

**The Post-Racial Fallacy in America.**

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The central thesis of this paper, is to provide a contribution to the global racism theory and to provide evidence showing that America is currently living in a Post-Racial fallacy, in the sense that although America has always been seen as the “land of free”, this has only been applicable to white americans. Furthermore, the presence of Barack Obama, may show that politically black people are free but there are other dimensions to the American society that show the reality of the new racism that exists, regardless of him being the first black president.

Racism prevents African Americans from receiving the same life chances as their white counter-parts. Therefore, for that reason they are still enslaved metaphysically and physically through various forms of racism. In terms of politics, the United States Constitution was given a Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. As well as, Title VII of The Civil Rights Act 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on skin colour. Nevertheless, it has still enabled racism and prejudice to exist in the supposed post-racial society.

The foundations set in the Transatlantic Slave Trade are so deeply internalised, Americans subconsciously create prejudice distinctions amongst one another. From that, I will be discussing how the four different discourses of racism, have challenged the identity of what it means to be black in America. For the reasons that, throughout history black females have become hypersexualised, and being a black male in America creates a vilification of his own identity. Which has therefore led to a colour complex amongst African Americans, where the lighter you are in terms of skin tones the more privileges you receive, and finally from that it creates a western style of beauty that accepts anglo features and rejects anything that goes against the norm.

Therefore this essay will provide a contribution to racism in America by demonstrating that although slavery was a part of the “warp and woof of American life” Davis (2012), knowledge of these historical points is not enough to make it go away. Instead, I will be making the connections between how the events of the Slave Trade have simultaneously been reincarnated through new discourses of racism.

The Sexualisation of the Black Female.

The purpose of this section, is to describe the way in which racism in America has fabricated the sexualisation of African American women, which was only made possible by the lack of scientific knowledge at the beginning of the colonisation. Furthermore, because of the lack of understanding of other cultures, it has allowed for the exploitation of the slave trade. However alongside the slave trade came a setting in which the black female, was not only exploited physically to work in the plantations but also sexually, which through intersectionality ostracised them further away from society. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what it meant by intersectionality, this term was coined by feminist Kimberly Crenshaw (1989), it is used to suggest that although both male and female slaves were exploited because of their race and class. However, unlike the men their gender also allowed them to be sexually exploited. Therefore to study the subordination of black women, we must take their race, class and gender into consideration.

In the ‘Heart of Darkness (1983), Omolade theorises that the sexualisation of black females began once European men and African women encountered each other face to face for the first time. The juxtaposition of their skin tones, alongside with their open nudity shocked the

conquerors as it was nothing compared their fair skin, it was something they had never seen before. This therefore laid the foundations for the intense racial and sexual characteristics that blacks have been discredited with today such as; savage-like, bestiality and uncivilised. For the reasons that, black people in the nineteenth-century, what the European settlers saw wasn't an extension of the human race but instead a species that was similar to an ape. Therefore, by distancing themselves the furthest away from the same racial category it allowed them to dehumanise, and conqueror without a remorse of guilt. Wallace-Sanders (2002) argues that, from this came a profit motive and a desire for cheap labour during the Transatlantic Slave movement. Which empowered the New World to reinforce the negative images of African women as hypersexualised workers. The term 'hypersexualised' refers to the process in which objectification, fetishism and misogyny; reduce black women to sexual beings without the agency over their bodies. The logic of hyper-sexuality was therefore used to rationalise the female slaves perception of themselves, as they believed that their only purpose on earth was to "involuntary work and produce slave children" (pg. 23). Thus the sexualisation of black females began.

Consequently, the dehumanising of black females with a hyper-sexual image of themselves was based on the main characteristics of a primate. Characteristics such as promiscuity associated Africans as the same species of apes, their 'masters' had no problem in exploiting the female slaves. Omolade (1983), argues that one of the reasons that female slaves were oppressed and sexually exploited is because "black women all too often fill the gap for both recreational and procreational sex" (pg. 367). Thus meaning, because of the negative attributions slave masters put on their female workers, it allowed them to sexually abused. At the forefront of it, it becomes evident that white men used their power over the female slaves for their own sexual gratification, however the realistic sadistic logic behind this discourse of racism, was that when the female slaves became impregnated, it generated more surplus value for the men. For the reasons that, the more children born into slavery meant more workers for the plantation, as well as more capitol for whenever he decided to sell on the slaves. Thus, capital investment became a reasoning behind the exploitation of women.

