

## SOMETHING ABOUT THE SUBJECT MAKES IT HARD TO NAME

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In Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins. eds. 2004. *Race, Class, and Gender*. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. NY: Thomson/Wadsworth Pub. Pp. 99-103.

Racism—simple enough in structure, yet difficult to eliminate. Racism—pervasive in the U.S. culture to the point that it deeply affects all the local town folk and spills over, negatively influencing the fortunes of folk around the world. Racism is pervasive to the point that we take many of its manifestations for granted, believing "that's life." Many believe that racism can be dealt with effectively in one hellifying workshop, or one hour-long heated discussion. Many actually believe this monster, racism, that has had at least a few hundred years to take root, grow, invade our space and develop subtle variations . . . this mind-funk that distorts thought and action, can be merely wished away. I've run into folks who really think that we can beat this devil kick this habit, be healed of this disease in a snap. In a sincere blink of a well-intentioned eye, presto-poof-racism disappears. "I've dealt with my racism . . . (envision a laying on of hands) . . . Hallelujah! Now I can go to the beach. Well, fine. Go to the beach. In fact, why don't we all go to the beach and continue to work on the sucker over there? Cuz you can't even shave a little piece off this thing called racism in a day, or a weekend, or a workshop.

When I speak of *oppression*, I'm talking about the systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another for whatever reason. The oppressors are purported to have an innate ability to access economic resources, information, respect, etc., while the oppressed are believed to have a corresponding negative innate ability. The flip side of oppression is *internalized oppression*. Members of the target group are emotionally, physically, and spiritually battered to the point that they begin to actually believe that their oppression is deserved, is their lot in life, is natural and right, and that it doesn't even exist. The oppression begins to feel comfortable, familiar enough that when mean ol' Massa lay down de whip, we got's to pick up and whack ourselves and each other. Like a virus, it's hard to beat racism, because by the time you come up with a cure, it's mutated to a "new cure-resistant" form. One shot just won't get it. Racism must be attacked from many angles.

The forms of racism that I pick up on these days are 1) aware/blatant racism, 2) aware/covert racism, 3) unaware/unintentional racism, and 4) unaware/self-righteous racism. I can't say that I prefer any one form of racism over the others, because they all look like an itch needing a scratch. I've heard it said (and understandably so) that the aware/blatant form of racism is preferable if one must suffer it. Outright racists will, without apology or confusion, tell us that because of our color we don't appeal to them. If we so choose, we can attempt to get the hell out of their way before we get the sweat knocked out of us. Growing up, aware/covert racism is what I heard many of my elders bemoaning "up north," after having escaped the overt racism "down south." Apartments were suddenly no longer vacant or rents were outrageously high, when black, brown, red, or yellow persons went to inquire about them. Job vacancies were suddenly filled, or we were fired for very vague reasons. It still happens, though the perpetrators really take care to cover their tracks these days. They don't want to get gummed to death or slobbered on by the toothless laws that supposedly protect us from such inequities.

Unaware/unintentional racism drives usually tranquil white liberals wild when they get called on it, and confirms the suspicions of many people of color who feel that white folks are just plain crazy. It has led white people to believe that it's just fine to ask if they can touch my hair (while reaching). They then exclaim over how soft it is, how it does not scratch their hand. It has led whites to assume that bending over backwards and speaking to me in high-pitched (terrified), condescending tones would make up for all the racist wrongs that distort our lives. This type of racism has led whites right to my doorstep, talking 'bout, "We're sorry/we love you and want to make things right," which is fine, and further, "We're gonna give you the opportunity to fix it while we sleep. Just tell us what you need. 'Bye!!"—which ain't fine. With the best of intentions, the best of educations, and the greatest generosity of heart, whites, operating on the misinformation fed to them from day one, will behave in ways that are racist, will perpetuate racism by being "nice" the way we're taught to be nice. You can just "nice"

somebody to death with naivete and lack of awareness of privilege. Then there's guilt and the desire to end racism and how the two get all tangled up to the point that people, morbidly fascinated with their guilt, are immobilized. Rather than deal with ending racism, they sit and ponder their guilt and hope nobody notices how awful they are. Meanwhile, racism picks up momentum and keeps on keepin' on.

Now, the newest form of racism that I'm hip to is unaware/self-righteous racism. The "good white" racist attempts to shame Blacks into being blacker, scorns Japanese-Americans who don't speak Japanese, and knows more about the Chicano/a community than the folks who make up the community. They assign themselves as the "good whites," as opposed to the "bad whites," and are often so busy telling people of color what the issues in the Black, Asian, Indian, Latino/a communities should be that they don't have time to deal with their errant sisters and brothers in the white community. Which means that people of color are still left to deal with what the "good whites" don't want to ... racism.

Internalized racism is what really gets in my way as a Black woman. It influences the way I see or don't see myself, limits what I expect of myself or others like me. It results in my acceptance of mistreatment, leads me to believe that being treated with less than absolute respect, at least this once, is to be expected because I am Black, because I am not white. "Because I am (*you fill in the color*), you think, "Life is going to be hard." The fact is life may be hard, but the color of your skin is not the cause of the hardship. The color of your skin may be used as an excuse to mistreat you, but there is no reason or logic involved in the mistreatment. If it seems that your color is the reason, if it seems that your ethnic heritage is the cause of the woe, it's because you've been deliberately beaten down by agents of a greedy system until you swallowed the garbage. That is the internalization of racism.

