revolved around race often make certain people uncomfortable, especially those who are racially privileged and/or are unwilling to challenge the White status quo, which has been oppressive to People of Color, particularly the poor ones. Whether it occurs in one's living room, the race talk in which people are engaged fundamentally reflects the reality of the macro socioeconomic and political structure of this country, which has been historically dominated by White males (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

Race has been used as an ideological tool to label People of Color as inferior, unintelligent, savage, or uncivilized, in order to dominate and exploit them (hooks, 2003). Racial superiority theories, which are based on faulty, manipulated scientific experiments, are nothing but ideological propaganda aimed at maintaining socioeconomic and political control over racially marginalized "others." Racial categories, which are grounded in these faulty racial superiority theories, have led to the labeling of People of Color as lazy, thief, violent, savage, and uncivilized (Asante, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Such labels, which have been circulated and normalized through the mass media, have often led to the marginalized educational and socioeconomic positions of People Color.

It is worth noting here that racial superiority theories are not and should not be limited to eugenics, for throughout slavery and the colonial era, Western religion and philosophy were also used and continue to be used as an ideological weapon to institutionalize White supremacy while denigrating Blackness or anything that is African (Asante, 2011; Mazama, 2007; Zuberi, 2003). Consequently, Whiteness has been constructed as the standard of beauty, purity, innocence, and safety, whereas what is associated with Blackness or Brownness is often represented as ugly, negative, and dangerous (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; hooks, 2003). To continue my analysis of racial issues, I now turn to CRT, which informs such analysis.

CRT: A Brief Overview

For the last three decades or more, scholars of CRT have critically and thoroughly examined the political and ideological agenda informing social construction of race and the institutionalization of racism, and their long-standing negative effects on People of Color (Bell, 2002, 2004; Delgado, 1999, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Gillborn, 2005, 2008). Originated in the legal field (Bell, 1976, 1980, 1992; Crenshaw, 2002; Delgado, 1996, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 1995), CRT has crossed and been used in many disciplines, such as education and ethnic studies, among others, to examine the effects of the social construction of race on People of Color (Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Leonardo, 2009; Solórzano, 1998; Stovall, 2006; Yosso, 2002, 2005, 2006).

Specifically, critical race theorists have looked at the manner in which race as a social construct has been utilized to limit the life chances of People of Color through institutionalized discriminatory practices preventing many from having access to well-resourced schools with highly trained, and culturally and racially sensitive teachers; well-paid jobs; quality health care; and decent housing, to name a few (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). These scholars have also examined the microaggression, a form of "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1990) of which People of Color have been targeted because of the sociohistorical misrepresentation of their race (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gillborn, 2008; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Racially motivated forms of microaggression have caused many emotional and psychological damages to People of Color. For example, many highly qualified professionals of color, including professors of color, working in predominantly White institutions, have suffered various forms of racially motivated microaggression.

For example, while talking at a leadership training that I attended, a female dean of color, who was a guest speaker at this training, shared that, as a result of a disagreement she had with a White colleague, she received an insulting email from this colleague saying that she is at the deanship position because she is Black. Likewise, I, as a male faculty of color, have been victim of some form of microaggression. For instance, while waiting for a colleague of mine to go out with for lunch, a White man walked by and asked me if I were one of the janitors working in the building. The assumption is that this Black female dean could not possibly be qualified to be at this high administrative position, nor could I be a university professor. We were both judged based on our racial background and phenotypes. The scholarly work of critical race theorists can help one understand the degree to which race plays an important role in the manner in which People of Color are treated in society.

Limitations of CRT

Despite the appeal and the relevance of the work of critical race theorists to many scholars and educators interested in understanding the ways and the degree to which institutional racism has limited the life chances of People of Color, these theorists have been criticized for not including in their analysis class-based oppression stemming from capitalism. Specifically, scholars such as Darder and Torres (as cited in Darder, 2011) argue that, while critical race theorists deserve credit for unveiling structurally race-based discrimination that historically marginalized groups have been facing in the United States, they have failed to incorporate into their analysis class-based discrimination to which both People of Color and poor Whites have been subject in this capitalist society. Darder and Torres state,

> One of our major concerns with the use of critical race theory to buttress educational-political debates of racialized oppression or racism is directly linked to the use of "race" as the central unit of analysis. Coupled with an uncompromising emphasis on "race" is the conspicuous absence of a systematic discussion of class and, more importantly, a substantive critique of capitalism. (as cited in Darder, 2011, pp. 110-111)

Similarly, Cole (2009) challenges critical race theorists arguing that any serious analysis of race and racism should also include a critique of the capitalist system, which White dominant and supremacist groups have used to maintain both race- and class-based inequalities. These critics contend that White privileges and the interests of the capitalist class converge. Therefore, a critical analysis of race, racism, and White privilege without situating such analysis in the larger context of the capitalist system is limited in that it leaves out equally important forms of oppression like capitalism.