The innate racial traits (promiscuity, filthiness, ugliness, etc) that were given to black women, devalued them in comparison to white women. A serious weakness with this kind of rationale, is the ironic high valuation that they had of white women. For the reasons that, the only reason black women were defeminised was because they weren't seen as 'true' women in the eyes of whites. However, this can be seen as an insight to the fact that the pre-existing assumptions that whites already had of race and gender generated separate attitudes when using the pronouns for black women. Wallace-Sanders (2002), argues that it's her ugliness that is emphasised in reference to her animalistic nature, and this therefore creates 'overt manifestations' of animal-like traits such as promiscuity, which then create sexualised images of black females.

The existing accounts of these manifestations allowed for the subordination of female slaves to be used for sexual gratification as well as for capital investment. However, for the female slaves who refused to be sexually exploited they were tortured, punished and sold off to new masters. This, then resulted in women having no choice but to go along with the sexual abuse, which eventually changed their perception of themselves, and by having this exploitative discourse of racism, it enable the slave trade to flourish.

So far I have shown how the Euro-American logic around black females lacked true scientific knowledge. That being said, the lack of knowledge around that time isn't surprising considering it was pre-modernity. However, what is interesting to note is that by having these pre-existing notions of race and gender it enabled them to create a hierarchical differences, which laid the foundations that we recognise today as racism. For the reasons that, in popular culture hyper-sexualisation has become a perpetual cycle because in many music videos there's still many images of over-sexualised black females, with big lips and big bums, that in the past were bullied for having and now through cultural appropriation it has allowed for these features to become commodities, that white people can have without having to appreciate blacks.

This section has reviewed the sexualisation of black females, and has shown how it started back in the nineteenth century but is still prevalent today. For the reasons that by still allowing these stereotypes to perpetuate, it prevents black females from escaping the overt manifestations of their ancestors.

### The Criminalisation of the Black Male.

This second section will be designated to showing another discourse of racism towards African Americans, however in this section I will be focusing on the extreme exploitation of males, and how it has created a vilified image of black males since the Jim Crow era. History has shown, that before this period was the 'Reconstruction' which came after the civil war as it was used as a political attempt to assimilate blacks into all communities, this is an example of how the state aimed to make a homogenous society. Blacks were given protection when they went to vote, schools were being made and a vibrant black sphere began to emerge in America. However, Davis (2005) argues that after a decade this quickly failed because within those ten years, black men went from slaves to vilified criminals in the Jim Crow era.

The Jim Crow era has to come to be used to refer to the period where white members of society began to take the law into their own hands to prevent blacks from having the same rights as them, and to keep them segregated. However, in doing so they created the criminalisation of black males for the reasons that, they became the scapegoats for any criminal behaviour. The punishment that fit in their eyes, was to lynch the black men regardless of whether they were guilty or not. In the 'Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogue', Angela Davis (2012) argues that "lynching not only extinguished black males lives but it also removed them from the possibility of belonging" (pg. 99). Therefore by creating an ideological constructed criminal out of black men, it enabled for the racist views to perpetuate around America and resulted in many innocent men dying as a way to exterminate them. Thus showing that at this period in time, America became a strong racial state, that is compatible to Nazi Germany. Ian Law (2008) argues that the "everyday ignorance, miscommunication and misrecognition of difference leads to offensive behaviour and various forms of conflict". Therefore, through internalised prejudice views along with structural power relations it created the racial violence in the Jim Crow era.

Furthermore, unlike the Slave Trade era, citizens had more knowledge of race but still had a myopia view on black people that allowed for the structural racism to develop behind public assertion. The term structural racism refers to a state such as America being able to maintain degrading assumptions about a particular culture, whilst still allowing it to be legal. For Davis (2002), the use of structural racism allows for "democracy for blacks to be withheld and the very moment it was given". For the reasons that, after the abolition of slavery African Americans were no longer slaves but immediately became villains and through this they have become metaphysically and physically enslaved by the state.

The importance behind this discourse of racism, is that by vilifying black males it creates a situation in which those pre-existed notions that once existed in the Slave Trade era, have perpetuated so greatly that the internalised images of lynching has been used as a process of defeating the enemy through visual materialisation. In addition to this, the internalised judgement that all black men are criminals has created a situation where in the modern day there are more black men in prison then their white counter-parts. For example, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013), found that African Americans, account for 30% of Americas population, but make up for 60% of the prison population. As well as that, blacks are eight times higher to be arrested and receive harsher punishments compared to their white counterparts. Thus showing that, by criminalising the identities of black males in the Jim Crow era, it has used law as a mechanism to gerrymander the black community, to keep them disenfranchised.

