

International Inherence to Africa's Ebola Crisis

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Abstract

This study is examining the racism in American society, and how the discussion of race has expanded to the issue of immigration. It highlights some of the current trends in public opinion to view Africa as a disease stricken nation and to further distant the country from the crisis's of disease caused by poverty that affect many African nations. This current trend among White American society includes arguments to the need of protecting the border against current levels of ethnic migration from non-European countries. Thus, advocating and disallowing an increase of modern day African immigrants to study in the United States or be allowed citizenship because of the public racist views. The study goes on to argue that new forms of racism have evolved passed old arguments and become more hidden beyond what is seen as socially unacceptable. For this reason, now White Americans can hold to strong anti-immigration policy and disallowing educational, political and social opportunities towards modern African immigrants and others from different parts of the world. This creates and furthers a system of race that excludes the opportunities allowed within American society towards everyday White Americans, regardless of their past ancestry.

Keywords: African, Ebola, Immigrants, Migrants, Racism, Race-System

Introduction

There is a unique underlying connection between Africa and the United States, which formulated from the transatlantic slave trade. It is true that America is a nation of immigrants and of those who are African in ancestry; the migration to the North American continent was done by force of action.

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Since Africa's inception in trade and interaction with the United States there are concerns that policy is driven towards the interest of the more developed western nation of North America, opposed to the Western and Eastern countries in Africa. Africa has gone through many transitional eras from pre-colonization, colonization, post-colonization and modernization. In regards, to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade this era in African History was a constant expansion of power for Western nations and the United States, who were successors to their European counterparts. The Portuguese aim during their arrival to Africa in 1488 near the Congo River was to expand their nation into an African-Indian empire. The Portuguese desired to control most of the trade routes to the east.² From 15th even until the 20th-century personalities such as Vasco da Gama established a commerce route for Portuguese through the southern tip of Africa building on the discovery made by Bartolomeu Dias. It was Christopher Columbus mistaken prediction of the world being smaller than it was that led to the conquest of North America, the enslavement of those indigenous Americans and ultimately Africans.³ It is estimated that over 11 million Africans were brought through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade,⁴ of those who survived 500,000 are believed to have been the ancestors of the now 42 plus million African Americans in the United States.⁵

This study shall examine the United States current vacillating policy towards African Immigrants and all immigrants for that matter. In the break of Ebola throughout West Africa, some colleges sought to prohibit international students from coming to their campuses.⁶ Although most colleges declared that their doors would stay open to students coming from Africa, it does, however, expose greater issues that emerge in the culture of race within American society.

²Chancellor Williams, *The Destruction of Black Civilization Great Issues of Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 245.

³Darlene Clark Hines, Williams C. Hine, Stanley Harrold, eds., *The African American Odyssey Combined Volume Fifth Edition* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2011) 32-33.

⁴Hines, *Odyssey*, 53.

⁵ United States Census Bureau, "Profile American Facts for Features Black(African-American) History Month: February 2012," United States Census Bureau,

http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb12-ff01.html (Accessed November 8, 2014).

⁶Dan Mangan, "Texas College Rejects Nigerian Applicants, Cites Ebola Cases," NBC News, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ebola-virus-outbreak/texas-college-rejects-nigerian-applicants-cites-ebola-cases-n226291> (Accessed November 8, 2014).

The Ebola crisis causes questions to the levels of access that African immigrants have at not only attending college, but who are migrating to the United States in hopes of becoming a citizen.⁷

To this issue presents the question of whether there are recent drawbacks in the areas of immigration among Africans being admitted to the the United States and if so does the restraints correlate with a broader examination of race in America. With so much streamlining happening in urban communities through white flight and gentrification does America still see itself substantially divided through race? Can racial identity still play a significant role in the nation's political landscape, are there issues of economic inequality caused by race towards, in particular, non-white immigrants? In addition to these questions arise, what is the level of access to education, housing, and public service for African Immigrants? At what levels do we find current inequalities among new African immigrants to the country who have now become part of the long legacy of racial segregation in United States history towards African American? Many scholars and academics have written on the issues of race in America. This study will examine some of the key recent works on the subject, and seek to outline social change, political logic, as well as, economic apprehension causing the drawback of advancement for African and other non-white immigrants in the country in their pursuit of equal citizenship.

