

Ronald E. Hall

An Historical Analysis of Skin Color Discrimination in America

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Victim Group Populations

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Preface

In the aftermath of the Atlantic slave trade and European colonization, white Americans discriminated against persons of African descent as a matter of cultural tradition. The various manifestations of such discrimination, based upon racial category, are referred to as racism. In the aftermath of colonial domination and racism, discrimination as a social pathology evolved into a tradition among the oppressed as well as their oppressors. That is, racist traditions directed at people of color including those of African descent were acted out by people of color themselves as a consequence of pervasive, universal acts of racism and discrimination to which they were subjected. Various manifestations, such as discrimination among people of color, while not racist per se have been referred to as “colorism.” As a consequence of discrimination, colorism practiced by people of color and other victim-group populations evolved throughout history commensurate with white racism. Thus, while less apparent in the twenty-first century, white racism prevails in the acts of discrimination engaged by victim-group populations. Their years of racist subjugation have fashioned a psychic response no less given to the pathological transgressions of their oppressors. Subsequently, in this new era, people of color have resorted to discrimination against other victim-group populations, which have been no less inclined to discriminate as well. The common medium for both at a time when race has become increasingly less relevant is skin color. Discrimination by skin color among victim-group populations is referred to as victimism.

Victimism is an extension of white racism, acted out by victim groups including people of color (African-American, Asian-American, Latino-American, and Native American), biracial Americans, gay and lesbian Americans (and, to a lesser extent, the transgender community), women, and immigrants. Much like colorism, victimism is a manner of discrimination, based on skin color, without respect to the demographic status of the perpetrator. It is historically rooted in the colonial traditions of white supremacy. In a society that has evolved to unprecedented racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity victimism, while historically existent, is the newest version of racism in the twenty-first century.

To undertake a treatise on racism in the twenty-first century is to wade into an area fraught with hegemony and Eurocentric bias. In fact, victimism as a twenty-first century version of racism has existed since the colonial antebellum and perhaps long before. Unfortunately, academia and other societal institutions, which archive the

social universe of human existence, have been the eminent domain of white intellectuals. Their version of social reality could not accommodate or indeed acknowledge any behavioral phenomenon beyond the mainstream white perspective. This inability is Eurocentrism (meaning focusing on Europe and its culture, defined herein as a Western worldview of the human, universal, and social environment), whereby any previous discussion of victimism would have been tantamount to inviting visceral accusations of blasphemy from the assumed objectivity of respected academics. Succinctly put, as an extension of white supremacy, any intellectual product of social scientific investigations must be validated by the mainstream academy or it is doomed to be considered nonexistent. Thus, while victimism has imposed upon victim-group populations in America, historically Eurocentrism has prevented its introduction into the discourse of mainstream academe. Academe both past and present thus remains an extension of the antebellum, not irrelevant to cultural traditions associated with white supremacy. In the aftermath, social reality as it pertains to discrimination amounts to little more than contrived conclusions of the intellectual status quo. Those who elect to challenge the ideas of that status quo, regardless of race or victim-group status, are then subjected to ridicule and destined for academic obscurity. Thus, despite the fact that discrimination in the twenty-first century is a multiracial, multiethnic, or otherwise multifaceted phenomenon, the intellectual status quo remains committed to the black/white racial dichotomy and its Eurocentric version of discrimination. Subsequently, it is my opinion that acknowledgment of discrimination by victimism is the most challenging task for the evolution of social science investigation. However, continued failure to acknowledge discrimination among victim-group populations merely because it is beyond the realities of a Eurocentric intelligentsia is likely to contribute to the digression of scientific investigation as a whole. Such digression will enable the continuation of a racial myth that all those who discriminate are white and that all those who suffer are black.

Despite the Eurocentric myopia of an academic status quo, throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African-American and Latino-American scholars investigated and documented skin color discrimination as it pertains to victimism. While seldom acknowledged in text of the mainstream academy, such discrimination held that, among people of color, there were discriminatory distinctions based on skin color. Because of skin color litigation, such as *Felix v. Marquez* and *Morrow v. the IRS*, blacks and Latinos engaged in lively and frequent discussions regarding the significance and implications of victimism. We spoke in terms of a lighter-skinned upper class and a darker-skinned but expanding lower class, similar to the more widely acknowledged white racism. Notwithstanding litigation, this manifestation of discrimination in the current era remains beyond the domain of mainstream academe. Social work scholars in particular, both black and white, dedicated to racial diversity in human services have been negligent. By way of Eurocentrism, women of color especially are suffering increased rates of skin cancer, still births, and suicides relative to skin color discrimination; suffering unnecessarily because victimism is irrelevant to quality of life among white women. As a result, social work texts and journals, including those committed to women's

issues, have treated such victim-group pathologies as little more than social trivia and/or nonexistent.