Given the global disaster that the capitalist system has been facing, particularly in the recent years, the Marxist critics of CRT are timely more than ever. While race and racism are important issues that deserve much attention, a critical analysis of these issues should not be detached from class and classism, as all forms of oppression intersect (Crenshaw, 2002). As McLaren (2005), Scatamburlo-D'Annibale (2010), Klein (2007), Malott (2008), and San Juan (2009), among others, illuminate in their work, race and class constitute a matrix of domination and oppression, particularly in the U.S. capitalist system—a system that has been controlled by a minority of oligarchs. Therefore, echoing these authors, I argue that a Marxist analysis of the intersection of race and class can help one better understand the ways and the extent to which these two forms of oppression affect people, particularly poor People of Color and poor Whites.

Unpacking the Fluidity of Race and Racial Identity

With regard to race and racial identity, it is worth noting that depending on the countries and geographical locations, people are racially labeled differently. For example, indigenous people in Canada and other People of Color are called "visible minorities" and have been marginalized (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2011). Similarly, in Japan, people who are not part of the elite groups and whose members do not comprise the majority of Japanese are marginalized (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2011). Those in power have strived to uphold a racially pure heritage, which they deem vital for the maintenance of Japanese racial hegemony (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2011). In Brazil, people are racially categorized differently than in the United States. This is due to the differences rooted in the history of these two countries. For example, whereas in the United States antimiscegenation laws did not end until 1967, in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, interracial marriages have been permitted and miscegenation has not been legally prohibited (Davis, 2001; Sansone, 2003). This does not mean, however, there is no racial prejudice in Brazil, because there is. Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous people are the most marginalized groups there (Sansone, 2003).

The racialization of people (directly linked to social, economic, and political hierarchy factors) has been happening for a long time. However, it is worth pointing out that during the time of Charles Darwin, for example, racial categories were based on phenotypes or skin colors, but were not socially constructed (Spickard, 1992). Decades later, to dominate, subjugate, and exploit people, race has been socially constructed, leading to unequal power relations between people who are constructed as Whites and those who are labeled as People of Color. Such labels, grounded in stereotypical binary distinctions, for example, between Blacks and Whites, serve to maintain White hegemony. This hegemony does not recognize the multiple racial identities of people, particularly those who do not necessarily fit in the Black and White racial binary. For example, people who are biracial or multiracial have been either called Black or arbitrarily lumped in the category of "People of Color," regardless of their White heritage. I argue this type of labeling aims at standardizing Whiteness, privileging those considered "real" Whites (Davis, 2001; Wise, 2010).

In the United States, people who are half Black and half White are called Black. Similarly, those who are half White and half Asian are called People of Color. Their White heritage is therefore made invisible. I ask, "Why can't the biracial identity of those who are half Black and half White be fully acknowledged?" As Spickard (1992) argued, "Mixed persons should

not be regarded as black or white, but as black and white" (p. 21). In order for Pickard's wish to become a reality, people's negative attitude and racial prejudice toward biracial and multiracial people would need to be changed, as well as policies and laws that often lead to the racial isolation and socio-economic marginalization of these groups. The 2010 U.S. census alone, which has allowed people to choose different ethnic and racial identity boxes, will not help us get there. The full acknowledgment and acceptance of people's biracial or multiple racial identities are contingent upon a profound shift in people's prejudiced attitude and actions as well as transformative changes in racially biased policies and laws that privilege Whites over People of Color.

Despite the ideological complexity of race and especially the harmful effects it has had on the well-being of many racial groups described above, many people are extremely polite using silence as a coping mechanism or the color-blind discourse to deny the socioeconomic, educational, and political implications of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Gallagher, 2007). It is important to talk about race because people are treated poorly and inequitably due to their racial background and racialized subordinate positions in society. And this has been happening for centuries now.

