

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN AMERICAN SOCIETY:



PRIMER

. . . A PRELIMINARY VERSION . . .

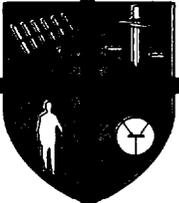
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The Mid-Peninsula Christian Ministry is pleased to make available this preliminary PRIMER on INSTITUTIONAL RACISM. It constitutes a short, initial version of what will be a more detailed document to be completed this spring (which will include statistics, references and more examples). In its final form, the document will be useful for constructing curriculum on this subject in churches and schools.

At this time of crisis in race relations and ugly urban tensions, no other subject deserves our attention more. It is clear that our past thinking on race relations with its concentration on individual relationships and efforts to ameliorate the problems of "disadvantaged" persons has been too superficial. The problem is not merely a matter of individual bigotry; nor is it only a matter of remedial programs to "better" conditions. We are now increasingly aware that it is also a question of the subtle ways in which institutions function, the way in which organizational arrangements in fact exclude and discriminate against segments of the population.

To our knowledge, little or nothing has been written which focuses directly on this issue of "institutional racism." We give a Bibliography at the end, but it should be clear that among those books listed, some deal with the issue only tangentially. We are therefore very grateful to our Student Team for the hard work they have done on this topic. We are particularly grateful to Dr. Kenneth Prewett, Political Science Department, Stanford University, Student Team Advisor, and to Mr. Peter Ware, Staff Assistant, Community House, who has worked closely with Dr. Prewett and the students.

This Primer should be used as an introduction to the subject. Since so little has been written, this constitutes an attempt at definition and explanation. Your comments and criticisms will be welcome. We urge churches and groups to use this to begin thinking "institutional racism" and to begin to examine their own communities and institutions for documentation of the phenomena.

Reverend Carl A. Smith, Director
Mid-Peninsula Christian Ministry

... UNITED IN CHRISTIAN AND COMMUNITY ACTION ...

Institutional Racism in American Society: A Primer

PREFACE

Racism in its most subtle, its most complex, its most stubborn, and, thereby, its most insidious form, is racism which is institutional. As part of the thinking of Americans, racial prejudice has been much analyzed and much condemned. As part of the institutional life of America, racism has been too little understood and too often overlooked. But it is not just prejudiced individuals who are pushing our nation toward two societies, "one black, one white -- separate and unequal." It is the overwhelming difficulty of controlling our own institutions which, being a product of their history, cannot but perpetuate practices which advantage the typical white and penalize the typical black. Businesses, classrooms, law courts, city councils, unions, newspapers, churches, police stations, hospitals, congressional committees, textbooks, school boards and welfare agencies, though often in the hands of "enlightened" and "concerned" citizens, remain controlled by habits still wed to the basic American formula which reads White over Black.

This essay has been prepared to help white Americans (including the authors) recognize a racism which is more, much more, than the summation of individual prejudices. The essay is exactly what its title implies, a primer. As such, it will be followed by a more ambitious and more completely documented essay which attempts to explore in detail the thesis just introduced here -- that is, the unjust racial practices of institutions such as Public Schools, Law Enforcement, Business, Labor, Churches, Public Health and Government.

The essay is the collective product of members of a Stanford University undergraduate seminar. Although sections were initially drafted by individuals, the entire group helped shape and write the final version. Although we have been interested in the educational value of this exercise for ourselves, our major concern is to contribute, in whatever limited fashion our talents allow, to a general awareness that racism is a sickness of white American and that it must be cured there. The group includes Owen Blank, Jim Davis, Paul Drews, Jackie Griffith, Sue Haley, Andy Horowitz, Lou Knowles, Sue Mithun, Kurt Schnepple (students), Lane Barton (campus minister), Peter Ware (staff member, Mid-Peninsula Christian Ministry) and Kenneth Prewitt (faculty).

Our effort is dedicated to the belief that Institutions, being man-made, can be man-changed.

Introduction: Towards a Definition of Institutional Racism.

A racist society is one in which social policies, procedures, decisions, habits and acts do in fact subjugate a race of people and permit another race to maintain control over them. As we understand it and try to present it in this essay, racism may be expressed as an individual act or as an institutional practice.