Racism is the systematic, institutionalized mistreatment of one group of people by another based on racial heritage. Like every other oppression, racism can be internalized. People of color come to believe misinformation about their particular ethnic group and thus believe that their mistreatment is justified. With that basic vocabulary, let's take a look at how the whole thing works together. Meet "the Ism Family," racism, classism, ageism, adultism, elitism, sexism, heterosexism, physicalism, etc. All these ism's are systematic, that is, not only are these parasites feeding off our lives, they are also dependent on one another for foundation. Racism is supported and reinforced by classism, which is given a foothold and a boost by adultism, which also feeds sexism, which is validated by heterosexism, and so it goes on. You cannot have the "ism" functioning without first effectively installing its flip-side, the in-ternalized version of the ism. Like twins, as one particular form of the ism grows in potency, there is a corresponding increase in its internalized form within the population. Before oppression becomes a specific ism like racism, usually all hell breaks loose. War. People fight attempts to enslave them, or to subvert their will, or to take what they consider theirs, whether that is territory or dignity. It's true that the various elements of racism, while repugnant, would not be able to do very much damage, but for one generally overlooked key piece: power/privilege.

While in one sense we all have power we have to look at the fact that, in our society, people are stratified into various classes and some of these classes have more privilege than others. The owning class has enough power and privilege to not have to give a good vvhinney what the rest of the folks have on their minds. The power and privilege of the owning class provides the ability to pay off enough of the working class and offer that paid-off group, the middle class, just enough privilege to make it agreeable to do various and sundry oppressive things to other working-class and outright disenfranchised folk, keeping the lid on explosive inequities, at least for a minute. If you're at the bottom of this heap, and you believe the line that says you're there because that's all you're worth, it is at least some small solace to believe that there are others more worthless than you, because of their gender, race, sexual preference . . . whatever. The specific form of power that runs the show here is the power to intimidate. The power to take away the most lives the quickest, and back it up with legal and "divine" sanction, is the very bottom line. It makes the difference between who's holding the racism end of the stick and who's getting beat with it (or beating others as vulnerable as they are) on the internalized racism end of the stick. What I am saying is, while people of color are welcome to tear up their own neighborhoods and each other, everybody knows that you cannot do that to white folks without hell to

pay. People of color can be prejudiced against one another and whites, but do not have an ice-cube's chance in hell of passing laws that will get whites sent to relocation camps "for their own protection and the security of the nation." People who have not thought about or refuse to acknowledge this imbalance of power/privilege often want to talk about the racism of people of color. But then that is one of the ways racism is able to continue to function. You look for someone to blame and you blame the victim, who will nine times out often accept the blame out of habit.

So, what can we do? Acknowledge racism for a start, even though and especially when we've struggled to be kind and fair, or struggled to rise above it all. It is hard to acknowledge the fact that racism circumscribes and pervades our lives. Racism must be dealt with on two levels, personal and societal, emotional and institutional. It is possible—and most effective—to do both at the same time. We must reclaim whatever delight we have lost in our own ethnic heritage or heritages. This so-called melting pot has only succeeded in turning us into fast-food gobbling "generics" (as in generic "white folks" who were once Irish, Polish, Russian, English, etc. and "black folks," who were once Ashanti, Bambara, Baule, Yoruba, etc.). Find or create safe places to actually feel what we've been forced to repress each time we were a victim of, witness to or perpetrator of racism, so that we do not continue, like puppets, to act out the past in the present and future. Challenge oppression. Take a stand against it. When you are aware of something oppressive going down, stop the show. At least call it. We become so numbed to racism that we don't even think twice about it, unless it is immediately life-threatening.

*Whites who want to be allies to people of color:* You can educate yourselves via research and observation rather than rigidly, arrogantly relying solely on interrogating people of color. Do not expect that people of color should teach you how to behave non-oppressively. Do not give into the pull to be lazy. Think, hard. Do not blame people of color for your frustration about racism, but do appreciate the fact that people of color will often help you get in touch with that frustration. Assume that your effort to be a good friend is appreciated, but don't expect or accept gratitude from people of color. Work on racism for your sake, not "their" sake. Assume that you are needed and capable of being a good ally. Know that you'll make mistakes and commit yourself to correcting them and continuing on as an ally, no matter what. Don't give up.

*People of color, working through internalized racism:* Remember always that you and others like you are completely worthy of respect, completely capable of achieving whatever you take a notion to do. Remember that the term "people of color" refers to a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These various groups have been oppressed in a variety of ways. Educate yourself about the ways different peoples have been oppressed and how they've resisted that oppression. Expect and insist that whites are capable of being good allies against racism. Don't give up. Resist the pull to give out the "people of color seal of approval" to aspiring white allies. A moment of appreciation is fine, but more than that tends to be less than helpful. Celebrate yourself. Celebrate yourself. Celebrate the inevitable end of racism.

From Jo Whitehorse Cochran, Donna Langston, and Carolyn Woodward, ed., *Changing Our Power: An Introduction to Women's Studies* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall-Hunc, 1988), pp. 3-6. Reprinted by permission.

**BRUCE LAMBERT. 1997. "At 50, Levittown Contends With Its Legacy."**  
*New York Times*. December 28. (Second Article)

In the second Levittown, near Philadelphia, angry white mobs threw rocks in 1957 to protest the prospect of blacks moving in. In the response back here, the Levittown Democratic Club, Jewish War Veterans and a Protestant minister all spoke up for open housing.

But this Levittown has had its share of bigots. The Levittown Historical Society's president, Polly Dwyer, recalled one incident: "An Asian family moved in, and some people moved out because of them. It's so silly. They were good, quiet, decent people."

