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# Race and Racism: Toward a Global Future

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**ABSTRACT:** There is a deepening and worldwide contradiction in the meaning and structure of race and racism. The age of empire is over; apartheid and Jim Crow have ended; a significant consensus exists that the concept of race lacks an objective basis; and yet the concept persists, as idea, as practice, as identity, and as social structure. This suggests that the global racial situation remains not only volatile but also seriously undertheorized.

Five key racial problems of the 21st-century are stressed: (1) Nonracialism vs. Race Consciousness; (2) Racial Genomics; (3) The Nation and its Peoples; (4) Race/Gender/Class "Intersectionality"; and (5) Empire, Race, and Neoconservatism.

I propose a radical pragmatist approach, which recognizes the ineluctable link between racialized experience and racialized social structure. Drawing on the Duboisian legacy as well as racial formation theory, I argue that racial hegemony has not been secured. Because racial rule is essential to rule itself, these contradictions are destined to deepen, not diminish. The article concludes with some preliminary programmatic ideas for contemporary racial justice movements.

**KEY TERMS:** nonracialism, colorblindness, racial formation, intersectionality, radical pragmatism, racial genomics

## INTRODUCTION

What is the future of the race concept, of racially-based social structures, of racial identities? How should we understand the meaning of race and of racism in a post-civil rights, post-apartheid, postcolonial world?

For a long time -- indeed most of modern history - such questions would not have seemed logical. Race was once thought to be a natural phenomenon, not a social one. It was considered eternal, not transient. While its meaning might have varied in practical terms (among nations and empires, say, or over time), the concept of race retained its character as an essence. The supposed naturalness of race, its givenness, was barely ever questioned. Race was understood as an ineluctable and natural framework of difference among human beings.<sup>1</sup>

That was then; this is now.

Today the race concept is more problematic than ever before. Racially-based social structures -- of inequality and exclusion, and of resistance and autonomy as well -- persist, but their legitimacy is questioned far more strongly than it was in the past. And racial identities also seem to be less solid and ineffable than they did in previous ages. While racial identity remains a major component of individuality and group recognition, it partakes of a certain flexibility and fungibility that was formerly rare.

This essay is framed by the perception (but it is not only mine) of a developing worldwide crisis in the meaning and structure of race. The age of empire is over; apartheid and Jim Crow have been ended; and a significant

consensus exists among scientists (natural and social), and humanists as well, that the concept of race lacks an objective basis.

Yet the concept persists, as idea, as practice, as identity, and as social structure. Racism perseveres in these same ways.<sup>2</sup>

Enormous discrepancies and contradictions continue as well, notably between official racial rhetorics and the actual dilemmas of racial experience and social organization. To list just a few major examples :

- Increasing mobility, both geographic and socioeconomic, among subaltern racialized groups, coexists with ongoing patterns of exclusion and superexploitation of these same groups.
- Postcolonial states and national societies display substantial continuities with the "bad old days" of empire, in both political-economic and cultural forms of domination and subordination.
- Post-apartheid South Africa, the post-civil rights US, and postcolonial Europe, perhaps the most significant national/regional stages upon which the postwar racial drama was played, have not significantly altered the "life-chances" of their racially-defined subaltern populations. Similar statements can be made for other nation-states and regions. Although more racially democratic than their despotic earlier incarnations, these countries have by and large incorporated and "normalized" their racial conflicts over the postwar years. Yet in many respects the conditions of

blacks, Muslims, indigenous peoples, and undocumented migrants/denizens have also worsened in these settings.

- The extensive deployment of non- or anti-racialist rhetorics and policies (multiculturalism, diversity, racial pluralism, equal opportunity, etc.) has not significantly altered long-prevalent patterns of racialized identity-formation and cultural representation.
- Increasingly visible and complex transnational racial ties (diasporae, "panethnic" movements and cultural forms, etc.) conflict with and undermine frameworks of citizenship and rights grounded in the logic of the nation-state.
- The reassertion of imperial geopolitical patterns, whether tacit or explicit, with embedded racial dynamics intact, casts the United States, still the world's hegemonic power, in a particularly ambiguous racial role.