In 2008, America elected its first African-American president, Barack Obama. President Obama received overwhelming support from the black community, but his election would not have been possible without the support of conscientious white Americans and other people of color. No less than a few decades prior, President Obama would have been breaking the law by a mere attempt to register to vote. His desire to become president of the United States would have been remote to the extent of being beyond the realm of fantasy. The fact that today a black man is leader of what remains the world's foremost superpower is representative of a new era in the investigation, analysis, and interpretation of a social reality that is no longer the domain of a Eurocentric status quo.

Despite the election of a black president, discrimination in America is a potent and formidable social pathology, both at present and in the foreseeable future. However, the Eurocentric models of social science research are no longer, and perhaps never were, relevant to legitimate scientific investigation. Just as America has begun to cross racial boundaries by electing a black president, the intellectual status quo of academe, both black and white, must free itself of racist cultural traditions and submit to the supremacy of ideas over the supremacy of race. It has an investment in the purity of scientific research, such that eugenic conclusions motivated by aftermath of colonization and the Atlantic slave trade should never again pose as scientific fact. Thus, pertaining to the academy of social work and other human service professions, theoretical priority and its account of social reality should not be contingent upon the preferences of social work and other scholars, but should consider what is the most urgent imposition upon the well-being of humanity—without respect to Eurocentric ideals. Such a change will require recognition of works for their scholarly worth rather than popularity or institutional affiliations. This change will require that the status quo intelligentsia resort to the spirit of debate and disciplined investigation in their incorporation and/or acknowledgment of ideas pertaining to discrimination and other aspects of social reality. They must then move beyond the trappings of a mainstream orientation in hopes of rescuing science from the bigotries of Eurocentric hypocrisy. I intend to accommodate this change with the introduction of skin color issues into the mainstream of modern social science investigation. Doing so will bring forth newer, more applicable models of discrimination and social reality that extend to a variety of human existential circumstances. The results will ultimately free academe from the tyranny of Eurocentric conjecture and align the state of scientific investigation with the momentous election of a black president in the United States.

East Lansing, Michigan
23 April 2009

Ronald E. Hall

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Dr. Emilie Smith, Professor and Director, Center for Family Research in Diverse Contexts, The Pennsylvania State University; Dr. Linda Burton, Professor, Duke University (former Director, Center for Family Research in Diverse Contexts, The Pennsylvania State University); Dr. Chalandra M. Bryant, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies; Dr. Lori Francis, Assistant Professor, Biobehavioral Health, The Pennsylvania State; Dr. Sherri Lawson Clark, Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University (former Research Associate at The Pennsylvania University).

Symposium Speakers

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Historically, variations in skin color enabled human racial categories, which consequently facilitated victim-group discrimination [1]. Scholars differ as to the number and implications of skin color for the various race categories, but included are Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid, which represent every ethnic and national variety of human. The first or “original” man, as far as archaeologists are able to determine, was a member of the Negroid race [2]. Negroids are indigenous to Africa and characterized by dark skin, course hair texture, and broad noses. In contrast to the Negroid, Caucasoids and Mongoloids are characterized by skin color and features: They are lighter-skinned and broadly located throughout the world. In Western terminology, Negroids and Mongoloids are referred to as “people of color,” distinguishing them from Caucasoids, who lack skin color.

In the opinion of biologists and medical professionals, race is scientifically meaningless [3]. By referencing various English dictionaries, this alone would define race as a myth. Scientists motivated by an earnest drive for research contend that valid facts are one form of knowledge and myths are another. Facts should be the results of rigorous scientific methods, which seek truth without the imposition of ulterior motives. Myths, on the other hand, have no methods to which the scientific investigator must adhere. The distinction between fact and myth is unnecessary, given that myth is less valued for being factual as truth is not the objective. Although the earnest investigator will note the ambiguities existent in so-called rigorous scientific findings, the investigator will also acknowledge the human limits of scientific objectivity conducted by well-intended human beings.

