



SITUATING RACISM

The Local,
National
and the Global

By

Hurriyet Babacan,
Narayan Gopalkrishnan
and Alperhan Babacan

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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by Hurriyet Babacan, Narayan Gopalkrishnan and Alperhan Babacan

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Ideas of “race” have shaped social and political relations all over the world over centuries. Racism is pervasive, permeating the fabric of everyday life and normalised in ways that render it invisible and neutral. The manifestations of it around the world make it one of the powerful forms of structural violence. It is often assumed that we have overcome many forms of ‘isms’ such as sexism and racism. Unfortunately, while medical science has made progress in discrediting ‘race’, racism persists as a concept, structure and action. Challenging racism has proved to be very difficult. Many who consider themselves not racist are complicit in racism in ways they may not be aware of, but most particularly through denial of racism. Treating racism as an aberration allows it to persist and flourish globally. It continues to privilege those who benefit from it.

Zelinka (1996) 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”. Racism defines the way in which social relations between people or society are structured and operates through a range of personal, relational, systemic and institutional practices that serve to devalue, exclude, oppress or exploit people. It is an act of power and is a tool for maintaining privilege (Johnson, Rush et al. 2000). Studies indicate that discrimination and racism impact on the life chances of people who experience it in key areas such as economic participation (employment, income, and assets), health (mental and physical health), access to key goods and services (education, housing, and other services). Studies also indicate that racism results in social exclusion, barriers to civic participation and social isolation for those who are victims (Babacan 1998; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) 2004; Karlsen and Nazroo 2004; Bromberg and Klein 2005; Babacan and Babacan 2006).

Over the past several decades, global manifestations of racism have undergone significant transformations. These have ranged from anti-colonial struggle, the civil and human rights movements and anti-Nazism to the antiapartheid resistance which have challenged the former

established racial regimes. During the last fifty years since the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations (UN) 1948), there have been advances made towards human rights through the creation of national and international laws, treaties and human rights instruments. However, the consolidation of global capitalism has also created new forms of racialization, racial hatred, exclusion and inequality very often along racial and ethnic lines. The dream of a world without racial hatred remains unfulfilled.

Institutionalized racism has been woven over centuries of colonialism and slavery, into the structures of society and institutions of government, local and central (Sivanandan 2006). Though the institutions go through change in themselves, if the underlying cultural assumptions do not change, the new arrangements will reproduce what is historically expected (Bowser 1996). Developing a strong analysis, Winant (2006) points to five themes that play a significant part in the making and unmaking of racism in a globalised world:

- *Non-racialism* as against *Race Consciousness* in the context of questioning “How can we both take account of race and get beyond it, as the present situation seems to demand?”
- *Racial Genomics* which, though at pains to distance itself from the eugenics of the past, simultaneously makes racial identity more fungible and flexible as well as reinforces the stereotypes its advocates challenge.
- The issues of the *Nation and its Peoples*, where many nations are maintaining unstable and contentious immigration, naturalization and citizenship laws in the face of changing patterns of immigration as well as internal political backlashes.
- The *Intersectionality of Race/Gender/Class* which also encompasses the complex connections and conflicts among anti-racist/anti-colonial movements, women’s movements and labour/anti-poverty movements.
- The *trajectory of Empire, Race and Neo-conservatism* has been a racial theme for a long time and that while the link between racism and empire was wrongly considered terminated, it has instead been reinvented, principally through US neo-conservatism (Winant 2006).

Thus, contemporary constructions of racism are historically contingent and are shaped by making interrelated processes including conquest, colonisation and nation building. Racism in the twenty-first century needs

to be considered in the charged atmosphere of global power politics. Ideologies of racism are now inextricably linked to the ongoing process of *globalization*. These ideologies seek to legitimise and sustain an international system that tolerates a strong divide not only between the North and the South but also within nation states (Thompson 1990; Bonnett 2006). Racialized global hierarchies operate at the personal but also institutional and structural level. Commenting on global international relations, Jones (2008) asserts that the current world order is characterised by profound global inequality, depicted through reference to the developed and developing world. She notes that the racialized character of global inequalities involves power which is rarely acknowledged, as explicit racial discourse has been removed from the institutional form of the modern world order, and this apparent transcendence of “race” is mirrored in the lack of attention to “race”.

As the process of globalization intensifies, there is an increased mobility of people across borders, through facilitated formal and informal channels. The United Nations (2001) identified 5 key areas of concern in which racism is manifested in the 21st century:

- Trafficking in women and children
- Migration and discrimination
- Gender and racial discrimination
- Racism against Indigenous peoples
- Protection of minority rights

This book explores the contemporary development of the global phenomena of racism. It uncovers the complexity of manifestations and causes of racism. The book critically draws upon and analyses global economic and legislative frameworks related to racism. We explore the key themes of global racisms and the interplay of hierarchies of colour, culture, identity and “race” developments and unpack the points of intersection between new and old racisms. The book also examines the manner in which racism exists and is reproduced through the formulation and application of rules, laws, and regulations and access to and the allocation of resources, as also processes where it is reproduced and reinforced, adapting continually to the ever-changing societal conditions in everyday life. We examine the impacts of factors such as fear, politics, the use of the “race card”, nation state and nationalism. Whether we are able to get to a “post-race” society is debatable and whether we continue to engage with “race” as an anti-racism concept is disputed. What remains

clear is that in the context of globalisation, anti-racism is going to be on the agendas of scholars and practitioners.

