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The Suffering of the Other: Why “Darker” People’ Suffer Most

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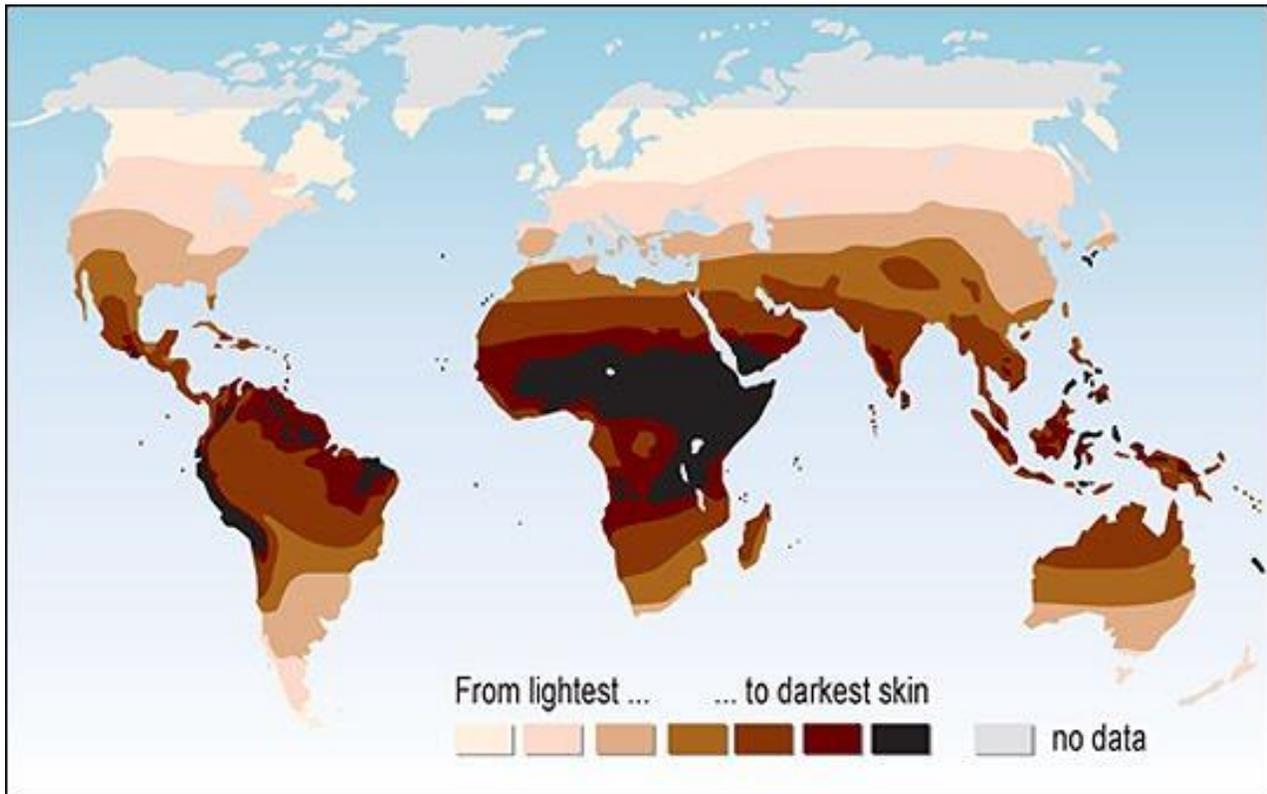
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UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Undergraduate Thesis

The Suffering of the Other: Why “Darker” People’ Suffer Most

By: Denisha Ragland



Abstract: In this thesis, I will tackle the phenomenon of colorism and racism within different cultures across the world. The evaluation is through the chronological effects of colonialism and imperialism, along with some of the justifications and reinforcements of its inequalities. After the evaluation of the two time periods, its justifications, and its reinforcements of its justifications, I will look at the manifestations of these time periods beliefs in the modern world by evaluating the suffering of darker skinned people in some regions of the world.

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Preface:

In 2014, the legendary music group Outkast embarked on a reunion tour to play some of their old hits. During this tour, Andre 3000 introduced his soon to be legendary suit collection. The suit collection was based on a series of statements or observations. One of the most well-known questions asked on his jumpsuit in the suit collection was “Across cultures darker people suffer the most, why?” This one question conceptualized everything that I had observed and questioned during my collegiate years. In classroom texts, I saw that darker people were and are treated differently than their lighter counterparts. I also observed the following: (1) across the United States there have been multiple murders of darker skinned civilians committed by law enforcement and civilians; (2) there is a disproportionate number of blacks and Hispanics in prison and jail; (3) there is often unsanitary water in majority black areas; and (4) there are huge numbers of impoverished blacks and Hispanics. In short, I became more aware of the numerous injustices visited upon the darker skinned population. I had hoped that this was limited to the United States. But as I advanced in my collegiate career, I noticed that the injustices done to darker people were truly global. The more classes I took, the more I realized that “across cultures darker people suffer the most.” But I never knew why. This thesis comprises what I have learned and experienced, during my time in college, about the phenomena of being darker skinned in the world.