A Hofstra University political science professor, Dr. Herbert D. Rosenbaum, who lived here from 1953 to 1965, said: "In those years, even liberal people like ourselves tended to take residential segregation for granted, without approving it. None of us went out into the street to change it."

Levittown's history seems especially jarring, experts say, because the community was founded as segregation was beginning to crumble. While the first Levitt houses were being built, Jackie Robinson was breaking the color barrier in baseball. A year later, President Harry S. Truman integrated the military.

### **Hopes Dissipated For Black Americans**

Another paradox was that although Levittown was built for World War II veterans, who had fought tyranny and racism, its doors were opened to at least one former German U-boat sailor, while black American soldiers were turned away.

"Because Levittown promised affordable housing, with no down payment, it offered hope to the African-American working class when no other community did -- but that hope was quashed," said Dr. Barbara M. Kelly, Hofstra University's director of Long Island Studies. "After the war, blacks thought things had changed, but they hadn't, and Levittown became a microcosm of that frustration."

The role of the developer, the late William J. Levitt, is debated. He defended his actions as following the social customs of the era.

"The Negroes in America are trying to do in 400 years what the Jews in the world have not wholly accomplished in 600 years," he once wrote. "As a Jew, I have no room in my mind or heart for racial prejudice. But I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then 90 or 95 percent of our white customers will not buy into the community. This is their attitude, not ours. As a company, our position is simply this: We can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem, but we cannot combine the two."

Indeed, the official Federal Housing Administration policy back then called for "suitable restrictive covenants" to avoid "inharmonious racial or nationality groups" in housing.

"To paint Levitt as a villain would be unfair: the whole system was villainous," said Dr. Herbert Gans, a Columbia University sociology professor who lived in Levittown, N.J., and wrote "The Levittowners." "Levitt strictly reflected the times," he said.

Dr. Kelly said, "To single Levittown out on racial covenants, as if it weren't going on everywhere else, is unfair."

But critics say Mr. Levitt was no passive bystander. His company branded integrationists as Communist rabble-rousers and barred them from meeting on Levittown property. It also evicted two residents who had invited black children from a neighboring community to their homes.

Building the third Levittown in New Jersey, the company openly defied that state's antibias laws and opposed a lawsuit from two blacks seeking to buy homes. Levitt capitulated to integration there in 1960, though by then much of the development was sold out.

As late as the mid-1960's, Mr. Levitt was still defending segregated housing, at that time in Maryland. And blacks were not the only targets. Although he was the grandson of a rabbi, Mr. Levitt also built housing on Long Island that excluded Jews.

### **The Basic Idea Was Innovative**

No one disputes William Levitt's visionary talent in applying assembly-line methods on a grand scale. Called the Henry Ford of housing, he spurred unions to organize an army of 15,000 workers into dozens of specialized crews, including one to apply red paint and another, white. His company made its own nails and bought forests to supply lumber.

At its peak, Levitt built 36 houses a day, each on a 60-foot-by-100-foot plot. The original Cape Cods had two bedrooms and an unfinished attic. Some models had a 12-inch Admiral television set built into the staircase. Drawn by prices of about \$7,000, or monthly payments of around \$60, hundreds of buyers flocked here. When the last nail was driven in 1951, Levitt had created 17,447 homes.

But critics say that Levittown could also have been integrated, endowing suburbia and the nation with a social vision as innovative as Levitt's construction technology and marketing.

## School Shootings and White Denial

By [Tim Wise](#), [AlterNet](#). Posted [March 6, 2001](#).

I said this after Columbine and no one listened so I'll say it again, after the recent shooting in Santee, California: white people live in an utter state of self-delusion.

I can think of no other way to say this, so here goes: white people need to pull our heads out of our collective ass.

Two more white children are dead and thirteen are injured, and another "nice" community is scratching its blonde head, utterly perplexed at how a school shooting the likes of the one yesterday in Santee, California could happen. After all, as the Mayor of the town said in an interview with CNN: "We're a solid town, a good town, with good kids, a good church-going town...an All-American town." Yeah, well maybe that's the problem.

I said this after Columbine and no one listened so I'll say it again: white people live in an utter state of self-delusion. We think danger is black, brown and poor, and if we can just move far enough away from "those people" in the cities we'll be safe. If we can just find an "all-American" town, life will be better, because "things like this just don't happen here."

Well bullshit on that. In case you hadn't noticed, "here" is about the only place these kinds of things do happen. Oh sure, there is plenty of violence in urban communities and schools. But mass murder; wholesale slaughter; take-a-gun-and-see-how-many-you can-kill kinda craziness seems made for those safe places: the white suburbs or rural communities.

And yet once again, we hear the FBI insist there is no "profile" of a school shooter. Come again? White boy after white boy after white boy, with very few exceptions to that rule (and none in the mass shooting category), decides to use their classmates for target practice, and yet there is no profile? Imagine if all these killers had been black: would we still hesitate to put a racial face on the perpetrators? Doubtful.

Indeed, if any black child in America -- especially in the mostly white suburbs of Littleton, or Santee -- were to openly discuss their plans to murder fellow students, as happened both at Columbine and now Santana High, you can bet your ass that somebody would have turned them in, and the cops would have beat a path to their doorstep. But when whites discuss their murderous intentions, our stereotypes of what danger looks like cause us to ignore it -- they're just "talking" and won't really do anything. How many kids have to die before we rethink that nonsense? How many dazed and confused parents, Mayors and Sheriffs do we have to listen to, describing how "normal" and safe their community is, and how they just can't understand what went wrong?