African Racist Symbolism

American racist symbolism has often spoken louder than words. Racist symbolism often portrays the notion that we as a nation prefer to do other things instead of assisting African countries with their levels of poverty or the current crisis of the day. As believed by some that the Bushmeat of chimpanzees is what hauled in the more recent crisis of Ebola on the Africa continent, ignoring the reality that there are extreme levels of poverty in these countries that need immediate and proactive attention. However, these sentimental views go back to a time of segregation and access to opportunity in the United States, when there were very few and limited public services for all non-white persons in the country.

⁷Nick Anderson, "Ebola could test college commitment to international academic exchange." Washington Post, http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/ebola-could-test-college-commitments-to-international-academic-exchange/2014/10/15/111c1d74-547a-11e4-809b-8cc0a295c773_story.html (Accessed November 10, 2014)

It brings to question how secure can the nation address epidemics that develop if there are levels of immigrants who are undocumented and can't receive medical treatment. What is being debated in previous cases shows that there is a grave disconnect among the public, typically mainstream to relate among non-whites and those who fall within low-income levels.

Generally immigrants who migrate to the country fall within one or both of these categories. In fact, due to European colonization in the 19th century of Africa, everything for a while became established through classifications and categorization. Unfortunately, what followed these misperceptions of categories that placed different ethnic groups in levels of intelligence gave way to a massive and international levels of discrimination and inhumane systems of racism throughout various parts of the world. This system of thought formulated by authors such as Frederick Coombs has caused total populations of people among Africans and their ancestors to be subjected to boorish incarceration into a state of segregated poverty, lack of access to education, and healthcare. Popular culture has through segregation and discrimination overshadowed the efforts of Christianity that was assumingly going to bring "salvation" to the "savages." Racism became a cultural phenomenon and gave way to levels of hostility towards those from African nations, and left no room for any numinous redemption or claims of charitable aid towards these impoverish nations.

Today the United States dealing with a form known as "othering" of non-white Westerners creates massive flaws in addressing current issues and crisis that are humanitarian in nature. What becomes of these misperceptions of events affecting non-white person's leads to misguided and ineffective policies, as well as responses to the crisis. In a recent column, similar issues occurred once again in American pop-culture as stated:

"Newsweek's use of a chimpanzee to represent a scientifically invalid story about an African disease is a classic case of othering. It suggests that African immigrants are to be feared, and that apes — and African immigrants who eat them — could bring a deadly disease to the pristine shores of the United States of America. Othering is particularly harmful in the context of a health epidemic, as one scholar notes because it "hampers the containment of contagion during an infectious epidemic by compelling people to reject public health instructions."⁸

⁸Laura Seay, Kim Yi Dionne, "A Long and Dirty Tradition of Treating Africa as a dirty, diseased place." WashingtonPost,

African Immigrants and the Race System

As often noted many believe that racial and ethnic expansion has occurred because of immigration over the past 40 years. It is a prominent belief that the new influx of immigrants will be in competition with other Americans for jobs and housing. Beyond this fact, exist the reality that all Americans within a democracy will need political representation and often desire to reach social levels of equality.⁹ Job security is something that concerns majority of Americans today, especially among lower skill workers. The need for training and development has become more important to offer options for immigrants who come to the United States. In addition, there must be protections of rights for those who seek representation and the enfranchisement to maintain levels of opportunities that address each's rights under the constitution. Although some studies show that the rising immigrant tide will cause interracial conflict among minorities, facts still remain that any potential competition cause for the need of a more equal and just society. Equality will allow the expansion of democratic principles beyond primarily white society to a more multicultural community the United States has always been destined to become.¹⁰

The historical system of racism, (better termed a race system) in the United States aligns the needs of African immigrants of the past and those today with others who come to the country looking for the opportunity of success. Some view the current influx of non-white immigrants in the country as an excellent opportunity to finally address the nation's system of race, and try to extend even more the values of freedom, as well as, equal opportunity for all Americans. In the United States, there are currently four states and the District of Columbia that have a larger population of non-white Americans: Texas, Hawaii, New Mexico, and California. There has been a drawback to this increase of immigrants in the country since the 1900s.

Most immigrants are affected by the race system that distinguishes them from their white counterparts, who typically are lighter in complexion.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/08/25/othering-ebola-and-the-history-and-politics-of-pointing-at-immigrants-as-potential-disease-vectors/>, (Accessed November 10, 2014)

⁹James G. Gimpel, Frank Morris, "Immigration, Intergroup Conflict, and the Erosion of African American Political Power in the 21st Century," Center for Immigration Studies,

<http://cis.org/AfricanAmericanPoliticalPower-Immigration> (accessed November 11, 2014)

¹⁰Gimpel, Immigration, Intergroup Conflict.

