

Democracy and Racism

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The latest shooting incidents in Louisiana, Minnesota and Texas and the confession of President Obama that more people of color are being stopped or pulled over by law enforcement raised many concerns about race relations in the United States. However, attacking law enforcement is not a good sign of a civic society because we all rely on law enforcement for law and order. Attacking law enforcement is attacking the legal system of the nation and this cannot be justified. Law enforcement can be trained or educated on diversity and equality but cannot be put down by the public.

To be exact, our democracy is two hundred forty years old. We have to question why the problem of racial equality has not been resolved despite the fact that we have now an African-American president, and many high officials around the country are not from main-stream culture but African-Americans, Asians and other minorities.

In order to understand the race question within the American society we have to look at our history, cultural aspects of American society and sociological, political and psychological issues and offer a solution for not only law enforcement but also for all strata of our society.

African-Americans arrived to this land as slaves not immigrants, refugees or those who sought political asylum. Most of these slaves were Muslims. This is because at that time the Pope of Vatican allowed slavery for non-Christians. Sociologically, many African-Americans later converted to Islam in America because they wanted to go back to their roots. African-Americans who arrived to this land were highly cultured, well mannered, romantic, brave, and literally civic for the standards of that time. Slavery stripped them off from their roots and de-culturized them to the extent that even when they were revolting against their "Masters" for freedom, they were not only whipped for punishment, but were asked to not utter their real names but names that were given to them. (Please watch the movie "Roots"). Not only that, but they were forcefully converted to Christianity. They become Christians but they did not taste the love that Jesus was teaching. Churches of African-Americans and main-stream cultures were separated. One reason Malcolm-X (1925-1965), a Muslim African-American civil rights and human rights activist adopted "X" as his last name was because he said his real name was not "Little." The name "Little" was given to him by slave owners. That was not the real name of his father.

African-Americans were not part of democracy until the civic rights movements led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr (1929-1968). De-culturization continued all these years. What is interesting in this trend is that after August 6, 1965 in which the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed by the 36th President of the United States, President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908-73), the law changed but the culture of people did not change. The best example of this case is the Tuskegee Syphilis research on African-Americans between 1932-1972. This happened seven more years after the law passed. What is ironic is that people expect more decency and integrity from academia and the educated class but that was not the case for African-Americans. Tuskegee is a shame for all those who claimed to be men of knowledge. Even today, in 2016, Republican Congressman Steve King said on national news "that white people contributed more to civilization than any other race." This is not only bias but clear white supremacy which America cannot tolerate in this century anymore. As we can see, democracy as a political system failed to change the culture of not only laymen but the educated class including people's representatives in the Congress. What do you expect when you see that your House Representative is ignorant and racist? Congressman King's knowledge about contribution to civilization is below that of 4th grader. Joseph R. Strayer and Hans W. Gatzke, the authors of *Mainstream of Civilization* (1979), write about this:

“ From 900 to 1200 the most important work done anywhere in the world in mathematics, astronomy, physics, medicine, and geography was done in Moslem countries.” (Page 302).

Sociologically speaking, since people's culture did not change after the Civil Rights movements changed the law on the books and theoretically restored equality for all, main stream culture did not accept African-Americans or other minorities as equal, and racism by the main stream culture continued. Socio-politically, The Trump campaign is a clear example of the fact that the law has changed but many people have not changed culturally to see their fellow citizens as equal. Since African-Americans were not accepted as equal, institutionalized racism became a tool for discrimination. Sociologists have different definitions for institutionalized racism. Wikipedia defines racism as follows:

“ Institutionalized racism is a form of racism expressed in the practice of social and political institutions, as distinct from racism by individuals or informal social groups. It is reflected in disparities regarding criminal justice, employment, health care, political power and education, among other things whether implicitly or explicitly expressed. Institutional racism occurs when a certain group is targeted and discriminated against based upon race. Institutional racism can go unnoticed as it is not always explicit and can be overlooked.” (Viewed, July 19, 2016).

The United States of America is a Christian nation and the majority of its citizens are Christians. Christianity teaches love for all, but that love did not cross all races for two hundred years. The problem was in the interpretation of the Bible on race issue. Those who interpreted the Bible, favored white over people of color. This is another reason that people of color were not accepted by the main stream culture. As we mentioned, churches of Whites and Blacks were separated. The majority of Whites always thought that they are superior and that Divine decree gave them this superiority. Even African-American Muslims were affected by this race mentality and Muslim-African Americans saw Islam from a race point of view, forgetting the fact that Islam from day one declared to its followers that Allah only recognizes people on the basis of piety, not race, color, language, or ethnicity. This was the case until some African-American Muslims including Malcolm-X traveled for pilgrimage to perform Hajj, and over there they understood that there is no racism in Islam. The Qur'an says: “And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and variations in your languages and your colors; verily in that are signs for those who understand.” (Qur'an 30:22). In another verse in the Qur'an, we read, “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other(not that you despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. (Qur'an 49:13). It was on the basis of these verses that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, appointed an African-American, Bilal, to call for prayer for the first time ever, selecting simply one who was best for the particular task. And he called Salman Farsi, a Persian, his brother and followed his advice on battle strategies among other interactions. In a Jewish funeral procession, the Prophet stopped and paused out of respect. He was told that this was a funeral of a Jew, and he replied, “ Is he not a human being?”

The problem of racism and democracy in a secular political system stem from a biased educational system. Children from a young age were not taught that mother nature is very diverse and mankind is part of this diversity. Since the universe is diverse, mankind must be diverse to complement the natural system.

To overcome the problem of racism, we have to teach cultural diversity from a scientific point of view at all levels of our educational system. This is a long-term educational goal but this author strongly believes that racism takes place due to lack of proper education. Ignorance is always the winner by default when true knowledge is not presented.

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