

## **Racism and the Authority of Neoliberalism: A Review of Three New Books on the Persistence of Racial Inequality in a Color-blind Era**

**Christopher G. Robbins**

*Pennsylvania State University, USA*

### **Abstract**

*This article is an extended review of three recently published books on the persistence of racism and racial inequality in what is called variably the post-civil rights or color-blind era. Beginning with different problematics, all three books underscore changes in society and the economy that have resulted not only in the persistence of racist practices and updated racial ideologies, but also in the deepening of structures of racial (and class) inequality. Common to all three books is the centrality of the prevailing discourse on colorblindness that uses the myths of individualism and meritocracy to explain on-going matters of racism and racial inequality as entirely private affairs. However, I argue and frame the review with a concern that the economic practices observed to reproduce racial inequality, and the cultural logic underpinning justifications of racism and racial inequality, bear an uncanny resemblance to the economic practices and cultural politics that have emerged under the authority of neoliberalism. I conclude by suggesting, as others have, that racism and racial inequality undermine democracy in any form, especially its radical and inclusive versions. But as contemporary racist practices and structures of inequality are now coupled with the authority of neoliberalism, which has so dangerously emptied the social and privatized its vocabularies, neither racism nor racial inequality can be systemically contested or transformed unless the power of neoliberalism is simultaneously contested.*

**Keywords:** color blindness, democracy, individualism, neoliberalism, post-Civil Rights, racial inequality, racism, the social

*Andrew L. Barlow*

*Between Fear and Hope. Globalization and Race in the United States. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.*

*Michael K. Brown, Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz and David Wellman*

*Whitewashing Race. The Myth of a Color-blind Society. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.*

*Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Eds.)*

*White Out. The Continuing Significance of Racism. New York: Routledge, 2003.*

The subjects of the contemporary state are individuals by fate: the factors that constitute their individuality—confinement to individual resources and individual responsibility for the results of life choices—are not themselves matters of choice. We are all today ‘individuals *de jure*.’ --Zygmunt Bauman<sup>1</sup>

In [neoliberal] vocabulary, it is not just that the personal is political. The personal is the only politics there is, the only politics with a tangible referent or emotional valence. It is in these privatized terms that action is organized, that the experience of inequity and antagonism takes meaningful shape. --Comaroff and Comaroff<sup>2</sup>

My concern in this review article is the difficulty of defining racism and transforming racial inequality in the post-civil rights era under the rule of neoliberalism. In other words, the social relations promoted by capitalist practices under neoliberalism pose a profound threat for understanding and contesting racism and transforming racial inequalities. Across the 20<sup>th</sup> century, racism was practiced *openly*, and its consequences were visible in legally segregated communities, schools, hospitals, and occupations. These consequences were, in part, manifestations of “the color line” to which W.E.B. Dubois referred in 1903.<sup>3</sup> The color line was also reinforced blatantly in everyday life in outward expressions of disrespect, disdain, degraded media representations, and in the horrific lynching and innumerable acts of police brutality throughout the first two-thirds of the 20th century, until the civil rights movements.<sup>4</sup> This is not to suggest that police brutality and other forms of social and economic violence did not occur during the civil rights era, or that they have not continued to injure African Americans and other racialized minorities, but that the civil rights movements temporarily destabilized and concertedly contested the then prevailing commonsense on racism and racial inequality. The civil rights movements in various ways attempted to transform the oppressive structures and behaviors that were endorsed by the color line, and they were successful in some instances. *Relative gains*

were made at least momentarily in African American college attendance, some schools were successfully desegregated, and some African Americans were allowed entrance to professions, such as law, that were predominantly foreclosed to them in the Jim Crow era. However, racial gaps in wealth, health care, criminal justice, and schooling persist.<sup>5</sup> This is to say that the color line, however displaced, disguised and/or denied, still undergirds a racialized hierarchy of power and privilege.

In the post-civil rights era, the displacement of the color line and its concomitant racist features are difficult to delimit not simply because of the relative gains achieved by the civil rights movements (to which liberals and conservatives refer when they rationalize ongoing racial inequality), but also because of the visibility of a few African Americans in the new mediascape that saturates U.S. society and the wider world. For example, hip hop is the most consumed music genre of white suburban youth.<sup>6</sup> Hip hop's clothing fashions stretch from the South Bronx and Compton to Hollywood and Fifth Avenue. Sitcoms, beginning with *The Cosby's* in the 1980s, now portray African American families as middle class Americans and, as such, supposedly immune to the constraints of racism. Some African Americans, such as Johnnie Cochran, are celebrity lawyers, and others, like Michael Jordan, have achieved almost corporate status. Moreover, African Americans are seen worldwide in high positions of one of the U.S.'s most problematic presidential administrations. This is not to suggest that these representations of African American success are negative in and of themselves. Alternately, these post-civil rights examples are *only* representations; their market value and "popularity" work in tandem with and provide a formidable ideological veneer for the privatizing and color-blind logic of neoliberalism and the inequalities and mistreatment that most African Americans continue to suffer.<sup>7</sup>

As the economic architects and cultural scribes of neoliberalism, the New Right has produced over the last twenty years two sets of mutually reinforcing claims regarding racism and glaring racial inequalities. The one set of claims broadly expresses that free markets pave the golden road to personal and political freedom and to the eradication of labor market discrimination. In this instance, *racism is reduced to a consequence of guarded markets and personal "taste"* and, consequently, is displaced entirely from the realm of history, cultural practices, and social relations of power.<sup>8</sup>

The other set of claims asserts that racism exists but only on a private basis, for example, as in “hate crimes.” This set of claims attempts to legitimate itself by acknowledging the prevalence of racial inequality as the consequence of cultural depravity, individual choice, and personal pathology, but not as the cumulative effect of the historical sedimentation of unequal and racialized relations of power. As University of California English professor McWhorter explains in reference to African Americans,

There comes a point, during any previously reviled group's climb to the top, where that group can reach the same level as the ruling group only if the safety net is withdrawn. Sometimes a group must refashion its entire self-concept in order to move ahead.<sup>9</sup>

Princeton political scientist Jim Sleeper echoes this argument when he purports that “some racist damage can be repaired only by the damaged themselves.”<sup>10</sup> In this instance, *racism is defined in the negative, removed from the sources that institutionalize and reward those who practice (or ignore) it.* According to this logic, individuals might practice racism in rare instances, but the “safety net“ [read: the welfare state] is the central culprit in racial inequalities and producing racism. For these scholars, racism existed, and racial inequalities *persist* because individuals make poor choices due to the purportedly inferior—or damaged—construction of their cultural identity. Though the economic and socially conservative strands of neoliberalism characterize racism in slightly different terms, both sets of claims on the neoliberal side *remove racism and the production of racial inequalities from the machinations of history and power, finding the resolution to them in the free market and in racialized individuals' choices not to experience racism--which implies the erasure of the social and the evisceration of the state's socially relevant functions.*