I. Introduction

In one of the layers of skin called the dermis, a specialized cell called a melanocyte creates a substance called melanin (Jablonski, 2012: 10). The substance called melanin is how the skin gets its color or tone. Melanin protects our biological system from wavelengths (i.e. ultraviolet radiation) and “free radicals” found in sunlight that have the ability to break down the chemical bonds in molecules and DNA (Jablonski, 2012: 10-11). With this basic understanding of biology, the average educated person in the world is able to explain why some people are darker and why others are lighter. Skin tone is determined by the amount and kind of melanin that is created by melanocytes. Those with darker skin produce more melanin and those with lighter skin produce less melanin. The gradation of skin tones across the world is determined by the area, climate, and terrain of a person’s ancestral homeland (Kanopy: Skin Deep, 2015). The ancestors of someone with pale skin, hair, and eyes, most likely hailed from an area of the world that received little to no sunlight, while ancestors of people with darker tones hailed from areas that received lots of sunlight.

There are probably evolutionary reasons for differences in skin tone, but there are scientific reasons as well. Although, there are scientific reasons for skin tone, it tends to take on a great deal of meaning. In the past, skin tone has determined whether a person was free or enslaved. There is no doubt that throughout history a person’s skin tone has either elevated them or lowered them within society. Skin tone is used because a person’s skin tone is an obvious trait and cannot be covered or changed easily. Although a person's skin tone is not a real indicator of a person’s intelligence, wealth, or personality, societies in the past and present do use it as such. There is no doubt that even in today’s society skin tone is a factor in how a person experiences life. It is also

true that darker and lighter people have unique experiences that are directly linked to their skin tone.

In 2014, Andre 3000, from the 1990s-popstar group Outkast, debuted his suit collection with some of his statements and observations. One of the questions on the suit asked, “Across cultures darker people suffer the most, why?” To understand why this question is so bold and worth answering, you must first understand the definition of the word culture and how it came to be. People who study culture define it as “The sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is transmitted, through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art, from one generation to the next.” In sum, cultures are unique to groups of people across the world, culture is created through shared history, and culture is passed down through the centuries. In this thesis, I will address Andre 3000 question, “Across cultures darker people suffer the most, why?” In order to answer this question, I will first establish how darker people are suffering, then I will look at the history of the meaning of skin color in society, and how the meaning of skin color was propagated and validated.

II. Darker People in Society

A. Case Studies

In order to get a better understanding of how darker people suffer the most in the world, I will evaluate India, Brazil, and Africa. Although I do realize that the United States and South Africa are the most well-known countries with a heavy history and presence of systemic racism, I will not be using these countries. By not using the United States and South Africa I hope to reinforce the idea that racism and colorism both socially and systematically is not just the problem of those select countries but a world

phenomenon. The countries I will evaluate are India, Brazil, and Africa I chose the following countries because the first two sale a large amount of skin lightening cream. By choosing one country from three different regions, I want to first show how far reaching colonialism and imperialism were, but also to show that the color complex is not limited to only one region of the world.

India

The country of India is vast, so vast that it is also known as a subcontinent, meaning the complexions, facial features, and cultures are different across its regions. Not only is it vast but India is known to be one of the oldest civilizations known to man. India has seen many internal conflicts, from civil wars to cultural conflicts, but it has not seen a war based on skin tone (Mishra, 2015). Although, India is known for its caste system, the caste system is not based on someone's skin tone. The origins of India's colorism are rooted in the people who dominated them or who was in power. Before Imperialism Mughals had taken over India. Compared to Indians Mughals were significantly lighter. India has been in contact with Europeans since 712 A.D. (Mishra 2015). It was not until the British proceeded to dominate India during its imperialism did colorism appear. During the initial imperialism by the British East India Company, the then the British Royal crown in 1858 the British treated the lighter skinned and the darker skinned people differently (Kaul 2011, Mishra 2015). When the British came to India they gravitated to Indians who had a higher status, it just so happened that the Indians of a higher social status were lighter and the darker people had a lower status (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013). Once British rule was established, the British would not hire dark skinned Indians, but they would hire light

skinned Indians, allow them to rise within the ranks, and give them advantages over the “blacks” (Mishra 2015; Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013). The discrimination in hiring and extra advantages to the light Indians led for the darker skinned Indians to fall into poverty while the light Indians became wealthy. Not only would the British discriminate between the two complexions, they would also claim themselves to be more superior than the Indians and most significantly the darker skinned Indians, thus leaving them to suffer (Mishra 2015). The disdain for the Indians was well-known throughout India and the British Empire, thanks to Winston Churchill's infamous quote “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion.” (Nelson 2010). The accumulation of white people being in power in India, from the Mughals to the British, Indians came to believe that white or light is synonymous to power, beauty, and desirability (Mishra 2015). This set of beliefs has led to darker skinned Indians to suffer in society.

The age of Imperialism in India has come to an end, but the social structures are still present. Darker skinned Indians are suffering most within India. Since Indians believe that light skin is synonymous to power, desirability, and beauty darker skinned Indians have reaped the negative effects of this belief. One of the ways to evaluate that darker skinned people are suffering or want to be lighter is by looking at the sales of skin lightening cream within the society. The skin lightening market within India is valued to be over \$432 million dollars, with over 30 percent of a half a billion women admitting to using skin lightening cream daily and more admitting to using it at least once over the past year (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013) Skin lightening creams are not limited to females but also males, the male population is estimated to be 20 percent of the total skin lighten cream sale (Mishra 2015). Both female and male

Indians use these skin lightening in the hopes of becoming fair, so that they can be desirable, gain power, and be beautiful. Although, skin lightening in general is considered unhealthy, there are both safe and unsafe methods of skin lightening (Jablonski, 2012). The most well-known skin lighteners are produced by Fair and Lovely, which can be very expensive, and when someone is unable to afford Fair and Lovely, they turn to other avenues such as mercury or the most harmful hydroquinone (Jablonski 2012). Some of the effects of using skin lightening creams can cause “permanent pigmentation, skin cancer, liver damage, mercury poisoning and others” (Ravichandran 2013).