The murder by KKK members and law enforcement officials of three civil rights workers in Mississippi was an act of individual racism. That the sovereign state of Mississippi refused to indict these men was institutional racism. The individual act by racist bigots went unpunished in Mississippi because of policies, precedents and practices that are an integral part of that state's legal institutions. A store clerk who suspects that black children in his store are there to steal candy but white children are there to purchase candy, and who treats the children differentially (the blacks as probable delinquents and the whites as probable customers) also illustrates individual racism. Unlike the Mississippi murderers, the store clerk is not a bigot and may not even consider himself prejudiced, but his behavior is shaped by racial stereotypes which have been part of his unconscious since childhood. A university admissions policy which provides for entrance only to students who score highly on tests for which suburban high schools primed them necessarily excludes black ghetto-educated students. Unlike the legal policies of Mississippi, the university admission criteria are not intended to be racist, but the university is pursuing a course clearly perpetuating institutional racism. The difference, then, between individual and institutional racism is not a difference in intent or of openness. The individual act of racism may be concealed purposely or innocently. The institutional policy of racism may also be concealed, again either by design or because its perpetrators do not know what they are doing. Racism -- whether covert or overt, whether intentional or unintentional, and whether individual or institutional -- is a sickness which destroys subjugator and subjugated alike. For the health of the society and for the health of the members of society, it will have to be overcome -- by whatever slow and painful processes are necessary.

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A great deal has been written about individual racism, especially those calculated acts performed when one man attempts to undermine the rights and dignity of another. Less has been written about institutional racism. Almost nothing has been written about institutional practices which are covertly racist. The collection of ideas put together in this essay represent different ways in which institutional racism is perpetuated.

Perhaps the best way to begin is to consider what institutions are and what they do in a society. Institutions are fairly stable social

arrangements and practices through which collective actions are taken. Medical institutions, for instance, marshal talents and resources of society so that health care can be provided. Medical institutions include hospitals, research labs, clinics, as well as organizations of medical people such as doctors and nurses. The health of all of us is affected by general medical policies and by established practices and ethics. If medical careers are limited to white people and if medical practices result in better health care for white than for black citizens, we can conclude that medical institutions are racist. Medicine is but one example of an American institution which might be guilty of unintentional racism.

Business and labor, for example, determine what is to be produced, how it is to be produced and by whom and on whose behalf products will be created. Public and private schools determine what is considered knowledge, how it is to be transmitted to new generations and who will do the teaching. Legal and political institutions determine what laws regulate our lives, how and by whom they are enforced and who will be prosecuted for which violations.

Institutions have great power to reward and penalize. They reward by providing career opportunities for some people and foreclosing them for others. They reward as well by the way social goods are distributed: by who receives training and skills, medical care, formal education, political influence, moral support and self-respect, productive employment, fair treatment by the law, decent housing, self-confidence and the promise of a secure future for self and children. No society will distribute social benefits in a perfectly equitable way. But no society need use race as a criterion to determine who will be rewarded and who punished. Any nation which permits race to affect those who benefit from social policies is racist.

It is our thesis that institutional racism is deeply embedded in American society. Slavery was only the earliest and most blatant practice. Political, economic, educational and religious policies cooperated with slave holders to keep "the nigger in his place." Emancipation changed little. Jim Crow laws as well as residential and employment discrimination guaranteed that black citizens remained under the control of white citizens. Second class citizenship quickly became a social fact as well as a legal status. Overt institutional racism was widely practiced throughout American society at least until the Second World War.

With desegregation in the armed forces and the passage of various civil rights bills, institutional racism no longer has the status of law. It is perpetuated nonetheless, sometimes by frightened and bigoted individuals, sometimes by good citizens merely carrying on "business as usual," and sometimes by well-intentioned but naive reformers. An attack on institutional racism is clearly the next task for Americans,

white and black, who hope for their children a society less tense and more just than the one of the mid-1960's. It is no easy task. Individual, overt racist acts, such as the shotgun slaying of civil rights workers, are visible. Techniques of crime detection can be used to apprehend guilty parties and, in theory, due process of law will punish them. To detect institutional racism, especially when it is not intended and when it is disguised, is a very different task. And even when institutional racism is detected, it is seldom clear who is at fault. How can we say who is responsible for residential segregation, for poor education in ghetto schools, for extraordinarily high unemployment among black men, for racial stereotypes in history textbooks, for the concentration of political power in white society?

The thoughtful citizen who reflects on the question of responsibility will probably come to agree with the President's Commission on Civil Disorders: "What white Americans have never fully understood -- but what the Negro can never forget -- is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

Although racism pervades the major institutions of American society, no institution need be racist. Policies and practices can be changed. The political, economic and social institutions of our society -- great in their power and great in their resources -- were made by men and they can be changed by men.

The Unintended Consequences of Social Policies: Are They Racist?

Most social policies and institutions are established for purposes totally unconnected with the race issue. They are intended neither to perpetuate discrimination nor to relieve it; on the race issue, they are "neutral." Unfortunately, the practices which follow from these policies and institutions have unintended, secondary consequences which are not neutral but are deeply embedded in the race question. These unintended consequences are as racist and as destructive as though the policies had initially been designed and promoted by prejudiced individuals.