It is worth noting that People of Color do talk about race, for they have been directly affected for centuries by the social and historical construction of their race (hooks, 2003). Those whose race is not a problem in the sense that the sociohistorical construction of their race does not cause them psychological and socioeconomic pains usually remain silent about it. It seems that unless something directly affects us, we tend to remain silent about it, not showing enough care or concern.

As a prime example, conservative, White, middle- or upper-class people might not show much interest in battling institutional racism and various forms of oppression linked to it because they are not directly affected by it. Among these groups of Whites, one finds those who have allowed themselves to be absorbed by their White privileges to the point where they have become insensitive to the misery of People of Color and even poor Whites. Yosso (2006) argues, "For the most part, White privilege seems invisible. Those who experience everyday benefits and other unearned White privileges may not recognize that the systemic oppression of People of Color enables these institutionalized racial preferences" (Yosso, 2006, p. 6). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are privileged Whites, such as Gillborn (2008), Kendall (2006), McIntosh (2007), and Wise (2010), who do speak and write about White privileges, and take action to battle institutional racism.

Race and Its Political and Socioeconomic Implications

For racially marginalized groups, their race usually comes to the fore of political debate especially when one of their members achieves something extraordinary, like being the first person of color to win a highly prestigious award or being the first one to be elected to a high position, like in the case of Supreme Justice Sonia Sotomayor—the first Puerto Rican woman ever to be appointed to such a high position in U.S. legal and political history. It is important to talk about race, for doing so can help us have a sound understanding of racism and the manner in which it has affected the life of many racially disfranchised communities.

The politics of silence about race needs to be challenged and denounced, for such politics directly or indirectly, purposely or not, contributes to maintain the White status quo. Worse, this politics has prevented many of us from finding ways to live respectfully, peacefully, and equitably together as human beings on this planet. From personal experience and observation, I have learned that those benefiting from and thus supporting this status quo often attempt to silence the voices of those who want to engage others in an open and honest dialogue about racial justice.

Why be afraid of talking about race when the livelihood, and educational and professional successes or failures of many people are often linked to racial factors? Race is pervasive in that it permeates almost every facet of our life and everything we are involved in. It is an identity marker that is visible and therefore cannot be denied or hidden. Race is linked to many things, such as one's identities, privileges, socioeconomic and political power, or racial marginalization. In other words, people often connect one's personal and social identities to one's race.

Likewise, one's socioeconomic and political positions, whether subordinate or not, are often linked to one's race. It does not have to be this way, but social and historical construction of race has made it so. Such a construction is not innocent nor has it happened in a vacuum. It has been well-thought out by those who historically have been in power and have strived to maintain the racial status quo for their own interests (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). They have constructed certain races through positive lenses while denigrating other races, again for their individual interests.

From my standpoint, there are no such things as superior or inferior races. These are historical and social constructs put in place to privilege certain groups of human beings over others. For example, there is no scientific evidence that Whites are superior to, smarter than, or more intelligent than

Blacks, Latinos, or Native Americans. Yet, many writers and so-called scientists, such as Jensen (1969), Herrnstein and Murray (1996), and Gobineau (2010), have used their knowledge to ideologically brainwash people to believe that certain racial groups, such as Whites, are more intelligent, smarter, or better than others. Consequently, those who have been labeled inferior or unintelligent and whose race (as socially constructed) has been looked down upon have been pushed to the margins in society. Race alone does not automatically lead to horrible socioeconomic, educational, and political conditions of some groups in society. Racism, which is profoundly and directly linked to the web of racial construction of People of Color, constitutes the root cause of these horrible conditions.

Race and Racism

Race and racism are interwoven and constitute the underlying forces leading to divisions among Whites and People of Color. They are also the root causes of the ill treatment, and poor socioeconomic and educational conditions of People of Color. For instance, because of institutional racism, the way People of Color and other marginalized groups have been represented and treated is usually negative. Through the mainstream media and major Hollywood movies, they have been portrayed as violent, irresponsible, lazy, drug dealers, and socially unfit (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). This negative image has led to both overt and subtle racial discrimination against People of Color, including biracial and multiracial people. For example, despite the U.S. Supreme Court's overturning of antimiscegenation laws in *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) and the federal passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, biracial and Black people, and other marginalized groups such as African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans continue to experience oppressive forms of racism, such as being denied loans, and being forced to live in segregated neighborhoods and attend schools that are underfunded (Dalmage, 2004; Kozol, 2006; Tatum, 2007).

