

Racisms in the New World Order

Racisms in the New World Order
Realities of Cultures, Colours and Identity

Edited by

Narayan Gopalkrishnan and Hurriyet Babacan



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

Racisms in the New World Order: Realities of Cultures, Colours and Identity, edited by Narayan
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This book first published 2007 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN 1-84718-223-2; ISBN 13: 9781847182234

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
<i>Narayan Gopalkrishnan and Hurriyet Babacan</i>	

Section One: Theorizing New Racisms

Chapter One	12
Boundaries of “Race” and Ethnicity and Questions about Cultural Belongings	
<i>Floya Anthias</i>	

Chapter Two.....	22
Neo-Liberalism and Infertainment: What Does a State Do?	
<i>Narayan Gopalkrishnan</i>	

Chapter Three.....	34
Racism in the Context of the Other “Isms”	
<i>Basil Varghese</i>	

Section Two: Indigenous Perspectives on Racism

Chapter Four	48
Human Rights in Australia: First things First	
<i>Jackie Huggins</i>	

Chapter Five.....	55
Surviving Colonization: Anishinaabe Ike Gang Participation	
<i>Nahanni Fontaine</i>	

Section Three: The New World Order and Racism: Manifestations

Chapter Six.....	74
Ignoring the Elephant in the Room: Racism in the War on Terror	
<i>Rahil Ismail</i>	

Chapter Seven	95
Contemporary Manifestations on Racism in Australia <i>Kevin Dunn and Jim Forrest</i>	
Chapter Eight	107
The New Anti-Semitism <i>Danny Ben-Moshe</i>	
Chapter Nine	124
Social Capital and the Economics of Racism in Regional Australia <i>Santina Bertone and Christopher Sonn</i>	
Section Four: New Racisms and the State	
Chapter Ten.....	138
Ethnic Minorities and Crime in Australia: Moral Panic or Meaningful Policy Responses <i>Jock Collins</i>	
Chapter Eleven.....	162
A Tale of Two Racisms <i>Linda Briskman</i>	
Chapter Twelve.....	171
Regulating Asylum in the Aftermath of September 11: The Case of Australia, Canada and New Zealand <i>Alperhan Babacan</i>	
Section Five: Future Challenges for Anti-Racism	
Chapter Thirteen	186
Contemporary Challenges for Anti-Racism: Issues and Strategies <i>Hurriyet Babacan</i>	
Biographical Notes for Editors.....	203
Biographical Notes for Contributors	204
Bibliography	209

INTRODUCTION

NARAYAN GOPALKRISHNAN
AND HURRIYET BABACAN

“Race” and Racism

“Race”¹ and Racism are value-laden terms that are perpetuated through societal messages and public discourses on immigration, ethnic minorities, Indigenous people, multiculturalism, refugees and citizenship. In many contemporary nation-states, discourses on “race”, ethnicity, and culture have formed the basis of nation building and have determined who is included in the boundaries of national identity and who is considered the “other”. Although racism is a lived reality for many people across the world, it remains largely a silent or invisible issue. It diminishes the social fabric of society, creates social tension, and perpetuates social inequality and impacts on the life chances of the people involved. Racism affects many sub-sections of society: those who perpetuate it, those who are at the “receiving end”, and those who are not directly involved in the problem.

Defining racism is a difficult task as it changes its forms and meanings in different historical contexts. These forms are multiple, historically specific, situationally variable and often contradictory. They also are gendered, and interconnect with nationalist and religious identities in complex ways (Hollinsworth 2006). There have been many attempts to define racism. One definition that is offered by Zelinka defines racism as:

A belief in the superiority of one particular racial or ethnic group and, flowing from this, the exclusion of other groups from some or many aspects of society. This exclusion (and often exploitation) is seen as legitimate simply because of the difference or supposed inferiority of the other group’s race, ethnicity or nationality (Zelinka 1996:1).

¹ ‘Race’ is a social construct that does not exist in the essence nor is the result of the biological make up of individuals. Yet the term ‘race’ is used widely as if it were a reality. The term is put in inverted commas to indicate that we are problematising it and points to the difficulties of the discourses and language of racism.