Apparently, the neoliberal doctrine of privatization, pathology and personal uplift and the post- democracy of images are mutually constitutive. While neoliberalism's proponents continue to hammer home the myth that citizens are individually responsible for their fates, the state is whittled to the protection of free markets and the policing of individuals inassimilable to the new logic. Put differently, as the state disinvests in the protection of citizens against the vicissitudes of the labor market as it is further deregulated, individuals, in particular those subject to the legacies of racism and racial inequality, are subjected to redefinition as expendable, dangerous, or

personally responsible if they are found on the losing end of the new public philosophy of neoliberalism or, in current parlance, if they fail to “pull themselves up by the bootstraps.” At the same time, the media capitalize on the marketability of individuals and celebration of individual consumption. Individuals acting alone--not the collective action of groups of people--are heralded as successful in the rags to riches stories of television magazines and “reality tv” schlock that continue to remind the U.S. citizenry of the virtues of individual will, strength and shrewdness and the vice, if not sheer masochism, of believing in cooperative social action, shared governance and decision-making. The underside of these stories that operate in concert with structural changes in the economy and society is that if individuals cannot convince themselves that they are acting alone and muster the requisite resources to do such, they will find themselves interminably in rags and subject to social and institutional practices, like racism, as a result of their own alleged life choices. In other words, neoliberalism assaults the connection between individual responsibility for life choices and public accountability for the iniquitous distribution of social, political, cultural, and economic resources that condition those choices. Under the logic of neoliberalism, the space of the social is attacked and removed from questions of history, power, and inequality.

It is in these conniving--not competing--logics of the privatization of public life and the individualization of life choices that the new forms of racism and the nature of racial inequality need to be addressed, namely in the challenges posed by the disappearing social under neoliberalism. Thus, I find it necessary to draw out the role of the social before I review three new books that attempt to bring into view the breadth and depth of racism and racial inequality today and, consequently, suggest what should be done to counter it.

### **The Market, the Individual, and the Fading Social**

Writing in the mid-20th century, the heyday of liberal capitalism in Western societies, Arendt suggested that

What makes mass society so difficult to bear is not the number of people involved, or at least primarily, but the fact that the world between them has lost its power to gather them together, to relate and to separate them.<sup>11</sup>

This observation can be understood by way of analogy if, as Arendt explained it, the world is perceived as a “table” around which a multiplicity of strangers was seated. The table at once relates and separates them. As Arendt pointed out, once the table is removed, the individuals gathered around it hold nothing in common and are at great pains to relate to each other. The “world” to which Arendt was referring--the place that simultaneously related and separated people--can be understood as the social sphere, the political ground that stood between private people in public life. Thus, people find themselves incapable of relating--they find separate ways of being separated and, obviously, remaining separate--if the social sphere common to them suddenly, or even gradually, disappears.

The disappearing social manifest in Arendt’s time was symptomatic of and implicated in contrapuntal tendencies: the waning authority of tradition as the thread guiding people from the past into the future and the waxing power of mass culture and market relations as the forces propelling alienated individuals into equally uncertain and alienating futures. Arendt astutely recognized that the distinction held between the private and the public was basic not only to ensuring citizens an active place to exercise agency but also to engaging certain traditions for a source of authority. In order to pursue their private interests, individuals need(ed) a public realm (free of market demands) to guarantee those pursuits vis-à-vis a social space into which they could enter and translate private worries into public concerns. This translation allowed individuals, acting as citizens, to relate their separate interests to matters common to all. Moreover, participation in this translation was double-valenced: It not only carried tradition into the present, allowing the past to be a guiding principle of collective action, but it also implied investment in that space of translation as a place that existed before them and would exist beyond them, ensuring a common place for future generations to have and enter into.<sup>12</sup> The social, Arendt argued so eloquently, was a space greater than the sum total of individuals and their fleeting interests. As it was the case in Arendt’s time, the social demands individual responsibility for one’s actions in it and collective accountability for the condition in which citizens leave it to future generations.

Unfortunately, mass culture and market relations in their postmodern consumerist and neoliberal forms have nearly absorbed the public, thus erasing the possibility of the

social to emerge as a political space of translation. The process of this erasure can be observed on two registers. One, over the last twenty years, the New Right has waged an unremitting assault on public goods and institutions. Public schools are cast as inefficient and burdensome bureaucracies, not as democratic public spheres vital to promoting socially just sensibilities. Social welfare is defined as a handout, a device that makes people lazy and licentious, not a fundamental protection against the cold “invisible hand” of unaccountable market forces. And now, social security is increasingly constructed as an impediment to one’s exercise of stock market acumen in devising fruitful portfolios, not as a guarantee that one will find public support when s/he can no longer get up every morning (or evening) and grease the gears of the free market economy. Two, an ideological battle on the very term “public” has mirrored the attack on material public goods. The symbolic power of driving a privately owned automobile trumps the “dirty and overcrowded” public transportation system. Exercising in private storefront gyms, as opposed walking or jogging in a public park, satisfies people’s obsessions with fitness. Even the mundane use of cell phones has not simply made it easier to be reached by employers or to eliminate some individuals’ needs for “public” phones; it also suggests that when people are present in public spaces, it is necessary to be disconnected from the “public,” when it is not fashionable to remain connected only to the private. Outside of intimates, everyday conversation is tagged pejoratively as “political” if it transgresses into “public” issues. The problem with anything public, at least as it manifests in these examples, is that it is a political construct in cause and effect; it requires individuals to translate personal matters into ones publicly intelligible and to be held publicly accountable for that translation. Without the figurative support for the term public and literal public spaces and places to correspond with the private, the social world is emptied of its politically valuable contents.

As the Comaroff’s note, it appears that “the personal is the only politics there is.”<sup>13</sup> But this is oxymoronic, if not counterproductive to democratic sensibilities, a point the Comaroff’s make well. The personal, rather, is politically incapacitating, if politics are personally irrelevant. Politics becomes the bane of private pleasures when individuals are denied that common space--the social--in which they can exercise agency. Hence, the neoliberal privatization of social concerns ensures the “gradual yet relentless demise of the art of two-way translation between private problems and

public issues, that lifeblood of all politics.”<sup>14</sup> It does not, however, equally guarantee the demise of politics and the power it wields. In short, neoliberalism abstracts power from politics when the private is unhinged from the public and the personal is decoupled from the social.

It seems that social life in traditionally democratic terms is a contradiction in the neoliberal lexicon. With the rise of the New Right and neoliberalism, it appears as if not only the table around which we were once seated, at least trying to relate, has disappeared, but also the floor on which we were seated has been swept from underneath us. This phenomenon subjects individuals to the inability to relate to others as they all descend with increasing uncertainty from the realm of history, politics, and power, and to hoping in their equally separate ways to land safely. With the transfiguration or disappearance of the social comes the transfiguration of history and its guiding authority. With this frightening descent, new ways of practicing and explaining racism and reproducing racial inequalities arise, as their origins are mired in history and translated by neoliberalism’s logic of politics and power. This is not to suggest that individuals do not practice racism, but that there are new ways of “explaining” and denying it and altered social and economic structures to support it in the neoliberal era.

Accordingly, I will now turn to three new books that investigate the persistence of racism and racial inequalities in the current historical juncture. There is consensus between the books, but they all have different methodological points of departure. Obviously, the books can be read in multiple ways, but my sequencing of the review positions their approaches to the new racism in expanding frames of reference. With the progressive recognition of history and neoliberalism’s attack on it in each review, the space of the social emerges more clearly as a sphere fundamental to contesting the new forms of racism.