Davis writes that disenfranchisement is 'one of the functions of the prison-industrial-complex to withhold people of colour from voting' (2005) Following on from that, it creates a discourse of new racism, because by criminalising African Americans males they receive significantly less opportunities and life chances which creates a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby they have no other choice but to turn to crime, and the cycle of poverty continues with the end result of them being in prison, thus eliminating them from democracy. From that all is left, is the social

branding they receive, because once you've been in prison it's more different from black convicts to regain entry back into society than it is for whites. Therefore, it's for this reason that the relationship between the police and black people is crucial because they are involved with the early stages of the cases, this suggests that the institutional racism within the police creates higher prison sentences for black people. (Landau 1981; CRE 1992).

The relevance of the crucial relationship between the police and black citizens can be seen currently in Baltimore, as another innocent black man has been killed from the police. Not only that, but USA Today (2014), critically analysed the FBI's data in the past seven years, and found that white police officers kill black suspects twice a week, which averages out at 96 times a year. Many fear that this police brutality is the reincarnated version of the Ku Klux Klan, that won't stop until it's genocide, therefore in order to survive this post-racial fallacy in America, is to take every precautionary necessary to ensure that you are a good black citizen, for the reasons that it's hard to survive in America if you are not white. Randolph Hohle (2013) theories that "exercising power over the self can produce change in others". Therefore, by performing like a good citizen, is a necessary and effective tool to counteract the draconian police brutality that is brought on by pre-existing notions of race.

In this section, I have described the connections between the criminalisation of the black male and the pre-existing attributions that have originated from the slave trade. Therefore, I have given the contribution, that in order to counteract the negative stereotypes we need to create an interpretative framework that informs citizens, that those pre-existing notions lacked knowledge back then and still lack knowledge now. And therefore produce real meaning of what it means to be black man in America.

#### From 'Negrophobia' to the Paradox of the Colour Complex.

This chapter describes and discusses the transition from 'Negrophobia' to the paradox of the colour complex that we are currently in. The term 'Negrophobia' is used to describe the dislike or fear of black people. However, in order to critically analyse the transition, it also shows a need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by a colour complex. A colour complex may be defined as; interracial discrimination based on the complexion of someone's skin, therefore creating distinctions amongst African Americans. One reason, colourism may still cease to exist, could be because black Americans have a lack of unity, because they don't have a shared language it allows the distinction to continue. However, the purpose of this section, will be to show that Colourism exists because of the pre-existent notions created throughout colonisation and the slave trade which have been perpetuated today.

That being said, in order to talk about the paradox of the colour complex, it is necessary to start with the historical points that put the wheels of this transition in motion. In the book 'Black Identities in the 20th Century; Expressions of the US and UK African Diaspora, Mark Christian (2002), argues that the preference and preferential treatment of slaves was through the process of 'Blancamiento' (pg. 168). The term 'Blancamiento' is used by Christian, to show that the whiter your skin the better life chances you had during slavery and since then. For the reasons that, because of the hypersexualised nature female slaves were given by their "masters", it resulted in the rape and consequently the procreation of mixed race children. Biracial children, were noticeably different to their black mothers, because of the lightness of their skin and somewhat anglo features. However, because slaves outnumbered whites on the plantation it was deemed necessary to create a distinction amongst the slaves, in order to prevent them from coming together to overthrow their white captures. It was from that, the "masters" intelligibly began using a divide and rule logic to stop them from revolutionising.

For the reasons that, those of mixed origin began to receive privileged treatment as they were less likely to be forced to do hard labour, and enjoyed better living standards and had a higher social status in the eyes of the whites. Christian (2002), found that they were also more likely to achieve legal freedom, and this is known through the official records of the emancipation process. Following on from that, by being emancipated it allowed them to have more powerful positions over their darker skinned counterparts whilst imitating the white culture and values. Therefore signifying the transition from 'Negrophobia', to a slippery oxymoron of the acceptance of lighter skinned African Americans, thus the rise of the reasonable racists began

to emerge. However, many key writers on the Jim Crow period have argued that rather than be lynched like their darker skinned companions, light skinned African Americans chose to “pass” as white to prevent their awaiting death. Frantz Fanon (1952) believes that because of the suffering that slaves had from not being accepted, because whites “told them that they were the parasites of the world” (pg. 73). It only seems necessary to step into the white world, if you have the possibility to do so, considering the only other option was death. As well as that, the only reason why African Americans to some degree would wish to be white, is only because of the society that we live in, which creates an inferiority complex and creates difficulty for a black american (pg. 74). This therefore acts as a discourse of new racism, as it continues to perpetuate the negative stereotypes of dark skinned African Americans, whilst giving acceptance to the lighter skinned which persevered the slave masters logic of divide and rule.

