

THE "R" WORD

by

Burnett W. Kwadwo Gallman, Jr. M.D.

Racism is a word that we've heard used in all kinds of contexts for many years. Many use it in an accusing way, many use it in a defensive way and others may use it as a way of explaining things. However, in a world where the same thing can mean different things to different people, I will attempt to answer some questions about the "R" word.

What is racism? When did it start? Where did it start? Why was it necessary? Who started it? How has it been fueled and used? Who is a racist? What is race anyway?

Race is a way of categorizing human beings based on appearance and physical characteristics. It is not a biological or scientific category and is purely a social construct. Biologically, there is only one race, the human race. However, since so much has been made of race and because it is a reality to most people, we will deal with it as if it is actually a real thing.

Racism is defined as:

1. "Prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or is marginalized.", or
2. "The belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities or qualities especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another."

To me, these definitions, confuse racism with prejudice. Prejudice and racism are not the same. Racism has a power component in which there is the ability to enforce the prejudice and victimize the people deemed as inferior.

When and where did racism start?

There are several theories.

1. The Two Cradle Theory put forth by Cheikh Anta Diop in his book *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa* extends the accepted theory that the climate experienced by humans over thousands of years influenced their appearance and posits that climate also influenced their outlook, worldview and behaviors. Those Afrikans who migrated from Afrika to Europe hundreds of thousands of years ago and got caught in the last ice age in Europe, the Wurm Glacial Period, lost pigment and

experienced a change in their facial features, which were adaptive mutations that enabled them to survive in the icy climate. The scientific world generally accepts the fact of the environmental adaptive changes in appearance. However, Diop states that they also became more aggressive, chauvinistic, misogynistic and violent compared to the Afrikans who remained in the friendlier temperate climate of Afrika. These discussions were further advanced by the scholars Charles S. Finch, III in his book *Echoes of the Old Darkland: Themes from the African Eden* and Vulindlela I. Wobogo in his book *Cold Wind from the North: The Prehistoric European Origin of Racism Explained by Diop's Two Cradle Theory*. The white scholar Michael Bradley also discusses this in his book, *The Iceman Inheritance: Prehistoric Sources of Western Man's Racism, Sexism and Aggression*.

2. The Cress Theory of Racism and Color Confrontation was put forth by the late D.C. based psychiatrist Frances Cress Welsing, M.D. It is discussed in her book *The Isis Papers*. She states that whites realize their numerical low numbers in the world and understand that the physical traits that define whiteness are genetic recessive traits or mutations. The physical characteristics that define blackness are genetically dominant. This means that free and open mating with people described as black could actually render whites extinct. She saw racism as a means of white genetic survival. This is part of the fear exhibited in Charlottesville in 2017 with the chant, "You will not replace us".
3. Many scholars feel that racism was invented/created in order to justify the enslavement, chattelization, dehumanization and brutalization of Afrikan people. Ibram X. Kendi in his book, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* discusses this thought. Jacob Carruthers in his book *Intellectual Warfare*, reveals how this was done by early European philosophers and thinkers. This may answer the question of why racism was created.

What are the types of racism?

Although many experts have described many types of racism, I will only briefly discuss four.

1. Individual Racism is personal and involves the actions of one person or a group of people.

2. Institutional Racism occurs when institutions, organizations and legal entities are manipulated in order to achieve racist objectives. In this type of racism, there are racial differences in access to education, housing, healthcare, employment and justice in the legal system. This is the type of racism that stimulated the creation of Critical Race Theory in Law schools to examine and study the legal ramifications of institutional racism. Institutional Racism is necessary by white supremacists in order to perpetuate white dominance and white privilege.
3. Cultural racism presumes white superiority and black inferiority. It is necessary to be present before individual racism and institutional racism are possible. It is transmitted intergenerationally and probably has an epigenetic component.
4. Internalized Racism is the type of racism in which members of victimized populations accept their lowly place and internalize their supposed inferiority. This, to me, is the most dangerous. People who come from victimized populations subconsciously accept their own inferiority and frequently work against the interest of their own people in the service of known and avowed racists. In my opinion, we see this frequently in politics and in people of Afrikan origin who describe themselves as “conservative”. Dr. Jacob Carruthers calls these people, “Black supporters of white supremacy”.

Most efforts to address racism have aimed at trying to get AUSA accepted by whites, as if racism was the fault of AUSA. This is blaming the victim at its best. It would seem to me that the only way to effectively address the problem of racism is to attack it where it lies...with white people. However, I am not optimistic in that regard.

Is racism a mental illness? It certainly conforms to the definition of many mental illnesses:

1. Schizophrenics have abnormal thought processes delusions, thought perceptions, emotional responsiveness and disruptions in social interactions.
2. Paranoid Personality Disorder. People with this disorder have extreme distrust of those around them. they feel that their rights are most important and persistently bear grudges. Remember “You will not replace us”?

3. Antisocial Personality Disorder. These people have absolutely no regard for the feelings or rights of other people and have no guilt about anything that they do.
4. Narcissistic Personality Disorder. These people have an extreme degree of self-importance and disregard and disrespect those around them. They have a sense of entitlement and they exaggerate their achievements and talents. They believe that they are superior and belittle people that they perceive as inferior. They take advantage of others to get what they want. They expect special treatment and have no patience for those who don't comply with these expectations.

Before ending, I'd like to ask, do any of these illnesses sound familiar to you? You know, not only individuals can be afflicted with these diagnoses. I submit that whole cultures and "civilizations" can be placed in these diagnostic categories.

Unfortunately, racism is not only a fact of life, it is widespread all over the world and is as American as apple pie. It is in the air, water and dirt of America. To pretend that it doesn't exist or that it is a thing of the past is wrongheaded at best and foolish at worst. Understanding racism is helpful but really doesn't change anything unless we use our information wisely. Knowledge cannot truly be power unless it is used appropriately for the benefit of the "knower".

Food for thought.