Americans love to test people and assign them scores. We have aptitude tests, achievement tests, motivation tests, skill tests, attitude tests, personality tests and intelligence tests. Scores received on these tests can follow a man throughout his life. These tests stand guard at the doors which lead to a healthy and satisfying life in our society. Tests decide whether a student is to be put in an advanced or a remedial track, whether he goes to an academic high school (the pathway to college) or a vocational school (the pathway to manual labor) and whether he is admitted to college. Tests decide whether the applicant to the apprenticeship program in a craft union has the necessary aptitude or is to remain an unskilled worker. Tests decide whether a prospective employee has the skill to handle a job and therefore moves into the employment market, or whether he is a reject and therefore is pushed down into the unemployed or subemployed sector.

Tests are necessary. American society is too complex, too technical, too large, too efficiency-minded and certainly too busy to ignore any shortcut in the incredibly difficult task of matching ability with responsibility. We would be foolish to expect anything other than a continued dependence on tests as a device to screen, select and eliminate. An overburdened school staff seriously intent on providing quality education understandably needs a device for deciding which students have what abilities. The employer facing a dozen applicants for an opening cannot afford the costs of extended interviewing or on-job sessions. The union apprenticeship program has no room for low aptitude members. We use tests to guarantee that the most able and talented receive the preparation appropriate to the responsibilities they someday will assume.

Of course, at times screening tests are prepared and applied with intent to discriminate against non-whites. The most famous examples of the overt use of discriminatory tests were the literacy tests and other Jim Crow laws used to disenfranchise the black voter in the South after Reconstruction. Less well known overtly racist tests are those in wide practice today to exclude blacks from the apprenticeship programs of craft and building trade unions.

More often, however, persons who write the tests, administer them and reward high scorers and penalize low scorers do not intend to discriminate according to color. Nevertheless, the tests are racist in consequence. "Neutral and objective tests" which are administered for one purpose but which lead directly to racist policies are one of the key institutional practices in American society which are pulling us deeper and deeper into the quicksand of racism.

Consider I.Q. tests in the public schools. The student's "intelligence quotient" determines what he is to be taught, by whom, for how long and with which methods. Educators place heavy reliance on I.Q. tests to enable them to match their resources with individual abilities of students, a commendable goal. The test scores are used to place students in ability groups. Ability groups in turn presumably permit the student to develop at his own rate. By separating the slow from the bright student, it is argued, the slower student does not retard the brighter student and the brighter student does not frustrate the slower student. In addition, ability-grouped classes are easier on the teaching staff.

But testing students, slotting them into ability groups or tracks and then teaching them at the level to which their test scores assign them have consequences of much greater impact on society than the particular educational policies ever intended. These consequences are racist. Testing and ability grouping systematically reward the typical white student and penalize the typical black student. The white goes into advanced tracks, the black into remedial classes.

First, I.Q. tests are not objective and not neutral. The typical white child has the advantage. In the words of one expert, "we (whites) establish a series of tests -- that we devise for us, standardize on us, operate in situations in which we feel comfortable and on this basis, we determine who is educable or non-educable." The tests assume a white cultural frame of reference, a vocabulary and set of skills best acquired in white, middle-class homes where both parents are present and likely themselves to have been formally educated. The black community, having been forced to form a separate society and develop a separate culture, will not perform according to white middle-class criteria.

Second, it is not at all certain that ability grouping is sound teaching policy. Educational authorities have begun to question whether bright students do not advance as rapidly irrespective of the group in which they are put. And it is clear that lower track students rarely overcome the stigma of being labeled "slow learner." One study cites how an error in computer programming sent the "smart" students into a lower track and the "dumb" students into a higher track. A year later, when the mistake was discovered, the so-called dumb students were learning and progressing as though they were bright and the presumably bright students were performing as though they were stupid.

Ability grouping is self-fulfilling. If you label a child "slow learner" and thereby teach him slowly, he will always stay behind. And when ability grouping is decided by tests which are biased in favor of white students, an institution has been established which perpetuates racism. The self concept of the child who is labeled "slow learner" is damaged. This is not a happy thing for any child. When it happens to such a disproportionate number of black children, the practice reinforces the idea of black inferiority. Because ability grouping is self-fulfilling and because the tracking system has racist consequences, the vicious circle of racism cannot be broken into. The "slow learner" receives an inferior education. He is unable to hold a job in an advanced, technical economy. He remains a prisoner of the ghetto. The poverty of the ghetto is passed on to the next generation, and it is hardly surprising that low test scores appear again. The circle is again set in motion. Black children are systematically penalized by these procedures.