Following on from that, Du Bois (1999) believes that the procedure of ‘passing’ acts as a ‘Double Consciousness’ because African Americans can only perceive themselves through the perception of others. In other words, it acts as a ‘Looking Glass Self’ (Cooley 1902) because we only begin to understand ourselves through the perception that others give us, therefore emancipated slaves and their children never felt like true americans because of the identities white americans gave them. As well as that, Du Bois provides a metaphor to explain the division amongst blacks and whites, because the life of a black person is within a veil. Furthermore, trying to gain self-consciousness in a racist society will always be impaired because any images blacks see of their culture is through the distorted voyeurs gaze of white America. Thus, the act of ‘passing’ is used to try and gain some acceptance in America, and therefore creates the paradox of the colour complex.

In addition, it is important to see if the act of ‘passing’ has transcended to modern day society. Therefore, the remainder of this section will be used to explain the effects of the paradoxical colour complex. In the sense that the acceptance of light skinned Americans has still left them with all the privileges and left detrimental effects of darker skinned Americans. For the reasons that, after the overthrow of the Jim Crow era, under *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act 1964*, discrimination in employment on the basis of colour was prohibited (colour was seen as independent from race). However, colourism still existed, but this time in a less overt way than that of the Jim Crow era. For the reasons that, the *New Immigrant Survey 2003*, found that immigrants with the lightest skin colour earn on average 16-23% more than immigrants with darker skin tone for the reasons that anglo features allows you to appear more respectable, more assimilable and gives you the competitive edge in schools and job markets still tainted by racism (Hunter, 2005, pg. 6). Thus connecting the links between the pre-existent notions that were once held against darker skinned African Americans and the way in which racism still exists, except this time it is no longer just a two-tier system against whites and blacks, but with other ethnicities whereby the shade of your skin also decides your future. (Hochschild, 2005; Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2008). An example of this can be seen in the way in which most immigrants enter American at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy (Massey & Fischer, 2010). Therefore from that, it suggests that immigration interacts with segregation to create a cycle of poverty.

That being said, John Hutchinson (2010) argues that because nations are rational political organisations, the use of selective ethnic symbols is for decorative rather than substantive purposes (cf. Hutchinson 1994, ch. 1, pg. 652). However, this does not explain why these decorative ethnic symbols have lead to the colour complex that we see today. Hunter (2006), however argues that the systems of discrimination operates first through racial category and then through the level of skin tone. (pg. 7). Therefore, this section has reviewed the transition from negrophobia to colour complexes and has found links between the categorisations throughout history, and the effect of discrimination based on skin tone, has had on African Americans.

#### White Supremacy and the Domination of the Beauty Industry

This final section will be used to analyse the way in which the paradox of the colour complex (as stated before), has created an internalisation of the degradation of what it means to be black. That has only been made possible by the beauty industry which continually uses white

supremacy to create the definition of what it means to be 'beautiful'. Many race theorists are critical about the beauty industry as it perpetuates beauty as an 'hegemonic ideology and its existence serves the interest of whites in that it maintains white supremacy' (Hunter, 2005, pg. 5). Therefore, in the section that follows, it will be arguing that the beauty industry is another example of a discourse of racism in America, including the effect it has on American American females.

The power of the colour complex, is greater than most writers of the slave trade could have imagined. For the reasons that, citizens are no longer 'passing' as white to eliminate the risk of death, but instead African American women are striving to achieve that western ideal of beauty, that has been dominating the beauty industry since the rise of globalisation and the trading of commercial goods. As shown earlier in this paper, since the beginning of the Transatlantic Slave (and for many years after) there has always been a division between the darker skinned slaves and the light skinned, as those who appeared more European received more privileges. This therefore lead to the internalised hatred of dark complexions, that African Americans themselves have fallen victim to, an example of this can be seen in the infamous 'Brown Paper Bag Test'. The premise of this test amongst the African American community, was that if you are lighter than a brown paper bag then you were deemed beautiful, whereas if you were darker than the bag you were considered ugly. Therefore, it has created a stratification in the communities on the basis of their complex, thus showing the backlash of colonisation. As well as that it perpetuates the paradox of African Americans having a colour complex, because many dark skinned women are doing their best to achieve the western idealism of beauty whilst still denouncing racism, but by doing so they are allowing the negative attributions of the past to control the futures of young black girls today whose self-esteems are telling them they will never be good enough.