I'll tell you what went wrong and it's not TV, rap music, video games or a lack of prayer in school. What went wrong is that white Americans decided to ignore dysfunction and violence when it only affected other communities, and thereby blinded themselves to the inevitable creeping of chaos which never remains isolated too long. What affects the urban "ghetto" today will be coming to a Wal-Mart near you tomorrow, and unless you address the emptiness, pain, isolation and lack of hope felt by children of color and the poor, then don't be shocked when the support systems aren't there for your kids either.

What went wrong is that we allowed ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security by media representations of crime and violence that portray both as the province of those who are anything but white like us. We ignore the warning signs, because in our minds the warning signs don't live in our neighborhood, but across town, in that place where we lock our car doors on the rare occasion we have to drive there. That false sense of security -- the result of racist and classist stereotypes -- then gets people killed. And still we act amazed.

But listen up my fellow white Americans: your children are no better, no nicer, no more moral, no more decent than anyone else. Dysfunction is all around you, whether you choose to recognize it or not.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, and Department of Health and Human Services, it is your children, and not those of the urban ghetto, who are most likely to use drugs. That's right: white high school students are seven times more likely than blacks to have used cocaine; eight times more likely to have smoked crack; ten times more likely to have used LSD and seven times more likely to have used heroin. In fact, there are more white high school students who have used crystal methamphetamine (the most addictive drug on the streets) than there are black students who smoke cigarettes.

What's more, white youth ages 12-17 are more likely to sell drugs: 34% more likely, in fact than their black counterparts. And it is white youth who are twice as likely to binge drink, and nearly twice as likely as blacks to drive drunk. And white males are twice as likely to bring a weapon to school as are black males.

And yet I would bet a valued body part that there aren't 100 white people in Santee, California, or most any other "nice" community who have ever heard a single one of the statistics above. Even though they were collected by government agencies using these folks' tax money for the purpose. Because the media doesn't report on white dysfunction

A few years ago, U.S. News ran a story entitled: "A Shocking look at blacks and crime." Yet never have they or any other news outlet discussed the "shocking" whiteness of these shoot-em-ups. Indeed, every time media commentators discuss the similarities in these crimes they mention that the shooters were boys, they were loners, they got picked on, but never do they seem to notice a certain highly visible melanin deficiency. Color-blind, I guess.

White-blind is more like it, as I figure these folks would spot color mighty damn quick were some of it to stroll into their community. Santee's whiteness is so taken for granted by its residents that the Mayor, in that CNN interview, thought nothing of saying on the one hand that the town was 82 percent white, but on the other hand that "this is America." Well that isn't America, and it especially isn't California, where whites are only half of the population. This is a town that is removed from America, and yet its Mayor thinks they are the normal ones -- so much so that when asked about racial diversity, he replied that there weren't many of different "ethni-tis-tities." Not a word. Not even close.

I'd like to think that after this one, people would wake up. Take note. Rethink their stereotypes of who the dangerous ones are. But deep down, I know better. The folks hitting the snooze button on this none-too-subtle alarm are my own people, after all, and I know their blindness like the back of my hand.

## NOTES

1. the drug usage data comes from Johnson, Lloyd, Patrick O'Malley, and Jeral Bachman, 2000. Monitoring the Future: National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-1999. Vo. 1: Secondary School Students. The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, National Institute on Drug Abuse, United States Department of Health and Human Services. National Institute on Health: 76. 101-102. This can be ordered from the U. of Michigan Institute for Social Research. The ordering information is available at <http://monitoringthefuture.org/pubs.html>.

Table 4-9 of the Monitoring the Future Report, page 101, "Racial/Ethnic Comparison of Lifetime, Annual, Thirty-Day, and Daily Prevalence of Use of Various Drugs: Eighth, Tenth and Twelfth Graders."

- For pot, 50.3 % of white 12<sup>th</sup> graders have smoked pot, compared to 45.1% of black 12<sup>th</sup> graders: a difference of 11.5% total.
- For cocaine, 10.3% of white seniors have used, compared to 1.5% of black seniors for a ration of roughly 7 to 1.
- For crack, 4.7% of whites have used, compared to 0.6% of blacks, for a ration of 7.8 to 1 Roughly 8 as I said in the piece).
- For heroin, 2.1% of whites have used, compared to 0.3% of blacks, for a ratio of 7 to 1.
- For LSD, 14.2% of whites have used, compared to 1.4% of blacks, for a ratio of 10 to 1.
- For Ecstasy, 8% of whites have used, compared to 0.5% of blacks, for a ratio of 16 to 1.

2. For sales, the info comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, Office of Applied Studies, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1999. Table G.71, at [www.samhsa.gov/statistics/statistics.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/statistics/statistics.html). 3.9% of whites aged 12-17 have sold drugs in the past year, compared to 2.9% of blacks. Though both numbers are small, this means that whites 12-17 are over a third more likely to have sold than blacks.

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## **BIAS TAXES BRAIN, RESEARCH FINDS DARTMOUTH SCIENTISTS LOOK AT EFFECTS OF RACISM**

Gareth Cook

To the litany of arguments against prejudice, scientists are now adding a new one: Racism can make you stupid.

That is the message of an unusual and striking new series of experiments conducted at Dartmouth College, with the help of brain-imaging equipment and a crew of undergraduate volunteers.

According to the findings, the more biased people are, the more their brain power is taxed by contact with someone of another race, as they struggle not to say or do anything offensive. The effect is so strong, the team found, that even a five-minute conversation with a black person left some of the white subjects unable to perform well on a test of cognitive ability.