Mellor (2004) notes the complexity of racism and demonstrates how everyday racism occurs through a range of means by a range of players. He identifies four useful categories of understanding racism: *Verbal racism* that is predominantly individual in nature expressed through verbal remarks, name-calling, general overheard comments, jokes, taunts and threats; *behavioural racism* in which racist sentiments are expressed through action including avoidance of particular types of people in interpersonal situations, staring, patronizing, segregation, harassment, assault and denial of identity; *discrimination* embedded in institutionalised practices which is perpetrated by individuals through denial of equality of treatment, restriction or exclusion, excessive or punitive measures including over-application of laws or procedures; and *macro level racism* which occurs at the societal and institutional levels and includes elements such as lack of concern by society or government, selective view of history, cultural dominance, institutions of society and media and misinformation. The processes of racism, while able to be categorised in this way, are much more complex and there is often an enmeshment of different types of racism in the way it is enacted. Troyna explains this complexity as follows:

What is evident, then is that racism is an ideology that is continually changing, being challenged, interrupted and reconstructed, and which often appears in contradictory forms. As such, its reproduction in schools, and elsewhere can be expected to be complex, multi-faceted and historically specific... specific forms of racism can be expected to change, and inherited racist discourse are likely to be reconstituted. New circumstances are likely to lead to new formulations of racism. (Troyna 1993:15)

It is important to note that racism is referred to as an “ideology” by many writers, such as Troyna. Although the notion of biological classification of “races” is discredited by contemporary science, the notion of racism still persists. The reason for this, as noted by Castles (2000), is that the process of categorising certain groups or individuals as inferior involves the use of economic, social or political power and generally has the purpose of legitimating exploitation or exclusion. The dominant group constructs ideologies of the inherent difference and their power is sustained by developing structures such as laws, policies and administrative practices, often referred to as institutional racism (Vasta & Castles 1996:31). Macdonald (1993) points out that in different types of racism we are confronted with prejudice plus power. Many writers have noted that a lack of questioning of the power relations in society results in a continued silence on the topics of racism and discrimination (Bennett 1998; Castles 2000; Papastergiadis 2000). Some authors prefer to use the term “racialization” as a way to denote that racism is embodied through

attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, laws, norms, and practices that reinforce power asymmetries (Miles 1989).

While racism is complex and is continually shifting boundaries, it is important to recognise its ordinariness. Essed (1991), the Dutch sociologist, has identified that the notion of “everyday racism” consists of inequitable practices that infiltrate everyday life and become part of what is seen as “normal” by the dominant group, even in the context of formal commitment to equality. It takes the form of everyday actions or interactions whose effects taken individually may seem trivial, minor and not worth making a fuss over. However, their cumulative impact can be far less trivial. Each racist joke or comment occurs in the context of a personal and collective history of such trivial incidents. Racism is not an individual act of but a social one. Hage (2002) points out that the perpetuation of racism is a collective social act and not the responsibility of individuals only:

Violent racists are always a tiny minority. However, their breathing space is determined by the degree of “ordinary” non-violent racism a government and culture allow to flourish within it (2002: 247).

While “racism” flourishes and takes on new forms, it has become invisible in the rhetoric of governments and communities, being replaced by less confronting terms like “living in harmony” and “community relations” and “social cohesion”. However, race structures continue to persist and determine, in real or imagined ways, the way people express their own and other’s identity and place in society (Chambers and Pettman 1986; Pettman 1992).

New Racisms

Today we live in a world that is rapidly changing. Processes of globalisation and migration have moulded a new sense of identity in individuals and communities so that people have a layered sense of identity and how they define themselves. Globalisation and its many manifestations - changing power relations, technology, media, finances, terrorism, war, movements of people and ideas- sets the stage for racism to mutate and change in terms of ideology, behaviour manifestations, intersectionality with other forms of “isms”, spatial spread as well as immediacy of escalation (Bulmer and Solomos 1998; Kondos 1992; Malik 1996). The last few decades have also seen the rise of fear and hate-based politics, with Pauline Hanson in Australia, Georg Haider in Austria and the Bharatiya Janata Party in India as just some of the examples of where fear of the “Other” has been effectively transformed into political capital (Gopalkrishnan 2003; Stratton 1998; Hollinsworth 1998; Quinn 2003). The use of fear and insecurity are key elements of the discourse of the new racisms

(Gopalkrishnan 2003; Babacan & Babacan 2006). This has been particularly the case with the global shift towards Neo-Conservative and Neo-Right politics. Beck (2000:11) points out that from now on, what happens in the planet is not only a limited local event and that “all inventions, victories, catastrophes affect the whole world, and we must reorient and reorganize our lives and actions, our organizations and institutions, along a “local-global” axis”.

