

Does Whiteness Need Dismantling?

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Answer

- YES!!!
- Now let's go get some early tea!

Killjoy Longer Answer

- Begs an earlier question -> Does whiteness exist?
- And if so, does it matter?
- This conference is about Identity, so...
- How many people here identify 'being white' as part of their identity?
- <Counts>
- Having a choice about this is nice.
- Not many black people can exercise the same sort of choice.

1. What is Whiteness?

- Enduring social construction (colonial) with no biological reality around 'race'
- White as the 'unmarked' state – the default, i.e. 'NORMAL.'
- Shades of fluid whiteness, e.g. Jewish, etc., ethnic Chinese in SA 'coloured' Taiwanese – 'honorary whites' in 70's/80's (bringing money!)
- Invisible White tacit privilege (head start and systematic advantages)
- Whiteness as one position, but with *power* given normative dominance and privilege from history of (colonial) exploitation.
- Nolte (2007) White is a Colour Too – 'liberal Colour Blind' as denying racism – white luxury of 'not noticing' colour – but implicitly erasing others experience of racism
- If someone says they don't see colour, tell them to see an optician – and if it's true, they should just get red and green people mixed up!

So Where does Whiteness Come From?

- The History of Whiteness (Painter, 2011)
- Idea of 'race' is not just a matter of biology but also includes "concepts of labour, gender, class, and images of personal beauty"
- Whiteness defined in opposition to Blackness (the conquered, subjugated and hence 'inferior Other')
- Stems from the 'colonial project', in sanitised white-speak.
- Slavery can only be justified via dehumanisation.
- Strengthened by neo-Darwinian theories of biological 'difference'
- Whiteness mutates and co-opts whenever needed, to strengthen base (e.g. USA expansion of definitions; divide and rule class racism).


Why Do We Need to Talk About It?

- The unspoken reinforces the status quo!
- Important to reflect on our difference and whiteness, including any own experiences of discrimination/prejudice
- White as intrinsically more valuable – an *enduring* narrative!
- Black = less valuable & can be treated as such & used to generate more White wealth
- Apartheid & Capital – Racism embedded in capitalist structures, e.g. cheap labour
- Anyone living in SA during apartheid – Whiteness & Male Patriarchy too. (Trump Too?)
- So we acknowledge intersectionality and multiple identity markers impacting, e.g. Class, gender, sexuality, disability etc.

An Extremely Brief History of Racism (Richards, 2012)

- Crusades & European colonisation of world – White ‘superiority’ justifies conquest/exploitation <linked to emerging capitalism, i.e. profit over ‘lesser beings’ – people reduced to economic units to exploit/slave-trades)
- Racism therefore linked to socio-economic conditions (White > Other)
- Construction of ‘scientific’ support now discredited (eugenics) ->
- Race does not exist (we are all humans from Africa), but despite this...
- Racism DOES continue, however!
- Insider/Outsider (Us-Them) and not just White/Black; but why?
- To protect hegemonic interests by excluding others and avoiding equity of access.
- Structural/Systemic and therefore not just individual (unconscious) ‘prejudice’!
- UCT, 2015...Libraries #Rhodes Must Fall -> Oxford University (Decolonisation)

Legal Realities of Whiteness

- Up until 1990, White was a legally enforced category in South Africa.
- White => Asiatic/Indian => Coloured => 'Natives'/Bantu/Black
- (Have to) Fill in your Rasse/ Race: W 
- My sister would scrawl; HUMAN
- But there was little more powerful than petty white bureaucrats in old SA
- At the end of the year there was annual accounting around race reclassifications – <neat boxes above broken and spilled into each other>
- 315 Coloureds became Black, 3 Blacks became White; 151 Indians became Coloured, 23 Whites became...
- Wild-Game accounting parody: 15 giraffes became zebras, 111 meerkats became porcupines, etc, etc...?

