

STRUCTURAL RACISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE U.S.

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RACISM

- The belief that races are groups whose physical differences are the foundation for significant cultural and social differences, **AND** that these differences are innate, measurable, and hierarchical.
- Subjugation of those races deemed inferior.



TYPES OF RACISM

- **Individual:**

Conscious or unconscious action by a person based on a racial ideology.

- **Institutional:**

Interactions between institutions across both time and space that serve to perpetuate racial inequality.



STRUCTURAL RACISM

- A system in which laws, policies and institutional practices perpetuate racial inequity.
- It does not require intentionally racist actions but is a consequence of policies and practices.
- Thus, a person can view themselves as “not racist” while still receiving the advantages of a racist system.



SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND RACIAL FORMATION

- **Social Construction:** The very way we understand reality is shaped by constructions.
- **Racial formation** is defined by Omi and Winant as “...the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.” (1994)
- **Race** is a social construction, unreal, but real in its consequences. (Merton, 1976)





RACIAL CONSEQUENCES IN AMERICA

- Africans and (poor) Europeans are brought here, initially as indentured servants, to fill the void created by the failure of indigenous slavery.
- Slavery is instituted and realized as hugely profitable, legal definitions are required to perpetuate the institution.



SLAVE CODES

- Laws by which (black) people are controlled and subjugated. Provides a framework for the supremacy of the elite planter class
- Outlines a second, specific set of rules by which social interaction of all people is regulated.



CREATION OF SLAVES (1662)

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, **that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother**, And that if any Christian shall commit fornication with a negro man or woman, he or she so offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act.



KILLING OF SLAVES (1669)

Whereas the only law in force for the punishment of refractory servants resisting their master, mistress or overseer cannot be inflicted upon negroes, nor the obstinacy of many of them by other than violent means suppressed, Be it enacted and declared by this grand assembly, **if any slave resist his master (or others by his masters order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be considered a felony**, but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquit from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that malice existed(which alone makes murder a felony) [or that anything] should induce any man to destroy his own estate.



BACON'S REBELLION

- In 1676, indentured and other poor whites joined forces with slaves and black freedmen to protest their collective conditions. Recognizing the threat this represented to their power, after putting down the rebellion, the planter class (landholding white men) created legislation designed to make such alliances unlikely in the future.



RACISM AND THE ORIGINS OF THE REPUBLIC

- Racism was built into America; the franchise was only extended to property owning men, men who were by definition white.
- White men from some other countries were accepted.
- Access to power expanded and contracted across the first century of America.



CIVIL WAR AND THE STATES' RIGHT TO DO WHAT, EXACTLY?

- Slavery, the mechanism on which white economic supremacy depended was the root cause of the Civil War. That reality is made clear here in Articles of Secession from Mississippi:

A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union.

In the momentous step which our State has taken of dissolving its connection with the government of which we so long formed a part, it is but just that we should declare the prominent reasons which have induced our course.

Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery-- the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of abolition, or a dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin. That we do not overstate the dangers to our institution, a reference to a few facts will sufficiently prove.



BLACK CODES

14th Amendment establishes “Equal protection under law...” and the 15th gives all men the right to vote but that represents a challenge to the supremacy of the white elites.



Racial discrimination becomes practice, and this is validated by the Supreme Court in Plessy vs Ferguson (1896), upholding a system which places white citizens preferentially.