Darker skinned people of India suffer most due to the stigmatism and its consequences of being dark. The perpetuation of negative stereotypes placed on darker skinned Indians is because of marketing schemes for fashion and skin lighteners (Leslie 2014). Within advertising of fashion and magazine the majority of the models are either European or light skinned Indians (Glenn 2009). These advertisements and magazines are known to stipulate what is beauty in a society (Glenn, 2009). As fashion and magazines define beauty the skin lightener advertisements reinforce it and says that with lighter skin you will be able to find a job, achieve your dreams, and get married (Leslie 2014). Within the marriage market in India those with darker skin are less likely to get married and become a hindrance on their family (Leslie 2014). They are suffering because in India marriage is very important within their society and darker skinned people are less likely to get married (Sarin, 2015). Even within the job market people of darker skinned suffer, although there is no definitive proof, it can be seen when looking in a job field and everyone in successful positions are fairer or have European looks

(Sims, 2016). People of darker skinned are also passed when it comes to promotions because of their skin tone (Sims, 2016).

Brazil

In the world order Brazil is known as a racial democracy, meaning there is an absence of racism in Brazil. Although there was constant mixing between the present ethnicities i.e. Natives, Africans, and Europeans, which led for Brazil to say that there is no racism in their society, that is proven false. Even though there is racial ambiguity, there is a clear racial hierarchy and inequality in Brazilian society. Unlike Asia and Africa, Brazil has been resistant to skin lighteners. Instead of trying to get rid of their darker skin through skin lighteners they recreate with people who have more European-like features, such as small noses, lighter eyes, straighter hairs, and lighter skin (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013). Given the vast number of African slaves sent to Brazil, almost all Brazilians have some trace of African ancestry in their DNA (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013). This reason alone has stopped Brazil from developing a racial caste system found within the United States after slavery based on ancestry (Jablonski, 2012). Unfortunately, a color hierarchy was still established. The color hierarchy was based on skin color. Color in Brazil is considered to be more important than race, because is synonymous to ancestry or origins (Jablonski, 2012). The racial hierarchy was as follows: the higher a person was socially the more European heritage they had and arguably the lower a person was the more African ancestry they had or in other words the lighter a person the wealthier they are and the darker a person is the poorer they are (Jablonki, 2012; Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. 2013; PBS, & Kanopy. 2016). Not only is the Afro-

Brazilian underrepresented they are also undereducated (PBS, & Kanopy, 2016). The majority of the students in higher education are of lighter skin (PBS, & Kanopy, 2016). In order to rectify the inequality in education the Brazilian government have to implement affirmative action (Glenn, 2009). Given that the Brazilian population is mostly Afro-Brazilian they only make up 6 out of the 559 seats in Congress it is evident that lighter people are favored and they are unable to politically rectify their status (Schneider, 1991). Even though, Afro-Brazilians are aware of their socioeconomic status, they do not believe that it is because they are of darker skin, but because their country is underdeveloped, when in reality Brazil is developing rapidly (Schneider, 1991). The economic and educational suffering found in Afro-Brazilian areas is vast and yet the Brazilian government claims they have achieved a racial democracy, thus perpetuating the suffering of darker skinned citizens.

Africa

In skin tone Africa, collectively is the darkest skinned continent. Africa is also the motherland to all, the oldest human remains can be found within Ethiopia, and yet the continent itself suffers the most in the global world. Africa is known across the world for being impoverished although there are very wealthy, very advanced, and healthy areas within Africa. Given these facts the continent of Africa has a less than favorable reputation in the world order. Africans are also known for their darker complexions. Africa can be argued to be the main victim of both colonialism and imperialism. Both Colonialism and Imperialism are the root causes of the conflict and turmoil within modern Africa. The negative belief sets of people being tribal, cannibal, illiterate, and lacking in intelligence all root back to perceived notions of Africans who are darker

skinned (Kanopy: Skinn Deep, 2015; Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E., 2013; Tickel, 2008). Africa is the epitome of darker people suffering the most. Africa is the epitome of that phrase because when evaluating the poorest countries, countries with the highest mortalities, highest infant mortality, lowest GDP, largest amounts of war, and more, the majority of the countries are located in Africa (IMF.org; cia.gov; worldbank.org). Even though, the continent of Africa has the most countries in the world and should have the highest median in all measurement of wealth, it unfortunately does not.

III. Background

A. History

Though the concept class colorism is not new, the meaning and implications of class colorism have evolved. Even before globalization and the Age of Discovery, there was class colorism. For the purpose of this paper, class colorism is defined as a view that the color of someone's skin marks his/her class standing. The emergence and the concept of class colorism is rooted in past agrarian societies (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E., 2013: 26-27). Every modern society has its roots in agrarian societies. In a way, class colorism is the evolution of societies. After humans renounced the life of hunters and gatherers for more permanent settlements rooted in farming, class colorism emerged (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. (2013: 26-27). Color classism emerged once farmland became commodified. In agrarian societies if a person was lighter, he/she was considered wealthier, and if he/she was darker he/she was considered poorer (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E., 2013: 26-27). This belief emerged from the fact that skin became darker when exposed to the

sun for prolonged periods of time. In contrast, if a person owned a lot of land, he/she could pay people to do manual labor. This relationship meant that landholders were lighter because they did not have to work outside, and the poorer or landless were darker because they had to work outside on someone else's land. In the Age of Discovery and the centuries following, this concept of class colorism was amplified, warped, and spread throughout the world. To understand the meaning of skin color in the modern world order, one must evaluate the roots of the meaning of skin color within societies. The two historical time periods that heavily defined what skin color meant within society are colonialism and imperialism.