This is the present racial crisis. "[C]risis," Gramsci wrote, "consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (Gramsci 1971, 276). The enormous advances made since WWII in overcoming such entrenched systems of racial despotism as apartheid in South Africa and segregation in the US, and the tremendous accomplishment of dismantling the various colonial archipelagos (British, French, Dutch, Portuguese, etc.), coexist with a system of ongoing racial stratification and injustice that substantially if more ambiguously manages to reproduce most of the conditions that have supposedly been

abolished. What this suggests if nothing else is that the global racial situation remains volatile and undertheorized.

Although the intellectual endeavor required to rethink global racial conditions obviously exceeds the capacities of any single scholar, the task of framing the key problems presented by the contemporary situation is not beyond our grasp. Indeed, we must not desist from trying to make sense of the current world racial situation and of our role within it. A new account of race and racism is possible, one that addresses the emergent racial conditions of the 21st century. We can catch a glimpse of the global racial future by trying to reinterpret the racial present.

#### THE RACIAL PRESENT

We confront a contradictory combination of progress and stasis in racial institutions. This is paralleled in social life and personal experience by a similar unstable combination: that of resilience and confidence on the one hand, and disappointment and vulnerability on the other. This situation is intelligible: it is the variegated outcome of a complex process of mobilization and reform. It is the result of a cultural and political-economic shift that has been counterposed, over the post-WWII period, to the centuries-long tradition of racial domination, discrimination, exclusion, and violence that shaped colonialism and empire, and through them the world sociopolitical system tout court.<sup>3</sup>

To sort out the innumerable variations of this worldwide set of dilemmas is more than the present paper can accomplish. In lieu of that sort of inventory-taking,<sup>4</sup> I propose to devote my attention to a set of five themes in contemporary

patterns of racial formation on a world scale. These five issues, I suggest, play a significant part in the making and unmaking of worldwide patterns of race and racism. By grasping the contradictory sociopolitical forces at work in these five thematic areas, we can begin to visualize emerging parameters of the race concept, and to retheorize racism as well, as 21st-century phenomena.

Nonracialism v. Race Consciousness: The production of racial categories, the classification of people within them, and the quotidian experience of living within such classifications, are all complex processes that link macro-level societal dynamics -- censuses, the spatial organization of housing, labor, transport, etc., and social stratification in general -- with micro-level ones,<sup>5</sup> such as acculturation and socialization, the "testing" of attitudes and beliefs and risk-taking in everyday life, shifting interpretations of difference and identity, "styles," etc. In the post-WWII era, the postcolonial era, it has been possible to claim that race is less salient than before in determining "life-chances"; this is the nonracialist or "colorblind" argument. At the same time social organization continues to function along racial lines; "race consciousness" operates in the allocation of resources, the dynamics of social control, and the organization of movements for equality and social justice. At both the micro- and macro-social levels, in both cultural and political-economic frameworks, race must be signified and organized.

On what ground -- however shaky and uncertain -- do nonracialism and race consciousness meet? US Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun famously said that "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race"



(Blackmun 1978). The 1955 South Africa Freedom Charter (the key programmatic document of the African National Congress) condemned racialism, but the post-apartheid ANC government must struggle every day with issues of state racial policy (African National Congress, 1979 [1955]). How can we both take account of race and get beyond it, as the present situation seems to demand?<sup>6</sup>

Racial Genomics: Racial science has advanced and retreated in historical "waves." Before the current DNA-based breakthroughs there was the approach of eugenics (Duster 2003 [1990]). Much as genomics does today, the worldwide eugenics movement also claimed that it was a dispassionate advance over the benightedness of the past. Though particularly dangerous in the hands of right-wing and fascist movements and governments, eugenics also had left-wing and feminist adherents. Tainted by its adoption by Nazism, eugenics "retreated" (Barkan 1992), but has resurfaced under neoconservative and new right sponsorship in recent decades (Herrnstein and Murray 1994).