Indeed, not every scientist pursued the myth of race based on skin color with disregard for scientific methods. Some were quite fervent in their attempts to establish truth. Unfortunately, such scientists were limited by their exposure to untruths about racial constructs, which assured the eventuality of racist conclusions, despite efforts to conduct research independent of such. Ultimately, for different reasons, the efforts of “objective” scientists validated race as a true “fact,” attaching its significance to the prestige of Western institutions. Hence, by the time Western civilization had gained imperial powers, the euphemistic groupings of man were differentiated as biological fact based on skin color and validated by the influences of Western science. A Negroid was referred to as “black,” that is, African-American (dark skin);

the Caucasoid was referred to as “white,” that is, Euro-American (light skin); and the Mongoloid as “yellow,” that is, Asian-American (light skin or dark skin). The Latino-American designation was in fact a combination of mixed races, described in skin color terms as “brown.” The various designations of color do not necessarily pertain to the skin of each group literally, but instead served as metaphor extended from race rhetoric. These variations in skin color have been dramatically played out in the all too often colonial confrontation between dark- and light-skinned race groups [4]. In the aftermath of such confrontation is the enablement of white racism and victim-group discrimination for Western colonial purposes.

People of color as a victim group have not readily acknowledged their role in the perpetuation of discrimination. The failure of victim-group populations in general to comprehend their role in Western racism rests on the West’s dark/light skin dichotomy. Prior to the denigration of dark skin, historical skin color differentiations were first alluded to by ancient Greeks. The Greeks referenced dark skin, to which, however, classical authors had not yet attached any basic significance. “Ethiopians do not astonish Greeks because of their blackness and their different appearance,” Agatharchides wrote [5]. It was apparent to him that such a fear is a childhood *tabula rasa* or the mind at birth without preconceptions. Agatharchides’ statement was not only an accurate assessment of the ancient Greek’s reaction to dark skin, but it resonates today as an aspect of childhood known to psychologists. “Four-year olds,” according to Gordon Allport, are in fact quite interested, curious, and appreciative of differences in racial groups [5]. Furthermore, Alan Marsh, in considering the awareness of racial differences in African children living in modern-day Britain, finds that the critical age of racial curiosity seems to be around three to three and a half years [5]. Thus, it would be perfectly normal for a Western child living in a predominantly Western environment to take notice of darker-skinned Africans. Simply put, children may be aware of differences implied by skin color, but will not necessarily attach judgments to them as was true of the ancient Greeks. This is especially true as it pertains to the pattern of racial discrimination, unless they are exposed to socializing forces that emphasize overt racial identification and overt acts of racial hostility. To illustrate the point, Marsh notes that “such socialization forces were absent. . . overt race values, beyond those affective bonds formed in personal relationships, were also absent in children” [5]. Thus, ancient Greek children lived similarly in an environment where dark-skinned persons frequented, but where overt discrimination and racism toward them was not a fact of life. Once they attained adulthood, Greek children had no reason to attach significance to differences in skin color or to think those of African descent were in any way fundamentally different or inferior.

In the annals of Western civilization, documentation of the attitudes toward dark skin suggests racism was lacking. Greek references, however, are informative, particularly when they are scrutinized within the context of beauty. By virtue of historical record, it is possible to examine the early Greek norms for beauty and their implications for dark-skinned people. The combined Platonic, Lucretian, and Ovidian assumptions of the classical norm image suggest a distaste for extremes. The main characters in classical Greek poetry seem to prefer their own skin color to that of the extremely light-skinned Germans or the dark-skinned Africans [5]. The

Greeks used themselves as the ideal in their expressions of aesthetic preference. Little mention is made, however, that there were Europeans as well as Africans who did not meet the Greek norm image. This omission allows for a negative emphasis on dark skin that distorts the original view of Africans today.

In other sectors of early Western civilization, there were those who extolled the beauty of dark skin and did not hesitate to do so publicly. Herodotus, the first known among Westerners to express an opinion about the physical appearance of Africans, describes them [Ethiopians] as the “most handsome of all men” [5]. Others, such as Philodemus, put their feelings about dark skin into poetry. In reference to a certain Philætion (short, black, with hair more curled than parsley and skin tender than down), Philodemus concludes as follows: “May I love such a Philætion, golden Cypris, until I find another more perfect” [5]. Additionally, Asclepiades praises the beauty of the dark-skinned Didyme: “Gazing at her beauty I melt like wax before the fire. And if she is black, what difference to me? So are coals when we light them, they shine like rose-buds” [5]. Theocritus contends that those who refer to his Bombyca as sunburned should know that to him she is “honey-brown and charming and adds that violets and hyacinths dark but are the first flowers chosen for nosegays” [5].