Colonialism

When evaluating the meaning of skin color in modern societies, one must evaluate the historical roots of the meaning of color, racism, and colorism in the world order. What came first, racism or colonialism? Unlike the classical philosophical question (which came first, the chicken or the egg?) it is easy to discern which came first; the answer is colonialism. To understand why colonialism led to the racism/colorism in today's world, one must look at the history of colonialism. Colonialism is understood to be "a political doctrine promoting and justifying the exploitation by a colonizing power of a territory under its control either for its own benefit or for the benefit of the colonies settled in this territory" (Fourchard, 2011). In short, colonization was the process of a foreign entity settling and proclaiming an area its own. Underneath the umbrella of colonialism, the colonizer would farm and mine the natural resources of the newly owned area for the benefit of their homeland.

Colonialism began with what is called “The Age of Discovery.” The Age of Discovery is significant in racism/colorism. Before colonialism most of Africa and the Americas were relatively unknown to the Europeans. Prior to the Age of discovery, Europeans fought amongst themselves to determine which territories belonged to whom. When Europeans held prejudices, it tended to be between groups of people that looked similar. When the Europeans set sail, they encountered people that looked almost completely different from them--that is, they had darker skin. The Age of Discovery was between the 15th and 17th century. The Age of Discovery began when the infamous explorer Christopher Columbus mistakenly sailed west of Europe to modern day South America in pursuit of India--- hence the emergence of the term the West Indies. When he arrived, he noticed that the inhabitants of South America were significantly darker than he and his crew. This innocuous difference and their way of life became the premise of the downfall of the indigenous peoples’ way of life and the rise of European slavery.

When the Europeans arrived in South America the land was fertile and great for farming, and rich in natural resources. The Spaniards and the Portuguese proceeded to enslave the indigenous people, who they used to both farm and mine. Harsh conditions and new diseases brought to the Americas by the Europeans, decimated the numbers of the indigenous people quickly. It can be argued that the indigenous people were enslaved not because they were darker than the Europeans, but because they were the “owners” of the land. The Europeans wanted to exploit the land and the indigenous people were in the way, so they had to go. After other European countries discovered how much they could profit from colonizing these “new” lands, many more countries began to voyage to these “new” found lands. This “discovery” led Europeans to uncover

the rest of the Americas, Africa, and Australia. Once the other Europeans arrived to these “new” lands and found out that most of these lands were also rich with natural resources and had the ability to maintain cash crops, the Europeans began to enslave the indigenous people of the “new” lands. Like the indigenous people encountered by the Spaniards and the Portuguese, the indigenous people found by the rest of Europe also perished from the harsh conditions of slavery and diseases. The decimation of the indigenous people led the Europeans to search for a new workforce.

In search of a new workforce, the Europeans turned to the area that had a system of slavery already in place, Western Africa. Before the Europeans arrived, some African societies did have slavery. One difference between slavery practiced by Europeans and slavery found in Africa, however, concerned the ownership of someone else’s labor, and not their physical person (Fredrickson, 2002). The difference between African slavery and American slavery concerned how a slave was treated and how slaves became slaves. In Africa, a slave became a slave via war. The losers of the war were enslaved by the winners. Once they became slaves, they were not treated as property but as dependents. Slavery that was practiced by Europeans within the Americas was very different.

As I stated above, the Europeans decimated the indigenous population, and this led them to go to Africa to acquire new workers. In pursuance of a new workforce, the Europeans went to Western Africa which already had a system of slavery in place. The Europeans purchased or stole the free laborers from these Western African countries and took them to South America to farm the land and mine for natural resources. As new areas of land became known to the Europeans, these laborers were taken all over North America, South America, and island nations. The common trait among the slaves was dark skin. The differences in skin tone became the premise of their societal status

(Tickel, 2008). Skin tone status was stratified in this most basic form; if a person was white or had ancestors who solely hailed from Europe, they were free and held a high status, while if a person was brown, black, or had ancestors from the Americas or Africa, they were slaves and held a lower status. Though it would seem that the offspring of the slaves would become free because they themselves were not bought, unfortunately this did not become a reality. Once a person became a slave, his/her offspring would become a slave as well. From here came the statement, “born a slave.” The only way to keep up with who was a slave and who was not a slave was by using skin tone. To conclude, the desire for a new workforce among Europeans led to the state of darker people in modern times. In sum, colonialism led to racism in the modern world.