### **The Whiteness Project, Perspectives and Practices, and Prospects**

Edited by sociologists Ashley W. Doane and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* sets a formidable objective to be achieved by the volume’s authors: to define and operationalize a sociology of whiteness and detail the everyday practice of racism. At once, then, this collective must situate whiteness



studies historically and distinguish their objectives from previous whiteness studies work in other fields such as critical legal studies, cultural studies, and history. Previous work on whiteness studies, typically associated with Roediger, Ignatiev, Frankenburg, and Kincheloe et al, amongst others, turned the lens from those who were oppressed to those who benefited from the exercises of “whiteness” in the practice of racism.<sup>15</sup> Though the authors generally find whiteness studies to be an important field of inquiry into racism, they argue that previous work vacillated between a focus on structures or agency, ideology and, in the worst cases, between either the personal or the political without a sustained emphasis on relations of power.<sup>16</sup>

In contradistinction to the lack of theoretical acuity and continuity in previous whiteness studies, Doane claims “‘whiteness’ must be understood as a position in a specific set of social relationships--a ‘*racialized social system*’--and as a *historically contingent* social identity” (Emphasis in original, P.9). This system, all the authors agree, is explained by the ideology of color blindness. Color-blind ideology is defined as a:

New racial discourse [where] race no longer ‘matters’—except perhaps as a private or symbolic entity vaguely linked to ‘culture’ in a ‘color-blind’ society. In this ‘colorblind society, the prescription for dealing with racial issues is not to ‘see’ race and to claim that ‘everyone is the same.’ (Doane, in this volume, P.13)

It is clear in their project that color-blind discourse taps two reinforcing elements of the American civic religion—liberal individualism and formal/abstract equality--to the benefit of whites as a group. As a result, to adequately investigate whiteness as a position in a racialized social system (which implies that it is struggled over and redefined in particular historical contexts), Doane concludes

First, we need to rethink whiteness in ways that have greater theoretical and analytical complexity...A second major task is to undertake empirical studies of the role whiteness and color-blind racism play in the reproduction of white dominance...[G]iven that whiteness is a position in a racialized social structure and that these structures are constantly changing, we need to move beyond static conceptualizations of whiteness to incorporate ways in which whiteness is being recast. (Pp.17-18)

There is much to be gleaned in terms of theoretical and analytical complexity from the book's "New Perspectives" section. The interventions range from the philosophical and historical/historiographical to theoretical analyses of changing demographics, possible legislature, and the media. Amongst many things, Mills argues that the state must be re-centered in studies of whiteness and racism to understand how it has produced (and continues to produce) racialized structures of power.<sup>17</sup> Guglielmo draws partly on this in his critique of previous historiography on "becoming white" groups, specifically the "Italians in Chicago." In particular, his main claim is that historiographical work needs to be careful in detailing immigrant assimilation stories because, as he argues, many "near white" and white groups have been and are discriminated against in their assimilation processes but, unlike African Americans, they have never been *excluded* from basic citizenship rights. These groups were always *politically* "white."

Murguia and Forman, however, want to understand the impact of whiteness on Mexican Americans and racial politics in "Shades of Whiteness." They find white hegemony to be relatively universal but whiteness to be heterogeneous, split by class fractures and European affiliation. Consequently, Mexican Americans can make greater or lesser claims on the privileges of (near) whiteness, depending on factors like ethnic identification (e.g., Hispanic, Latino, Chicano), somatotype, name, and religious affiliation. And they find this problematic: As Mexican Americans are oriented to making claims on varying degrees and privileges of whiteness, racial politics is undermined by their orientation away from other minority groups, particularly African Americans. Makalani finds similar difficulties posed by the "persons of mixed parentage" movement, a drive to produce a biracial category. The groups leading the movement, Makalani finds, are fundamentally anti-black. In order to demand privileges from the structural location of whiteness, these groups must deny their African origins, and thus are separated from, if not opposed to, the demands made by African Americans (P.88). What these analyses suggest is that political choices are based almost exclusively on economic interests alone with no broader respect for and understanding of the social as a place to wage *common* battles against the power of whiteness under neoliberalism.

Further, the media chapters add complexity to the category of whiteness. Vera and Gordon make a substantive argument for understanding the role Hollywood plays in casting notions of goodness, leadership, and power through the white male.<sup>18</sup> This is critical to addressing whiteness, because films “bring into being—or reinforce old—ways of seeing, feeling, and thinking” (P.125). Alternately, Hartigan wants to understand the role of pejorative representations of poor white people in the media, specifically “rednecks,” “hillbillies,” and “white trash.” Though he contextualizes rural and poor whites within the broader structure of whiteness, Hartigan makes a good case for recognizing how the scapegoating of poor whites in mainstream media naturalizes the power structures and privileges of middle- and upper middle class whites. As he says, “After all poor whites are not the bank officers who deny mortgages and other loans to African Americans of all classes at a rate of two to three times that of their white counterparts” (P.111). The questions are, then, how are these theoretical insights helpful in observing, understanding, and transforming the structure of white power in everyday life and how do these observations point to the disappearing social under neoliberal rule.

The empirical studies in *White Out* shed much light on how whiteness, power, and history are rearticulated with liberal individualism, formal equality, and color-blind ideology. These chapters detail studies that were done in schools, with middle-class whites, the corporate world, and other areas in everyday life. In “White Fright ...,” Myers found that everyday talk is not as color-blind as the media and government policy suggest. As a result of whites thinking that they are under the “siege” of minority groups, Myers found that white people categorize (and thus monitor) people of color through all kinds of discursive practices: racializing body parts, smells, and behaviors (Pp.134-36). Indeed, the private and public practices of categorization and surveillance cannot be separated from the ways in which they naturalize the socially and politically produced power of whiteness. Nor can the practices be separated from the fact that whites can circulate in social spaces in which people of color are still intentionally and unintentionally excluded, thus being free from accountability for the racialized claims they make.

A central element in debates over racial inequality, school (and neighborhood) choice is an area upon which notions of color-blind discourse were constructed in order to

secure and/or mask racialized patterns of privileges. This is also an area in which conceptions of public life and the social are actively omitted. In “Good Neighborhoods, Good Schools, and the ‘Good Choices’ of White Families,” Johnson and Shapiro found in their interviews that whites of most classes base their choices of schools and neighborhoods on overt and covert racial claims. In some cases, the notion of having a white social network pre-figured parent choices of neighborhoods and schools (P.189). Johnson and Shapiro suggest that there is in place a “social structure that rewards white families for perpetuating segregation through their racialized decisions” (P.183), but what is lacking is the space of the social in which whites are held responsible for the private choices that they make in reference to public goods. This particular structure was found to be operative in the study of “White Views of Civil Rights: Color Blindness and Equal Opportunity” by Ditomaso et al. They found that whites explain equal opportunity through individual initiative and personal choice. As a result, whites ignore their access to social networks in getting jobs, while they cast affirmative action in the stereotypical terms of “special treatment.” And the other empirical chapters, “Some are More Equal than Others” by Lewis, “Playing the White Ethnic Card” by Gallagher, and “Racing for Innocence: Whiteness, Corporate Culture, and the Backlash against Affirmative Action” by Pierce all offer up different angles and contexts in which a structure repeatedly rewards whites as a group, and it is explained (away) by choice and initiative. Stated differently, there is a structure in place where whites are rewarded for making “individual choices” without being held publicly accountable; according to neoliberal logic, there is no prize for entering the social into personal choices, at least for those who can afford to do so. Moreover, without the social contest that could ensue over these choices, whites capitalize on the opportunity to translate their socially and politically constructed privileges into a narrative of natural teleology.