In his breakthrough book *Racists Without Racism*, Bonilla-Silva (2003) eloquently demonstrates how racism is the root cause of the inhumane socioeconomic, psychological, and political conditions of People of Color. Drawing on empirical data and through deep and careful analysis of such data, Bonilla-Silva unveils the corporate lies embedded in the dominant ideology long put in place to mislead people into believing that slavery is over, that the Jim Crow era is long gone, and that the conditions in which Black people live are not as bad as they used to be. Vigorously countering this view, Bonilla-Silva argues that racism has merely taken a different, more subtle form, but its negative effects on Black and Brown people remain the same, if not worse than before. He contends that since the Jim Crow era where derogatory terms, such as

nigger, were overtly used to isolate and cause psychological damage to Black people, euphemisms have been used to continue insulting and humiliating Black people. Bonilla-Silva (2003) goes on to point out that new racist strategies have been institutionalized to continue discriminating against People of Color (p. 3).

Bonilla-Silva (2003) states that these racist tactics stem from a new racial ideology, which he calls color-blind racism. "Color-blind racism became the dominant racial ideology as the mechanisms and practices for keeping blacks and other racial minorities 'at the bottom of the hell' changed" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 24). I share this view; I believe that the socioeconomic and political conditions of People of Color are inextricably linked to the current racial order that generally privileges Whites over other racial and ethnic groups.

Because of many unearned privileges that are attached with being White, both liberals and conservatives have been trying to maintain the so-called purity of the White race. According to the one drop rule, one can be 1% Black and 99% White, but one will be labeled Black, for Blackness symbolizes constant struggle for survival in this world while Whiteness represents a universal passport that can open many doors (Davis, 2001). As noted earlier, over a century ago, racist theorists, such as De Gobineau (2010), have theorized that Blacks are genetically inferior to Whites. This racist theory has been renewed in the so-called modern and postmodern time by the authors of *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1996). These ideologues have strived to continuously convince people that Blacks are genetically deficient, incompetent, and lazy, so that they can justify the poor socioeconomic, educational, and political conditions of Black or Brown people and maintain White hegemony. This form of hegemony has been institutionalized to preserve the White status quo privileging Whites over non-Whites. Specifically, White hegemony plays a significant role in blaming People of Color for their dire socioeconomic and educational conditions while contributing to the silencing of their voices. That is, People of Color are often accused of playing the victim or playing the race card when they dare to talk about the ways and the degree to which institutional racism, for example, has limited their life chances (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; hooks, 2003). Moreover, ideologically, White hegemony has normalized Whiteness putting it in a lofty pedestal while denigrating and misrepresenting Blackness through institutions such as the media. In short, White hegemony has much to do with the subjugation and inhumane conditions of People of Color.

The sociohistorical construct of race fueled by White hegemony has been the root of calamity of People of Color. Despite the counternarrative of many Black scholars (Asante, 2011; Biko, 2002; Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Collins, 2000; Du Bois, 1930; Dyson, 2004; Fanon, 1967; hooks, 2003; Marable,

2003; Tatum, 2007), who have challenged and refuted the ideology of White supremacy, individual Whites continue to look at and treat People of Color as inferior because of the way they have been historically misrepresented (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Consequently, people who happen to be biracial or multiracial have been under constant attack in society. Despite the obvious racial physical and "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1990) that has been done to Black and Brown people, many individual Whites continue to believe in the color-blind discourse. These individual Whites, and, ironically, some People of Color with a colonized mind, often say, "color does not matter to me" or "I believe there is only a human race."

I argue that only those with the privileged White skin can dare say they do not see color and that color does not matter to them. Politically aware and con-scientious Black and Brown people, or simply People of Color, cannot ever make such a statement because they are reminded everyday of "the color line" (Du Bois, 1995) through their interaction with racially prejudiced people. If race does not matter, why is it then that Black, Brown, and biracial people have been denied housing, access to quality education, and economic opportunities; have been targeted at stores; and have been called names? If race does not mat-ter, why would some White parents disown their children because the latter choose to marry a man or woman of color? Moreover, if race does not matter, why is it, then, that people in powerful political and professional positions have been mostly Whites, particularly rich White males? Finally, if race does not matter, why are many biracial people called Black and treated as such even though they are half Black and half White (Dalmage, 2000).