Imperialism

Although, colonialism accounts for the racism and colorism within some of Africa and all the Americas, it does not account for racism and colorism in Southeast Asia, India, and a large portion of Africa. The racism and colorism found in the rest of the world is attributed to imperialism. The imperialist age arose via Western World nationalism, Christianity, social Darwinism, and the Industrial Revolution. In the context of European History, imperialism is defined as “imperial powers taking administrative control of “foreign” lands and turning them into colonies and dependencies” (Grovoqui, S., 2011). The difference between colonialism and imperialism is how they ruled the newly acquired lands. During colonization, the Western World would colonize new lands, settle them, and set up a new government to directly rule the “new” nations and their people. The goals of the Western World during Imperialism was the same as those during colonialism--to exploit the land and the people to gain a

profit, but also to develop new markets to fuel their Industrial Revolutions ((Grovoqui, S., 2011)). In scholarly circles, imperialism is viewed as a more sophisticated form of colonialism. During Imperialism, Europeans and Americans established two forms of governance--direct and indirect rule. In direct rule governance, Westerners would completely reorganize their government and installed a more tyrannical form of government. Unlike direct governance, indirect governance was more influential. In indirect governance, the Westerners used the rule of government already established in the area. Westerners would indirectly rule a territory using proxy rulers. Proxy rulers were the pre-imperial rulers. Instead of the pre-imperial rulers having sovereignty over their land and people, the pre-imperial rulers now reported to Western power. This meant that when the Westerners invaded an area, and instead of overthrowing the pre-established government, they gained control of the government and forced the government to exercise their demands. If the pre-existing government were to disobey, the Westerners power would either install a new leader or overwhelm the ruler and/or his people with advanced military might. This new indirect government was able to efficiently and effectively control the newly acquired land and force the inhabitants to mine the natural resources for the Western world's benefit. In either form of governance, the it was clear who was in charge--the Europeans, or the United States, who were the comparably lighter people.

The Difference of Treatment

Although, Colonialism and Imperialism began in two different time periods the way in which they treated the Natives and the Africans were similar. In both instances the Natives and Africans were below the Europeans in the social hierarchy. Although,

both Natives and Africans were considered underneath the Europeans socially, economically, and politically, during both Colonialism and Imperialism, Natives and Africans were treated differently. Within the social hierarchy there was even more stratification of hierarchy underneath the Europeans. In the hierarchy's most basic form the Europeans were at the top, the Natives were second, and the Africans were last.

When the Europeans first sailed to the Americas they saw the Natives as inferior due to their darkness of skin, way of life, and abnormal practices. Due to their differences and the European desire of their land, the Europeans enslaved the Natives. Although, the groups of people seemed starkly different, the Europeans were able to pick up on the intelligence and sophistication of the Natives (Kanopy: Skinn Deep, 2015). The slavery of the Natives eventually came to an end largely due to the humanitarian efforts of Bartolome De Las Casa (Tickel, 2008). Las Casas was a historian and a theologian who was aboard the ship of Christopher Columbus's during his first voyage ("Las Casas, Bartolomé De (1474–1566)). At first glance Las Casas paid no attention to the economic system set up by the Spaniards ("Las Casas, Bartolomé De (1474–1566)). It was not until Las Casas witnessed some of the atrocities committed by the Spaniards, that he thought differently of the system (Tickel, 2008). After witnessing the atrocities Las Casas became a defender of the Indians, and returned to Spain to plead the case of the Natives to King Ferdinand II ("Las Casas, Bartolomé De (1474–1566)). It was not until 1542 when his efforts paid off and the enslavement of the Natives became illegal (Tickel, 2008). As an alternative of the slave labor of Natives Las Casas suggested that they use Africans as slaves, thus satisfying the social hierarchy of Natives and Africans (Tickel, 2008). Las Casas suggestion for the slave labor of Africans became the catalyst for the difference of treatment and categorization of the Natives and the

Africans. After Las Casas suggestion, the Natives were no longer called slaves but indigenous and the Africans were completely regarded as slaves. The emergence of different names for the Natives and Africans meant that the Europeans no longer saw the Natives and the Africans as one of the same, but different sets of “people”. The Natives were able to live a life freer than the enslaved Africans, but they were not as free as the white Europeans.

The difference of treatment and the stratification of the social order became convoluted once there was the mixing of races. When the Europeans sailed to the Americas they sailed with small numbers. The small numbers of Europeans were outnumbered by Africans and sometime Natives. Since the Natives were dying off at an alarming rate and lack of European women, the European men would mix with both the Natives and Africans violently and rarely with consent (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. (2013)). Although, it seemed peculiar for Europeans, mainly Spanish and Portuguese, to mix with people that they thought less than them, they had no aversion to the mixing, because of the drastic varying skin tones present in Spain and Portugal (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. (2013)). Not only was there a mixing between Europeans and Natives and Europeans and Africans, there was also the mixing of Natives and Africans (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. (2013)). With the mixing of races happening quite frequently there was a rise in the population of racially mixed people with varying shades. The racially mixed people that arose from the coupling of Europeans and Natives or Europeans and Africans were treated drastically different from the homogenous Natives and Africans or the racial mix of Natives and Africans. Those whose heritage of both Native and African were treated like the beast of burdens the same as their parents. Those who were racially mixed

between European and Native or European and African were treated with a status that was much higher than the Natives or Africans but still lower than the Europeans (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E. (2013)). The reason behind this status was because they were of lighter skin and descendants of Europeans. As the race mixing continued over the years it became harder to differentiate between who had European ancestry and who did not. Since it became harder to tell who had past European ancestor, the color of his/her skin became the indicator of his/her past ancestry. Those whose ethnicity was racially ambiguous became known as “mulattoes” -- also known as a slur in modern times in certain areas of the world. If a person’s skin tone was white then they gained the status or benefits of a European, if a person’s skin was of a light brownish color or considered “mulatto” were freed and gained certain status, while those with darker skin were treated as slaves (Russell-Cole, K., Wilson, Midge, & Hall, Ronald E., 2013).