JIM CROW

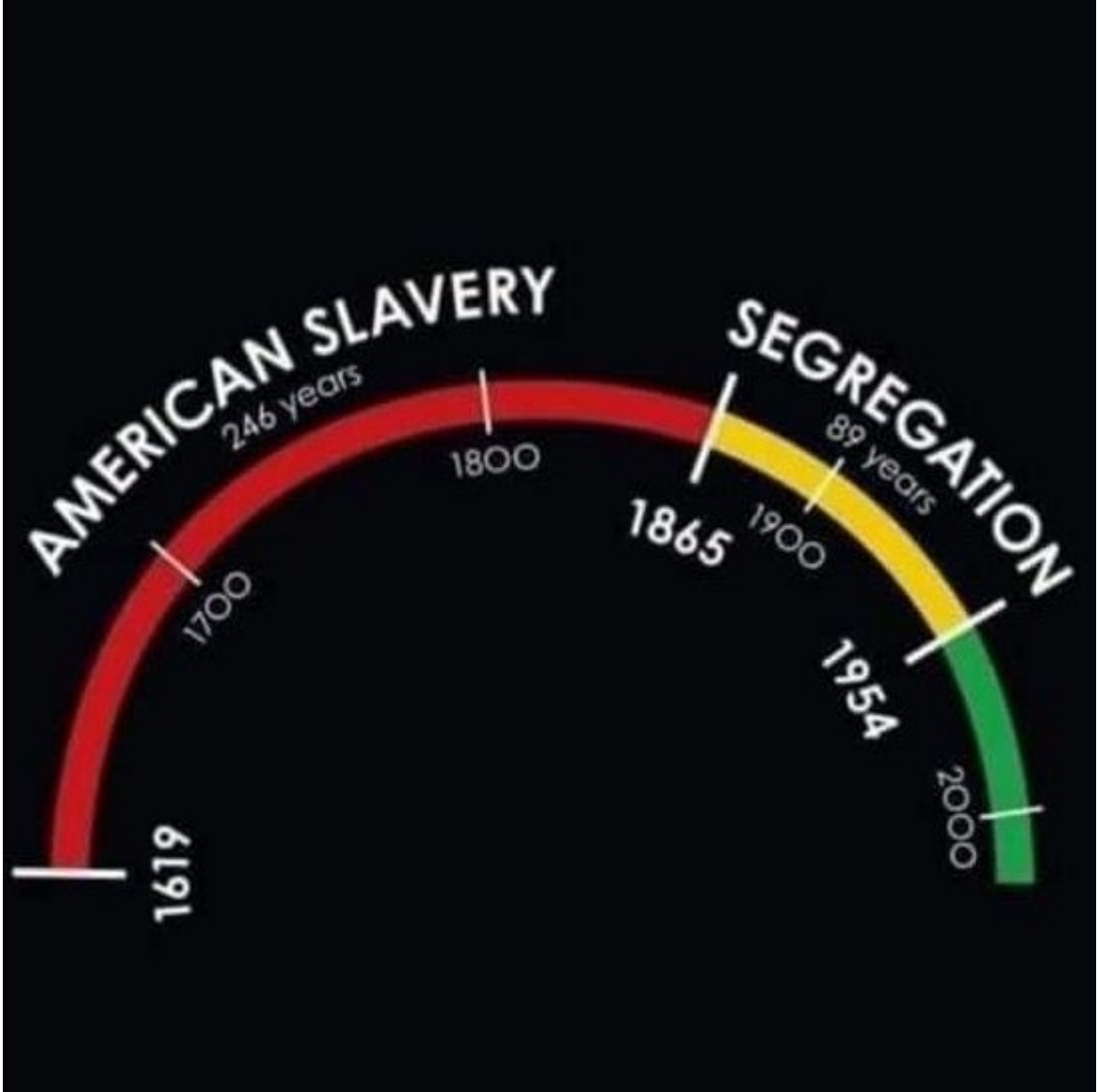
- Social institutions are regulated along racial grounds. Marriage, education, property ownership, residency, religion, sports are all regulated, to the detriment of blacks.
- Provides legitimacy to a specific, white-advantaged version of America.



BROWN VS BOARD (1954)

- Found that separate is “inherently unequal”.
- Civil rights legislation resulting from that decision is seen by the elites as a challenge to white supremacy.