One can believe race does not matter if one does not have to deal with the daily psychological assault and socioeconomic oppression resulting from the social construction of their race. Likewise, those who have been taught in school, in church, and through their textbooks, since childhood, that their race is superior to other races might not have to worry about the social con-struction of their race. Furthermore, race may feel unimportant to those who do not have to constantly worry about being unfairly stopped and arrested by police officers, particularly White racist police officers, when they leave their house to go to work, to school, to church, or just to run some errand. In addi-tion, color may seem meaningless to those who are not expected by their peers to be good at sports because they are Black or Brown. Moreover, color may not matter to those who have been chosen to be CEOs of major compa-nies or deans and presidents of some universities, because the system has been set up to privilege those who are Whites over People of Color. In short, color and race may not matter to those who happen to be born with the White skin privilege, which many Whites have taken for granted. Dalmage (2000) stated, "Whiteness is about privilege and power. It is a privilege to be able to

set the parameters of racial discussions and expect that others will comply" (pp. 51-52). However, for those who were born with a skin tone and racial background that have historically been unfairly targeted and stereotyped cannot ever dare to say race does not matter. Nor will they ever say that racism is over because we have a Black president, for example, in the Unites States, which has a long history of racism, or because some doors of opportunities have been opened to some People of Color at institutions that were dominated by Whites, particularly able-bodied, heterosexual, and privileged White males. Racism may have taken different forms and shapes, but it still exists, though often concealed through smiling faces.

Racism With a Smiling Face

The form of racism often manifested literally through lynching and beatings of Blacks may seem to come to an end. However, a renewed form of it, often masked with a different guise, is still at work. This new form of racism is often hidden through smiling faces (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Orelus, 2012). This new strategic form of racism using smiles is different and appears much less harmful than overt brutal forms of racism such as Blacks and other People of Color being forbidden from using the same public facilities as Whites or, worse yet, killing Blacks through lynching and other forms of physical violence. Unjust and racially biased laws often protected individual Whites and institutions that committed these criminal actions against Blacks.

These days, many racist Whites do not deliberately and publicly call Blacks "niggers," much less lynch them, for they know they will be legally penalized for such actions. Instead, they use phony smiles in their daily interactions with Blacks and other People of Color to hide their deep-seated racism. At work, many try to be collegial, greeting People of Color with a smiling face, while others even initiate brief conversations with colleagues or coworkers of color. However, they continue to use their White and class privileges to maintain the racial apparatus that favors them over People of Color. They are essentially gate keepers denying opportunities to People of Color, particularly African Americans, Blacks, Native Americans, Muslim Arabs, Latinos, and Asians.

Through institutions, such as schools, the workforce, and the army, powerful White racist individuals have reinforced this new form of racism by hiring employees trained to maintain the racist structure of these institutions through polite smiles. These employees often receive professional trainings on racism from "experts" teaching them how to work with employees of color in a non-discriminatory manner. Although some employees might find these kinds of trainings helpful, they are often used as a pretext to mask both individual and institutional racism.

It is worth noting here that similar tactics are used to hide sexism, ableism, and homophobia, among other forms of oppression, occurring at work and other institutions. That is, "experts" have been hired by many institutions to provide training to male employees so they can supposedly stop sexually harassing women. Likewise, although to a much lesser extent, employees at some institutions have been told formally or informally that they should not discriminate against people with different sexual orientations. Finally, thanks to the Americans With Disabilities Act, employers in the United States have been compelled to accommodate physically and mentally challenged employees. Providing training to employees about these forms of oppression is an important step. However, what fundamentally needs to happen is a transformative shift in the power structure of these institutions, so that qualified People of Color and other marginalized groups can equally share the power structure with those who have been historically in powerful positions.

Conclusion

In writing this essay, my goal was to illuminate why it is important to talk about race and racism while unveiling many socially constructed racial categories purposely designed to justify the social and economic isolation, exploitation, and marginalization of many people, particularly people of color encompassing Black, Brown, and multiracial people. This essay looked at race from multiple perspectives, pointing out various factors directly connected to race, such as racism, multiracialism, White hegemony, and identity politics, in order to provide the reader a clear analytical picture of what race entails. By saying this paper explores various factors intrinsically connected to race, I do not mean that this essay covers everything one can imagine related to race—far from this pretense and ambition. What I do mean is that I looked at race from multiple perspectives, taking into account as many interrelated factors as possible to provide the reader a clear analytical picture of what race entails. It is hoped that the essay will enable the reader to expand his or her knowledge about racial issues and other interrelated racial matters.

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