Although Imperialism is not the sole factor for colorism in Asia, it is considered to be the amplifier. When the Europeans started to imperialize Asia, they believed themselves to be the superior race of all races. In some Asian societies, before Imperialism, they desired lighter skin because of their agrarian society set of beliefs. If someone was darker it meant they were laborers because they had to work on someone else's land, whilst fairer skinned people were wealthier because they did not have to work outside. Once the Europeans came more specifically the British, those who were darker were forced to have the labor intense jobs and unable to go to certain places because of their darker skin (Mishra 2015). The belief that darker skinned was less than was amplified even more by the fact that white skinned or lighter skinned people were in

a position of power and had well-paying jobs while darker skinned people were not and did not.

Summary

To understand the emergence of racism and colorism in the modern era one must look at the history and societal structure during Colonialism and Imperialism. In both time periods of Colonialism and Imperialism the color of someone's skin became the indicator of whether they were completely free or enslaved, or had jobs, or did not have jobs. Colonialism was the first-time period where Europeans came into contact with the Natives in the Americas and their rich in resources land. In order to obtain that land, the Europeans enslaved the Natives, which was then outlawed and replaced with Africans which was the catalyst for racial stratification in the Americas and Africa. In Asia, the belief that white was better was already present because of their agrarian roots. The belief that white or lighter was better was then enhanced due to the dominating Europeans. Once the Europeans imperialized Asia, the Europeans gave jobs to the lighter skinned population. The emergence of Colonialism and Imperialism allowed for the belief that lighter skinned was better to permeate the world. These two-time periods and their treatment of darker skinned people and the meaning of skin color is still seen in the modern world, maybe not as intensely but subtlety in every region that was exposed to Colonialism and Imperialism.

B. Justifications

Once it is established that Colonialism came before racism, the question remains how did Colonialism and Imperialism transcend to racism? Oppression of a certain set

of people is not new to the European continent. In Grecian societies, there was the belief that certain sets of people were below other sets of people (Tickel, 2008). During the ancient Grecian time slavic people were who they believed to be natural slaves. The slavic people were not believed to be slaves because of their skin tone but because they were not greek. The Greeks believed that anyone who was not Greek was a slave (Tickel, 2008). Because of the Grecian belief in slavery and the existence of slavery in Western Europe, the Europeans had no aversion to enslaving a group of people. The mixture of the absence of aversion to slavery and the growth of nationalism in Western European societies, led to the growth of racism within Colonial slavery and Imperialism (Tickel, 2008). Imperialism rose because of the Europeans strong sense of nationalism. With nationalism came a European superiority complex. When the Europeans met other people around the world the Europeans thought themselves to be superior. Although, the Europeans saw themselves as superior to the other people of the world the Europeans needed more to justify why they treated the other or darker people less than. The Europeans used religion, science, and philosophy as to justify both why they were superior than and their horrific treatment of the others.

Religion

Throughout Europe's history religion has always been the lens in which Europeans viewed the world. Religion was the way in which the Europeans separated themselves amongst the rest of the world. Europeans viewed their Christian religion superior than all other religions. Historically religion has always been the source of knowledge in Europe and has been the way in which Europeans defined themselves. The beginnings of Colonialism are closely tied to the Europeans Christian faith. Once the

Europeans set sail and “discovered” the new lands and saw the Indians living in savagery the Europeans believed it was their Christian duty to save the Natives from being savages, and enlighten them of the one true god, the Christian God. When the Europeans arrived, they began to educate the Natives of their Christian beliefs and convert them to Christianity in order to save their souls. Although, the Europeans saved the Natives they still believed them to be natural slaves.

The Europeans saw first Slavs, then Natives, and lastly Africans as slaves due to the story of Ham from the bible. In Genesis chapter 9, the story of Noah after the flood is told. Noah has just finished saving the animals and mankind from the great flood, and has become drunk from massive consumptions wine. After he has drunk the wine Noah is naked on the floor unconscious. Ham, the father of Canaan and son of Noah walks in and sees his father and proceeds to call his brothers into the room to mock him. The brothers come into the room and cover their father. Noah wakes up and learns what Ham has done and says:

Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers. Praise be to the Lord, the lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers. Praise be to the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend Japheth’s territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth. (Genesis 9:25-27 New International Version).

To the Europeans this chapter of the Bible Noah has effectively cursed Ham’s descendants to be slaves of the descendants of Shem and Japheth for the rest of time. The Europeans saw themselves to be the descendants to the good brothers and those they enslaved as being the descendants of Canaan. Given that the Europeans did not know who the direct descendants of Canaan were, those who they deemed natural slaves varied over time (Tickel, 2008). Slavs were the first people that Western Europeans

were slaves, then they moved to the new world and believed the Natives to be the descendants of Canaan. Lastly, the Europeans believed the Africans were the descendants of Canaan because of their skin was the darkest skin. Even though the bible does not specify what skin tone the descendants of Canaan had, the Europeans believed that the Africans were the descendants of Canaan, because at that moment it benefitted them the most. The Story of Canaan being cursed, and the Europeans belief that the Africans were the descendants of Canaan, meant that Europeans treatment of Africans was approved by the Bible. The Bible and the story of Ham allowed the Europeans to feel as if they were doing God's work by enslaving Africans because the Bible - or word of God - said that the descendants of Canaan were to be the slaves of Japheth and Shem (Tickel, 2008).