Today's racial genomics is at pains to distinguish itself from the eugenics of the past. Indeed it has dual effects that would have been unimaginable in the heyday of eugenics: it renders racial identity more fungible and flexible, quite the opposite of what occurred in the era of Fisher, Pearson, or Stoddard. Yet at the same time racial genomics is pressed into service for "profiling"; it is harnessed to old and repressive practices (Duster 2004). Thus it simultaneously reinforces the same stereotypes its advocates profess to debunk. Recognizing the sociohistorical context in which the race-concept developed and in which it has

been explained, it seems, does not prevent the periodic recurrence of biologically-based accounts. To what extent is current scientific knowledge about race distinct from previous scientific knowledge?

The Nation and its Peoples: Citizens, Denizens, Migrants: In the past, the commonsense view of "the nation" was inflected by race (and to some extent by gender as well). The US, for example, was perceived as "a white man's country," a herrenvolk republic, as David Roediger (1991) called it. South Africa explicitly institutionalized the herrenvolk model, first piecemeal, and then systematically after 1948. All the European empires struggled to distinguish between metropolitans/citizens and colonials/natives, especially as mixed-race populations expanded, miscegenation became commonplace, and "creoles," "kaffirs," and "wogs" established themselves in London, Paris, Lisbon, Amsterdam, and elsewhere (Stoler 2002). Recurrent nativism was directed against immigrants, while anti-black racism and contempt for indigenous peoples underwrote state racial policy in both colony and metropole. In the US, for example, Anglo-Saxonism and "anglo-conformity" shaped the national culture in various ways, sometimes relaxing and sometimes tightening the boundaries of membership, but always reflecting restrictive norms. Blacks only became citizens in a practical sense in the 1960s; many Asians only achieved naturalization rights in the 1950s, and native peoples only received their citizenship in the 1930s.

Today new nativist rumblings can be heard in the US as the specter of a "majority-minority" society looms. ("Doesn't a declining pool of middle-class

manufacturing and service jobs endanger the US economy itself? Where is effective demand supposed to come from? Who will finance baby boomers' social security outlays?") The new threat to the norm of whiteness comes, we are told, from the Latinization of certain areas (Huntington 2004); the west coast is being transformed into "Mexifornia" (Hanson 2003); and border-oriented vigilantism (the "Minutemen") receives grudging support from mainstream politicians. Yet California voters have also punished those who promoted anti-immigrant initiatives, and many corporations too oppose heightened restriction. How lawns will be mowed, dishes washed, vegetables picked, or laundry done in a highly restrictive immigration regime remains an unanswered question. Meanwhile, economists differ markedly on the costs and benefits for the American economy of immigration, both low- and high-skilled, both capital-bearing and capital-deficient.

In Europe as well, citizenship rights were only gradually extended (and even more gradually granted in practice) to immigrants, Jews, and nonwhites. In Germany jus sanguinis policies were continued from the formation of the nation, through the Nuremberg Laws and Holocaust, and into the establishment of the EU, when they were finally relaxed (only in the 1990s!). French "racial differentialism" (Taguieff 2001 [1988]) struggles in vain to reconcile the exclusion and despair of the banlieues with the Jacobin/Napoleonic legacies of assimilationism and secularism (Wieviorka 1995; Noiriel 1996; Silverstein 2004). Race issues in contemporary Europe necessarily invoke old imperial tropes. French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy's designation of rioting Arab youth as

racaille (filth) recalled the atmosphere of the the last years of the Algerian war (Silverstein 2004). The Front Nationale in France, the German Republikaner, the Austrian FPÖ, the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Northern League in Italy, and many "mainstream" parties as well habitually associate racially-designated immigrants with crime and unemployment. In many of the Pacific rim countries, Chinese communities are attacked by nationalists as "middleman minorities" and as agents of globalization, of the neo-imperialism of the IMF and its structural adjustment policies (Chua 2002).

These examples could be multiplied. Most "developed" countries (and not a few LDCs as well) maintain unstable and contentious immigration, citizenship, and naturalization policies.

Race/Gender/Class: Race/gender/class "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1994; Collins 1998) is the name we now give to the complex of deep attachments and conflicts among anti-racist/anticolonial movements, women's movements, and labor-based/anti-poverty movements. In the US (Hine, ed. 2005; Zinn and Dill, eds., 1994; Davis 1981; Lerner, ed. 1972), in Britain (McClintock 1995; Ware 1992; Rowbotham 1992), France (Guillaumin 1995), and elsewhere these linkages have connected struggles for racial justice, women's rights, and labor rights for nearly two centuries. Today these intersections cross the whole racial spectrum. In postcoloniality approaches, notably in the "subaltern studies" school, feminism has come to play a central role (Spivak 1987), not only in relation to colonial and postcolonial South Asia, but in regard to Latin America (Franco

2001; Beverley 1999) and Africa (Seidman 1993; Urdang 1989; Amadiume 2000).