The racism of I.Q. testing and ability grouping in the public schools has been challenged in the courts. Judge J. Skelly Wright of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled with respect to public schools in our nation's capitol that the standardized tests used to assign students to advanced, general or retarded tracks measured not individual capabilities but cultural background. The Washington, D.C., Board of Education was unconstitutionally depriving black children in particular, and poor children in general, of their right to equal education. Tracking, said the Court, condemned black and poor children, on the basis of inappropriate test scores, to a blue collar education in lower tracks distinctly inferior in quality and in promise to that provided for white children in upper tracks. Youngsters, once assigned to a lower track, become prisoners of a test score unfairly assigned in the first place.

I.Q. testing and ability grouping in public education are but one example of something occurring throughout American society. A policy, intended to be neutral on the race question, has unintended consequences which punish a man for the color of his skin. When one group in society, be it a majority or a minority, has managed both to define success and also to control who is permitted to succeed, the society indeed has forfeited its claim to be a moral and democratic society. When the population is multiracial but with members of only one race controlling the definition of success and the pathways to a successful life, then indeed the society is racist. Although test scores probably do predict success as defined by the white middle class, they do not predict intelligence, ability or aptitude --- the claim made on their behalf. As white society begins the slow and painful process of understanding its own racism, it might begin by trying to understand its myopic view of success.

The Control of Institutions in a Racist Society

One of the clearest indicators of institutional racism is the exclusion of black members of society from positions of control and leadership. The statistics march across the pages of countless studies. Schools, businesses, unions, hospitals, newspapers and, most clearly of all, government remain firmly in the hands of white society. Black citizens are consistently underrepresented in all those positions which control the flow of political power and economic capital in our nation.

The exclusion of blacks from legal and political institutions has possibly the most far reaching consequence. A nation's values and the behavior regarded as proper and acceptable by society's members are often expressed through statutes, laws and regulations. This is especially the case in American society. Legal considerations dominate our public life, and the cliché "there ought to be a law" expresses our faith that standards of behavior can always be translated into written rules of conduct. The making and enforcing of law is a basic activity of our society; the values implicit in these laws are presumed to reflect the goals and hopes of society's members. It is through the law and experiences with legal authorities that the citizen is actually linked to the state and to his fellow citizens.

Where society's activities and values are intimately bound up with the law making and law enforcement processes, any group excluded from participation in these processes is for all practical purposes excluded from society. Such is the case with black people in this country. The institution in which law is formulated, the law itself and the agencies which administer and enforce the law belong to white America. Black people know this. Legal institutions are seen by them not as tools with which to fashion a better life but as weapons in the hands of persons who at best are indifferent to their fate and at worst intend to exploit them.

The American public is well aware that it has taken a full century after the abolition of slavery even to begin the task of guaranteeing the vote to black citizens. As late as August, 1967, only 439 black persons held elected positions of any kind at the local, state or federal level. This includes school boards, water districts, town councils, county supervisors and the like, as well as state and federal legislative and executive posts. In fact, it has been estimated that there are approximately 700,000 elected positions in the nation's political institutions; 439, then, is .06 per cent, or a proportion which grossly underrepresents a group constituting about 11% of the population.

But to be deprived of the vote and to be excluded from office is only part of the story. According to the Civil Rights Commission study in 1963, "law enforcement agencies throughout most of the nation are staffed exclusively or overwhelmingly by whites." Police stations, sheriffs' departments, prosecutors' offices, courts and prisons are controlled by whites and operate on behalf of laws made in white institutions.

The most common explanation for the exclusion of black citizens from law enforcement agencies is that they do not apply for these positions or, that if they apply, they are unqualified. Both explanations are partially true and both are themselves rooted in institutional racism. Having been reminded for most of their lives by their own experiences and those of fellow blacks that they fail to meet white "standards," it is reasonable for black citizens not to apply for positions presumed to "belong" to white society. Self-elimination is expected where those responsible for hiring assume that certain positions should be reserved for whites, and others (custodial and subordinate) saved for blacks. The lack of qualification hardly needs explanation. Exclusion of blacks from police and judicial agencies is significant not because it is exceptional, but, on the contrary, because it symbolizes all too clearly the subeducation in ghetto schools.

Not only do blacks find it difficult to vote, nearly impossible to gain public office and hard to gain employment in law enforcement agencies, but they are also underrepresented among private attorneys and on juries. Blacks comprise only one per cent of the lawyers in the United States. Until recently they were denied admission to law schools and to the bar associations in the South; they are still absent in many state and local bar associations.