The otherwise benign implications of skin color evolved to imply psychological meaning. Among a majority of victim-group populations, irrespective of Westernization, there then exist narcissistic ideals of physical beauty. In referring to such ideals, Harry Hoetink [6] uses the concept of “somatic norm image,” which he defines as “the complex of physical somatic characteristics accepted as ideal” [5]. Hence, all groups consider themselves aesthetically superior to all others. As an illustration of the concept, Philostratus remarked that Indians esteemed white less than black because, he implied, black was the color of Indians [5]. Greek orator Dio Chrysostom’s [5] discourse on beauty put forth the question as to whether there was not a foreign type of beauty just as there was a Hellenic type. Finally, Sextus Empiricus [5] noted that men differed in definitions of beauty, contending that Africans preferred the blackest and most flat-nosed; Persians, the whitest and most hooked-nose. Thus, as it pertains to the eventuality of victim-group discrimination, a Western somatic norm implies the belief that superiority is physiologically based in the Western racial and skin-color categories. Any deviations from a category are presumed to be inferior, enabling various social and political objectives to be acted out by victimism. Accordingly, the following are implications of victimism for victim-group populations: (a) somatic ideals including skin color are continually rooted in Western Eurocentric ideals, although it is seldom articulated in polite circles; (b) by virtue of colonization and white supremacy, such norms are inculcated by people of color among victim groups as their native ideal; and (c) the effort of victim groups to aspire ideally then necessitated their manifestation of the supremacist ideal, despite implications for victim-group self-preservation.

By idealizing the supremacist notions of light skin, the denigration of dark skin, being a vehicle of racism, is a psychological by-product of projection, first mentioned by Sigmund Freud in his utilization of psychoanalysis. The objective of projection is the changing of the psychological situation by the subject to suit the

subject. Projection is a critical component of the Western supremacist repertoire. It is used daily by Americans in reference to certain ideas and behaviors. If a particular behavior appears to be projection to an outsider, in retrospect it could never be recognized by the subject, who would perceive a completely different phenomenon. Thus, long before benign ancient Greek contacts with Africans, there existed the potential to project onto dark skin by assigning derogatory meanings to the term “black.” Among the more notable are “Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul. . . . Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister. . . . Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked. . . . indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment” [7]. Any form or human feeling associated with blackness suggested something bad or evil. Even today, that association connotes little difference between badness and its alliance with blackness.

The symbolism of blackness has played a critical role in determining racist perceptions of dark-skinned people, according to a considerable segment of the Western population [7]. In the mind of the most typical Western citizen, the color black symbolizes lust, sin, evil, dirt, feces, death, and so forth. When they first encountered Africans via the Atlantic slave trade, Europeans projected these derogatory connotations onto Africans, correlated to some extent with the intensity of dark skin. Yet in other Western societies including ancient Greece, blackness might find favor. Similarly, modern scholars will note, for example, the positive regard for blackness in Western music. But the positive regard for black musicians hardly rescues blackness as a vehicle in the denigration of dark skin, which merely suggests an attitude less intense than either the “dominative” or the “aversive” positions identified by Joel Kovel [4].

Some of the common terms for dark skin, which on the surface appear harmless but are associated with its denigration, are sable, dusky, and ebony. Few, if any, scholars would suggest that any such terms connote evil, feces, or death. But it is only on the surface that such terms avoid negative connotations. If it is suggested that these terms dismiss assumptions of negativity by their relative sterility—what psychologists refer to as a reaction formation against an underlying disgust—then, in fact, the argument for Western disgust relative to dark skin is made. Negative regard for blackness makes the point while positive regard proves the point, too, since positive regard in the West is clearly motivated by repressed feelings of negativity.