Additionally, two chapters take up the university and whiteness, “Blinded by Whiteness” by Chesler et al and “Diverse Perspectives on Doing Antiracism” by McKinney and Feagin. Their empirical findings based on interviews and writing samples all suggest that racial politics must be taken seriously in university life. McKinney and Feagin find that white students think they are “empty vessels” and passive recipients of racial beliefs and their explanations of racial issues shift between recognizing their complicity in racial politics and not recognizing racial matters at all.

Chesler et al have found that white students enter into a fairly diverse (but segregated) university setting and, due to their relatively homogenous K-12 school years, become confused by and/or reactionary to the racial dynamics they encounter on campus. Both studies make clear the need to engage, instead of reify, race and racism in university life. Adding a caveat to antiracist practice, which is critical to working with college students, O'Brien suggests that whites need to develop autonomy in racial thinking in order to understand the needs of people of color, to work openly through misunderstandings in doing antiracist politics, and to engage effectively their white counterparts, instead of becoming hostile with them or dismissing them altogether.

Closing the book, Bonilla-Silva reviews the centrality of liberal individualism, abstract equality, and the minimization of racism and racial inequality in color-blind discourse. Noting that color-blind ideology has gained more power as the economy has changed and more people have to struggle over fewer resources, Bonilla-Silva suggests that color blindness and whiteness might become more powerful in coming years. In particular, he claims that the U.S. will become "Latin Americanized;" as more people of Latino backgrounds immigrate to the U.S., the racial structure will shift to a tripartite racialized system. The demands that Latin Americans make on white privileges (echoing Murguía and Forman) and being "near white" will give whiteness an "ally," and defuse a more substantive politics that should include "all people of color" and progressive whites (Pp.282, 284). Otherwise, the fundamental structure of whiteness will remain unchanged (if not reinforced), reap benefits from (false) liberal individualism, and the "'We are all Americans' [color-blind] game" (P.284).

While Mills suggested that work on whiteness needs to address the role of the state and other chapters demonstrated the relationship between a racialized social system and color-blind ideology, the state's responsibility in "explaining" and *producing* the racialized structure of the U.S. through color-blind ideology was largely missing from *White Out*. Moreover, many of the authors recognize that a changing economy is critical to the salience of color-blind ideology, but they fail to elucidate the role that neoliberalism plays in that change and how it disconnects citizens from the social. I will return to these drawbacks later, but the authors of *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of the Color-Blind Society* squarely situate the state's efforts in disseminating color-

blind ideology and reinforcing racial inequality, and they note the function that free market practices and ideology serve in this process.

### **Myth and History, Accumulation and Disaccumulation**

Myths convey more than stories. When used to explain the relationships of large groups of people within a broader constellation, for instance a nation-state, myths expose the dreams of those in power, who can participate in that power, and who is excluded from it. One such myth, as demonstrated in *White Out*, is that the U.S. is a color-blind society, despite “the persistence of deeply rooted racial inequality” (*Whitewashing Race*, P.VII). In *Whitewashing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*, the authors seek collaboratively to put the central myth explaining racial inequalities in the post- era to an empirical and historical test. The myth is well rehearsed and all-too recognizable:

Racism has been defeated...If racial inequalities in income, employment, residence, and political representation persist, [supporters of color-blindness] say, it is not white racism. Rather, the problem is the behavior of people who fail to take responsibility for their own lives. If the civil rights movement has failed, ... it is because of the manipulative, expedient behavior of black nationalists and the civil rights establishment. (P.VII)

For the authors, this myth is assuredly problematic in that it has become so common and impenetrable in public discourse and policy making. But rather than engage in unproductive polemics about the myth of color blindness, the authors want to find the evidence on which the myth purportedly rests. The objective, then, is three-fold: to identify the main proponents of the myth and to bring it to full view; to discern the inequalities and the mechanisms (rituals) by (through) which the myth grounds itself in and contradicts that empirical reality; and, to propose democratic alternatives to systemic inequalities.

The authors rightfully locate the ascendance of the myth of color-blindness after “the Reagan-Bush revolution in the 1980s,” but they are careful in drawing out the historical underpinnings of the myth and racial inequality (p.1). Amongst many reasons, the authors note changes in demographics, economic restructuring, and

general white middle-class anxiety as factors basic to the power of the myth of color-blindness. As immigrating people, emigrating capital, and downward mobility have put increasing pressure on the state and the economy, all workers have been forced to scramble for limited resources. In a post-civil rights era however, to make outward claims on biological racial inferiority, as a way to legitimate racialized inequalities, is generally avoided. Consequently, the authors indicate prominent people who have been instrumental in redirecting race-talk to terms that are carefully coded in public debates, public discourse and policy as cultural deficit, individual initiative, and pathology.<sup>19</sup>

These widely publicized public intellectuals on the new racial thinking range from Shelby Steele to Jim Sleeper, Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom to John McWhorter, and Dinesh D'Souza to Charles Murray and others.<sup>20</sup> Most are either part of massive conservative think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Olin Foundation or the Heritage Foundation, or they have received funding from them to produce their studies. Nonetheless, they are widely recognized for having been highly influential in economic and social policy over the last twenty years. They have lead arguments for the dismantling of affirmative action, supported Draconian criminal justice policy, and advocated for the elimination of the welfare state. They can be delineated into two groups, the conservatives and the “racial realists” (P.6), though their claims by and large overlap and reinforce each other. In broad strokes, conservatives tend to locate racial inequality in behaviors, and realists, such as Sleeper, argue, “white Americans have been receptive to racial equality. Thus, racism is a thing of the past,” or it is at best relegated to sporadic individual acts. This view lays the groundwork to blame individual people of color for the inequalities they suffer, or to “biologize”<sup>21</sup> their culture and claim that the inequalities are the results of cultural differences (P.6). “Racial progress, in this view,” Brown et al state sardonically, “is best achieved by letting the free market work its magic” (P.8).