Exclusion of black citizens from juries is prevalent not only in the South, where we read of the most celebrated cases, but throughout the nation. State regulations often require jurors to be registered voters or freeholders, to own taxable property, pass literacy tests or have no criminal record. Of course, blacks more than whites are eliminated by such qualifications as well as by the greater financial hardship of absence from work entailed by jury service. In the case of grand juries, usually chosen from persons nominated by public officials, civic organizations or "prominent" citizens, the likelihood of representative black participation is even less. Black citizens, then, are excluded from the jury system just as they are from law enforcement agencies and the legal profession, either through conscious prejudice or through apparently "nonracial" factors.

In the typical case, a black person suspected of a crime is arrested by a white police officer, brought to face a white judge, white district attorney and white jury in a courtroom where the proceedings are recorded by white clerks, and, upon conviction, is sent to a prison where the only black employees are janitors. Even black citizens who never go through the law enforcement processes are constantly reminded by their encounters with its white representatives, most frequently police officers, that the legal system has room for them only as violators of its code.

Again, the failure of many institutions in society contributes to the poor record of a specific one. But again, we cannot allow the one to excuse its own record because the entire society is responsible. Somewhere the snowballing tendencies in institutional racism must be stopped.

If we have dwelled at length on the control by whites of law making and law enforcing institutions, it is because law is rightly considered the foundation of American society. To be excluded from the legal processes (except as a violator) is to be excluded from society.

Institutional Standards and Social Justice

All institutions operate within a framework of standards that are intended to preserve minimum levels of efficiency and production. A factory that produces an item such as a car has standards that must be met by each car assembled. Similarly, a service organization such as a hospital has a level of patient care that the administration feels it must maintain as part of its responsibility to those it serves.

In order to meet achievement standards, institutions seek to hire those people who will do the best job and who will fit easily into the institution. This means that there must exist another set of standards by which to measure the acceptability of those who seek careers in the institution. These standards take the form of qualifying examinations, personal interviews and required training or experience.

Most administrators in business, civil service, universities and service organizations have stated explicitly that a man's race is not one of the standards by which his acceptability is measured. The businessman explains that not only does he believe it to be immoral to practice discrimination in hiring, but it would also hurt the company to turn down needed talent on the basis of race. Using this policy, known as equal opportunity hiring, institutions have attempted to keep their own achievement standards intact while serving the cause of social justice.

The phrase "equal opportunity employer" has become commonplace in most branches of industry and business. Yet an examination of current racial representation in virtually any American institution demonstrates that fair employment practices have not led to significant increase in black participation. Black unemployment rates remain double those of whites; within the labor force, black people are for the most part found doing blue collar work.

The reason for the failure of the equal opportunity policy is at once clear if conditions of poor ghetto schools, lack of skilled training and union discrimination are compared with the acceptance standards of business, government and other institutions. Although it is true that a qualified lathe operator, plumber or engineer, be he black or white, can compete for any job opening, the numbers of black people in these professions have not increased. There are no lathe operator training centers serving the ghettos; plumbers' unions do not accept black apprentices; ghetto schools turn out a tragically small number of students prepared for a college program in engineering.

It is meaningless for an employer to say that if a black man with a Ph.D. in electrical engineering walks in the door of a technical firm he will be treated in the same manner as a white man with the same education. There is a long, unfortunate but well known history to the fact that black men with Ph.D.'s in electrical engineering do not just "walk in the door;" for all practical purposes, such men do not exist.

If institutions limit their responsibility to opening their doors to all qualified comers, the subordinate economic status of the black population will be perpetuated indefinitely even if all overt discrimination in acceptance standards is wiped out. To break the vicious circle in which black Americans are caught, institutions must develop active recruitment and training programs in the minority communities; they must employ black personnel agents who will be able to recognize undeveloped talent within the black community; they must scrutinize their acceptance standards for traces of middle class bias.

Such programs will be costly, and they will never come into being if management continues to measure success by standards that are too narrow. There must be a re-ordering of priorities that will allow administrators to accept a dip in profits or a reduction in efficiency as the price for long term social gains. Businessmen who think primarily in terms of furthering the ends of the corporation itself must realize that their first responsibility is not to the stockholders or even to the consumer but to the entire society. In the long run, American institutions will benefit from an expanded labor force that is trained for the occupations of a technical society. In a larger sense, the economic enfranchisement of black citizens is a step toward the elimination of racism, a goal in which the entire country has a vital interest.

Noncompliance: White America Ignores Her Own Laws

Many people point to the several Supreme Court decisions and civil rights laws of the last fourteen years as evidence that the country is making progress towards integration. The use of federal troops in Little Rock and the forcible desegregation of southern schools in several other areas convinced many Americans that the Federal government was ready to put force behind its pronounced policies. Other national centers of power, such as labor and industry, have echoed in their statements the government's concern to eliminate racist policies.