The explanatory framework for intersectionality studies, however, remains elusive. Unquestionably a general parallel exists between racial and gender-based oppressions and emancipatory claims. De Beauvoir explicitly modeled her pioneering account in feminist theory, The Second Sex (1989 [1953]) on working-class and anticolonial struggles for emancipation. The key parallels she stressed, along with many others, included: rule through chattelization, the assignment of political status based on corporeal characteristics, "isolation effects" and alienation, and the internalization of domination. Numerous other common experiences link these axes of power and resistance. Yet race-based, gender-based, and labor-based movements have always teetered between convergence and divergence, both in the US and elsewhere. That's at the macro-social, institutional level.

At the micro-social or experiential level a similar uncertainty operates: involvement in "multiple oppressions," for example, often forces women of color to "choose their battles." They confront competing demands for solidarity, often across race-, class-, or gender-lines. White women too, must often choose between gender, race, and class solidarity. Rather than lamenting these dilemmas, we should learn from them about pragmatism and the instability in practice of the race-concept. Theorizing intersectionality requires a hefty dose of pragmatism, a strong recognition that "self-reflective action" shapes the production and transformation of both individual and collective identities.<sup>7</sup> This

phenomenon -- of situatedness and strategic reflection in practice -- is not necessarily problematic for emancipatory purposes; it may indeed be unavoidable, a prerequisite, for all efforts (men's as well as women's) to create an emancipatory political framework.

The Trajectory of Empire, Race, and Neoconservatism: Empire has been a racial matter since the rise of Europe and the founding of the "modern world-system." It involves subduing "others," tutoring them in the "higher values" of advanced "civilization," and also squeezing their resources and/or labor out of them. Though often justified by free-market ideology, this process is basically coercive; indeed some political economic and economic history approaches reject the idea that the extraction of mass labor and the drive for natural resources at the periphery are fundamentally market-based processes at all. This dimension of imperial activity -- "extra-economic coercion" (Brenner 1993; Polanyi 2001[1944]; Laclau 1977; Mamdani 1996; Mann 1988) -- is regaining its centrality in the supposedly postcolonial, but perhaps re-imperializing,<sup>8</sup> 21st-century world.

The divestment of the old European empires took place in the decades after WWII, sometimes peacefully and sometimes as a result of bloody conflict. The transition to a postcolonial world was accompanied by a rhetoric of antiracism, democracy, and self-determination that had roots not only in revolutionary movements but also in Wilsonian principles (Singh 1998).

The global dismantling of European empire was paralleled by a fierce battle within the US. The connections between civil rights and racial freedom

movements, on the one hand, and anticolonial ones on the other, have been extensively studied. But the US, as the leading global power, also defended the European empires during the decades after WWII, notably in Southeast Asia but elsewhere as well. Only after the end of the Vietnam war did that practice come largely to a halt.

This was roughly the same moment that the civil rights movement was being incorporated and institutionalized, a process that was shaped by neoconservatism. That viewpoint took shape in the 1970s as a disillusioned domestic racial liberalism that deplored segregation and redistribution of resources along racial lines in approximately equal measure.

Originally formulated as a set of social scientific and policy-oriented principles, neoconservatism developed into a grass-roots racial ideology ("reverse discrimination" etc.). Later still it developed an imperial cast, avowing US empire for the first time since the turn of the 20th century (Kaplan 2001; Kagan 2003; Ferguson 2004). In its advocacy of US intervention in Iraq, neoconservatism drew both on the civil rights legacy and on the older imperial presuppositions: of tutelage, uplift, religious messianism, etc. These "others" have waited too long for liberation; the US has an obligation to help them understand the ways of democracy and freedom; we must, in short, promote our "way of life" and "enlighten" our subjects abroad. Empire tends to have a racial subtext.