Because the New Right reduces racism to private individual acts, the authors find that “the routine practices of corporations, law firms, banks, athletic teams, labor unions, the military, and educational institutions tend to be ignored or minimized” (P.19). With the focus on individual instantiations of racism, history and the development of inequality is erased from the analysis (P.21). One relatively recent consequence of the

narrowing of research methodology on race (and other social) issues is the legal turn to the “individualist perspective” (P.31). The authors find that “[c]urrent law embraces the concept of racism as intentional individual prejudice” (P.37), and turns the burden of proof upon the victim. The victim must be able to extrapolate proof of the perpetrator’s *intent* above and beyond his/her actual behavior and the consequences of it.<sup>22</sup>

To get beyond the impasse of contesting individual acts of racism in the face of systemic inequality, the authors indicate that their analysis recognizes the vast disconnect between how sociologists study racism and racial inequality and how conservative think tanks approach these issues. Current sociological analyses approach racism as “unintentional, implicit, polite, and sometimes quite normal” (P.43). Approaching analyses of racism and inequality as normalized features of everyday life in the U.S. requires a complex understanding of structures and institutions and how they have evolved over time. Thus, Brown et al proceed in their studies of intermediate institutions through a central concept--“durable inequality” (P.22). Durable inequality can best be understood as the consequence of patterns of accumulation and disaccumulation. Accumulation is the collection of social, political, cultural, and economic opportunities afforded to one group (whites) through systemic investment over time; disaccumulation is the denial of those same opportunities through disinvestments over time to another group (African Americans) (Pp.22-30).

No doubt, perceiving racial inequalities in terms of accumulation/disaccumulation changes the foci and findings of analyses. It also centers the role of the state and intermediate institutions. Brown et al provide an invaluable intervention in the debates over inequality by demonstrating that throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous government policies were scripted (until recently) with clearly racialized assumptions and, as a result, reverberated throughout other spheres of society. A few examples will be helpful to illustrate government responsibility in the production of durable inequality. The rise of the New Deal is generally conveyed as a watershed in helping people of color, and it did in some ways. However, Brown et al note that the famous Wagner Act of 1935, which provided constitutional protection for union formation, did not legislate antidiscrimination measures (Pp.29-30). As whites benefited from the protection of unions, African Americans were systemically excluded from the benefits



of union participation, subjected to lower-paying and degrading jobs, without legal recourse. Further, the Federal Housing Commission working in tandem with the Veteran's Association (VA) disinvested in African Americans during the post-World War II era, which is typically regarded as time of great prosperity for most Americans. Though Brown et al recognize the gains that African Americans made in this time period, they demonstrate how the government incorporated a racialized system of opportunity accumulation. African Americans were denied mortgages by the Federal Housing Authority and VA, while whites received them. Moreover, when it did approve mortgages and loans for African Americans, the Federal Housing Authority only did such on the condition that the houses were in areas segregated by class and race (Pp.76-80).

The racial structure of accumulation laid down by government policies and the practices of intermediary institutions were reinforced in other areas of society, either by fiat or a consequence of the opportunities afforded to groups in one area and not another. The production of the managerial and professional class throughout the fifties, for example, is not too far removed from the rise of suburbia and the expansion of educational opportunity for whites in the 1950s. While African Americans were still excluded from white universities and public schools, white Americans were facilitated in tapping the resources of suburban communities by entering into the occupational networks and institutions found there. As Brown et al also note, the differential distribution of veterans' benefits through the GI Bill also exacerbated these trends in educational opportunity, further segregating African Americans and whites in education and occupations (Pp.76-77). Beyond the ideological gloss of the work ethic, this process of hoarding jobs and education over time substantively refutes the claims that suggest labor markets end discrimination, especially when labor markets have been racially bifurcated over time and since those who control local markets generally covet job opportunities for those of their own race, if not approximate class, when residential housing segregation doesn't provide a strong enough barrier to racial minorities' searches for employment.

Accordingly, Brown et al also investigate the arguments over affirmative action in light of the accumulation process. While African Americans entered university life at higher rates after civil rights legislation, the authors find that African Americans do

not “take positions of qualified whites,” as is often argued vociferously in the media. In studying the Thernstrom’s argument against affirmative action in relation to graduation rates (and what informs them), the authors find that the debates are concerned more with African American admissions to a handful of private, elite universities than with them entering universities in general. Moreover, the authors find these studies particularly misleading because, when conservatives do look at public universities, they overlook the practices (e.g., counseling services and the general racial climate) of universities that graduate higher rates of African Americans. Instead, the Thernstrom’s et al claim uncategorically that African Americans are unready for university life (see chapter 3 of this book—“Keeping Blacks in their Place: Race, Education, and Testing”). Unfortunately, this argument cascades into conservative arguments about primary and secondary education: Public schools are inefficient and dangerous, and the solution is to provide choice or open up public charter schools.<sup>23</sup> It seems, as Brown et al point out, that the problem in public education at any level is the public part of it, especially when race (and class) is (are) factored into the equation (P.106).

Additionally, the authors demonstrate how a narrow analytical focus also distorts debates over crime and African Americans. One, Brown et al found that conservatives repeatedly rely on pre-arrest data. In focusing on pre-arrest data alone, conservatives are hard put to explain, as the authors put it, how the prison population “gets darker” as one proceeds further into the system (Pp.142-43). The authors note numerous studies that show African American youth are more likely than white youth to be referred to the system for minor infractions, instead of being released and receiving therapy (Pp.143-44). The youth also have smaller chances of receiving services while in juvenile centers or prisons, a higher likelihood of being beaten or raped, and fewer tools to re-enter their communities.<sup>24</sup> The criminal justice process for African American youth, when combined with sustained disinvestment in their communities, is a self-reinforcing downward spiral. As current studies suggest, young African American males have a 33% chance of being incarcerated at some point in their live, while whites of the same age have 4% chance.<sup>25</sup> Between 1980 and 2000, affirmative action for African Americans was in full force in criminal justice, putting three times more African Americans in prison than in higher education.<sup>26</sup> This can only add to disaccumulation, as potential students and workers are denied entrance into

institutions of (higher) education and labor pools and communities are broken by the removal of more than a generation of its young males and, increasingly, females. Two, the focus on pre-arrest data and the “behaviors” of African Americans also elides the perpetual disinvestment in urban communities. Beginning in the early 1970s and still in operation today, industry has continuously fled the U.S. urban areas, while social benefits have been retracted from the same communities. It becomes apparent that the narrow focus on pre-arrest data actively misses how disinvestment in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of urban communities has been met with an increase in the number of punishable crimes and investment in the prison industry (See chapter 4—“Been in the Pen So Long: Race, Crime, and Justice”).<sup>27</sup> The silence on these disparities in criminal justice undoubtedly indicates a conspicuous vacancy in the social.

How can inequalities in education, the labor market, and criminal justice be separated from civil rights, specifically voting rights and political representation? Brown et al decidedly demonstrate that all of these issues are finely interconnected. The authors detail debates over (re) districting and current legislation on it. Voting rights and political representation are areas manifestly concerned with race and decisively refute color-blind initiatives. As the authors explain, conservatives are fundamentally concerned with defusing African American electorates: African Americans have been found to have a uniform set of political beliefs across classes and over time. One set of beliefs (e.g., redistributive programs) rests upon the value of public institutions and the state in general (P.205). The other concern with district lines is found in polling data. Brown et al find that, when a racial matter is involved in an election, working class whites vote against their class interests (P.207). For Brown et al, voting rights in their historical development, current districting politics, and impact on political representation indicate irrefutably that the U.S. is not color-blind.