But behind the highly publicized victories that appear from time to time, there exists a great reservoir of ineffectiveness. Many of the Federal measures are aimed at the overt segregation found in the South and do little to expose or rectify the covert discrimination in the cities of the North. But even in the South where laws are most directly applicable,

no large scale progress has been made due to widespread noncompliance with Federal law.

When we speak here of noncompliance, we mean the refusal of those individuals or political and social structures for whom the laws were designed to comply with the new legislation. The burden of guilt for this refusal lies squarely on the white racist society in the United States; not only on the racism of a Southern "redneck" sheriff, but also, and even more importantly, on the racism of institutions such as business, labor and government.

Examples of "paper decrees" are numerous in every area associated with human and civil rights: in justice, welfare, law enforcement and employment, to name a few. One of the clearest examples of noncompliance can be found in the area of education. In 1954, the Supreme Court decided that separate facilities were "inherently unequal" and that segregated schools within a school district would no longer be legal. Another generation of children passed through the schools before the government, recognizing finally that nothing was being done, passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The penalty for a school district that did not desegregate was the loss of all Federal funds.

The situation in the schools of Virginia is an example of how the law has failed. In the 1965-66 school year, 124 of the 130 school districts in the state were listed as being "in compliance." However, of the 239,700 black children in these "desegregated" districts, only 26,300 were enrolled in schools with whites - a meager 11%. And Virginia is by no means the clearest example of noncompliance. States such as Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama have even worse percentages.

Another shocking example of noncompliance is found in a comparison of the stated intentions of the labor movement with its record of discrimination. In 1955 when the AFL-CIO was formed, it pledged to "...encourage all workers, regardless of race, creed or color, to share equally in the benefits of union organization." Yet a 1960 census showed that there were only 2,191 black apprentices in all trades throughout the country, one more than in 1950. The Brotherhood of Railway and Steamship Clerks did away with its "white" and "colored" job classifications by hiring whites for jobs traditionally reserved for black men, who were then left jobless.

Resistance to Federal laws and the policies of national organizations is greatest at the grassroots level. The individual school boards and union locals are the center of noncompliance in the examples given above. Large corporations may claim to practice equal opportunity hiring, but the receptionist in the personnel office may not adhere to company policy. It is admittedly very difficult to root out this widespread noncompliance at low levels, yet there are enforcement measures which can be taken by government, business and labor leaders. However, the evidence indicates that much less has been done than might be expected considering the urgency of the racial crisis.

The problem of noncompliance has been compounded by the reluctance of national authorities to enforce their laws and policies. In the years since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Congress has actually cut the amount of money spent on enforcement of the anti-segregation clauses of the law. In the case of the Virginia schools, most of the districts fell far short of the percentages of students in integrated schools which the Federal authorities projected for 1966. Yet the Federal enforcement program was cut back in Virginia rather than strengthened. Federal funds continued to flow into most districts despite the dire threats contained in government directives. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare has approved enforcement actions against only three of the worst districts. Some twenty five school boards continued to receive aid in 1967 although they were violating the faculty desegregation requirement contained in the 1964 law.

Union officials have also proven reluctant to crack down on locals which continue with racist policies. Although locals have been expelled from unions in the past on charges of communism and corruption, none has been ousted for discrimination. Unions continue to use their legal resources to defend locals in court suits involving discrimination, rather than seeking to eliminate racist practices.

Examples can be drawn from all parts of the nation and all types of organizations to demonstrate the extent of noncompliance in lower echelons and the great lack of enforcement from the top. The public must be aware that the passage of a civil rights law which is not obeyed or enforced can only lead to greater frustration among black people. Disrespect for the law starts in white society, and until white society stops its "open defiance of the law," as it is called by the President's Commission on Civil Disorders, there can be no hope of even beginning to fight racism and injustice.

Paternalism

White paternalism toward black people has its roots in the pre-Civil War era. The institution of slavery, in which the black man was made totally independent upon the white owner for his livelihood, set the tone for the future of black-white relations. The black man was believed to be irresponsible and incapable of directing his own affairs. Whites felt they had the responsibility to "civilize natives" from the dark continent. This paternalistic mentality was sanctioned by and incorporated into Southern institutions. Churches considered it their moral duty to Christianize the heathen black race; governmental and legal institutions ratified and upheld laws which "protected" black people by keeping them under the tutelage of their white masters; educational institutions assumed black people were capable of only the most rudimentary forms of learning.

