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Opinion

On the Fallacy of Color ‘Blindness’

What happens when you say ‘I don’t see color...’

What is the fallacy when someone says, “I don’t see color?” Immediately, when someone says this to me, a woman of color, two thoughts cross my mind. The first one is, “Is there some congenital abnormality that negates the ability to perceive colors?” The second, if more visceral: “If you don’t see color, does that render me invisible, unimportant, or not worthy to be seen?”

This statement prickles the hairs on the back of my neck. For, too often, these words are spoken by a White person to someone Black or brown.

It almost fits into the trite utterance of “I have some (or a) Black (or brown) friends,” or, another, “You are not like them.” So, if you do not see color, how do you know you have some friends of color or that I am not like the illusive “them,” presumably others of color?

Many of us have prejudices and/or stereotypes of those

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we view as “other” or ones different from ourselves in some way. It might be that culture, religious belief, ethnicity, gender, class, marital status, socio-economic status,

“Regardless of the injury, all people’s blood is red and all of us can hurt or grieve, regardless of color

or one or more of the -isms influence our perceptions. Some biases are so inculcated that, from infancy, we are programmed to have fears, stereotypes, and negative views

of those unlike ourselves.

One part of this kind of fallacious thinking may hinge on the fact that in order for some groups to feel righteous and superior, other groups must have to be viewed as dangerous and/or inferior.

Our perceptions of the value of ourselves and others often determine our treatment of and reactions toward those we view as less than or not as valued. Wars are fought over cultural and religious differences. Regardless of the injury, all people’s blood is red and all of us can hurt or grieve, regardless of color.

In the classrooms across the United States, many children of color — and we all have a color — are castigated, segregated, and under-educated by least-qualified teachers who are sent in to work with children most needy.

As our schools become more multicultural, many of their teachers are becoming more monocultural and unprepared to acknowledge cultur-

al differences, different styles of learning, or ways of showing respect and tolerance. The resulting revolving door of teachers who hone their craft on these children not like themselves often exacerbates the underachievement of students and the continual decline of the public-school system as we know it.

Until all of us are willing to forego our color and cultural blindness, we perpetuate students being placed on an assembly line to mediocrity, frustration, and wasted, unacknowledged potential. This, in no way applies to all teachers, for many teachers are diligent, dedicated, and hard-working people who care and who have students, many of whom, succeed in spite of the odds against them.

However, to “not see color” is, to a person of a different color, the height of insult from an arrogant, insecure, ignorant, condescending — even if unintentional — racist person!

Are Blacks Close to Receiving Reparations?

Understanding the Importance of H.R. 40: Commission to Study and Develop Reparations Proposals for African Americans Act

Blacks have been trying to level the economic and societal playing fields in this country for some time. When it comes to the concept of granting “reparations” to Black people as a form of restitution for the years that Blacks spent subjected to the barbaric institution of slavery in America, it has seemingly been overlooked and ignored by the majority of legislators that have come and gone in the U.S. Congress.

Many Blacks have heard and even used the phrase, “40 acres and a mule,” which was a guarantee made to formerly enslaved people of African descent that was the first attempt at seeking to provide some form of reparations to Blacks who had been enslaved.

Of course, history shows us that the decision makers who talked about the idea of providing reparations to people of African descent who were previously enslaved, reneged on their promise, leaving Blacks to work harder and longer to achieve success than those who had enslaved them to begin with. This has proven to be extremely challenging for Blacks.

U.S. history has set precedent for providing reparations to several groups, including Japanese Americans, who have suffered challenges.

In 1942, during World War II, the U.S. created internment camps where roughly 125,000



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people of Japanese descent were essentially enslaved as a result of an executive order from then-president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The rationale for their inhumane detention was that people of Japanese descent were suspected to have been conspiring against the U.S.

Sadly, many of these people were American citizens, but that did not matter because they were forcibly detained and made to move from their homes to the internment camps.

Congress decided to institute a reparation fund after recognizing the actions of the U.S. government resulted in estimated losses of several billion dollars sustained due to the loss of property and the ability to make a living suffered by those of Japanese descent.

As a result, each survivor was eventually awarded \$20,000, with approximately 80,000 people of Japanese descent claiming the reparations that they were entitled to.

This action cost the U.S. government approximately \$1.6 billion in reparations and remains a dark stain on Ameri-

ca’s history.

Here in America, descendants of the people of African descent that were enslaved and experienced some of the cruelest ordeals imaginable, should be looked upon no differently than any other group. As with Japanese Americans during and after World War II, African Americans continue to experience their own unique challenges and issues.

From a historical perspec-

“African Americans continue to suffer debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships

tive, approximately 4,000,000 Africans and their descendants were enslaved in the U.S. and colonies that became the U.S. from 1619 to 1865. The institution of slavery was constitutionally and statutorily sanctioned by the U.S. from 1789 through 1865.

African Americans continue to suffer debilitating economic, educational, and health hardships, including but not limited to the nearly 1,000,000 Black people incarcerated, an unemployment rate that is more than twice

the current unemployment rate of Whites, and an average wealth of less than 1/16 of that of White families, a disparity which has worsened, not improved, over time.

While the focus has been on highlighting the social effects of slavery and segregation, the continuing economic implications remain largely ignored by mainstream analysis. These economic issues are the root cause of many critical issues in the African American community today, such as education, healthcare and criminal justice policy, including policing practices.

The call for reparations represents a commitment to enter a constructive dialogue on the role of slavery and racism in shaping present-day conditions in our community and American society.

Former U.S. Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) once proposed creating a Commission to study how to appropriately compensate the descendants of slaves for decades, with those conversations falling on deaf ears.

Understanding the unique challenges that African Americans face here in America, U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) is hoping that a bill she is now championing, in the spirit of former Rep. Conyers, gets the level of support and traction needed.

Read the rest of this commentary at
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