

Race *Doesn't* Matter

by Daniel Borchers

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Part I – Getting Beyond Race

Here we present the first in a multi-part series on race and racism in America. This feature is adapted from a series of letters sent by this author to the editor of a major national magazine. [Please be sure to see our companion articles, “Groupthink” and “Fill-in-the-blank Americans.” - *Ed.*]

Eric Alterman, columnist for *Nation* magazine, says “*Everything* has to do with race in America.”¹

Does it? Should it?

The O.J. Simpson criminal and civil trials highlight a racial divide in America. *But this need not be so.*

Self-appointed civil rights leader Jesse Jackson asserts “To ignore race and sex is racist and sexist.”² Is he correct? Or is ignoring race the *only* way to *become* colorblind?

In this series we will explore racial issues from a non-politically correct perspective, infusing common sense with a practical understanding of human nature. In the end, as we explore various issues and expose various myths on race, we will find that what we should look at is not *race*, but *principles*. Looking at race, first and foremost, colors the truth and clouds the issues.

Foundational Premises

The foundational premise of this article is that “all men are created equal,” a concept which is predicated on the Judeo-Christian perspective that in God’s eyes all humans are His children, regardless of race, class or sex. For Christians, there are no racial, class or sex distinctions within the body of Christ. *Individuals* (not *groups*) become one in Christ. We must, therefore, set aside all other distinctions.

As a whole, our Founding Fathers believed all men and women are equal, and they endeavored to establish a colorblind system in which all would have equal opportunity and equal justice before the law. That they failed is not a reflection of their *vision* nor of their *morality*. Rather, the sin of slavery became imbedded in the origins of our nation, not through lack of vision, but because *compromise* was necessary in order to *become* a nation.

“Had the United States split over the issue of slavery when the Constitution was written in 1787,” writes economist Thomas Sowell, “it is by no means clear ... that either region would have survived.”³ Abolishing slavery was not an option for America’s founders.

External vs. Internal

“be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” - Romans 12:2

The word for “conformed” (*schema*, Strong’s # 4976) refers to being conformed to a transitory *external* appearance, a chameleon-like adaptation to the current fashion. The word for “transformed” (*morphe*,

Strong's # 3444) refers to "the special or characteristic form or feature" of a person or thing – to its essential unchanging essence, nature, character, *inward* being.

This parallelism is evident in the contrast between the Old and New Covenants. Under the Old Covenant the law was *external*, written in stone; under the New Covenant it is *internal*, written in our hearts.⁴

This verse in Romans is another way of saying not to be concerned with the outward, external, superficial aspects of a person, but, instead, to look to the inner character, the heart and soul of the individual. Instead of being clothed by our culture we should be transformed by Christ.

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it this way: "I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." It is human nature to judge by outward appearance, whereas God looks at the heart. Will we?

Stanford Trinity

Human nature has run rampant in today's society. Racial polarization and sensitivity have reached high levels, in part, because charges and characterizations of racism are so often bandied about *without regard for accuracy or veracity*. For example, California's Proposition 209 is neither racist nor xenophobic. Proposition 209 merely reiterates the 1964 Civil Rights Act, restates Martin Luther King's desire for a colorblind society, and strives to achieve the Declaration of Independence's ideal of the equality of all men (and women). Still, *unwarranted* charges of racism were (and continue to be) used to stifle legitimate (and, often, godly) political positions. Therefore, it behooves all of us to beware fanning the flames of fury (not too strong a word considering today's political climate).

Author Dennis Prager warns of the dangers inherent in placing an undue emphasis on *external* characteristics: "The liberal world has supplanted a *values*-orientation to life with race, gender, class – what I call the Stanford Trinity. It is a very dangerous thing because it literally devalues values."⁵

The Stanford Trinity – racism, sexism, and classism – has become the *new criteria* for human behavior, the foundation of political correctness. They are the secular *sins* of the 1990s. Yet these three "sins" judge the *heart* based on *outward* appearances. They judge *character* based on the *clothing* of race, gender, and class. Often these charges are based on *subjective* and *elastic* criteria rather than objective standards.

Philip Greenberg, of the National Coalition of Free Men, says "Once they're charged with [battery] instead of a presumption of innocence there's a presumption of guilt even after they're proven innocent."⁶

We must not turn *inward* (isolation, self-pity) or *outward* (dependence, victimhood) but *upward* (liberty, salvation from God).

Complex issues

Despite the complexities of these issues, there is truth in simplicity. Either something is *right* or it is *wrong*. Put another way, more things are black and white than gray. Our understanding of this simplicity has been *obscured* by all the complexities surrounding these issues. Many of today's complex issues have simple solutions which require returning to basics, going back to traditional values, and applying time-honored solutions. Sadly, these values and solutions are no longer honored or valued by our cultural elite, and are, in fact, denigrated at every turn.