In university classrooms in the US today many of our students (especially but not only white students) tell us that they "don't notice race," and that they

"treat everyone as an individual." Their rejection of racism is no doubt genuine in its adoption of "colorblindness" or nonracialism; but it also tends to ratify the existing inequalities and injustices that descend from the "bad old days" of segregation. These positions reflect the dominant racial ideology in the US -- neoconservatism -- a view that seems more concerned with "reverse discrimination" than with unchanged black and Latino poverty rates, infant mortality, or heightening, not declining, racial stratification (Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Thus domestic neoconservatism both undermines an older, more familiar racial mindset and reinvokes it.

In respect to Iraq and the "war on terror," US foreign policy operates in parallel fashion, once again reflecting the contradictions of neoconservatism. "Welcome to Injun country," Robert Kaplan (2005) quotes US officers telling him in Iraq. Leading US foreign policy intellectuals have spilled a great deal of ink on the theme of "getting used to the American empire." An effort is made to distinguish the US approach to "projecting power" from that of the British or French a century ago. Unlike our predecessors, we bring democracy and freedom. But is the US (and its allies the British) not committed to its "great game" in the Middle East every bit as much as were the British a century ago (Meyer and Brysac 1999)?

In short -- to lapse into Bourdieu-ese for just a moment --neoconservatism today combines a habitus of domination over the racialized other with a doxa of incorporation and respect for those who are no longer formally recognized as other at all.<sup>9</sup> And from the standpoint of those others -- who are in practice still



racially identified -- there is a combination of responses as well: as we have already noted, not only a new resilience, but also a continuing vulnerability. It is the height of perversity that the civil rights legacy has been harnessed to the cause of global domination and "preemptive" war, but the fact remains that some of its key tropes have been preserved by the neocons who once represented its "moderate" wing.<sup>10</sup>

## TOWARD THE RACIAL FUTURE

These contradictions are indications of the uncertainties of the current moment in racial politics. The necessarily brief review presented here suggests that a new racial hegemony has by no means been secured. There are fundamental instabilities in the ideologies of colorblindness, racial "differentialism," and "nonracialism." Racial biologism is prospering; is it still a "backdoor to eugenics" (Duster 2003 [1990])? Race/gender/class "intersectionality" denotes the instability in practice -- both at "micro-social" and at "macro-social" levels -- not only of race and racism, but also of other axes of oppression. The link between racism and empire was wrongly considered terminated; instead it has been reinvented, principally through US neoconservatism. In fact none of the "posts-" -- post-civil rights, post-apartheid, post-coloniality -- is sufficiently "post"; none denotes a full break with the conditions their very names contain; all necessitate uneasy and continuous adjustments, both on the level of policy and politics, and on that of personal experience and identity, to the ongoing operation of racial conflicts.

So what is the meaning of these racial contradictions for the future? What do they suggest about the development of a new racial justice agenda, both globally and locally? Although the intellectual endeavor required to rethink global racial conditions is rather daunting, the political and personal commitments we "movement scholars" have undertaken do not permit us to desist from trying to make sense of the current world racial situation and of our role within it. Neither do they allow us to "stop thinking about tomorrow," as the popular song would have it.

Simply reasserting the continuing significance of race, while not mistaken, nevertheless has serious limits. Such an approach is insufficiently pragmatist, as well as deficient in its democratic commitments. As we learn from racial formation theory and critical race theory, race is a flexible concept that is constantly being reshaped in practical political activity. That the civil rights movement and the racial nationalisms of the 1960s were absorbed and rearticulated in a new racial hegemony was not only a contradictory outcome, one that combined some real achievements with some painful defeats; it was also a valuable lesson about racial politics.

Question: what happened to the civil rights movement ideal of a colorblind society? Answer: it morphed under the pressure of neoconservative politics into an abstract concept of equality, becoming available to the respectable racial right. Ironic, isn't it -- downright annoying in fact -- that the rearticulation of "colorblind" racial ideology served to shore up the inequality and structural racism

of US society. This was after all the same phenomenon that movement advocacy of nonracialism had originally aimed at overturning!