Yet white is not necessarily positive. White, too, can symbolize death or evil in Western psychology just as easily as can black, for example in sickness or as in Death’s horse being traditionally pale [8]. In brief, Western culture has customarily accepted a “black” positive and negative as well as a “white” one. The symbolic meaning of black versus white has thus never been simply equivalent to bad versus good. However, psychologically, blackness enables projection without limitation, as when children or adults imagine things in the dark. This would suggest that blackness might be more potent than whiteness (light skin) could ever be. If true, the Western psyche would have been much more amenable by domination to the denigration of dark-skinned peoples despite the fact that people of color had been

rendered less threatening having been conquered and colonized by those who were light-skinned. What is more, the act of projection will occur if and only if the projector has developed some need to engage it. Europeans arguably projected onto Africans to justify the slave trade. Typical victim groups have no such history with dark-skinned people. The question must then be answered as to why they need to have an obsession with the denigration of dark-skinned people, if not motivated by submission to colonial domination and Western imperialism. Subsequent to universal tolerance, the enslavement of dark-skinned people gained wide acceptance that culminated in America's antebellum Civil War South.

While skin color was all but benign during the ancient Greek era, today's persons of European descent are distinguished among the world's population by a lack of skin color. According to Frances Cress Welsing [9] and Michael Bradley [10], in a world populated by people of color, this lack of skin color had a psychological impact that facilitated Europe's colonial aggression. That aggression enabled Europeans to dominate the world, militarily, economically, and ultimately psychologically. As people lacking color, persons of European descent were motivated to conquer, extended from a feeling of color inadequacy. Thus, the threat of dark-skinned people existed only in the Western mind, attributed to peoples having the most color—Africans or African-Americans. In an effort to calm psychological threats and justify the Atlantic slave trade, it was then necessary for the West to project onto dark-skinned African peoples that which it could not reconcile morally. This would buffer their psyche from a history of atrocities requiring the worldwide export and institutionalization of white supremacy, to which victim groups eventually submitted as psychological progeny.

Psychological progeny, as acted out by victim-group populations, implies the ability of one group to impose its ideals upon another absent consideration for the latter's reaction [11]. Regardless of particular methods used, dominant groups may then idealize the social universe. Furthermore, aside from the more obvious aggressive tactics, true dominance may derive from influential behavior and relative status. In the West, dominant-group Euro-Americans are then in a position to psychologically incorporate people of color and other victim-group populations, who have been stigmatized as alien, to their somatic norm [12]. Euro-Americans as individuals may incorporate victim-group populations without making conscious or overt decisions to do so. The willingness of these populations to acquiesce is sustained by Western imperialism. Regarding the dynamics of the scenario, research suggests dominant-group Euro-Americans acquire power directly by emphasizing competence and action. Dominated victim groups acquire power by virtue of identification with and/or submission to dominant-group ideals, for example, the marriage of conservative Republican Senator Phil Gramm to Asian-American Wendy Lee Gramm [13]. Given the status differential between these dark- and light-skinned spouses, resulting interactions between group members are thus tantamount to the acceptance of victim-group discrimination.

The current status of the West as a global superpower and its psychological impact upon non-Europeans have resulted in a willingness of victim groups

to discriminate by skin color. For those who might otherwise be regarded as victims of racism, unlike the ancients, their domination by the forces of Western imperialism has made them no less amenable to the denigration of dark-skinned (African-descended) peoples. Being the psychological progeny of Western imperialism, Eurocentric language, bloodlines, and ideals became symbols of status among victim-group populations. Furthermore, the ability of the West to affect a racial skin color hierarchy was no less ingenious than traditional colonization in having an impact upon the victim-group psyche. A system of stratification that eventually overlapped with skin color and/or race can be summarized as follows: The West found a way to maintain power over victim groups psychologically via racial criteria. Relative to racial criteria, many people of color did not arrive in the West being racist, but maintained by culture a strict sense of superiority and a tendency to rank the world's various peoples accordingly. Once exposed to Western racism, where African-Americans were the objects of racist projections, people of color and other victim groups submitted to discrimination against Blacks rather than risk becoming objects of racist projection themselves, thus reinforcing racist notions of hierarchy and white superiority convinced that this would enable their own assimilation into the American mainstream. The penchant for hierarchy became a marital strategy, with Wendy Gramm as an ideal, and which spawned an international business in mail-order brides. In other words, the indigenous mores of non-European people had given way to the racist influences of Western domination. That is not to say that racism per se is typical of people of color, but their psyche in particular has not withstood the assault of Western imperial forces.