Regarding strategies for redressing durable inequality, Brown et al provide two sets of initiatives. One set pertains to increasing accumulation in urban areas. This requires increasing investment in public institutions of all kinds; public support of efforts to increase wealth in minority communities; and policies to increase the social wage (which, they rightly recognize as a concern that cuts across racial and gender lines) (p.232). The other set of strategies deals with discrimination. The authors suggest that

laws be put in place to protect and enforce civil rights; the development of laws that focus on unintentional discrimination; a shift from a focus on intent to a concern with results; a broad-based initiative to promote public, private, and self-monitoring of employment practices; and public support for lawyers in discrimination cases (P.238-39).<sup>28, 29</sup>

Nonetheless, this is a highly simplified picture of a complex and exhaustively researched undertaking, and I barely scratch the surface of the myth Brown et al explode. However, as is the case with most projects, there are some caveats. While Brown et al widen the structural frame of reference for racial inequality and recognize the role of the state and intermediate institutions in reproducing it, they fail to define explicitly neoliberalism as the guiding force for free market practices. As was the case in *White Out*, the primacy of the social in providing a plurality of citizens access to the history of durable inequality and a space to justify the use of racialized power is missing from their analysis. Alternately, Barlow puts the U.S. and its responses to race and racial inequality in dialectic with its position in a globalizing economy, and he also underscores the challenges confronting political life under neoliberalism, in *Between Fear and Hope: Globalization and Race in the United States*.

### **Race, Place and Space, Problems and Potentialities**

Race, place, and space have become catchwords in studies on neoliberal globalization, and they have to be. Barlow understands the centrality of these categories, and he takes seriously the critical role the U.S. plays in the valence and contents of each in the neoliberal era. Barlow's study of racism begins with observations of how the U.S. has responded to the globalizing economy over the last twenty years and in the short period following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. While economic globalization has closed down many ways of life, it continues to open new forms of being and relating, new social and ethnic formations, and perpetually changing cultural practices. Rightfully recognizing the presupposition of newer forms of politics, Barlow argues that the U.S. is faced with a true crisis, a moment, in Marcuse's words, in which it must make a "determinate choice" between "hope and fear." Unfortunately, he feels that the U.S. has responded thus far with fear, a response that has found its greatest reception in what he calls the middle class society.

Like Brown et al, Barlow recognizes the transformations in U.S. in the post-World War II era. The transformation crucial to his argument is the shift from an urban to suburban society. He notes the U.S. government's and banking institutions' active and conscious efforts in racist practices that enabled whites to flee the cities and people of color. Especially important is his recognition that these efforts opened suburban life to blue collar whites, whereas suburbia was previously the locale of old money. Numerous changes in social and political life occurred because of the massive white migration to the suburbs. While city life offered whites a sense of community, typically based on collective notions of tradition and ethnicity and, in some cases, a sustained interest in labor issues, suburban life, he claims, began to "revolve[] so powerfully around the private worlds of home and consumption...The meaning of community took on more top-down, ritualistic, and organizationally defined and commodified forms, bereft of the possibilities for collective, autonomous action" (p.39). Barlow obviously suggests that the privatized life of suburbia is critical to the U.S. citizenry's disconnect from the social.

Consequently, social concerns get reduced to protecting the privileges of private, white suburban life, as he calls them in one of his more biting moments, "fetishes of private property, individual status, and malls..." (P.142). This is the foundation for "structured racism," which he claims is more productive in explaining racial inequality than institutional racism alone. Barlow explains:

First, the unit of analysis is not a particular institution, but society wide (sic) patterns of privilege and subordination. Second, it emphasizes the distinct way that privileging works, as patterns of behavior, not primarily as racist ideology or state policies. (P.18-19)

When racial privilege is the product of the use of race to make "unequal claims to...freedom, citizenship, jobs, political power, housing, education, and prestige," suburbia becomes consequently a mechanism, or "white habitus," to reproduce the opportunities associated with white power (P.12). These opportunities are the unequal access to education at all levels, the production of occupational networks, and the localization of politics at best. As a result, the transformation of U.S. society throughout the 1950s was a racialization of place and the power and opportunities it wields. As he notes, calls for "local control" or "racialized localism" are struggles

over scarce resources (p.93); these are also battles over membership in society, struggles over inclusion and exclusion as the U.S. undergoes changes in the globalizing era. These struggles currently benefit those who can afford to engage in privatized choices, thus evading the space of the social.

Racialized localism--and the ability to make claims on scarce resources and accumulated opportunities--is mirrored by the U.S. turn away from the welfare state to the "private investment state" (P.74). While those who can continue to make good on the privileges stitched into the framework of structured racism, racialized others who cannot make the same claims experience "the only growing sector of public 'services'...criminal law, police, criminal courts, prisons, probation, and so" (P.74).<sup>30</sup> Consequently, these services achieve greater prominence as the private investment state has lost--or relinquished--its responsibilities in monitoring capital: As the middle-class society experiences "fear of falling" (Pp.76-77), they are susceptible to, if not actively involved in, calls for increased security, investment in the prison-industrial complex, and any number of wars (e.g., the war on drugs, the war on crime, the war on homelessness, and the dubious war on terror). And these interminable wars only fly in the face of the other side of the state's neoliberal "policies and programs that enable capital to flow unfettered" (P.59).

The other consequence/benefit is the globalization of people, as Barlow suggests. The underside to the mass dislocations of people (beyond the obvious impacts on the individuals and their families as they leave their previous homes) is their inability to make claims on traditional levers of power when they arrive in the U.S. Moreover, the vast flows of new peoples into the country heighten the fear of falling condition and the newly found fear of anything "un-American" in the post-9/11 war on terror. Further, Barlow points out that unless the state can--or will, or is made to--reinvest in the public, the conditions are ripe for increasing racial inequality and racial hostility (P.68). Alternately, Barlow demonstrates how the dislocations of people in the globalizing economy have created new ethnic (he uses this term broadly) groupings in U.S. megacities. These ethnic groupings have the potential for new solidarities, locally and, importantly, globally, as they maintain contacts and exchange currency, information, and cultural products with family, friends, and political organizations in their previous country.

Lastly, Barlow offers up hopeful (but by no means given) alternatives to the culture of fear, hostility, repression, and privatization. For Barlow, “social globalization” is the basis for a new politics. “Social globalization [is] the recognition of the need to find ways to regulate markets and to counter their disequalizing effects in the name of social justice” (P.141). Though Barlow’s suggestions for achieving social globalization might seem “utopian” to the hopelessly cynical, these strategies are realistic, refreshing, and radical. In broad strokes, he calls for a “new civil rights movement.” While recognizing the setbacks of the first civil rights movement, the long-term benefit of them was the “knowledge of how to win institutional power” (P.173-74). The original civil rights movement enabled a certain class of scholars to enter academia; he suggests that academics must find ways to be in the institution, but not necessarily of the institution. Using their intellectual authority and institutional leverage (however limited), they need to involve themselves in racial and ethnic issues in the community and world beyond the institution because, despite neoliberalism’s supposed color blindness, the state’s and society’s responses to racial and ethnic matters have been and are increasingly becoming fundamentally antidemocratic. In Bourdieu’s terminology, the new civil rights scholar-activists have to contest “the logic of things”, instead of the things of logic.<sup>31</sup> If the new civil rights scholars can and will engage the coalitions emerging from globalization’s dislocations, they “would bring into existence a multiracial, multiclass prodemocracy movement of historic proportions” that must revitalize the nation-state (Pp.146, 179). Granted, all of this appears wildly optimistic, but he closes with three critical conditions that might contribute to the viability of such a movement: an unstable middle class order; burgeoning size and political influence of ethnic communities; and other nations’ interest in transnational accords (P.180). There is, again, a determinate choice to be made between fear and hope.