"Just having a prejudice makes you stupider," said John Gabrieli, a professor of psychology at Stanford University who was not involved in the research. "It is really interesting."

Researchers cannot yet predict how racial bias as measured in the lab will translate into overt racist attitudes or actions. But the new brain-imaging work, reported in today's edition of the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, represents the most detailed look yet at the way racial biases function in the brain.

The work also paints a dispiriting portrait of the state of the nation's race relations, the lead researcher said, even among the well-educated, well-meaning Dartmouth undergraduates whom the scientists studied.

"I think people are getting caught in this trap where they are trying not to do the wrong thing, rather than trying to act natural," said Jennifer A. Richeson, an assistant professor of psychological and brain sciences at Dartmouth College. "Somehow we have to get past this awkward phase."

Richeson and her colleagues began by recruiting a group of white Dartmouth undergraduates and asked them to perform an "Implicit Association Test," a test that is widely used to measure unconscious racial bias. The subject is given a screen and two buttons. First, the subject is asked to push the button on the left if the word that appears on the screen is a positive word, like beauty, or a common first name for a white person, such as Nancy. Otherwise, they are instructed to push the button on the right.

After a session, the test is changed slightly, and the names given are those more common for a black person, such as Tyrone. The greater the difference between the reaction times in the two sessions, the more the person has trouble associating black names with positive concepts.

Next the team had each of the students speak briefly with a black experimenter and then perform a test of cognitive ability called the Stroop test. They showed that the higher a bias score the student had in the IAT test, the worse they did on the Stroop test after speaking with the black experimenter.

To uncover what was behind this effect, the team used a functional magnetic resonance imager,

which is able to peer inside the brain and measure the level of activity in different areas.

Each student was then shown a series of photographs, some of white males and some of black males. The more biased a student was, the more the team saw a certain area of their brain activate, an area associated with "executive control," conscious efforts to direct thinking. This, Richeson said, is a sign the brain is struggling not to think inappropriate thoughts.

Based on the findings, the team suggested that when a biased person interacts with someone of another race, even briefly, it exhausts the part of the brain in charge of executive control, leaving it temporarily unable to perform as well on the Stroop test and, presumably, other tasks.

The report is the first time that researchers have shown a connection between racial bias and the parts of the brain responsible for higher functions, according to several neuroscientists who were not involved in the research.

It is part of a nascent movement to study the neurological basis of social phenomena, in particular racism. One study, by Elizabeth A. Phelps at New York University, found that biased people are more likely to have greater activity in their amygdala, a portion of the brain associated with negative emotions like fear, when shown the picture of a black person they don't know.

Another, conducted by Stanford's Gabrieli and other scientists, showed that the **brains** of white people process white and black faces differently from the moment they see them.

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## **David Wessel -- Wall Street Journal - Sept 4, 2003**

<http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB106262466678910800,00.html>

Two young high-school graduates with similar job histories and demeanors apply in person for jobs as waiters, warehousemen or other low-skilled positions advertised in a Milwaukee newspaper. One man is white and admits to having served 18 months in prison for possession of cocaine with intent to sell. The other is black and hasn't any criminal record.

Which man is more likely to get called back?

It is surprisingly close. In a carefully crafted experiment in which college students posing as job applicants visited 350 employers, the white ex-con was called back 17% of the time and the crime-free black applicant 14%. The disadvantage carried by a young black man applying for a job as a dishwasher or a driver is equivalent to forcing a white man to carry an 18-month prison record on his back.

Many white Americans think racial discrimination is no longer much of a problem. Many blacks think otherwise. In offices populated with college graduates, white men quietly confide to other white men that affirmative action makes it tough for a white guy to get ahead these days. (If that's so, a black colleague once asked me, how come there aren't more blacks in the corporate hierarchy?)

A recent Gallup poll asked: "Do you feel that racial minorities in this country have equal job opportunities as whites, or not?" Among whites, the answer was 55% yes and 43% no; the rest were undecided. Among blacks, the answer was 17% yes and 81% no.

The Milwaukee and other experiments, though plagued by the shortcomings of research that relies on pretense to explain how people behave, offer evidence that discrimination remains a potent factor in the economic lives of black Americans.

"In these low-wage, entry-level markets, race remains a huge barrier. Affirmative-action pressures aren't operating here," says Devah Pager, the sociologist at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., who conducted the Milwaukee experiment and recently won the American Sociological Association's prize for the year's best doctoral dissertation. "Employers don't spend a lot of time screening applicants. They want a quick signal whether the applicant seems suitable. Stereotypes among young black men remain so prevalent and so strong that race continues to serve as a major signal of characteristics of which employers are wary."

In a similar experiment that got some attention last year, economists Marianne Bertrand of the University of Chicago and Sendhil Mullainathan of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology responded in writing to help-wanted ads in Chicago and Boston, using names likely to be identified by employers as white or African-American. Applicants named Greg Kelly or Emily Walsh were 50% more likely to get called for interviews than those named Jamal Jackson or Lakisha Washington, names far more common among African-Americans. Putting a white-sounding name on an application, they found, is worth as much as an extra eight years of work experience.

These academic experiments gauge the degree of discrimination, not just its existence. Both suggest that a blemish on a black person's resume does far more harm than it does to a white job seeker and that an embellishment does far less good.

In the Milwaukee experiment, Ms. Pager dispatched white and black men with and without prison records to job interviews. Whites without drug busts on their applications did best; blacks with drug busts did worst. No surprise there. But this was a surprise: Acknowledging a prison record cut a white man's chances of getting called back by half, while cutting a black man's already-slimmer chances by a much larger two-thirds.