Similar pitfalls awaited "nationalist" concepts of racial emancipation. Originally developed under conditions of colonial (or quasi-colonial) rule as the effort to restore democracy and "self-determination," nationalist movements have proved susceptible to autocracy and caudillismo of various types: plagued by corruption, religious authoritarianism, and sexism, dependent upon charismatic leaders, they are often incapable of fulfilling in practice the democratic and emancipatory ideals that originally inspired them (Gilroy 2000).

Such is post-civil rights, postcolonial, post-apartheid racial hegemony. But is that the end of the story? Is this the end of the trajectory of racial politics? After the emancipatory insights of a movement have been absorbed and reinterpreted, after its radicalism has been so to speak bleached away, then what happens? What happens to a dream deferred?

By way of answer -- for space here is limited -- it is worth noting how unstable and problematic the ideas of colorblindness, nonracialism, differentialism, and postcolonialism are proving to be. Of course there is a significant movement critique of these supposedly post-racial positions, one that insists on the fulfillment of the still-incomplete agenda of the earlier post-WWII decades; demonstrates the continuity and depth of US racial injustice (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Brown et al 2003); and notes the links between globalization and racism (Macedo and Gounari, eds. 2005). But this critique, for all its merits, has not yet developed a theoretical account capable of resolving the various

contradictions of 21st-century racial dynamics -- nonracialism, intersectionality, etc. -- that are the central subjects here.

Meanwhile, back at the plantation, 21st-century racial hegemony has not been secured. Once again ironically, its major challenges originate, not from the critiques just mentioned, and not from the anti-racist left or from civil rights advocates or racial nationalists based in the global South or global East. Rather they have emerged from the ongoing instabilities and conflicts of racial rule itself. Taking the US (the world's only "superpower") as a central case: the post-civil rights US racial regime must frequently negate its own insistence on colorblindness. This regime apparently cannot dispense with its practice of "racial profiling": not only for reasons of "national security" but also in carceral, policing, and welfare state practices. It has made substantial investments in the racial genomics, which is now a big scientific enterprise as well as a developing system for social control. Driven by paranoia about immigration, the US is reviving nativist practices on the Mexican border and in the Pacific.

Not only because it has failed to fulfill the promise of racial equality and justice, but also because it defaults, so to speak, to racial rule as a key component of hegemonic rule, the contemporary US regime must violate its own racial norms, themselves the products of post-WWII civil rights and anti-imperial political struggles.

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What does the foregoing analysis suggest about 21<sup>st</sup>-century movement politics oriented toward fomenting racial justice and expanding democracy?

Instead of insisting on the fulfillment of 20th-century demands, movement activists and theorists have to pose new questions about the actually existing and deeply conflicted dynamics of racial politics and racial identity; in short, we have to think about racial formation processes as they are unfolding today and in the future. Here I briefly (and artificially) distinguish the experiential dimensions of racial politics (micro-level raciality, the personal or small-scale aspects of racial formation) from the social structural dimensions of racial politics (macro-level raciality, the institutional, governmental, and world-systemic aspects of racial formation).<sup>11</sup>

At the micro-social, experiential level, we all experience race in a contradictory fashion. We must recognize once again, a century after Du Bois introduced it (1989 [1903]), the importance of "double consciousness." His exploration of that contradiction in Souls ("An American, a Negro: two warring souls in one dark body...") points more than ever to the situated and flexible character of raciality as a practical matter. It applies to everybody, not just blacks, albeit in varying ways. This duality or even multiplicity is what shapes our racial identities really, not some ideal of a nonracialist world or of an undifferentiated, racially-defined group solidarity. Life is more complicated than that.

We know both that in the US -- and across the whole planet -- race continues to matter, that it shapes identities and "life-chances"; and that racially-based identity can be problematic, uncertain, or overridden by other forms of solidarity. Racial identity can be called into question by mixed-race status, by

strong ties that cut across racial lines, or by multiple identities (for example, racial and class-based identities can conflict). In real life-experience we are often forced to "choose our battles" or make distasteful tactical alliances; we are sometimes uncertain what the racial meaning of a given situation or utterance might be ("Was that a racist remark, or not?").