Science

Even though there is a scientific reason for people to explain the differences in skin tone, back during first contact between Europeans and Natives/African they were unaware of the factual scientific reason for differing skin tone. As the Enlightenment era approached Europeans belief in religion dwindled therefore Europeans looked to science to justify why they treated those of a darker hue less than. Given that Europeans saw Natives as human like earlier on, the Europeans did not believe that the Natives were biologically different from themselves. The scientific reasons to explain the difference between the Europeans and who they deemed the other, mainly dealt with the Africans. When Europeans delved deeper into Africa, Europeans came into contact with people who were of a very dark hue. The people of a darker hue seemed peculiar to the

Europeans. The Africans with darker skin were very dark but their palms and the soles of their feet were of a pale color. In 1498, Christopher Columbus sailed to Sierra Leone on his 3rd voyage. Christopher noticed that the people there were of a dark hue (Tickel, 2008). He then sailed due west and landed in Trinidad and Tobago. Columbus saw that the people of this area were pale and had blonde hair (Tickel, 2008). His observation in the drastic difference in skin tone and features led for Columbus to believe that the Africans were not human at all but polygenic - origins of multiple species. Europeans began to believe that Africans shared a close history with chimpanzees (Tickel, 2008). The first encounter Europeans had with chimpanzees they believed that the chimpanzees were very intelligent, and human like. The intelligence of the chimpanzees and the skin tone of the Africans led Europeans to believed that in some point in history a human had mated with a chimpanzee and created the dark-skinned Africans (Tickel, 2008). Because the Europeans believed that the Africans were the product of the mating of humans and chimpanzee, they did not think that Africans were fully human like the Europeans (Tickel, 2008). Their belief that Africans were not fully human meant they could treat the Africans as animals. Africans not being fully human, for the Europeans, explained the culture, skin tone, and “animalistic” nature of Africans. Because the Africans were not fully human, this meant that they did not have souls that could be saved, which eliminated the European obligation to save them, and that they could be treated as animals and slaves (Tickel, 2008).

Philosophy

European philosophy also justified that treating darker people was expected and natural. Philosophy has always been one of the largest instruments in how Europeans

functioned in society. As the desire for liberty, equality, and democracy rose within Europe the Europeans embraced the philosophers of Ancient Greece. Most importantly, the Europeans looked to the ancient Greek philosophical minds in order to organize society and understand morality. One of the most influential Grecian moral philosophers was Aristotle. Within Aristotle's lifetime and society there was the presence of slavery. Unlike colonial and imperial slavery Grecian slavery was not based off of a person's skin tone but their ethnicity. Meaning Greeks believed that anyone who was not Greek, in other words a barbarian, was a slave (Wiedemann 1989). Even within Aristotle's time period people struggled with the justification for slavery, some believed that it was natural and other believed that it was (Wiedemann 1989). Aristotle was one of those that believed slavery was natural and not just a creation of society. In order to justify himself and the morality of slavery within his society Aristotle created the Natural Slavery Theory. Aristotle's argument for slavery was there are two types of people in the world the the natural master and the natural slave. Furthermore, Aristotle believed that some people were natural born slaves and some were born to be the master of the slaves ("BBC - Ethics - Slavery: Philosophers Justifying Slavery"). Aristotle went on to say that slaves did not possess a whole soul and "lacked certain qualities, such as the ability to think properly" ("BBC - Ethics - Slavery: Philosophers Justifying Slavery"). Because the natural slaves lacked these basic qualities it was the job of the master guide them, dominate them, and take care of them ("BBC - Ethics - Slavery: Philosophers Justifying Slavery"). The beliefs of Aristotle were then implemented as a justification of enslaving groups of people. The Europeans constantly cited Aristotle's Natural Slave Theory when justifying slavery. Although, Grecian slavery was not based on skin color,

the Europeans used skin tone as the basis of whether or not someone was a natural slave.

Summary

As the Europeans continued to colonize and imperialize the darker people and their land for economic gains, they needed came up with various explanations as to why they were justified in doing it. Religion, science, and philosophy are the fundamentals of which the Europeans distinguished themselves from others. Within all of these disciplines the Europeans found reasons as to why they were the superior race. Religion “said” they were the superior race because the darker people were the descendants of Canaan, who were cursed to serve the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Science “said” that the darker people, mainly Africans, were the product of crossbreeding between humans and chimpanzees. Lastly, their major philosophers either said that slavery was natural, that some people were destined to be slaves, or darker people were inferior to Europeans because their cultures were not as advanced as their, thus they needed to be enslaved.

D. Reinforcement

Overtime, the true European reasons for the oppression of a certain set of people became lost. The reason for the European oppression of a certain set of people were economic purposes. As their economic reasons became diluted overtime and their created alternative “justifications” (i.e. religion, science, and philosophy) for the oppression became wide spread, new ideas developed. As Europeans justified treating darker people less than through religion, science and philosophy, their belief set was

then propagated and reinforced through new rationales in philosophy and science, and spread via propaganda.

Philosophy

Coinciding with the era of Imperialism was the Age of Enlightenment. The Age of Enlightenment is considered to be the time period in which Europeans moved away from religion to embrace a reoriented rational of what it meant to be human rooted in morality and to evaluate the world around them as it was. During this time period, there was various advancements in math, science, politics, and philosophy. Unfortunately, this Enlightenment period did not bring forth the notion that all people were equal and human, no matter their skin tone. Although the Age of Enlightenment is well known for the development of modern morality, freedom, and liberty there was still the presence of slavery. As the Enlightenment and slavery progressed simultaneously more philosophers began to reinforce the good of slavery by rationalizing the need for it. The list of philosophers that reinforce the good of slavery is long, ranging from Thomas Hobbes to John Locke. One of the most well-known modern moral philosophers that did not believe that “all” people were equal is Immanuel Kant. Immanuel Kant philosophy is heavily based within morality and equality. Although, his philosophy was based in equality he believed that people were divided into four different racial groups i.e. white European, red-America, black-African, and yellow-Asian (Hedrick, 2008). Within the four groups Kant believed that only the white-Europeans are able to progress and be civilized, whilst the rest of the racial groups were primitive or stagnant (Hedrick 2008). In short Kant believed and propagated the belief that the darker skinned people were inferior to the white Europeans.