Although white America has allegedly renounced concepts of black inferiority, many institutions continue to enact programs for blacks which imply that they are incapable of solving their own problems. These programs are demeaning to black people. They are racist because they place in the hands of whites the power to control the lives of black people. The welfare system is an example. Recipients of aid are expected to adhere to a puritanical code of personal conduct if they wish to receive funds. Welfare agents regularly violate the client's right to privacy in order to ascertain whether he is overstepping any of the thousand restrictions placed on his life. Furthermore, the allotments of most welfare agencies barely cover the cost of survival. The recipients have no freedom to decide how they will use their money; it must all go for food, rent and clothing.

Programs such as the War on Poverty, designed by white society to ameliorate the misery of poor black people, never address themselves to the institutional racism that produces and sustains poverty conditions. At the same time, these paternalistic endeavors give whites an easy escape route from the painful task of ferreting out the racism in white society. This is not to suggest that whites should do nothing about black poverty. It is to say that instead of creating programs that enforce dependency and perpetuate the racial status quo, whites should consider ways to supply the resources and technical aid which black people will need to develop meaningful programs in their own communities.

For example, at this very moment there are black leaders in ghettos throughout the country struggling to develop an educational program which will be meaningful to children raised in the context of ghetto culture. Some are building their own schools; others are working within the public school system. The white community must supply these leaders with funds and the necessary technical knowledge for large scale progress. There is no value in hordes of whites who do not know the first thing about ghetto culture entering the black community to tutor. Nor will white poverty program administrators serve the children of the ghetto as well as will the indigenous leadership. The experts on the ghetto and its needs are the black people themselves.

In summary, paternalistic policies, where they involve whites acting on behalf of blacks, foster racism in several ways. First, they deny the ability of blacks to formulate effective solutions for their own problems, thus containing the assumption of white superiority. Second, such policies continue the control of whites over blacks by insisting that the power within poverty programs remain in the hands of whites. Finally, they enable whites to escape their own critical problem of white racism and to avoid criticisms of white institutional behavior.

Caste and Class in American Society

America is both a class and a caste society. Americans are stratified in terms of class characteristics such as wealth, occupational prestige and formal education; in terms of a caste characteristic, race. Because of social, occupational and geographic mobility, class lines are not rigidly drawn in American society. The matter of caste is altogether different. When one group of citizens (in our case, blacks) are assigned to the lowest economic class, and when institutional arrangements combine with historical precedent to permit no escape from that assignment, a caste indeed exists.

No American is poor because his skin is white. Millions of Americans are poor precisely because their skin is black. Many white immigrant groups suffered discrimination because of their ethnic background, but, as the President's Commission states, "never was it so pervasive as the prejudice of color in America, which has formed a bar to advancement, unlike any other." For 300 years, blacks have been a caste in American society with caste membership determined on the basis of skin color. For years we enslaved, politically disenfranchised, exploited and separated the caste of black Americans. For reasons, then, of both individual and institutional racism, blacks as a group have remained in the lowest economic stratum. The few outstanding examples of blacks who have "made it" (most often in entertainment and athletics) do not alter the facts materially. Black Americans are not distributed equally throughout the different occupational, income and educational groupings in society. Institutional arrangements guarantee this situation.

It is difficult for whites who have never experienced the stigma which society attaches to black skin color to understand caste. Clearly, there are problems and grievances which poor whites share with ghetto blacks - poverty, substandard housing, welfare practices, poor schooling, inferior health care and inadequate employment. But in the class situation confronted by poor whites, social mobility is not only assumed but documentable. Even though the process may have taken generations, many poor whites have moved up the class ladder from lower to middle and middle to upper class. Blacks, on the other hand, have always been in the lowest socio-economic category. Furthermore, the economic position of whites is improving, while blacks find themselves constituting a greater percentage of the poor. During the Fifties, for example, there was a net decrease of 200,000 overcrowded housing units occupied by whites, while the number of overcrowded housing units occupied by blacks increased 300,000 units. Whites are escaping poverty conditions because class barriers alone do not prohibit Americans from moving up in our society. For blacks in urban and rural ghettos of America, the caste of race is frequently the determinant of their class position.

Given the caste position of blacks in America, any institution which provides superior services to middle and upper class members of the society and inferior services to the lower class may unconsciously help to

perpetuate racism. Two examples may help to illustrate the point. Both legal and medical institutions provide two systems of service and care -- one for the poor and another for those who can afford to pay. A 1967 documentary on the legal system reviewed the inadequacy of legal services available to the poor, especially the black poor. Though free legal service is available to the poor defendant, public defenders are often inexperienced, overburdened with cases and they clearly cannot provide the same quality of service that a large legal firm provides for a fee. In the area of medical care, the traditional fee-for-service medical system has resulted in two "separate and unequal" systems of medical care, one for those who pay directly and one for those who must rely on public health services. Too often the location of public services, availability of public transportation and the hours when services are available reflect arrangements which are convenient for the providers of the services and not for the patients. As in the legal situation, the number of professional medical personnel is inadequate for the multitude of cases needing attention. Health statistics for the nation's black population bear evidence to inadequate care. A specific case in point is that of the black ghetto of Watts which in a recent year had 100% of the cases of poliomyelitis, brucellosis and diphtheria, although it comprises only 17% of the city's people.