It is well known that this type discourse of racism has proven to be toxic, because black women have now been cultured to compare themselves to their lighter skinned companions rather than to connect with them. This has also become powerful from the recurring memories through generations about the value of the colour of your skin, because ancestors of slaves have internalised the alien norms that the slaves had to learn to adopt. This acts a perfect example to prove that self-hatred is not innate the human psyche, instead it becomes something we learn from both primary and secondary socialisation, therefore, it's from this that the 'booming business of "fixing" ethnic features is able to flourish' (Hunter, 2005, pg. 59).

Another form of subordination women face is through beauty because it has been used to interest men and keep patriarchy going by dividing women and leading them to self other women as "competitors" (Hunter, 2005, pg. 5). Therefore, it creates high levels of low self-esteem issues amongst women, for the reasons that they "are defined as much by their looks as by their deeds" (Freedman,1986), therefore women are judged on their looks more that their minds or actions. However, when considering intersectionality amongst African American women it appears to be worse for them. For the reasons that, "because beauty is a sociological concept, it is informed by other societal characteristics" (Hunter, 2005, pg. 69). Consequently, this creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that keeps African American women in subordination, as the hypersexualised attributions that are negatively given to them prevents them from seeing their true worth, as they are constantly compared to the western style of beauty. An example of this can be seen in marriage statistics, as 41.9% of black women in America have never been married, in comparison to only 20.7% of white women, (US Consensus 2001). Therefore, it has been speculated that through the internalisation of the degradation of what it means to be black prevents some women from finding love.

Another example, of the link between white supremacy and the beauty industry, can be seen in Margret, L. Hunter's book 'Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone, as Hunter theorises that sexism and racism interact and she uses the metaphor of the 'Beauty Queue' (2005, pg. 71) to explain. In the metaphor there is a queue of women, from the lightest to the darkest and the lighter ones receive the most privileges and resources. However, Hunter argues that the lightest women receive the most benefits for these two reasons; as the essay has shown European settlers preferred the lighter skinned; as well as that because of the western ideal of beauty interpret lighter as beautiful, they became privileged as beautiful women. Therefore,

Hunter concludes that “the conflation of beauty and light skin is part of how racial aesthetics operate” (pg. 71). That being said, it creates a social capital of beauty aimed at darker skinned women, as skin bleaching products sales have risen from \$40 to \$43 billion in 2008 and is rising daily as it becomes a global industry. Therefore, in order to fully understand colourism and the impact that it has on African American women, there has to be the realisation that beauty is just a small compartment to the bigger picture which is structural racism within the beauty industry as it is perpetuating the image of white supremacy.

This section has reviewed the ways in which beauty has acted as a discourse of new racism, for the reasons that it has created the category of beauty by defining it as the western ideal of beauty. Therefore, creating preference amongst skin tones, this can be seen in Harvard ‘Implicit Association Test’, which tests whether people are implicitly biased. In May 2006, with 122,988 participants they found that 27% of people had a preference for light skinned people whilst only 5% had a preference for darker skinned people. Thus showing that the paradox of the colour complex has allowed for a white supremacist domination of the beauty industry and in everyday life.

The purpose of this essay was to give a detailed analysis of the four difference process of racialisation in America against African Americans. Therefore I believe that this paper will be able to provide a contribution to the study of racism, as it shows the interlinking connections between the Transatlantic slave trade and the perpetuated negative stereotypes that still affect all African Americans today. Thus showing that that also well as pre-existing modernity it, is was also a product of western capitalism at the same time. Therefore it is for that reason, I believe that America is living in a ‘Post-Racial’ fallacy. For the reasons that despite the media altered and ‘pseudo-intellectual debate over post-racial America (Hohle, 2013), this paper has proven that racism still exists and perpetuates in America. That being said, I believe that the wider significance of this paper will show that, currently America is not the ‘melting pot’ that many think it is, but instead it’s a collection of cultures that each bring something different to the table, however rather than trying to be colour-blind when it comes to ethnicity, there has to be education to prevent people from seeing the problem in colours. Because after all the racist views in America are just draconian stereotypes formed through the lack of scientific knowledge. However, that’s not to say that we should ignore the effects of the pasts, instead there needs to be a realisation that unless we are able to understand and articulate the issues, from different points of view, including of those who faced the oppression by the degrading images created about black people, we are only going to continue this vicious cycle.

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