

Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006. ISBN: 0742546861

Racial discourse has been viewed as taboo in public discussion after the Civil Rights Movement. It seems that as long as we don't "see" or mention the color differences among us, things will be peaceful. However, Bonilla-Silva argues that while the Civil Rights Movement may have lifted the daily burdens of racism from people of color, especially African Americans, institutionalized racial inequality is still deeply rooted in American society. In *Racism without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva proposed four frames of color-blind ideology to examine current racial issues in the US.

The first frame is abstract liberalism, which explains that the dominant group sees every racial group gaining equal access to education, housing, and employment. Discrimination is just an individual act. In general, the dominant group uses abstract liberalism to emphasize the bootstrap concept of how people of color should work hard to reach their goal without special support, such as the Affirmative Action program. "This claim requires ignoring the multiple institutional and state-sponsored practices behind segregation and being unconcerned about these practices' negative consequences for minorities" (p. 28). By emphasizing abstract liberalism, it certainly gives the dominant group plenty of excuses to overlook history.

The second frame centers on the naturalization of personal preferences. The dominant group tends to justify racial inequalities as if they were natural occurrences. For example, where we live often determines where we can go to school. Racial preferences, however, do not affect our personal choices in terms of residential neighborhood or school district. It may be our choice to go to a school that has predominately white students. We all should take responsibility for the choices we make. Overall, everyone should feel at liberty to choose in a free society. By practicing the naturalization of personal choices, the dominant group claims that the residential segregation and preferences result from a normal social process, and nothing has to do with discrimination against *Others*.

The third frame is cultural racism, which explains the socioeconomic standing of minority groups. The dominant group often denounces indigenous people/blacks for failure because they did not make the right choice to adapt to the "normal" culture. Cultural racism criticizes minority groups for their dysfunctional cultural and family values. These condemnations strongly connect to the previous two frames where the bootstrap concept and personal preferences are rationalized by the dominant group.

The minimization frame is used to specify why color-blind racism is institutionalized. This again echoes the practice of abstract racism. The dominant group perceives that racism is no longer prevalent or no longer exists after the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. Today, minorities are considered “hypersensitive” and “too race conscious.” If people all could be more color-blind, society would be more peaceful and better off. The practice of minimization allows the dominant group to deny the racial inequality claimed by minorities. On the other hand, the minimization talk “qualified” the dominant group to become the oppressed against whom minority groups like to play the race card.

Many readers have been raising concerns regarding the argument of color-blind racism in America. As a reader myself, it can be a heavy stigma to be accused of being a racist, and no one wants to be categorized in that position. As Bonilla-Silva states, “individuals are not the ones who create larger systems such as ‘capitalism,’ ‘patriarchy,’ or ‘racialized social systems,’ but they are the ‘cogs’ that allow these systems to run” (p. 221). For him, the main purpose of writing this book is not to demonize whites in the U.S. or dominant groups in other societies but to point out that invisible white privilege is in need of acknowledgment from the dominant group.

Bonilla-Silva explicitly states that racial inequality and disparity are embedded in American society, although racist practices have changed from apparent forms to color-blind forms. The stories told by the participants convey racial ideology and views in contemporary America. Also, the technique of story-telling analysis enhances readers’ ability to detect color-blind racist practices through words. An awareness of color-blind racism not only should prompt readers who live in American society to carefully think through racism, but it also applies to readers from other dominant groups who live outside the U.S. The globalization of whiteness must be scrutinized in today’s international community.

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