The race system in the United States has established numerous levels of exclusionary and inclusionary opportunities for non-white or European Immigrants. The exclusionary levels for European immigrants has been historically previously resolved by working oneself to the top or obtaining some skill and education. However, this has not been the same for African immigrants or those of color. After working hard and achieving levels of education, they still must deal with the "fault-line of race."¹¹ The struggle for immigration in the United States has often been linked to the greater aims towards equality in the African American communities. The Civil Rights Movement of the 60s helped to overturn eras of inequality dealing with immigration with the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. This act prohibited race, being used as criteria for deciding who can legally migrate to the United States. It is argued that a strong coalition of immigrants and Americans of all colors could developed in advocacy for worker rights, political representation, social equality and integration in education, housing, and employment that fosters equal opportunities.¹²

Immigrants Civil Rights Coalition

African Americans are much more accepting to immigration than their white counterparts in recent studies. In addition, African Americans are in agreement that immigrants should be equally eligible for government provided social services, including public schools, as most see a strong resemblance in Civil Rights and Immigration Policy in the United States. Although, some African Americans feel a threat to a shortage of jobs for low-skill workers because of the influx many African American leaders and organization stand in solidarity with the immigrant community. Mainstream African American organizations and black radical groups have vocally expressed their support for immigration reform and policies that address modern day trends of equality. The African American community is richly made up of African and Caribbean immigrants and view the need to build coalitions in the past that causes for more collaboration in the immigrant community than divisions. Some have even called for a "neo-rainbow coalition" that could be led by people of color aimed at addressing issues of class and developing an anti-racist system in the United States.¹³

¹¹Sdonline," Immigrants and Race in the US: Are Class-Based Alliances Possible?," Journal of the Research Group on Socialism and Democracy Online, <http://sdonline.org/48/immigrants-and-race-in-the-us-are-class-based-alliances-possible/>(Accessed November 14, 2014)

¹²Sdonline, Immigrants and Race.

¹³Sdonline, Immigrants and Race.

Conclusion

Contemporary racism has gone beyond traditional means and now finds itself in what is seen as “aversion racism,” which is defined as aversive racism’ – a form of prejudice characterizing the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the majority of well-intentioned and ostensibly non-prejudiced White Americans. There exist currently, even beyond attitudes substantial disparities within the African American community in the areas of earned wages, medical treatment, and health care, access to quality basic services, housing, employment, education, and job training. African Americans still lag behind in all these areas compared to their white counterparts. Although the views among whites about race in the United States is that the country has become more fair and equal, studies highlight and reveal new forms of racial prejudices. These new forms of racial prejudices are hybrids from the past allowing White Americans to feel that society has become more just by developing forms of social political correctness, but still holding to principles of inequality that come in more subtle and indirect forms.¹⁴ The Ebola crisis revealed drawbacks to equality when outraged came from many institutions in American society including the public sector of colleges and government officials to withhold allowing any forms of West African immigrants’ admittance to the country.

Do to the racist history of the United States past, racism in the United States can be noted as being socially stimulated in the minds of White Americans cognition. This can be contributed to living in a system that views society in racial categories or a race system. As studies explain:

“Because of important historical roots, social categorization by race within the United States is largely automatic, where the actual or imagined presence of a Black person is often enough to automatically activate racial categories without conscious effort or control Social categorization spontaneously activates more positive feelings and beliefs about in-group members (‘we’s’) than out-group members”

As long as there is no conscious awareness or something that is deemed racist, white Americans will abide by those social norms.

¹⁴Adam R. Pearson, John F. Dovidio, Samuel L. Gaethner, “The Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: Insights from Aversive Racism,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, <http://www.yale.edu/intergroup/PearsonDovidioGaertner.pdf> (Accessed November 14, 2014).

However, when the lines are not clear and properly established, there is the possibility of acting in the form of racist behavior. In circumstances that are seen rational or justified aversive racists have the possibility of harming African Americans while still expressing the public image of being non-prejudiced. "Thus, although the processes through which contemporary biases emerge can often be subtle, the consequences can be severe."¹⁵By that, leaving African Americans still in a form of racial segregation and inequality without their needs being addressed or considered.

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¹⁵Adam R. Pearson, *The Nature of Contemporary*.