The chapters presented in this book explore the complexity of racism in the context of a globalised world. We do not purport to a comprehensive coverage of all issues relating to racism but maintain our focus on covering the interplay of racism at the diverse levels on a global platform. Chapter 1 provides the *Introduction* and sets the rationale and synopsis for the book. Chapter 2 *Theorises Racism*. This chapter will provide a theoretical basis for the book. It will provide a sociological exploration of the conceptual frameworks for understanding race and racism and provide an overview of the critiques of theories of “race”.

Chapter 3 explores and analyses the *Global Economies of Racism*. Globalisation theory posits that transnational corporations, global financial institutions and markets determine global governance arrangements. The disintegration of the 20th century industrial society, largely driven by the demand for unskilled labour, resulted in particular discourses on racism. The 21st century global economies are largely different, driven by technological change and information economy on the one hand and the need for limited types of unskilled labour on the other. The new global economies have produced new discourses, often contradictory, about culture, language, diversity and immigration. This chapter unpacks the central role played by global economics in creating hierarchies of “race”, people and culture.

Chapter 4 focuses on the *Global Manifestations of Racism* and the way racism manifests itself in similar ways, albeit adapted to local situations. This chapter will outline the manifestations of contemporary racisms as a global phenomenon. It will outline the common causal factors, similarities and differences in discourse and practices. It will demonstrate the similar ways in which “othering” and exclusion occurs. The chapter will argue that there is a global hierarchy of “races” that is created and structured in a manner that delivers similar practices and arguments in different spatial locations. The chapter will also draw attention to the key racisms in the 21st century within the global framework.

Chapter 5 explores *Fear and Racism*. This chapter will focus on the way fear and insecurity is a key factor of racism. Linking with the themes of global economic insecurity (e.g. jobs lost as a result of industries shifting offshore), fear of the “other” and fear of terrorism, and how a new mindset has been created in individuals. The chapter will argue that fear strategies are deliberately used by a range of players such as governments (for legitimisation), by corporations (for economic gain) and by media (for selling papers). The overall result is a barrage of ideas and images that are

reinforced in society about particular groups of people who are to be treated as the “other”. The chapter also explores the psychological, social, economic and political ramifications of the use of fear and the consequent racisms that have emerged. Furthermore, the chapter will identify the consequences of the use of fear in creating societies focused on safety, law and order and security, limiting civil liberties, inward looking societies lacking in human compassion against others.

Chapter 6 focuses on the *Nation State and Nationalism*. This chapter excavates the nexus between immigration, multiculturalism and national identity. The chapter will argue that ethnic identities have been subsumed under a general banner of culture that is static and reified. The media contributes to this by negative stereotyping of ethnic identities and even racial profiling of some groups such as “Lebanese gangs” or “Chinese or Vietnamese drug rings”. The chapter will review contemporary debates on immigration, settlement and multiculturalism and put forward the argument that official multiculturalism has remained at a rhetorical level and that despite the policy recognition of the right to ethnic identity and heritage, there has been an incremental return to assimilationism over the last few decades. We argue that this is exacerbated by a paranoid discourse about different groups of immigrants such as refugees, boat people, and Muslims that has resulted in significant setback of the rights of minorities. We examine the role of the nation state in creating nationalisms which are exclusionary and explore the challenges to the nation state in a globalised world. The nation state has undertaken a greater role as the “watch dog” of their society with stricter regulation of immigrants and asylum seekers, with assimilationist policies and greater emphasis on law and order while at the same time withdrawing from the delivery of services and programs.

Chapter 7 examines *Racism and Legal Measures*. Many nations have anti-discrimination and anti-racism legislation and agencies that act to monitor human rights. The legislation often outlaws direct acts of racism and discrimination. There has been considerable debate about the effectiveness of both legislation and such human rights bodies. Civil libertarians, human rights activists and others have posed different arguments for and against such legal measures. It is well known that there are very few cases of racism that have been successfully brought to justice before such legislation. Much of the legislation is highly technical and cumbersome. The evidence required to substantiate racist acts is detailed and overwhelming. This has resulted in many victims not using the legal measures or lodging complaints. The chapter examines the efficacy of legal measures and visits the arguments for and against these measures.

Chapter 8 is on *Developing Anti-Racism*. This chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical and practical measures of anti-racism. The difficulty of defining racism is reflected in the problems in constructing anti-racism theories. The anti-racism measures in practice contain a fragmented range of activities with varying degrees of impact. The chapter will provide an analysis of the barriers and challenges to developing anti-racisms and will identify challenges and future work that is needed. Chapter 9 is the *Conclusion* and brings the diverse themes of the book together.

The book establishes the complex scenario of racism which involves issues of “race”, “culture”, ethnicity, migration, gender, citizenship, fear, nationalism and the war on terror that are conjoined and intertwined. These chapters are offered as a contribution towards the critical thinking on racism and for the development of anti-racist futures...