



Speak Out Now

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Racism – A Cancer of This Society

We live in a society based on divisions. The main division, which is hardly ever discussed, is the division between those who control the wealth and productive forces of society, and those who do the work. Those in control of the economy determine what to produce, who will produce it and who it is produced for. This is not determined by what is needed, but what is most profitable. In a wealthy country like the U.S., there is room for some who were not born into privilege to “make it”. This gives people hope that they can find a better place in society. And those individuals or groups that don’t succeed are blamed for what is supposedly their failure.

To maintain their control, those in power have always used a “divide and conquer” strategy – pitting one group of people against another. In the U.S. the one of the main divisions is based on race. The origins of this division go beyond the founding of this country. But like other myths that try to get us to believe that “things have always been this way” – it is an outright lie. Racism hasn’t always been a part of human existence.

Modern-day racism began with the enslavement of African people. The European ruling classes had to justify this brutal institution and did so by claiming that Africans were lesser beings than Europeans. Of course there was no mention of the great civilizations of Africa and their accomplishments. The lies and rationalization of this brutal treatment of African people led to the creation of one of the most powerful myths of our day – the existence of biological races.

The existence of race is a myth we are taught from an early age. We are taught to not question whether races exist. The racial hierarchies we then see in society are accepted as being natural.

Biological races do not exist. Our species has a common origin. Over the 100,000+ years of our existence, minor genetic differences, like skin color, became concentrated in certain populations.

These differences might have given a survival advantage in some environments. For instance, less

skin pigment allows for more synthesis of Vitamin D from exposure to the sun and darker skin protects from the sun’s rays. There are no genes that belong to one race. But the belief in races and the abilities supposedly associated with different races supports the racist divides we see in society today.

Today one’s so-called race has an enormous impact. If you are classified as black or white it can make a big difference. In the U.S. over the past 25 years, the wealth gap between blacks and whites has tripled. In 2014, the median income for black households was less than 60 percent of that of white households. The jobless rate for black people is twice that of whites, and one in four black people live in poverty compared to one in ten for whites. People classified as black are only 13 percent of the U.S. population, but make up 60 percent of those imprisoned. In Oakland, if you are a young black man, you are as likely to go to prison as you are to graduate high school. These are just some of the terrible consequences of racism.

A society based on artificial scarcity and haves and have-nots will make sure that some get more and most get less. A society that represents the interests of a tiny minority must keep the majority divided and turn people against each other. One way is to seem to reward one group for accepting the degradation of others. Racism has been a very effective strategy to do this. Race has often stood in the way of people seeing their common interests and standing together to make a collective fight for a better life. The prejudices coming from the racism of this society aren’t aimed just at black people. The ignorance and hate racism is based on knows no limits – it can be used against anyone who can be labeled as different or “other.”

We have to oppose racism wherever we encounter it. Whether we are direct targets of racism or not, we need to stand up to all racist attitudes and actions. But to finally eliminate racism, we will have to get rid of the system that created and maintains these racial divisions.