Recent doctrinal changes within the Worldwide Church of God prove this point. This church went from being legalistic with an emphasis on the Old Covenant to embracing New Covenant beliefs and the centrality of Christ held by mainstream Christianity.⁷ Theologically speaking, they had overlooked the *simplicity* in Christ and preached *another* gospel. Their understanding of the simplicity in Christ was *obscured* by all the “complexities” surrounding it.

Many “experts” on race have a socialist worldview with its flawed concept of human nature and of the roles of government and the church. They tend to look at *externals* (skin color, numbers) and not *internals* (human heart, spirit of God). Theologically, the Worldwide Church of God did the same thing, looking at *externals* (Old Covenant, legalism) instead of *internals* (New Covenant, Christ within us).

Race is not the measure

Everything seems to be defined, categorized, quantified by race. Race has become the preeminent human characteristic in so many aspects of life. *The Bell Curve* suggests racial differences can be quantified and then makes value judgments based on those quantities. The Left uses statistical disparities as proof of discrimination (despite the actual evidence and contrary to the law).

According to the Bible all humans are descended from Adam (at creation) and from Noah (following the Flood). We are all of one blood.⁸ Similar creation accounts exist in other faiths, all pointing to the same conclusion: we are all brothers and sisters.

Race is not the measure.
The *heart* is the measure of a human.

In my view, race should *never* be a factor because then it always becomes *the* factor. The authors of *The Bell Curve* used controls to accommodate certain factors in their study, but they necessarily left out other, significant factors. Similarly, those who use statistical disparities as proof of racism and discrimination discount many crucial variables.

The other day I happened upon a new book entitled *Color-Blind: Seeing Beyond Race in a Race-Obsessed World*. The author, Ellis Close, unfortunately does not see *beyond* race. While disagreeing with Justice Harry Blackmun’s philosophy⁹ (quoted below), Close accepts it as the lesser of two evils:¹⁰

“In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. There is no other way. And in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.” - Blackmun¹¹

But isn’t the essence of equality being *treated the same*, not differently, before the law? Lady justice is blindfolded to ensure justice, to be blind to differences (racial, socio-economic, cultural, etc.). Ellis Close supports affirmative action and wealth redistribution using race as part of the criteria. But how can we get *beyond* race if we *use* race as a criterion? And not just a criterion but *the* preeminent criterion?

“Rather, one gets beyond racism by getting beyond it now; by a complete, resolute and credible commitment *never* to tolerate in one’s own life – or in the life and practices of one’s government – the differential treatment of other human beings by race.” - Professor William Van Alstyne¹²

It’s the Humanity, Stupid!

Contrary to the prevailing cultural climate, race really *doesn't* matter. To paraphrase President Clinton, "It's the *humanity*, Stupid!" [We do know that none of our readers are "Stupid," but our esteemed leader did use *that* word in his famous motto. - Ed]

It is the *humanity* of each person – created in the image God – which matters. Not the outer wrapping. Not the skin clothing the human. But the spirit, the spark of divinity within each of us, which must be nurtured and tended.

Political correctness and the counterculture movement have used these (and other) myths to transform race into the *pre-eminent* characteristic instead of the *benign* trait it really is. All these "little things" **divide** people, create animosity and inculcate racist attitudes.

Our national *obsession* with *race*, this inordinate emphasis on the outer trappings of the inner spirit, both suppresses and oppresses those very qualities which God most wants us to exhibit, to nurture, to share. God is concerned with our *morphe*, not our *schema*. He looks on the *heart*, not the *outward* appearance.

As author and talk radio host Armstrong Williams observes, people "have value and inalienable rights simply because ... they are human. Human in any hue."¹³

Where does race fit in? Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl expresses it best: "There are only two races: the decent and the indecent."¹⁴ Let us all strive to be decent.

We have already addressed one myth prevalent in contemporary America, that race is everything. Future installments in this series will examine more closely some of the more pernicious myths concerning race and racism, and how they are escalating the hatred and suspicion which already warps our society.

Endnotes:

¹ MSNBC, January 19, 1997.

² Tony Snow, "Shades of affirmative action, *Washington Times*, November 13, 1995, pg. A20.

³ Thomas Sowell, *Race and Culture: A World View*, BasicBooks, 1994, pg. 218.

⁴ Jeremiah 31:31-34.

⁵ Dennis Prager, *Booknotes*, C-Span, November 21, 1995.

⁶ MSNBC, January 5, 1997.

⁷ David Neff, "The Road to Orthodoxy," *Christianity Today*, October 2, 1995, pg. 15.

⁸ Acts 17:26.

⁹ Ellis Close, *Color-Blind: Seeing Beyond Race in a Race-Obsessed World*, HarperCollins, 1997, pg. 99.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 178.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pg. xxv.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

¹³ Armstrong Williams, "Perfidious racial reasoning," *Washington Times*, October 19, 1995, pg. A16.

¹⁴ Dennis Prager, *Booknotes*, C-Span, November 21, 1995.