Though no racism need be intended by either medical or legal institutions, the result of separate systems of service and care is to perpetuate the injustice of caste. Institutions that provide two sets of services, one for the poor and one for the rest of us, must recognize that in so doing, they are reinforcing the caste status of blacks who are poor precisely because they are black in a white-controlled America.

Can White America Condemn Itself?

No society can undergo basic and effective social change without recognition of its problems. The individual members of the society as well as its leaders must have the ability and courage to be self critical. A country which has engaged in practices and procedures over the years develops a mythology and a justification for its actions regardless of their objective merit. America is no exception in this respect. Throughout our past, we have found justification for racist policies and practices, and we continue to do so today. Yet it is precisely this inability to be self critical which blocks progress toward the solution of our problems. Prognosis without diagnosis is futile. Racism will not go away because it is evil. It will be erased only when we deal honestly with white history and white institutions.

The inability to be self critical is perhaps best reflected in our educational institutions, particularly in their treatment of American history.

One method used to avoid any discussion of racism is simply to ignore the black race and thus white society's treatment of blacks. A study of the texts used in California's public schools in 1964 states that "although the authors of the books must know that there are Negroes in America and have been since 1619, they evidently do not care to mention them too frequently. In one book there is no account of slavery in the colonial period; in a second, there is not a single word about Negroes after the Civil War; in a third, the narrative does not mention Negroes in any connection." Thus, many of us have grown up with little if any knowledge of the black man's part in American history or the white man's suppression of black Americans.

American history texts which do mention the black man have failed to deal with white racism except at the most superficial level. Great pains are taken not to offend our white ancestors and the institutions which they created. Slavery, for example, has been most commonly viewed as simply an economic system and slave masters have been pictured as benevolent, paternal figures. More important, the texts play down or ignore the impact of America's severe system of slavery on black people. They imply that racial contact has been characterized by a "progressive harmony." The black man's position in contemporary society is consistently ignored in most texts. While some of the most recently written texts mention the most overt forms of racism and discrimination, even in these attempts to deal more squarely with American history, the caste position of blacks and the impact of institutional racism are totally ignored. This is falsification of history in its most dangerous form.

The failure to deal critically with our own past and present makes it exceedingly difficult for America to treat racism today. It is not surprising that so many Americans are questioning the findings of the President's Commission regarding "white racism" when little or nothing in the history and civics taught in our public schools reflects the racism in our history. History texts and courses in themselves are another example of institutional racism.

Our inability to deal critically with our own lives and our own institutions has resulted in talk of the "negro problem" rather than examination of the white problem. This prevents us from seeking new and imaginative solutions to the problem of racism. The prerequisite to ending institutional racism is self criticism by white society.

Conclusions

Public opinion polls and attitude studies show that the majority of Americans have overcome their primitive prejudices and bigotry of the past. White citizens publicly express support for the "inalienable rights

of all men regardless of race, color or creed." Behavior, however, lags far behind attitudes. In spite of our public decrees about justice, "our nation is moving toward two societies: one black, one white - separate and unequal." This trend can be traced to institutional racism and thus to the practices of those of us who constitute these institutions. In the broadest sense, we are all racists, for our lives and hopes for the future are closely intertwined with those very institutions which perpetuate racial injustice.

It has been our purpose to provide the reader, through specific examples, with some idea of how to combat racism at home. For if we understand institutional racism, we must admit that racism is a white problem and not a black problem. The effects of institutional policies which manifest themselves in America's black communities can be dealt with effectively only by non-racist institutions. Ultimate solutions lie in the ability of white society to recognize the necessity for change in its own institutions.

In these pages, we have provided only a few examples of the many ways in which institutional racism operates. We believe that no institution is exempt from criticism or from the need for change. Given the pervasive nature of the problem and the history of racism in America, it is not enough that an institution merely refrain from discriminatory or prejudiced behavior. While it is necessary that we end racist policies, it is also necessary that the resources of all our institutions be employed in the solution of a present crisis which is the product of three hundred years of personal and institutional discrimination.

Finally, although racism pervades the major institutions of American society, we do not believe any institution need be racist. It remains to be seen whether or not white America will create just policies. However, the social, economic and political institutions of this country were made by men, and it is our conviction that they can be changed by men. We can not afford to fail.

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