

Is Colorblindness a Progress Toward Equality?

A race-less society sounds like an end to inequality for minorities, and pursues Dr. Martin Luther King's inspiration to live in a society, where a person would be judged based on the content of their character and not skin color. Is America finally ready for this progress? California thinks so. Currently up for debate is to pass a legislation which aims to "effectively" become color blind, by prohibiting the collection of race based data in all government institutions. This legislation has the intent to advance towards a race-less society. If California were to pass this law, would this color blindness create a race-less society or would it create a blindness in seeing the reality of contemporary racial inequality?

Ultimately this legislation would cause many citizens to be oblivious to the many social injustices happening to underrepresented people, because there would be no evidence to back up the existence of racially biased laws, which in effect, make it harder for minority groups to address change in the justice that is happening in our legislation system.

Even without this proposed legislation, white people already consider themselves colorblind. In "Color Blind Racism" by Eduardo Bonilla Silva, "Whites have developed an ideology that justifies racial inequality and thus help maintain 'systematic white privilege'" (132). This means that white people aren't concerned with issues that oppress other groups, and so they blame these issues on minorities because of their current situations. By way of maintaining 'systematic white privilege', whites come up with policies that are similar to disfranchisement and Jim Crow Laws. To keep the power of being privileged, whites became more discreet, color blind racism suppress minorities by explaining their social standing as outcomes of "market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and presumed cultural deficiencies" (132) and not on skin color, as it was before. The explanation for many social problems are faulted on the easiest target, cause who else is there to protect them?

Presently, citizens do not think to look deeply into social issues, because they think the government takes care of it by making more laws. The War on Drugs is a government action that aims to insure safer streets and lower crime rates by making policies such as stop and frisk, legalize marijuana, and giving harsh punishment for drug arrest. But the problem is that it incarcerates hundreds of thousands of lives, mostly consisting of African Americans, and locks them away in a cage for years. And since they have a felony on their record, they can't receive any federal aid nor can they vote. The War on Drugs is a tactic that discriminates and ruins American lives. Current statistics show that there are more white people in the United States than any other race, but the number of African Americans in prison outnumber whites severely. This imbalance shows that there should be more whites being arrested for drugs and other drug related activities, but mostly minorities are being targeted.

As a result of the War on Drugs, there is a growing industry in private prisons. Prison companies have become powerful in the legislation system because they profit on amount of people incarcerated. In the article "Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law", Sullivan investigates the behind-the-scene influence that went into drafting Arizona Senate Bill 1070. Private multi-billion dollar companies such as Corrections Corporation of America pay tens of thousands of dollars to meet with legislators in a secretive group called American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), to come up with bills that target immigrants in order to boost their revenues. Of course the legislators involved failed to mention the generous donations which allows this public-private partnership to occur, and companies denied their involvement in the lobbying for the bill to pass but tell the public that "the opportunities at the federal level are going to continue apace as a result of what's happening... and enhance opportunities for what

[they] do” (qtd. in Prison Economics). This conference is completely legal, and has a powerful influence in making laws. White people would rather think the problem for crime is solved, and they don’t bother wondering why more minorities are being arrested than white people. Whites don’t see this inequality because it’s becoming a natural fact in life, in their minds. As a result of more minorities behind bars, it creates a stereotype about those groups.

Whites see their laws being effective because crime rates have diminished in the past few years, but they don’t see the impact it has on the community which is affected, and America as a whole. All they see is the problem eradicated, causing citizens to believe that “prisons thus perform a feat of magic” (Davis “Masked Racism” 569). Young African American males are five times more likely to go to jail or prison than attend a college or university (Davis 572). Whites assume African Americans are dangerous because of this occurrence, thus making whites believe that it’s African Americans fault that they don’t seek opportunities to receive a higher education. In Bonilla- Silva’s essay he interviews white people on certain issues, in one particular interview he ask a woman, named Karen, why blacks are poor. Her response was that they lack the drive to succeed and that it’s their background to wait for a handout because “they feel like they were discriminated against hundreds of years ago, now what are you gonna give me?” (136). People, like Karen, think minorities are the cause to problems because of their background. Whites think that minorities are responsible for the opportunities available to them and if minorities don’t achieve success it, was because of lack of hard work. This lack of analysis on why minorities are poorer, have low income jobs, and have second rate education compared to whites, leads to belief that minorities are in control of what happens to them. Bonilla-Silva, states that whites use cultural ideas of minorities to barricade them behind an ideological wall to keep them from the racial reality (137). Which creates an acceptance of stereotypes as the norm of that race. Without higher education, the current situation of racially biased laws are going to continue to ruin human lives. Making it easier for privileged groups to use legislation against African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and other minorities.

The one major stand against color blind racism is having the foresight to be aware and be concerned with this inequality. Education is the most important aspect to fight against poverty and all drawbacks that are attached to it, because it provides skills that make it easier to communicate ideas and start movements of change. If more minorities were sent to school instead of prison, more people would be concerned about our current legal system and how it privileges rich white people. One way to improve the quality of education is through rehabilitating schools that are too poor to help students exceed. By providing transportation for students, creating a supportive atmosphere to guide students to be successful throughout high school and beyond, encourage students to be aware of the social injustices happening in our country and exemplify the importance of voting. With more people claiming an education, the more representation of minorities would give them a voice to speak up against oppression. When it comes to finding solutions to poverty, who’s better to deal with a social problem other than the people who experience it first-hand and know the struggle? Because currently, privileged white people aren’t doing too good of a job of solving social problems, when their only solution is to make more prisons. This quality of education should be available for everyone, no matter your race or class.

Correcting the injustice happening in the legislation process calls for immediate action on fixing racial bias laws. One way to fix the problem is educating people of every skin color to be aware of the “ideological wall” and know that it “barricades whites from the racial reality” (Bonilla-Silva 137),

therefore exposing the hidden racism. Higher educated minorities voicing their struggles under the dominate group through more involvement in politics, could change the current legislation system. If White Americans understood that blaming racial problems on minorities and not themselves is keeping America from progression, than more social problems would dissolve. Minorities and dominate groups need to collectively change the inequality around them in order to fight social problems not ignore it. If California decides to follow through with becoming color blind, be prepared to deal with a new type of racism, because it would be slightly harder to stop when there is no statistical evidence to back up racial bias laws.