PHYSICAL RACIAL TRAUMA

- National Institutes of Health define physical trauma as a serious injury to the body.
- Two main types of physical trauma are:
 - **Blunt force trauma**—when an object or force strikes the body, often causing concussions, deep cuts, or broken bones.
 - **Penetrating trauma**—when an object pierces the skin or body, usually creating an open wound. (nih.gov)



PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA



- SAMHSA defines psychological trauma as “...results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” (2012)



HOW RACIAL TRAUMA WORKS



- Du Bois (1903) concepts of “double consciousness” and the “psychological wage of whiteness”
- Hill-Collins (1986) Concept of the “outsider within”
- McIntosh (1988) concept of the “invisible knapsack”
- Pager (2003) real world cost of being black



SUICIDE RATES

- Per the CDC, rates of suicide in the US increased 5% in 2021, and almost half of that (2.6%) in 2022. While rates of suicide were less than proportional to population (approximately 7.5% of suicides vs. about 15% of the population), **black suicide rates increased at a higher percentage than the rate for white Americans.**
- The APA recognizes that African Americans often receive mental health care of poorer quality and are often unable to access culturally competent care.
- Black children between the ages of 5-12 have almost twice the rate of suicide of similarly aged white children. (Alvarez et al., 2022)



HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL RACISM

- Black women have higher maternal mortality rates than any other racial group. (Fleszar et al., 2023)
- Non-white Emergency Room patients are more likely to be skipped over for treatment than white patients. (Sangal et al., 2023)
- Many white medical students and residents hold false beliefs about biological differences between black and white patients, and therefore are biased in their understanding of pain perception and treatment recommendations. (Hoffman et al., 2016)



American Psychological Association

“...racism...has had an incalculable negative toll on the ...survival, security, health, well-being, and societal participation of generations of people in the U.S...” APA, 2021

American Medical Association

“It is a difficult and potentially perilous exercise to examine our past through the lens of 21st century thinking.” AMA, 2021

- To that I ask: ***Difficult for whom?***

CONTRASTING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF HARM



HOW DOES DISCRIMINATION CONTINUE? THE SOUTHERN STRATEGY AND DOG-WHISTLES

- Deliberate and specific policies designed and implemented by the elite to disadvantage certain groups.
- Nixon and Reagan
- John Ehrlichman
- Lee Atwater



TRUMP, BIDEN AND TODAY

- Return of racialized speech: “When the looting starts the shooting starts” - Donald Trump 2020 (George Wallace 1968)
- “Poor kids are just as talented as white kids” - Joe Biden 2019
- “We have an under-incarceration problem” - Senator Tom Cotton (R, AR) 2021



CORNYN TWEET



Senator John Cornyn  @JohnCornyn · Jun 25



Now do Plessy vs Ferguson/Brown vs Board of Education.



Barack Obama  @BarackObama · Jun 24

Today, the Supreme Court not only reversed nearly 50 years of precedent, it relegated the most intensely personal decision someone can make to the whims of politicians and ideologues—attacking the essential freedoms of millions of Americans.

[Show this thread](#)

 28.8K

 50.9K

 7,860





Accurate historical accounting.

Dismissal of expertise.

Anti-intellectualism.

Critical thinking.

Evaluation of claims.

Public inversion of privilege.



Absurdistwords

@absurdistwords

White supremacy is kinda like high fructose corn syrup.

Very few people would purchase a bottle of it for themselves, but it's cheap, palatable, effective, unhealthy and is an ingredient in just about everything.

10:20 AM · 26 Feb 21 · TweetDeck

312 Retweets 22 Quote Tweets 873 Likes



Absurdistwords @absurdistwords · 7h

Replying to @absurdistwords

To me the experience of opening my eyes to white supremacy was like realizing that HFCS was a component in everything I picked up off the shelf at the supermarket.... even in things you wouldn't expect.

Just a constant refrain of "Seriously? It's in this too?"

5

64

299



Absurdistwords @absurdistwords · 6h

If you don't really care and aren't actively looking for it, you likely won't find it. You'll just consume it thoughtlessly.

Those who are adversely affected though will be rigorous in identifying it because a failure to do so is harmful. They will look harder and find more.



**THANK
YOU FOR
LISTENING**

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