The development of racist movements has also been linked to the crises that many of the counties face as global economic decisions cause societal changes. The shifts and fluctuations of global capital has changed national economies, and migration processes intersect with and are constitutive of networks of political, military and cultural relations which lie with either nation states, transnational corporations or international bodies (Held. et al. 1999; Castles & Miller 1998). Wieviorka (1995:25) argues that the rise of modern racism is linked to the “decomposition of national industrial societies” with high levels of unemployment, industrial restructuring, and reduction in welfare support. This has also led to an evolving configuration of the transformation of the State, particularly in term of management of the mobility of people and border control (Ghosh 2000; Brochmann & Hammar 1999). The State is enmeshed in the production of the labour market as a commodity in a contradictory manner of mobility and de-mobility, wanted and unwanted immigrants. Thus, in the new global order, racism is very much part of the production of the labour market. The corner stone of the democratic nation-state is the establishment of rights: political, social and civil. What citizenship rights and entitlements are to be given to the “Other” is one of the key discussions in contemporary societies and goes to the heart of the debates on multiculturalism (Brubaker 1992).

Mass movements of people have destabilized citizenship, nationhood and territory as we witness greater hybridization of societies. The response from the State has been greater assertion of dominant identities.

The roots of contemporary racism are deeply steeped in historical processes. As Stoler notes

There is good evidence that discourses of race did not have to await mid-nineteenth century science for their verification. Distinctions of color joined with those of religion and culture to distinguish the rulers from the ruled, invoked in varied measures in the governing strategies of colonial states. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, race becomes the organizing grammar of an imperial order in which modernity, the civilizing mission and the “measure of man” were framed. And with it, “culture” was harnessed to do more specific political work; not only to mark difference, but to rationalize the hierarchies of privilege and profit, to consolidate the labor regimes of expanding capitalism, to provide the psychological scaffolding for the exploitative structures of colonial rule (1995: 27).

The contemporary forms of racism have shifted their focus away from biological notions of racism to cultural notions. These are referred to as “new racisms”. The features of new racisms are related to a broader understanding of “race” issues and include cultural dimensions, linkages with identity or ethnic signifiers, construction of whiteness as an invisible factor, intolerance of minority religious groups, assertion of certain religious beliefs, assimilationist emphases, interconnections between “race”, culture, nationalism and patriotism and discourses of the New Right, (Solomos & Back 1996; Mac an Ghail 1999). It is acknowledged that the new racisms are fundamentally supported by the old racisms linked to essentialist arguments such as skin colour (Modood 2005; Babacan 2006)

The significance of the “new racisms” has been the move beyond the idea of a single monolithic racism and to acknowledge the wide range of contemporary racisms that are located in specific historical and spatial conditions. Another important factor to emerge from the focus on “new racisms” is problematising “whiteness” as a concept. There has been considerable focus on difference but not on sameness, focus on “colour” but only those who are black or brown. Sameness and whiteness had been rendered invisible and the hegemonic subject position of “white” was untouched as the notion of colour was to do with “blacks”. Thus whiteness studies have seen a shift in the critical gaze from the colonised and disadvantaged to the colonisers and the privileged. Critical studies address the way in which whiteness is privileged and normalised. The spotlight has been turned on the powerful and privileged although its effectiveness in understanding the structural and historical process of racism and in developing anti-racism strategies remains limited (Anderson 2003; Babacan 2006).

The new racisms are observed across many Western countries. Although new racisms are moulded by specific historical, situational and spatial contexts, they nevertheless exhibit similar elements of “othering” and exclusion. Since the events of 9/11 we observe specific targeting of Muslims in many countries across the world as part of the effort by governments in the “war on terror”. We also see the State being engaged in creating and being created by discourses of “new racisms” through its involvement in security and ethnic crime prevention initiatives. Moreover, there is considerable debate about the policies of multiculturalism as both a preventative measure against racism and also a cause for racism by reifying culture and replacing racism with “culture”.

Plan of the Book

The chapters presented in this book explore the complexity of racism in the context of a globalized world. The book presents a collection of writings

relating to the impact of global trends on intercultural responses, the experiences of Indigenous and ethnic minority groups, intersections of racism with other forms of discrimination, spatial issues as well as international comparisons and institutional responses. This book is made up of 6 key sections: Theorizing Racism; Indigenous Perspectives on Racism; The New World Order and Racism: Manifestations; New Racisms and the State; and Future Challenges for Anti-Racism. A range of authors, with expertise and knowledge in this field, has made valuable contributions to this collection.

Chapter 1 offers perspectives on ways to theorise new racisms. Professor Floya Anthias discusses the complex nature of racism and its intersections with gender and class. She examines issues of transnationalism, ethnicity, identity, ethnic violence and nationalistic ideology and suggests that an approach using the concept of “Translocational Postionality” is valuable in terms of understanding and responding to the complex and varied aspects of the modern world.