Psychological-progeny discrimination among victim-group populations is no longer a question of its existence, but rather of its function in sustaining "white" supremacy via worldwide domination. While people of color, including African-Americans, are not racist in the traditional sense, they are facilitative in their racist denigration of dark-skinned people. A focus upon the dynamics of skin color will enable social scientists to broaden the concept of racism that will eventually free all people from discrimination and psychological domination. That is not to suggest all peoples are the progeny of Western imperialism or that all Euro-Americans are unified in maintaining world domination. However, among those of various skin colors, who make earnest attempts to eliminate racism, their numbers are far too few. They struggle daily against racist agendas because the success of their efforts would result in a dramatic shift in worldwide wealth and power. Immediate eradication of racism would liberate oppressed and vulnerable populations at the expense of Western imperials, which Peggy McIntosh [14] refers to as "white privilege."

In order to comprehend the historical extent of victim-group discrimination in America, it is necessary to understand that the dynamic of every major institution operates on the basis that some degree of discrimination is acceptable; if not rhetorically acceptable, it is at least expected and considered unavoidable. For example, the educational system uncritically accepts that victim-race students should have a markedly lower score on standardized tests. The norms of an institution are, in effect, its standards for achievement; they are the expectations that tell an individual what is required. When one starts challenging norms or aspiring beyond a designated role, one is punished or denied opportunity by the power structure. Such is

the case for many of the South's best and brightest African-American minds—like Martin Luther King Jr.—who must relocate to Northern institutions to realize their educational potential.

Volumes of literature have been written pertaining to discrimination against victims by race, skin color, and other criteria to explain the circumstances of their oppression. Beginning in the early 1800s, theories prevailed that labeled various factions of mankind as inferior. In this more modern era, the inferiority theory has been sanitized to suggest that they are inferior due to their economic and social conditions or because they do not have the intellectual capacity to compete in an advanced technological society [15]. Thus, in the minds of many Americans, whether the reason is biological or intellectual, discrimination facilitates accusations of racial inferiority as a fact of life.

During the 1960s, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote about the pathology of dark-skinned African-Americans and suggested special programs to better their situation [16]. For decades, the US government funded special programs to assist African-Americans, which conservatives denounced as wasteful spending. Today, they rationalize the pseudoscience of Richard Herrnstein—who contends that African-Americans are intellectually inferior—and others as evidence of the waste [17]. The common assumption has been if African-Americans fail to gain admittance into college, obtain gainful employment, or locate housing, then it must be the result of some personal inadequacy enhanced by liberal policies. Occasionally, when presented with an overwhelming amount of evidence in exceptional cases, conservatives will concede that a racist landlord or a bigoted employer is at fault. However, few will admit there are less comprehensible societal ills built into the very fiber of this nation, given the more overt acts of discrimination recorded in both distant and recent history [7].

Victim-race groups including people of color have been the focus of Western oppression directed by white racists. This is true whether they are indigenous or they immigrate or become US citizens. In 1881, the Supreme Court declared Native Americans to be “alien.” Shortly thereafter, both Asian and Mexican Americans were discriminated against by American institutions to varying degrees: The Asian Exclusion Act of 1889 denied Asian immigrants the right to enter the country; the assignment of Japanese citizens to relocation centers during WWII was unprecedented. Mexican Americans were denied the right to attend so-called public schools during the 1880s because the schools served predominantly white students. These four examples illustrate the involvement of government and educational institutions in the perpetration of discrimination under which victims have internalized as a norm. Thus, for members of victim groups, their American experience has taken the form of overt and covert discriminatory acts, no less significant psychologically. Despite the fact that victim groups have experienced suffering under such oppression, often of their own efforts, they appear no less given to practices that may ultimately impair their future and quality of life.

Given the existence of discrimination at every level of American society, what prevails is then no longer an accusation associated with the Euro-American mainstream. Discrimination by various acts has become so socially diffused that it is

now an essential element of the mediating process, through which many of the basic rewards for the entirety of society are granted. In other words, the mechanisms for oppressing victims of discrimination have become so complex and intricate that it is practically impossible to reverse the process. The crux of discrimination necessarily extends from a black/white dichotomy that is arguably no longer as relevant in a multiracial society.

What is attempted herein, in the first study of its kind, will be an analysis of the latter, acknowledging the discriminatory role played by those who are normally designated as victims [7]. While it is no doubt a political risk to cite victims or to stray from the mainstream perpetrator model, avoidance to do so in an emerging multiracial world would be tantamount to self-defeat.

