Protection of racism from the anti-racism movement: taking colorblindness racial discrimination as an example

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Abstract:

After the emergence of many great anti-racism movements, the supporters of traditional racism have significantly decreased. However, racism, or more precisely, liberal racism, including its specific form - color-blind racism, has replaced traditional racism and still exists in large numbers in society. Racism seems to have found new ways of survival in anti-racism concepts such as liberal racism and color blindness. To analyze the new forms of racism that exist in today's society, this article takes colorblindness racism as the analytical object. Starting from the dual role of color blindness in the anti-racism movement, it points out that a large number of new forms of racism are prevalent under the guise of anti-racism, revealing the challenges and limitations faced in current anti-racism activities in order to provide assistance for future anti-racism work.

Keywords: anti-racism movement; liberal racism ; colorblindness racism.

1. Introduction

Kawania Wooten, who is black, recalled that her son had attended a class, which created a timeline of civilization, including the Greeks, the Romans, and the Incas, but nothing was said about Africa. Wooten spoke to the school's director, a white woman. The director insisted that the omission was not racially biased and said, "You know, we've just been following the curriculum. We're not talking about whether people are white or Black" (Scruggs, 2009).

After the advent of many great anti-racism movements, such as abolitionist movements in the nineteenth century (and before) and the civil rights movement in the twentieth century, the so-called "traditional racism," which is institutionalized or is stipulated by law thereby, is usually considered systematic racism or whose discourse and praxis explicitly and overtly manifest discrimination of the other because of their color of skin, has been reduced. (Zamudio and Rios, 2006) However, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003), Zamudio and Rios (2006), and Burke (2017) contend, racism, or more precisely, liberal racism, including its particular form, colorblind racism, is much more prevalent than disappeared. It may come as a surprise that, paradoxically, racism found its way to survival within the very anti-racist notions, such as liberalism and colorblindness.

By invoking the research of critique of liberal racism and articulating the relationship between the liberal an-ti-racism movement and the ignorance of the social and psychological roots of racism, this article will examine to what extent the anti-racism movement can become a preservation rather than an elimination of racism.

2. The Ambiguity of Colorblindness: Liberation or Racism?

To illustrate how the anti-racism movement becomes the preservation of racism, both in the traditional and non-traditional forms of racism, we can examine the various ways in which liberalism or egalitarianism, the most anti-racism idea, upholds racism. After the civil rights movement, as an apparent liberal discourse, the notions of racial colorblindness or color evasion, according to which people should not be treated differently by the color of their skin, have been gradually and broadly accepted. There is no doubt that the notion of racial color blindness is one of the liberal concepts that has been used in the anti-racism movement. Although the basic meaning of racial colorblindness is not controversial, many scholars still discovered that the use of the idea had derived some unexpected connotations of racism.

According to Zamudio and Rios (2006), one connotation of using racial colorblindness aligns with the liberal notion of distinguishing the private from the public. The distinction between the public and the private is to protect the human rights of individuals from the power of the state or government. This distinction implies that if a talk is private or even a private race talk, which, in its expres-

sion, can unlimitedly approach the traditional race discourse, then the government and any other people should not intervene. Thus, the so-called "laissez-faire racism," which defends itself using liberal principles, as mentioned by Bobo et al. (1997), can be innocent under the shelter of liberal ideology.

Moreover, according to Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2009), as Zamudio and Rios (2006) also mentioned, while not limited to colorblind racism, liberal racism actively cites the principle of equal opportunity as an "anti-racist" practice, ignoring the historical and current differences in the social, political, economic status of different people of color. This kind of opportunity equality ideology and practice undoubtedly become the ideology for defending the existing social status differences between different races. Passage by Zamudio and Rios (2006) also discussed the other forms of colorblindness racism, for instance, revisionist racist narratives, according to which racism is not accurate (there is no racism in the liberal era). However, all the forms can conclude one similarity, which is that colorblindness racism existed as a typical liberal racism; in a society that still has racism, there is a tendency to think that racism no longer exists, which is the most crucial criticism of colorblind racism by Zamudio and Rios.