While these books offer specific insights in their own ways and on their own terms, I will close by addressing their strengths and weaknesses in light of my opening comments on the disappearing social under neoliberalism.

## **Conclusion**

When racism and racial inequalities are seen in the progressive widening frames of reference of these books, history, power and the role of markets under neoliberalism

take on greater prominence in the diagnosis and thus the prognosis of contesting racism and transforming racial inequality in this historical juncture. More centrally, the evisceration of the social under neoliberalism becomes clearer in terms of how certain groups of people, namely whites of most classes, are rewarded for exercising what Gallagher calls a “happy and guilt-free revisionism” (White Out, P.154) of the history of racism and racial inequality in the U.S. Since the lack of social space in which individuals can be held publicly accountable for their racialized claims reinforces the promotion of color-blind ideology, the social needs to be entered into analyses of racism and strategies for anti-racist political action. Thus, White Out and Whitewashing Race could benefit from a more sustained recognition of neoliberalism’s assault on history and the public realm necessary for the emergence of the social, and how its cultural politics of survival of the fittest frames the most of social action in everyday life and social policy formulation and cuts across racial categories.

In White Out, there was a uniform understanding that racist ideology is being redefined with the changing economy and the demands of growing minority groups in the U.S. There was also a strict recognition, as was the driving force of the project, of the role of structures in rewarding whites and underpinning color-blind ideology. However, the state and its changing functions under the authority of neoliberalism were largely missing as factors basic to the shifting nature of, or the demands put on, the structures of whiteness. What’s more, liberal individualism, a primary characteristic of color-blind ideology, is so powerful not simply because it is racially productive, but because neoliberalism so forcefully and convincingly reinforces liberal individualism in every other facet of citizens’ social, cultural, and economic life in and outside of racial relationships. Indeed, the denial of the social is critical to the denial of racism and racial inequality, because it eliminates the possibility for race to be raised and contested as a social myth that nonetheless produces harrowing political and economic consequences.

In Whitewashing Race, Brown et al made central to their analysis the state, markets, history and ideology. In widening the analytical framework for racial inequality, they were able to unravel the myth of color blindness by exposing its historical and material foundation through the state’s active involvement in the processes of



accumulation and disaccumulation of racial power. This strategy unequivocally blew up the myth that we are all color-blind individuals operating ahistorically, asocially, and apolitically, the function of which is to secure consensus for the on-going assault on public institutions, history, and democratic sensibilities. But there seems to be a significant contradiction in this otherwise penetrating critique. However reasoned and desperately needed their policy suggestions are, the authors are roundly unconcerned with the cultural politics of neoliberalism. The cultural politics promoted by neoliberalism have been the motor force in blinding or making citizens inured to what happens at the policy level and encouraging them to be concerned with their individual choices, initiative, bootstraps, and pathology. Neoliberalism's disdain for history vis-à-vis its assault on public life and celebration of rabid consumerism destroy the social sphere in which citizens can participate not only in an active sense of history, but also in actively investing in a politics that would secure consent for a broad redistributive program. In short, how can the power of neoliberalism's fiercely individualistic cultural politics be absented from contesting racism or gaining consent for transformative democratic policies?

Building on the accumulation/disaccumulation thesis of *Whitewashing Race* and taking seriously the color-blind ideology articulated so well in *White Out*, Barlow understands that the virulence of structured racism vis-à-vis the "middle-class society" is integrally conditioned by and formative in neoliberal policies. He also recognizes that the U.S.'s responses to a destructured economy, the migrations of people as a result of an unfettered global capitalism, and innumerable wars are crucial to the forms racism takes and the mechanisms by which it is reproduced. Barlow also provides a needed intervention, one lacking in *White Out* and *Whitewashing Race*: the prerequisite formation of a substantive politics in light of the social, economic, political, and cultural conditions altered by neoliberalism. While Barlow makes a passionate call for relevancy in the professorate, recognizes the crucial role the articulation of history plays in understanding racism and racial inequality, and understands the culture of fear spawned by the war of terror, the process of re-imagining the public sphere was absent, unless it would just spontaneously evolve from the work of the new civil rights movement, which is a possibility.

By recontextualizing these books in light of the role of the social in democratic politics, it appears that I am making one of two claims on the primacy of the social in contesting racism and transforming racial inequality: 1) Dialogue about racism would occur automatically if the social were reconstituted and this dialogue alone would encourage social and economic transformation; 2) and discussions of racism and racial inequality cannot occur without the space of the social. I am arguing that both claims have elements pertinent to addressing the current political climate on race. 1) Empirical studies in *White Out* demonstrate that both white and black Americans do, in fact, discuss race. For example, Myers found that whites speak quite candidly in racist terms and participate frequently in racist practices, while they use color-blind discourse in outwardly public expressions (Pp.129-144). In a study of corporate culture and the use of color-blindness to explain affirmative action issues, Pierce found that black Americans were willing to speak openly about racial issues, while whites became hostile when pushed on their explanations of racial matters (Pp.199-214). Unfortunately, black Americans are denied legitimate public spaces in which they can make those claims, while whites are shielded from these discussions and rewarded by the avoidance and/or absence of the social under neoliberalism. However, this is not to suggest that sincere and equitable discussions of race would *automatically* occur, and social transformation of racial and class inequalities would magically happen, if the social were reconstituted but that, without a vibrant social sphere, the discussions of racial issues already occurring will fail to get the public translations and accountability necessary to addressing them. And this condition informs the second claim. 2) Racism and racial inequalities are political problems. As Arendt explained, the social is the political space standing between private individuals in public life; it is the place in which private interests are translated into collective needs. Democratic public life demands that private individuals be held publicly responsible for their choices, claims, and uses of power. Thus, the political challenge of eradicating racism cannot be challenged *systemically* without a solution that is fundamentally political in nature, one that encourages citizens to enter equally into a common space that permits and promotes a fair contest over scarce social, political, cultural, and economic resources. Otherwise, separate individuals, finding unequally separate ways of remaining separated, will continue to redefine political issues according to their private interests and benefit, while others suffer the consequences of those antidemocratic translations, one of which being the translation of racism into

a mythically and individually produced and experienced act, instead of a social, political, and economic system of racialized power.