At the social structural level, the macro-social level, we must recognize again, a century after Du Bois, that we still live in an unfolding racial history, in which racial dynamics are linked to the struggle for democracy, for a socially just distribution of resources, and for the overcoming, if not of capitalism itself, at least of the wretched, cruel, and despotic excesses of capitalism. Racism is a variety of despotism. When we contemplate race and racism as global or national social structures, we are immediately struck by the extent to which they still stratify national societies and the social world as a whole. Yet we cannot operate effectively, we cannot think effectively, if we deny the significance of the racial transformations of recent decades.

If it is true that both at the "micro-social" and at the "macro-social" levels racial experience is now more patently contradictory than it was in earlier historical moments, this should be considered more as an opportunity than as a dilemma: a chance to develop new forms of political practice, and new theoretical insights as well, in pursuit of racial justice and racial democracy. Although the scope of this argument obviously exceeds the space presently available, in my view we must embrace and build upon pragmatist sources to help us realize this opportunity to advance a new racial theory for the 21st century. Pragmatist racial

theory comes to us through Du Bois, whose concepts of "double consciousness" and of the "veil" laid the foundation for an understanding of race that is radically democratic. From the standpoint of the radical pragmatist account of "double consciousness," we can begin to grasp the improvisational and self-reflective processes that racial awareness demands in the post-civil rights, post-apartheid, postcolonial era. From a radical pragmatist position we can better understand the heightened flexibility required of the racially oppressed and their allies as they conduct their freedom struggles in that "post-" era. To be sure the pragmatist tradition has tended to emphasize the micro-social dimensions of action,<sup>12</sup> which has been a limitation. Nor are pragmatist approaches uniformly liberatory; pragmatist principles are also invoked by such conservative thinkers as Richard Posner (2005). But as I have argued elsewhere (Winant 2004, 188-204), promising radical pragmatist approaches to race are available; they are concerned with linking the micro-social and macro-social dimensions of race; and they are being applied to such issues as the racial state, race-based social movements, and the racial dynamics of globalization.<sup>13</sup>

Thus we are compelled to ask, what would a racial justice-oriented set of policies, what would a racial justice-oriented political program, look like in the 21st century? Let us not dismiss that as a rhetorical question, but instead attempt to respond from a radical pragmatist viewpoint, one that takes its commitments seriously.

Clearly such a program would require redistribution of wealth/income nationally and globally via democratically selected means. This might take

various forms: a "global Marshall Plan" has been suggested (Rademacher et al 2004), the "Tobin tax" scheme continues to attract attention (ul Haq, Kaul, and Grunberg, eds. 1996; Patomäki 2003), and various reparations initiatives have been proposed (Thompson 2002; Yamamoto 1999; Feagin 2000; Bittker 2003 [1973]).<sup>14</sup>

Now hold on a moment!" I hear my readers cry. "Is all that stuff race-based? You're talking about big global issues!"

Perfectly true, but as a few moments' reflection will confirm, most of the "big global issues" (as well as the big national ones) have significant racial dimensions. That is a logical consequence of global development in our postcolonial, post-Cold War epoch, which takes clear North-South (and now West-East) forms.

Continuing to take race and racism seriously is particularly logical in the aftermath of the vast wave of racial conflict and racial reform that succeeded WWII. That set of conflicts linked "southern" anticolonial and "northern" anti-racism very clearly. Thus, as the racial state has incorporated the demands of anti-apartheid, anti-Jim Crow, and anticolonial movements -- in suitably "moderate" form of course -- it has become a more difficult target for racial justice movements.

Put in another way, while movement activity on behalf of racial justice and racial equality must continue to address its demands toward the nation-state, it must also shift attention, as movements have frequently done in the past, away



from the framework of the national and toward both local and transnational spheres of mobilization.<sup>15</sup>

The racial future remains uncertain. The concept of race and the social practices we designate as racism and antiracism are in transition, for we are passing through a period of crisis when "the old has died but the new cannot be born." Today these conditions demand that we clarify the circumstances under which contested concepts of race, racially-based social structures, and race-based identities continue to operate. Yes, the accomplishments of the post-WWII movements for racial justice and the end of colonial rule were significant; yes, the reforms achieved and revolutions carried through changed the global racial system. But these accomplishments, for all their importance, also had the perverse effect of reinforcing some of the very institutions they sought to overcome, of inoculating them, so to speak, with tolerable doses of their own oppositions, and thus immunizing them against the more severe "diseases" of radical change. Hegemony operates, Gramsci said, by incorporating resistance.