"Employers, already reluctant to hire blacks, are even more wary of blacks with proven criminal involvement," Ms. Pager says. "These testers were bright, articulate college students with effective styles of self-presentation. The cursory review of entry-level applicants, however, leaves little room for these qualities to be noticed." This is a big deal given that nearly 17% of all black American men have served some time, and the government's Bureau of Justice Statistics projects that, at current rates, 30% of black boys who turn 12 this year will spend time in jail in their lifetimes.

In the Boston and Chicago experiment, researchers tweaked some resumes to make them more appealing to employers. They added a year of work experience, some military experience, fewer periods for which no job was listed, computer skills and the like. This paid off for whites:

Those with better resumes were called back for interviews 30% more than other whites. It didn't pay off for blacks: Precisely the same changes yielded only a 9% increase in callbacks. Someday Americans will be able to speak of racial discrimination in hiring in the past tense. Not yet.

**ABOUT DAVID WESSEL** David Wessel, 49, The Wall Street Journal's deputy Washington bureau chief, writes Capital, a weekly look at the economy and the forces shaping living standards around the world. He also appears frequently on CNBC.

David has been with The Wall Street Journal since 1984, first in the Boston bureau and then the Washington bureau, where he was chief economics correspondent. During 1999 and 2000, he was the newspaper's Berlin bureau chief. He also worked for the Boston Globe, where he shared a Pulitzer Prize for a series of stories on the persistence of racism in Boston, and at the Hartford (Conn.) Courant and Middletown (Conn.) Press.

He is the co-author, with fellow Wall Street Journal reporter Bob Davis, of "Prosperity: The Coming 20-Year Boom and What It Means to You" (Random House/Times Books, 1998), which argued that the next 20 years will be better for the American middle class than the previous 20 years. Write to him at [capital@wsj.com](mailto:capital@wsj.com)

#### ONLINE RESOURCES

\*For Pager's paper, soon to be published in the Journal of Sociology, see <http://www.northwestern.edu> [<http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/papers/2002/WP-02-37.pdf>]

\*For Bureau of Justice Statistics data, see <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov> [<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/piusp01.pdf>]

## **“The Fire That Seared Into Tulsa's Memory: In the Ruins of Tulsa.” [4/83]**

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TULSA - At 92 years old, Robert Fairchild is losing his hearing, but he can still make out the distant shouts of angry white men firing guns late into the night 75 years ago. His eyes are not what they used to be, but he has no trouble seeing the dense, gray smoke swallowing his neighbors' houses as he walked home from a graduation rehearsal, a frightened boy of 17. His has since been a life of middle-class comfort, a good job working for the city, a warm family life. But he has never forgotten his mother's anguish in 1921 as she fled toward the railroad tracks to escape the mobs and fires tearing through the vibrant black neighborhood of Greenwood in north Tulsa. "There was just nothing left," said Fairchild recently.

It was 75 years ago Saturday that Tulsa experienced one of the worst race riots in the nation's history. The death toll during the 12-hour rampage is still in dispute, but estimates have put it as high as 250. More than 1,000 businesses and homes were burned to the ground, scores of black families were herded into cattle pens at the fairgrounds, and one of the largest and most prosperous black communities in the United States was turned to ashes.

Until very recently, the events of June 1, 1921, were rarely --if ever-- spoken of publicly in white Tulsa. This Saturday will be different. Blacks and whites, Christians and Jews will come together at Greenwood's Mount Zion Baptist Church -- torched during the riot and later rebuilt -- to acknowledge publicly for the first time this tumultuous moment in Tulsa's past. Benjamin L. Hooks, former executive director of the NAACP, will speak at a prayer service, and a tall black granite monument will be unveiled, dedicated to the once-glorious neighborhood known as "Black Wall Street." "The response has been so overwhelming that I now fear we'll end up with more whites than blacks," said Don Ross, a black state representative whose district covers Greenwood. "And that's not a bad fear to have."

At a time when acts of hate and racial divisiveness are cropping up across America from the burning of black churches to housing discrimination -- this event is a small but significant step toward healing taken by a city that is still largely segregated. Oddly enough, the very existence of this blot on Tulsa's history has been credited with fostering a spirit of tolerance today. Many people believe that because of it, city officials have felt pressured over the years to resolve other potential racial crises expeditiously.

"One of the remarkable aftermaths of the riot was that the tension was considerably diminished," said noted black historian John Hope Franklin, 81, whose father was a practicing lawyer here at the time. "The whites were much more amenable to accommodating blacks in many ways. I grew up with no fear."

While violence was erupting all over the country in the '60s in the fight for civil rights, Tulsa had its share of sit-ins and protests -- but they were peaceful. "We desegregated with little fanfare," said James Goodwin, 56, a lawyer whose family has long owned Tulsa's only black newspaper, the *Oklahoma Eagle*, and whose father was one of those interned in 1921.

While urban communities were being torn apart because of forced busing in the effort to integrate schools, Tulsa became one of the first cities to experiment with a magnet school system. Resources were poured into black neighborhood schools to attract whites voluntarily. Within two years, the magnet schools had waiting lists and the schools were integrated. "Tulsa never again wanted to be exposed as a racist community because that would be bad for business, and so many of these milestones became easy," said B.S. Bishop, a leading black minister here who was involved in the early fight for integration. "All you'd have to do is mention the riot and everyone would cringe. It just wasn't done."

Tulsa's white mayor, Susan Savage, found that out earlier this year when she addressed an NAACP conference here, and took the unusual step of pointing to the riot as a reminder of past intolerance. To her astonishment, Ross jumped up and embraced her, saying that it was the first time he had ever heard a white politician raise the issue at a public event.

