



Super-Essays
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Questions Answers



1. Please explain the development of the racial system in the United States of America from its beginning to today. Include an explanation of what racism is. Select a recent incident as an example of the system operating today.

Racism is defined as action, inaction or attitude which provides for the existence of the superiors and inferiors. It refers to the systematic mistreatment of people due to their race or color of skin. As an idea, racism developed gradually in the USA. When first colonists arrived, they encountered the Native Americans with whom they later had frequent conflicts while trying to establish the settlements. Eventually, they introduced the system of indentured servitude for both Africans and Europeans.

After Bacon's rebellion when whites and blacks, shoulder by shoulder, resisted the wealthy Virginia planters, the status of Africans was revised. They were freed from the servitude; instead, they were subjected to permanent slavery.

Later, during the War of Independence, the Constitution of the U.S. was adopted. It was designed by Thomas Jefferson, the owner of large plantations, who was the supporter of the idea of the supremacy of whites and inferiority of black people. Thus, the slavery was abolished only the years later in 1865.

The nineteenth century was also marked with the racialization. However, in this period this process concerned not only African Americans, but also Native Americans, Mexican and Chinese Americans up to the abolition of slavery.

When the wave of Great Depression covered the USA, some scientists explained

social inequality and economic downturn attributing certain features such as criminal behavior, violence, intelligence to specific races speculating on the theory of genetic inheritance. After the World War II, racism in the USA expanded and involved Japanese, Indians and the immigrants.

Nowadays, racism still reigns, even though it is frequently negated. The idea introduced during the Great Depression still echoes in the present times as police turns to arrest considerably more blacks than whites.

2. What is structural violence? How does it emerge within the racial system? What are some examples of how it is used; as defined it is more than acts of physical violence, although it includes these (e.g. redlining and reverse redlining)? Give one specific example.

Structural violence occurs in case one group or a number of groups have the access to more goods, opportunities or resources than others, and such an inequality is vital for the social, political, economic systems within the society. These trends could be extremely demonstrated in such examples as Apartheid or more slightly in cases where there is a tradition to provide certain groups with extra privileges. On the contrary to the cases when the violence is applied to only one person, the structural violence instances are much worse. The individuals, who encounter this type of violence, are treated unequally by the entire staff of different institutions and organizations in various life spheres including law enforcement, housing, education, employment, or medical care. It does not seem to affect only a few individuals who differ by the color of skin, origin, or race. Instead of this, it impacts thousands of innocent people just because of their individuality, different race or ethnicity. In a few cases, the discrimination



might also be based upon the gender of the person, his/her disability, or other features.

Structural violence is frequently rooted in the existing prejudices and stereotypes and is related to the racial systems. The discrimination practices are then investigated in the law courts, determining the operations of the organization, its policies, and other issues. The implications of such discrimination are starker than the ones of the typical individual discrimination, as they influence the lives of plenty of people at once. The example of such adverse treatment is the practice called 'first-hired-first-fired', when the employees who have been recently hired are the first candidates for firing in case of redundancies or other types of the misfortunes that might happen to the company or organization. Such people are dismissed just because of the mere fact that they have not been employed for long. And their education, experience, knowledge, skills, and other characteristics are not considered at all.

3. Discuss the evolution and history of skin pigmentation. Why do people have different skin tones? What are some negatives and positives associated with this?

There are many theories explaining skin pigmentation. In accordance with Darwin's theory of evolution, the skin color was changing in order to ensure people adapting to the environment which, in turn, was crucial for their survival. There have been many suggestions as to how specific environmental conditions contributed to the skin darkening. It was presumed that the protective effects provided by the melanin against the sun are more valuable. Thus, the people living in hot areas usually have darker skin color.



Another theory explaining the evolution of skin pigmentation asserts that skin darkening occurred in order to prevent the overproduction of the vitamin D. The latter is needed in small portions for the body. This vitamin is produced every time the sun reaches human body. Thus, the researchers presumed that skin with the high levels of pigmentation that is enriched with vitamin D developed to prevent the toxicity and overproduction. The third theory suggested that darkly pigmented skin evolved as protective mechanisms in the communities that moved from the places with low UV radiation to the ones with high UV radiation.

Differences in skin color might result in mistreatment of a person within certain societies or even discrimination. As has been mentioned above, American history has long treated black-skinned people as inferior race that was expected to serve the interests of the white-skinned residents. For example, African Americans were discriminated due to their skin color with the decision made in the case Plessy vs. Ferguson. According to the synopsis of the latter, non-African Americans and African-Americans were subjected to have equal, though separate, public facilities, which actually meant discrimination, or, at least, differentiation of people on the basis of their color of skin and origin. It was actually the first time when the highest judicial body carried out the decision that people should be treated differently without reasonable grounds.

Additionally, skin color is associated with certain prejudices and stereotypes that negatively impact human relations. At the same time, whites definitely benefit from their skin color as they, in comparison with black-skinned people, are prosecuted less.