The analysis presented here recognizes the pervasive contradictions and uncertainties of the post-civil rights and postcolonial era. This is fully consistent with noticing the ongoing social injustices and "human waste" that remain at the core of the race-concept, and of racism as well, in all their forms: attitudinal, practical, and structural.

In the racial future, I venture to predict, there will be a combination of greater flexibility in the understanding of racial identity on the one hand, and a deepening structural racism on the other. That is to say: the global racial crisis

will intensify, not diminish. The trend toward heightening disparities in "life-chances" by race, toward increasing racial stratification on a planetary scale, is in large part congruent with general global tendencies toward mounting inequality. People around the world, and ordinary Americans as well, cannot long escape these troubling contradictions. In different ways, Du Bois's "double consciousness" now divides us all. This is itself both a great achievement and an injunction: to look deeper into our disciplines, our social institutions, our political activity, and ourselves.

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## NOTES

1 . Race is concept which signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race appeals to biologically-based human characteristics (so-called phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of "race," and the sociohistorical categories employed to differentiate among these groups reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be imprecise if not completely arbitrary.

2 . Racism consists of one or more of the following: (1) Signifying practice that essentializes or naturalizes human identities based on racial categories or concepts; (2) Social action that produces unjust allocation of socially valued resources, based on such significations; (3) Social structure that reproduces such allocations.

3 . For more on the global racial "break" that took place during and after WWII, see Winant 2001.

4 . For some examples of such inventories, see Chaliand and Rageau 1995; Gurr and Harff 1994; Gurr et al 1993.

5 . As I have written elsewhere, the micro-macro distinction is merely analytical as it applies to racial formation: see Winant 2004, 200-202.

6 . See the discussion of Duboisian "double consciousness" below.

7 . This argument, which receives greater attention below, applies as well to other axes of oppression and resistance, quite obviously. Here I confine myself mainly to discussion about race.

8 . Forgive this neologism: I refer to the resurgent imperial character of North-South (and to some extent West-East) international relationships and organizations such as the IMF and the WTO.

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9 . See Winant 1994, 24-29.

10 . "We should never indulge in the condescending voices that allege that some people are not interested in freedom or aren't ready for freedom's responsibility. That view was wrong in 1963 in Birmingham, and it's wrong in 2004 in Baghdad" (Condoleeza Rice, Commencement Speech, Vanderbilt University, May 13, 2004).

11 . See note 3, above, in respect to the micro-macro distinction in "levels" of racial formation.

12 . I am thinking here of Mead's (1967 [1934]) concept of self, and of the performative dimensions of identity in Blumer's (1969) work and its legacy, as well as in the oeuvre of Erving Goffman.

13 . Radical pragmatist approaches to racial theory are finally receiving the serious attention they deserve. Much of the credit for this advance belongs to Cornel West, whose early work on this theme (1989) remains indispensable. See also West and Mendieta 2004. Herbert Blumer's later work on race is indispensable; see his classic article of 1958; see also Blumer and Duster 1980. Fraser's (1998) work on Alain Locke should also be noted.

14 . Reparations and redistribution projects have much to recommend them, but also must be approached with caution. Race/class intersectionality comes into play here; in other words, who pays for them counts as much as who benefits by them. Unless they can be structured as transfers not only from the racially privileged to the racially subaltern, but also as transfers from capital to labor, they will have the effect (intended or unintended) of heightening class divisions even as they reduce racial ones. As a general rule, reparations should be funded by wealth taxes rather than by transfers from general funds. See Winant 2004, 126.

15 . The US civil rights movement did this quite consciously, shifting its political leverage from the state level, where segregationism and "state's rights" arguments held greater sway, toward the US nation-state, where such matters as Cold War imperatives, northern voting and labor patterns, and liberal cultural norms were in play. Today, with the federal state under the control of reactionary

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and anti-democratic groups, we see movement activity emphasizing local and state-based political venues.