Regardless of politics, discrimination in America has arguably prevailed as one of its most devastating and tenacious social ills. Extensive literature and research have added little to facilitate discrimination's demise. Contributing to ignorance is the fact that for decades, discrimination has been portrayed as a Euro-American phenomenon, a psychosocial behavioral event directed at people of color—particularly darker-skinned African-Americans [18]. There should be no doubt about the accuracy of this assumption. Notwithstanding, to characterize discrimination in such a narrow context does a disservice to the scientific method. It enables the otherwise absurd rhetoric of hierarchy to play only within a single race group and, in fact, provides a conduit for the continued social, economic, and political domination of victims. However deserving of sympathy it is, analyzing the role of victims when examining discrimination is an issue that must be acknowledged. For victim-race groups—relative to Euro-Americans—race then acknowledges their status as minorities. Their skin color is their most potent and salient feature because it contrasts with that of the American mainstream. Because it is relative, skin color allows for the manifestation of discrimination—both between and among each group. Dark skin may affect every phase of life, including mate selection, general stereotyping, and treatment by the judicial system. Dark skin is a “master status,” which differentiates victim-group people of color as an inferior element of the population. So potent is this master status that it has recently served as grounds for discrimination litigation between persons of light and dark skin color who belong to the same racial or ethnic group [19]. Resorting to legal tactics is an indication that, for some, discrimination has been particularly painful, given the psychologically conflicting implications of dark skin. That is, people of color have idealized much of American discrimination, but unlike members of Euro-American ethnic groups, they have been prohibited from full assimilation into society. Their willingness to idealize discriminatory norms regardless reflects a desire not to devalue themselves but to improve their quality of life and live the American Dream. In so doing, victims of discrimination harbor disdain for dark-skinned people and other victim groups because such disdain is an aspect of the American status quo [20]. They recognize that dark skin is regarded as an obstacle by various institutions that might otherwise afford them the opportunities necessary to succeed. For victims who aspire to success, oblivious to this, failure is frequently the end result. Furthermore, since quality

of life has demonstrably correlated closely with mainstream norms, discrimination has emerged as a critical factor in one's ability to enhance opportunity [20].

While the dual role of victim and perpetrator as played by the oppressed is noteworthy, their participation as victims up to the current point in time seems more urgent. Individual- and group-level discrimination establishes and sanctions discrimination ubiquitously. The involvement of the government in housing is an obvious illustration of how it can happen. By sanctioning unequal treatment, the housing institution sanctioned inequality in status between those who are victims of discrimination by various levels of status. For example, when the US government decided to grant FHA loans to residents of nonintegrated areas only and to finance the movement of Euro-Americans to the suburbs instead of rebuilding the inner cities, discrimination was actually perpetuated by way of unequal goals, objectives, and priorities for people of color. By making it impossible for darker-skinned people to move from the city and to have access to more and better jobs, the government also assisted in the discriminatory effort to reduce people of color in status. It further suggested policies to keep out "inharmonious racial groups" [21]. As a result, American suburbs today border the inner cities that are dominated by people of color. As more people crowd into these overpopulated areas, conditions reach the crisis stage. Furthermore, while living in substandard and overcrowded housing, other economic and social inconveniences exist, which are less obvious, having implications for victim-group discrimination.

As folk who value knowledge, social scientists have agonized over the manner in which the victims of discrimination accommodate nationwide discrimination. On more than one occasion, they have encountered members of victim groups, who are then trained to challenge the keenest aspects of discrimination with hardly any consideration given to the social and cultural gaps perpetuated by the discriminatory acts attributed to their own people. In fact, most social activists have gone through their entire activist experience with not a word mentioned about it. It should therefore come as no surprise that victims of discrimination have not understood the role of their own discrimination in the demise of oppressed victim-group populations. For many reasons, the topic in practically every sector of society has remained an unspeakable taboo. Most would agree that this is dangerous. It serves the tenets of discrimination and the mainstream status quo. In the aftermath, people of color and all other victims of discrimination define their worth in association with the discrimination of the mainstream population. Rather than belittle the discrimination engaged by victim-group populations as trivial compared to that of whites, science will be best served by its deliberate and methodical investigation of social phenomena, independent of potential political outcomes.

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