Science

The growth of imperialism and the long history of enslaving darker people, rose new pseudo sciences to support the original scientific belief that darker people mainly Africans are the product of cross species breeding. Not only did the pseudo sciences try to prove that darker people were biologically inferior to Europeans. One of the most well-known scientific reasons for the inferiority of darker people was social Darwinism. social Darwinism arose from the evolutionary discoveries of Charles Darwin. In Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* he explained biological evolution, how animals evolved through natural selection that animals with the best traits to survive were able to thrive and reproduce and those with lesser traits died because they were not equipped to survive. Meaning through natural selection the inferior would die off and the superior would survive. This concept of biological evolution was applied to human beings by Herbert Spencer (Dennis 1995). Spencer believed that like animals humans are susceptible to natural selection and that over time the weak would be dominated by the superior, i.e. “the survival of the fittest” (Dennis 1995). In essence Spencer’s social Darwinism is not inherently racist. Social Darwinism becomes racist once a person’s skin color or ethnicity becomes the basis of their inferiority. Basing the skin color of someone’s inferiority or superiority is what the Europeans did. The Europeans propagated this expansion of social Darwinism, to reinforce their notion that darker people are inferior.

Propaganda

In order to perpetuate the belief that Europeans were superior to the darker people, the Europeans used propaganda. The propaganda presented painted the

Europeans as the advanced saviors of the “childish primitive” darker people. During the age of Imperialism, a poem titled “The White Man’s Burden”, emerged. The poem was written by Rudyard Kipling and it was “used to justify European imperialism, implying that imperialism was motivated by a high-minded desire of whites to uplift people of color”. The implications of the poem are that the white people of the world since they are the most “advanced”, duty is to uplift the darker people from their primitive lives. Implying that the white people are obligated to tame the darker people of the world. The white people or lighter people were the saviors of the darker people, or the “half-devil, half-child” (Kipling 1998).

Summary

Although, the justifications that the Western World gave for oppressing the darker people was not rational nor legitimate, their justifications were reinforced from different disciplines. Major moral philosophers reinforced the enslavement of darker people with their moral and natural rational of darker people being primitive people. Pseudo-sciences emerged, expanded social Darwinism, which claimed that based off of a person’s skin tone one could tell if they were inferior or superior. Lastly, the propaganda created perpetuated the belief that Westerners were aiding the darker skinned people to transcend to civilized people.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of darker people being treated worse than their lighter counterparts is not only found in the United States and South Africa, - countries known for their long histories of lawful racism - but it also occurs worldwide. There are

probably evolutionary reasons for differences in skin tone. But humans and societies have given meaning to skin tone. In most societies those with lighter skin tend to experience life differently from those with darker skin.

The accumulation of Colonialism, Imperialism, the justifications of those time periods, along with the reinforcements of the justifications, has brainwashed society into believing that naturally darker people are less than lighter skinned people. The exploitation and abuse of the darker skinned people of the world and their home land has led for darker skinned people to have a life that is significantly different from their lighter counterparts. Although, these exploitations and abuses are of the past, the mindset has continued to live on, thus making life for darker skinned people difficult. The prominent racism and its effects of those time periods is not as apparent, but it is still present within modern society. Thus, when observing poverty, war, and social inequalities across the world those who suffer the most from its effects are darker skinned people. When looking at the countries with the lowest gross domestic product (GDP), purchasing power parity (PPP), gross national income (GNI), and so forth the countries that have the lowest numbers are the countries with large dark skinned populations (data.worldbank.org). Countries with large dark skinned people populations are also countries that appear the most on a list of countries that are the most war-torn in modern times (Nag 2016). Overall, throughout the evaluation of the CIA database countries with darker complexion are countries that suffer the most from social inequalities (cia.org). Almost all the countries with darker skinned people that are suffering are countries that were either colonized, imperialized, or both. The suffering of dark skinned people in the world becomes more apparent once you analyze the collective experiences and understanding of what it means to be dark in different

societies. When discussing the suffering of darker people, I am referring to the things in which they do to become lighter, the negative connotations placed on them via stereotypes, their status in society and/or the war, poverty, and death present in their society. Overall, darker skinned people do suffer the most because of the societal structure during Colonialism and Imperialism. Once colonialist and imperialist established this hierarchy within society they used religion, science, and philosophy to validate their actions. After these beliefs from different disciplines were established they used pseudo-science, philosophy, and propaganda to reinforce their beliefs.

After evaluating the reasoning behind the mistreatment of darker people in society I have realized that the justifications are nonsensical and racist. The reason behind darker people suffering in society is rooted within economic reasons, and in order to cover up this basic reasoning certain philosophy, religion, and pseudo sciences were created in order to placate the public and not raise the public's ire. I believe in order to rectify the suffering of darker people in society is to first address that darker people are suffering in society, and to look at its origins. Different societies call for different actions, but the first step is addressing that there is a problem in how people and society treat darker people.

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