Chapter 2 focuses on Neo-Liberalism and the role of the State. Mr. Narayan Gopalkrishnan discusses some of the consequences of adoption of a neo-liberal model of economic policy within a liberal democracy. He examines the increasing use of “Infearthainment” as a way of drawing the polity together, one that leads to new forms of racism, discrimination and marginalization of the “other”. He excavates the consequences for multiculturalism and looks at some positive directions towards the future.

Chapter 3 offers a practitioner perspective of racism in the context of the other “isms”. Mr. Basil Varghese argues that prejudice, discrimination and oppression take a variety of forms in society including sexism, ageism, elitism, cultural chauvinism and racism among others. These forms of oppression have much in common, while also being different in critical ways. The chapter focuses on racism to clarify its nature, social history and its effects.

Chapter 4 examines the complex interaction of sexism and racism in the context of Indigenous people. Ms Jackie Huggins excavates the construction of identity and the relationship to developmental processes and community engagement. She further looks at the context of Human Rights and the ongoing struggles for recognition of Indigenous people.

In Chapter 5, Ms Nahanni Fontaine discusses the historical and contemporary context of Aboriginal girls and women involved in gangs in Manitoba, Canada, addressing the narrative construction of place, race, class and sex. She contests mainstream constructions of Aboriginal gang members, reflects their own stories, examines the political economy context and draws attention to the contested nature of so-called “collective” social fields.

In Chapter 6, Dr Rahil Ismail examines the War on Terror in the context of how dialogue, perceptions, depictions, interpretations and

management of the conflict are affected by racist inclinations. The nature of the political debate and the role of the media in demonizing the “Other” are also discussed, as well as the normalization of Islamophobic views and policies.

In Chapter 7, Dr. Kevin Dunn and Jim Forrest argue that racism and racist attitudes show wide spatial variation across the national space and that spatial variation in one form of racist attitude does not correspond with regional variations for another. They further argue that the recognition of such spatial variation is essential when it comes to thinking about anti-racism initiatives. The ideological bases of anti-racism are not only specific to a nation, but are also likely to vary across a national space.

In Chapter 8, Associate Professor Danny Ben-Moshe uses Australian and international data to explore the global emergence of the “new anti-Semitism” since September 2000. He considers what distinguishes the new from the old, and the characteristics, manifestations and implications of the new are considered both in terms of policy and identity. Strategies to respond and counter the process are also discussed

In Chapter 9, Dr. Santina Bertone and Dr. Christopher Sonn use research conducted in regional Australian towns to examine how the language of economics plays a key role in framing peoples’ perspectives on multiculturalism and on making judgments about those who are acceptable and those who are not in these towns. The many layers and manifestations of racism are excavated in the study as also the impact of levels of bridging capital on social exclusion,

Chapter 10 focuses on the moral panic about ethnic crime in Australia and in western societies. Professor Jock Collins argues that, in general, ethnic crime is highly exaggerated and uses the criminality of a few to portray a culture as criminal. Using criminological evidence and research findings, he argues that policy responses developed on the basis of this moral panic are likely to fail, while broad based policy responses that relate to socio-economic disadvantage, educational outcomes, labour market outcomes, infrastructure needs, avoidance of sensationalism and effective policing are far more likely to produce desired outcomes.

Chapter 11 focuses on the responses of governments to groups that interfere with dominant interests and threaten perceived and reified unity of the nation-state. Examining two areas of policy in Australia, with Indigenous Affairs and the incarceration of children in immigration detention facilities, Professor Linda Briskman argues that the solutions are often sought in terms of assimilation into the mainstream or in rejection by placing people outside the citizenry of the nation-state or a combination of the two.

In Chapter 12, Dr. Alperhan Babacan examines the state policies of regulating asylum in the aftermath of September 11 in a comparative study of

Australia, Canada and New Zealand. This chapter looks at that the changes in asylum laws and policies post the September 11 terrorist attacks, examines the variances across the three countries and suggests that the conjoining of asylum and security matters has unjustifiably “criminalised” asylum seekers, portraying them as threats to national security.

In Chapter 12, Professor Hurriyet Babacan explores the contemporary challenges for anti-racism. She interrogates the challenges for developing a discourse of anti-racism in a climate of denial of racism, silencing of the voices of victims of racism and the sophisticated manner in which racism is enacted in contemporary societies. The chapter identifies strategies that may be adopted to develop an alternative discourse and a platform for action.

This collection of writings should be read in the context of a complex scenario of racism where issues of “race”, “culture”, ethnicity, migration, multiculturalism, gender, citizenship and the war on terror are conjoined and intertwined. These readings are offered as a contribution towards the creation of critical thinking on racism and for the development of anti-racist futures...

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