In closing, racism and racial inequalities are the products of history and the on-going “racist practices [that exist] in a relationship that pits human beings against each other in the struggle for and against privileged access to scarce social resources” (Barlow, P.12). And this struggle is clear in all the books reviewed here. In its color-blind guise, contemporary racism is at once a struggle over historical memory and the product of neoliberalism’s broader effort to eradicate history through the elimination of democratic public life and commodification of the spaces and vocabularies central to it. Racism and racial inequalities are insidious practices and relations, and they must be eliminated and transformed if we are to have history, justice, and democratic public life. Neoliberalism in its various instantiations is a wicked set of policies, ideology, and practices, and it must also be contested if we are to have history, justice and democratic public life, instead of a religious fixation on consumerism, individual initiative (as only a theoretical construct), and pathology. But unless the table around which we were once seated--that is, the social--can be reintegrated into our ways of thinking, being, feeling, seeing and relating, history can never achieve the public translation and hearing it requires. To battle racism and escalating inequalities today means to intervene collectively in neoliberalism’s process of social, cultural, and historical evisceration. This suggests socio-cultural, political, and economic interventions. Possibly, a new civil rights movement (*Between Fear and Hope*), a broad redistributive program (*Whitewashing Race*), and active efforts to unravel and contest color-blind racism and its privileges in everyday life (*White Out*) are the tools essential to begin rebuilding the destroyed social sphere that we need to translate racial inequalities and contemporary myths of rugged individualism and false color blindness into public matters requiring social thus political, not free market, solutions.

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## Notes

cxr253@psu.edu

1. Zygmunt Bauman, *Society under Siege*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), p.69.
2. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming," *Public Culture* 12(2) 2000, p.305.
3. W.E.B Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p.221..
4. There is an expansive body of literature on these issues. Some key texts are: bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1993); Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for the Sign of Blackness*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Angela Davis, in Joy James (Ed.) *The Angela Davis Reader*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); Joy James, *Resisting State Violence: Radicalism, Gender, and Race in U.S. Culture*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002); Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Post World War II*, (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
5. See Gary Delgado (Ed.), *From Poverty to Punishment: How Welfare Reform Punishes the Poor*, (Oakland, CA: Applied Research Center, 2001). Joe R. Feagin and Karyn D. McKinney, *The Many Costs of Racism*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of *Brown v. Board of Education**, (New York: The New Press, 1996).
6. See S. Craig Watkins, *Representing: Hip Hop and Black Cinema*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
7. This introductory tension between the continued presence of the color line and the high visibility and marketability of a few African Americans is borrowed from Henry Giroux. For a further exploration of this tension and a sustained analysis of what he calls "neoliberal racism," see H.A. Giroux, "Spectacles of Race and Pedagogies of

Denial: Anti-Black Racist Pedagogy under the Reign of Neoliberalism,”

Communication Education 52(3/4) (July/October 2003), Pp.191-211.

8. See Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002/1962), pp.110-11.

9. See John McWhorter, “Don’t Do Me Any Favors,” *The American Enterprise* 14(3), April/May 2003, p.25.

10. Jim Sleeper, “Negatives vs. Affirmatives: Countermeasures against Racism Have Gone Too Far for Much Too Long,” *Los Angeles Times*, (June 24, 2003), p.B.15.

11. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), Pp.52-53.

12. Arendt. *Ibid.*, particularly Pp.54-56.

13. Jean and John L. Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming,” *Public Culture* 12(2), 2000, p.305.

14. Bauman, *Op.Cit.*, p.70.

15. See Ruth Frankenburg (Ed.), *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social Criticism*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, (New York: Routledge, 1995) and *Race Traitor*, (New York: Routledge, 1996); Joe L. Kincheloe, Shirley R. Steinberg, Nelson M. Rodriguez and Ronald Chennault (Eds.), *White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America’s Classrooms*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of American Working Class*, (New York: Verso, 1991).

16. For this critique, see in this volume, Margaret Andersen, “Whitewashing Race: A Critical Perspective on Whiteness.” For an example of whiteness coupled with power, see Henry A. Giroux, *Channel Surfing: Race Talk and the Destruction of Today’s Youth*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), specifically Chapter 4, “White Noise: Racial Politics and the Pedagogy of Whiteness,” pp.89-137.

17. For an extensive analysis of the “state,” see David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).

18. bell hooks and others have done much in this area. See bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*, (New York: Routledge, 1996), and Giroux, *Breaking into the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002).

19. The authors are in complete agreement with much of the work in *White Out...: The ideology of liberal individualism permeates the myth from start to finish*.

20. Some of their work includes: Shelby Steele, *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision for Race America*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990); Jim Sleeper, *Liberal Racism: How Fixating on Race Subverts the American Dream*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Stephen and Abigail Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003); John McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America*, (New York: Perennial, 2001); Dinesh D’Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multiracial Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1996); and, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

21. See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p.148.

22. Constitutional lawyer and Georgetown law professor Cole provides an excellent analysis of the individualist perspective in law. See David Cole, *No Equal Justice: Race and Class in the American Criminal Justice System*, (New York: The New Press, 1999).

23. See Thernstrom, *Op.Cit.*, ”Education’s Division Problem.”

24. See Sasha Abramsky, “Hard-time Kids,” *The American Prospect*, (August, 27, 2001), pp.16-21. Also see Matt Olson, “Kids in the Hole,” *The Progressive* (August 2003), pp.26-29.

25. The Sentencing Project, "Facts about prisons and prisoners," The Sentencing Project. Available [on-line]: <http://www.sentencingproject.org/pdfs/1035.pdf>.

26. Justice Policy Institute, "Cellblock or Classrooms. Justice Policy Institute (2002). Available [On-line]: <http://www.riseup.net/jpi/article.php?id=2>.

27. Manning Marable sees this circular process as the groundwork for making prisons the "new Leviathan" of racial inequality. See Marable, "Racism, Prisons, and the Future of Black America," Zmag, Available [On-line]: <http://www.zmag.org/racismandblam.htm>. For a sociological analysis of the relationship between cities, disinvestment, and prisons, see Loic Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration," *New Left Review* (13), January-February 2002, pp.41-60.

28. These are well-reasoned strategies. The aims of the redistributive policies seem consonant with those of the discrimination efforts. These suggestions seem much in line with Fraser's theoretical position on redistributive and recognition justice, though Brown et al express little interest in issues of identity and cultural politics. See Nancy Fraser, "From Redistribution to Recognition?: Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Postsocialist' Age," in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.11-39.

29. I will return to the prospective viability of these suggestions in the conclusion.

30. Zygmunt Bauman makes a similar argument in "Global Law, Local Orders." See Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

31. Pierre Bourdieu, *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*, Translated by Loic Wacquant, (New York: The New Press, 2003), p.19.

Christopher G. Robbins

### **Author's Details**

Christopher G. Robbins teaches at the College of Education, Pennsylvania State University, USA

### **Correspondence**

Christopher G. Robbins  
178 Chambers Building  
College of Education  
The Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, PA 16802  
U.S.A.

[cxr253@psu.edu](mailto:cxr253@psu.edu)



Racism without Racists book. Read 126 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. The first edition of this best-selling book showed that also... Start by marking "Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving... Want to Read. Vice Chancellor's Oration on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia March 18, 2008. On March 21, 1960, South African police killed sixty-nine peaceful demonstrators in the township of Sharpeville. But if we see these individual eruptions of racism as connected to the persistence and further entrenchment of institutional and structural racism that hides behind the curtain of neoliberalism, their meanings cannot be understood as individual aberrations. In the cases we have discussed, the racism is explicit and blatant. Thus new forms of global structural racism are emerging. The deep structural life of racism bleeds out from the U.S. criminal justice system and is having a devastating effect on the political life of the nation and the world.