Contrary to the idea of Zamudio and Rios, Meghan A. Burke suggested different ideas. From quoting the study of Doane (2017), Gonlin and Campbell (2017) think that Colorblindness cannot potentially protect against racism in any situation. However, it can also contain a type of progressive, anti-racism thought. Colorblindness, in its original meaning, is an anti-racism thought, especially in the following ways: People subjectively believe in it and practice it in their lives. (Burke, 2017) Thus, Burke supports the proposition of Hartmann et al. (2017) and advocates a distinction between Colorblindness as an individual ideal (Colorblindness as having the potential of anti-racist ideas) and Colorblindness as an ideology (having the characteristics of defending racism as indicated by Zamudio and Rios). Following this kind of thought, people might acknowledge the thought Doane that Colorblindness ultimately equates to racism (Like the use of colorblindness racism) is probably a type of conceptual error (Because, according to Doane, only when it maintains a racialized social system, Colorblindness is racist). However, as Burke mentioned, this idea has a problem: How do we distinguish Colorblindness as a personal ideal and identity from Colorblindness as an ideology? If the two can be distinguished, this is equivalent to recognizing Colorblindness as a personal ideal of anti-racist thoughts and actions that can reduce racism (though not in every case) and vice versa.

3. The Reflection of the Ignorance

To judge the above controversy, it must begin with the premise that almost all scholars acknowledge that structural racism (in potential or explicit ways, inequalities in the political, economic, and socio-cultural status of whites and colored races) is still widespread in modern society. Recognition of this premise implies an acknowledgment of the failed (or at least unsuccessful) ideals of egalitarianism in abolitionism or civil rights movements. Therefore, there is such a structure in the anti-racist movement: an ideal of racial equality and an ever-lasting struggle for the perfect. If we are faced with persistent social problems, and if we think that solving these requires a constant battle, then the idea that the ideal society has been achieved is a hidden social problem of racial inequality. Based on the analysis of many scholars, there are many reasons for the emergence of racism, such as colonialism and economic inequality, or identity politics, where people can only establish their own identity through opposition to others' identities, a social psychological reality (Leong, 2013; Ackelsberg, 1996; Bernstein, 2005). This article does not discuss these causes but instead acknowledges them and explores whether they are overlooked by racial colorblindness.

Current scholars who critically analyze colorblindness as a defender of racism follow the above analytical strategy, arguing that colorblindness conceals the necessity of the struggle. This concealment manifests itself in colorblindness as a custom of political correctness (Raúl Pérez, 2017), creating a seemingly peaceful environment, neglecting the existence of racialized social systems and the group and individual psychological roots (such as identity politics) of racist ideologies. In other words, if the general belief in colorblindness only serves to ignore the existence of social institutions and psychological roots of racism by severing the connection between a free society and traditional racism, then viewing colorblindness as a form of racism is not a conceptual error. The question then is merely whether colorblindness, as a personal ideal—an individual anti-racist ideal—lacks the shortcomings.

The question is that it is not clear whether colorblindness, as an ideal and identity, can fight against the social system and identity politics as the basis of racism. However, it is clear that if colorblindness, as a personal ideal and struggle, can resist social systems and identity politics, it must be based on a clear understanding of these social systems and identity politics, not just mere opposition. People must understand the basic facts and mechanisms to know what they resist. Therefore, this ideal is not only premised on social movements (whether violent or quasi-violent) but also the rigorous and cautious pursuit of knowledge.

Without a clear understanding, there is no essential difference between a personal ideal and unquestioning belief in a "liberal society."

Without a clear understanding, if social problems caused by colonial history, economic exploitation, and identity politics cannot be alleviated at the societal level through individual resistance, then colorblindness, as a personal ideal and identity, cannot eliminate racism. This resistance (compared with traditional anti-racist narratives) will create a new identity political antagonism: not white and people of color, but racist and anti-racist. If identity politics is the psychological root of racism, then compared with solving identity politics itself, colorblindness as an ideal and identity is precisely a part of the operation of identity politics. Therefore, it is also a link in maintaining racism. In other words, In the pre-civil rights era, without the social construction, imagination, and discrimination of people of color, racism that supports the superiority of white people would no longer be possible; Racism that promotes white supremacy would no longer be possible; following the concept of colorblindness, racism can define itself through anti-racism (like today's Republican and Democratic parties in the United States). Anti-racism, as the enemy of racism, provides the premise for the existence of racism. Therefore, without an intellectual inquiry into the roots of racism, colorblindness as a personal ideal and as an ideology essentially has no difference in the sense that both ignore the social and psychological roots of racism.

4. Conclusion

In summary, liberalism or any other anti-racist social movement, not merely colorblindness, requires individuals to have a clear understanding of the essence and truth of racism. This clear understanding must be implemented at the level of collective (violent or quasi-violent) social movements for anti-racism efforts to reduce or even eliminate racism effectively. Genuine knowledge combined with violence, rather than blind adherence, is a necessary condition for eradicating racism. The current anti-racism movements lack these conditions.

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