Most recently, Savage and the state's white attorney general, Drew Edmondson, pointedly scheduled a "unity" rally here early this month to counter a simultaneous Ku Klux Klan gathering a few miles away. More than 1,200 people showed up for the unity rally. Of the estimated 400 people at the Klan event, about 300 were believed to be protesters .

"We're in the process of building bridges, but we haven't crossed them yet, " said Ken Levit, a 30-year-old white lawyer who, of his own accord, raised about \$15,000 , mostly from the Jewish community, to help complete the \$65,000 Greenwood monument. "We're interacting in ways we never have before."

At the turn of the century, some 40 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the territory now called Oklahoma was a magnet for Southern blacks. Looking for freedom, prosperity and a place where they could live without hassle, they migrated to what became known as "the promised land." By 1907, the year of statehood, Oklahoma was already one of the largest oil-producing territories in the nation. Money flowed freely, and blacks

capitalized on these flush times with high-tipping table-waiting and bell hop jobs. "Waiters," said Robert Fairchild, "were taking home 75 to 100dollars a day." But blacks needed places to spend this money since white establishments were off-limits to "coloreds. " Before long, vital black communities sprouted all over the state.

In Tulsa, Greenwood was the place to be. By 1921 Tulsa's black population was estimated at a robust 11,000, and this 34-square-block area boasted two newspapers, 12 grocery stores, two schools, 23 churches, two theaters, a pharmacy, a haberdashery, a library, restaurants, four hotels, doctors, lawyers and dentists. Tulsa was, in effect, two cities -- one black and one white.

There are some blacks today who believe it was the white community's jealousy over Greenwood's economic success that triggered the riot. Whatever the reason, the catalyst was an unlucky black teenager named Dick Rowland who got on the wrong elevator at the wrong time.

Here is what is believed to have happened, according to Scott Ellsworth's 1982 "Death in a Promised Land," the definitive book on the subject:

Rowland, 19, a shoeshine boy, boarded an elevator of a downtown building May 30 in order to use a restroom designated for blacks. No one will ever know what transpired on that elevator, but it is commonly believed that Rowland tripped and bumped into Sarah Page, a 17-year-old white elevator operator. To keep her from falling, it is said, he probably grabbed her arm, causing her to scream. It wasn't until the next morning, however, that Rowland was arrested and charged with assault. Later that day, before the police had completed their investigation, the now-defunct Tulsa Tribune published an inflammatory article on the front page of its after noon editions. It stated that Rowland had attacked Page and had torn her clothing, and noted that he went by the name "Diamond Dick," a moniker never before heard by his family and friends. (The article was later torn from archived issues of the newspaper, and no known copies exist.)

Just hours after the paper hit the streets on May 31, nearly 2,000 whites began congregating outside the downtown jail where Rowland was being held. Rumors of an impending lynching raced through north Tulsa, inciting armed black men to join the courthouse throng. Tempers inevitably flared, and before long, mobs of white men were racing across the railroad tracks through Greenwood with burning torches, shooting some blacks and dragging others out of their homes. By midnight, Greenwood was in flames.

George Monroe, 80, one of about a half-dozen witnesses still living, has a vivid recollection of his father being pulled out of the house and his mother hustling the four children under a bed. He was 5 years old. "I was smallest so I got under last," he said in a recent interview. "My older sister was right next to me. I could see the feet of the men running through the house carrying torches, and I could see them set the bottom of all the curtains on fire.

"One of them stepped on my finger, and I was about to yell when my sister put her hand over my mouth. Had I screamed, they would have just dragged us out of there. I will take that memory to my grave with me."

Monroe said that as soon as the men left, his mother managed to get all four kids out of the house. The next day, they learned that their father had survived. But the house was gone.

The National Guard was mobilized in the early-morning hours of June 1, and some 6,000 blacks were marched to makeshift internment camps, ostensibly for their own protection. Many were held for weeks unless a white employer came and vouched for their release. When they were finally released, most had nowhere to go. Tents sprang up all over Greenwood.

And the fate of Dick Rowland? The elevator operator refused to press charges, and he was released from jail.

In the ensuing years, the riot was something that city political and business leaders thought was better left deep in Tulsa's past. State representative Rosss said that in 1971, when he published a commemorative magazine about the riot, prominent local blacks and whites criticized him. "They said, 'Why dredge this up?'" recalled Ross, who was working at the Urban League. "There was a sense of embarrassment."

Greenwood was eventually rebuilt by a determined black community, becoming in the '30s and '40s one of the country's renowned jazz centers. Names like Count Basie, Cab Calloway and Nat King Cole would perform at clubs patronized by white oil barons and then hop over to Greenwood to jam.

Today, the famous intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street, the onetime heart of the business district, has only a few shops. The malls and freeways, ironically coupled with integration, spelled the undoing of Greenwood. There remain high hopes that both the University Center at Tulsa, a state school built over the past seven years, and the recently dedicated Greenwood Cultural Center will help rejuvenate the area. At 13 percent, Tulsa's black population today is a bit higher than the national average of 12 percent. And while there has been progress, the city's black leaders warn against painting too rosy a picture. Black and white still live for the most part at opposite ends of town.

As for Robert Fairchild, he said that he has lived his last 75 years trying not to dwell on his memories of 1921. His family was one of the lucky ones. When his mother returned home, she found that their house was the only one not torched on Latimer Street. Fairchild went on to college and for 30 years worked for the city as a health educator.