But Why? From 1950 Population Act

- Asiatic means, a person whose parents are, or were members of a race or tribe whose national or ethnical home is Asia, and shall include a person partly of Asiatic origin living as a Asiatic family, but shall not include any Jew, Syrian or Cape Malay;
- Bantu means a person, both of whose parents are or were members of an aboriginal tribe of Africa, and shall include a person of mixed race living as a member of the 'Bantu' community, tribe, kraal or location, but shall not include any Bushman, Griqua, Hottentot or Koranna;
- Coloured means any person who is not a white person, Asiatic, Bantu or Cape Malay as defined, and shall include Bushmen, Griqua, Hottentot or Koranna; and
- A white person means a person both of whose parents are or were members of a race whose national to ethnical home is Europe, and shall include any Jew, Syrian or other person who is in appearance obviously a white person unless and **until contrary is proven.**

Always Nuances: Whiteness Has 'Shades'

- Until 'contrary is proven?' - > if possible to do so, must be 'degrees' of whiteness, surely, i.e. some are more 'white' than others??
- Who polices the boundaries?
- Dual heritage/mixed 'race' and 'passing' for white <Split families in SA>
- Which kinds of 'white' are more 'acceptable'? <Class; ethnicity etc.>
- Example on Stratford Train.
- White resistance to apartheid was strongly over-represented by people from the Jewish communities, e.g. Joe Slovo, Dennis Goldberg, Ray Alexander, Ruth First...<African commemorative stamps> Why?
<https://web.archive.org/web/20110305041425/http://www.legendaryheroesofafrica.com/>

Again, Why?

- The whole absurd edifice was to enshrine white dominance and access to resources, by keeping a cheap underclass – Race/Capital
- Other white western systems are less crude (and more cunning) about keeping whiteness invisible, ‘the unmarked (privileged) norm’.
- Again, the (racist) system pays: <although Chinese growth may change this list from 2016/17>:
- Since 2015, richest 1 percent owns more than the rest
- Eight men own same amount of wealth as poorest half of world
- Ten biggest companies outweigh revenues of 180 countries combined
- Nine of ten richest people in world are white men. (DiAngelo, 2018).

Whiteness and the R Word

- Racism – Direct/Indirect & Conscious/Unconscious
- So You CAN be ‘racist’ without meaning to be.
- Why and how?
- By the casual, unthinking degradation of marginalized groups - brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership
- Prejudicial comments are often not planned or even realized as such but emanate from an (unacknowledged) position of assumed superiority
- Implicit Association Tests may ‘diagnose’ but don’t ‘treat’

What Can We Do About This?

- Thursday 10.30 am Symposium: **1467** Symposium : Race/Racism
- Nimisha Patel on '50 Ways to Leave your...'
- Racism' (see References).
- Disrupt 'white spaces' if needed – educate, challenge, don't collude.
- Will be uncomfortable, may lose 'friends' etc.
- A cost is usually involved, for doing what is required. i.e. being fair and just.
- Given white men are dominant, intersectional joined up thinking needed – allies to challenge White Patriarchal Capitalism?
- There are always alternatives!
- The Company Car...

Stretch Your Boundaries

- Go out of your comfort zone, if you find you are in almost exclusive white zones, as racism feeds on stereotypes – avoid ‘white flight’
- ‘Decolonise Your Mind’ #RMF (Rhodes Must Fall)
- And remember, while racist institutions exist, we can never truly be free from racism, as we will keep (inadvertently) ‘breathing’ it in, so stay aware, alert and open to promptings/teaching, from inside and out.
- The ‘Job’ of Disrupting Whiteness is a Life-Long One. Recent example:
- Replacing Peter Parker as Spider-Man!!??
- There can be only ONE Spider-Man. Umm, okay, yes, so he’s white, but...
- Go See...

MILES MORALES:

My new HERO!

‘Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse’

A ‘black’ Spider-Man!

So How Do I Identify?

- Aotearoa New Zealand – 2 years in CAMHS ‘poor area’ = ++ Maori/PI
- Treaty of Waitangi – Bay of Islands, and Maori accounts of...
- The arrival of the ‘Other,’ the *Pakeha*, the white goblins...
- As a white man, I am Other to the majority of the world, I am...
- A white goblin from Africa, or an **African Pakeha**, but...
- Plenty of white privilege got me here too!
- Or, if you go see the new Spider-Man movie, you will see we are **all** wonderful Spider-People/Heroes.
- Let’s take on The Kingpins of Whiteness!

The Whiteness Project

References (TBC)

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