When asked what he told his only son growing up about the riots, this old man said: "I told him to learn how to work and how to think, to try to have trust in God . . . and not worry about the color of skin."

[In the end the 34 sq. blocks were virtually destroyed: 1,500 homes, 21 of the 23 churches, the four hotels (including the largest black-owned one in the nation, 30 stores, one hospital, a bank, the schools, and the two theaters, along with approximately 300 African Americans killed. Property damage was estimated to be between \$1.5 and \$1.8 millions (Over a billion dollars in the value of the dollar today.)]

## **Abercrombie & Fitch to pay \$40 million to settle discrimination case**

- PAUL CHAVEZ, Associated Press Writer

Tuesday, November 16, 2004 (11-16) 14:21 PST LOS ANGELES (AP) --

Abercrombie & Fitch has agreed to pay \$40 million to black, Hispanic and Asian employees and job applicants to settle a class-action federal discrimination lawsuit that accused the clothing retailer of promoting whites at the expense of minorities, lawyers said Tuesday.

The settlement, approved Tuesday morning by U.S. District Court Judge Susan Illston, requires the company to adhere to a consent decree that calls for the implementation of new policies and programs to promote diversity and prevent discrimination in its work force. It also must pay about \$10 million to monitor compliance and cover attorneys' fees.

New Albany, Ohio-based Abercrombie & Fitch in a statement released Tuesday denied engaging in any discriminatory practices.

"We have, and always have had, no tolerance for discrimination. We decided to settle this suit because we felt that a long, drawn out dispute would have been harmful to the company and distracting to management," said chairman and CEO Mike Jeffries.

The lawsuit originally was filed last June in San Francisco by Hispanic and Asian groups charging that Abercrombie & Fitch, known for its "classic casual American" clothing styles, hires a disproportionately white sales force, puts minorities in less-visible jobs and cultivates a virtually all-white image in its catalogues and elsewhere. A second, similar lawsuit was filed against the company last November in New Jersey.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission joined the private plaintiffs in the lawsuit, which alleged that Abercrombie & Fitch violated portions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The lawsuit specifically accused the company of engaging in recruiting and hiring practices that exclude minorities and adopting a virtually all-white marketing campaign.

"The retail industry and other industries need to know that businesses cannot discriminate against individuals under the auspice of a marketing strategy or a particular 'look'. Race and sex discrimination in employment are unlawful, and the EEOC will continue to aggressively pursue employers who choose to engage in such practices," said Eric Dreiband, the EEOC's general counsel.

The EEOC estimated the lawsuit would affect more than 10,000 Hispanic, Asian or black men and women. Anyone who believes they should be included in the class-action lawsuit should call (866) 854-4175 or go to [www.abercrombieclaims.com](http://www.abercrombieclaims.com).

The consent decree calls for Abercrombie & Fitch to hire a vice president of diversity and hire up to 25 diversity recruiters. The company also promised that its marketing materials would reflect diversity.

The original lawsuit was brought on behalf of nine young minorities, including students and graduates of Stanford University and the University of California, who were denied jobs or fired based on their race.

"This agreement promises to transform this company, whose distinctiveness will no longer stem from an all-white image and work force," said Thomas A. Saenz, vice president of litigation at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

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## **Study: Housing Discrimination Alive and Well**

By Associated Press Jun 7, 2006, 07:02

CORVALLIS, Ore.

What's in a name? Maybe plenty if you want to rent an apartment. An Oregon State University survey found that an ethnic-sounding name can be a factor in whether an applicant gets an apartment.

A rental housing applicants thought to be Black faces more housing discrimination than one thought to be White or Arab, according to the results published in the *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. The study, co-authored

by Dr. William E. Loges, an OSU assistant professor in new media communications and sociology, sought and found differences in replies to online housing inquiries from people with names associated with Whites, Arabs and Blacks.

"My jaw just hit the floor when I saw these results. I had no idea how badly the African-American inquiry would be treated," Loges says. In 2003, Loges and study co-author Adrian G. Carpusor sent 1,115 identically worded e-mails to Los Angeles-area landlords asking about advertised vacancies.

They were divided equally among names signed Patrick McDougall, Tyrell Jackson and Said Al-Rahman. The fictional names were based on U.S. Census Bureau rankings of popular first and last names and other factors.

McDougall received positive or encouraging responses from 89 percent of landlords, while Al-Rahman was encouraged by 66 percent. But only 56 percent of the responses for Jackson were positive.

Because the data was collected near the start of the Iraq War, researchers said they thought Al-Rahman would receive the fewest positive responses.

They were wrong.

The authors had expected to find more discrimination by private landlords than corporate leasing companies, but did not.

"There was little difference at all," Loges says. "We thought that some of the bigger corporate complexes, which have hundreds and hundreds of units, would be more professionally run. They would have the resources to train their staffs on residential discrimination law."

The Fair Housing Act prohibits denying housing based on a name.

"Names are powerful indicators of who we are," says Carpusor, a former student of Loges and now a researcher with JD Power & Associates. "A recent interview on National Public Radio pointed out that a first name in Iraqi culture could disclose one's affiliation with either the Shiite or Sunni Muslims. Sixteen men named Omar were killed one day because of that affiliation."

Rent varied from \$1,000 to more than \$1,500 for the one-bedroom apartments sought, but that made no difference. Tyrell Jackson was the only name to receive responses reiterating the amount of rent, perhaps questioning his ability to pay it.

Loges and Carpusor concluded that online apartment inquires do not protect people from prejudices and advise people to disclose as little as possible in their initial inquires, including their names.

— *Associated Press*

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