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The Color Line, People of Color, and Black Supremacy: A 21st Century Alarming Mischaracterization of the African-Americans' Justice Struggle

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"When you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression"
- The Boeskool

Introduction

The dialogue on race and identity in modern society remains deeply complex, shaped by the historical legacies and contemporary challenges encapsulated in three dreaded INs: inequality, inequity, and injustice. Central to this discussion is the notion of the color line—a concept introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois that continues to underscore the enduring divisions in racial identity and social hierarchies. As racial dynamics evolve, new and contested ideas, such as the alleged existence of Black supremacy and reverse racism, have emerged, often challenging traditional understandings of power and privilege.

The term "people of color" has become widely used as a collective identifier for non-white groups, yet it carries subtle implications that warrant critical examination. This term, while intended to foster unity, also raises questions about its effectiveness in addressing the distinct experiences of different racial groups. At the same time, the rise of anti-racist movements has sparked significant debate, with critics arguing that these efforts might inadvertently reinforce divisions rather than bridge them.

Figuring out these contemporary issues requires a careful analysis of the historical context and power dynamics that have long influenced racial relations. The call for colorblindness, often promoted as a path toward equality, is another focal point of contention, with critics arguing that it may obscure the persistent realities of racial inequality.

This introduction frames an exploration of these multifaceted topics, providing a foundation for deeper inquiry into how they intersect and influence the broader societal discourse on race and identity. Through this examination, we aim to gain a more intricate grasp of the challenges and opportunities in

pursuing racial justice and equity, starting with the notion of Black supremacy.

The Existence of Black Supremacy

The concept of "Black supremacy" is a figurative tool often deployed to undermine discussions about systemic racism and racial equality. It is critical to understand that Black supremacy lacks both historical and empirical basis, especially when compared to the well-documented and institutionally supported system of white supremacy.

White supremacy has a clear and undeniable history, entrenched in centuries of colonization, slavery, segregation, and institutional racism. It is a system of racial hierarchy that privileges white people at the expense of people of color, particularly Black people. This hierarchy has been enforced through violence, laws, and social norms designed to maintain white dominance. Scholars such as Kendi (2016) and Davis (1983) have extensively documented the ways in which white supremacy has shaped societal structures and perpetuated racial inequalities (Kendi, 2016; Davis, 1983).

The notion of Black supremacy is deeply flawed because it suggests that Black people hold systemic power and privilege comparable to that of white people. However, systemic racism involves the majority group—historically and currently, white people—using their power to oppress minority groups. Black people, who have been marginalized and oppressed for centuries, do not hold institutional power in a way that could support a system of Black supremacy. Coates (2015) argues that power dynamics are central to comprehend racism, and the suggestion that a historically oppressed group could wield power to oppress the majority in the same way is both misleading and harmful (Coates, 2015).

The term "Black supremacy" is often used as a symbolic mechanism to dismiss or delegitimize movements for racial justice. This can be seen in the backlash against movements like Black Lives Matter, where calls for equality and an end to police brutality are falsely equated with an agenda for Black dominance. Alexander (2010) emphasizes that the focus of such movements is on achieving justice and equality, not on reversing the racial hierarchy (Alexander, 2010).

There is no credible evidence to suggest that Black supremacy exists as a widespread or organized movement, nor that it has the capacity to influence institutions or policies. In contrast, there is abundant evidence of white supremacist groups and ideologies actively working to maintain and expand racial inequality. The Southern Poverty Law Center ([2023](#)) reports that white supremacist hate groups are growing in number and influence, a stark contrast to the lack of any equivalent movement among Black communities ([SPLC, 2023](#)).

The Color Line and Racial Identity

The article's assertion that focusing on racial identity perpetuates division is a misrepresentation of the purpose and importance of recognizing race in societal contexts. Acknowledging racial identity is not about fostering division but about understanding and addressing the historical and ongoing impact of racism on people of color.

Racial identity plays a crucial role in how individuals experience the world and how they are treated by society. Historically, the "color line" has been used to segregate and oppress people of color, as famously noted by W.E.B. Du Bois in his seminal 1903 work *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du

Bois accentuated that the problem of the 20th century was the problem of the color line, referring to the systemic and pervasive racial discrimination that defined the social and economic lives of Black people in America. This remains relevant today, as the effects of systemic racism continue to influence opportunities, treatment, and outcomes for people of color (Du Bois, 1903). For example, the treatment of crimes committed by Blacks in the legal system is not based on the same principles of justice and due process as those for individuals from other racial communities. Billions of dollars disappear annually due to white-collar crimes. Even though 80% of white-collar criminals are men and 67% of the offenders are white, "people of color are sentenced for longer prison time more often than white people," a stark reality frequently ignored by critics, including Jacques Delacroix.

Recognizing racial identity is essential in the fight for social justice because it allows us to identify and address racial disparities. Ignoring the color line does not erase its effects; instead, it allows systemic issues to remain unchallenged. Crenshaw (2013) states that the concept of intersectionality highlights how various aspects of identity, including race, intersect to create different modes of discrimination

and privilege (Crenshaw, 2013). By acknowledging racial identity, we can better understand these intersections and work towards more equitable solutions.

Advocating for a colorblind approach, as Delacroix suggests, overlooks the reality that race, and racism continue to shape societal structures and individual experiences. Colorblindness often leads to the erasure of the unique challenges faced by people of color, making it harder to address the systemic inequalities that persist. Alexander (2010) suggests that colorblind policies fail to confront the legacy of racism and can perpetuate racial disparities by ignoring the specific needs and experiences of racial minorities (Alexander, 2010).

The idea of ignoring racial identity is problematic because it dismisses the historical context of race relations in the United States and other societies. The legacies of slavery, segregation, and colonialism have left deep scars that continue to affect people of color today. These historical injustices are not just relics of the past but ongoing issues that require acknowledgment and action. Coates (2015) articulates, the refusal to engage with the history of racial oppression is a refusal to

engage with the reality of how deeply ingrained racism is in our institutions ([Coates, 2015](#))

The Use of People of Color as a Term

Delacroix' critique of the term "People of Color" as an attempt to homogenize diverse groups is misguided and overlooks the term's role in fostering solidarity and collective action among those who have been marginalized by systemic racism. The term "People of Color" is a powerful tool for unifying various racial and ethnic groups who share experiences of oppression and discrimination.

The term "People of Color" has historical roots in the civil rights movements, where it was used to unify different racial groups under a common identity that resisted white supremacy. The term recognizes the shared experiences of marginalization faced by Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and other non-white communities. Painter ([2011](#)) notes, "People of Color" emerged as an inclusive term that acknowledged the common struggles against racism while respecting the distinct identities within these groups ([Painter, 2011](#)).

One of the key strengths of the term "People of Color" is its ability to foster solidarity among diverse groups. This solidarity is crucial in movements for social justice, where collective action can be more effective than fragmented efforts. Davis (1983) mentions that the term helps build coalitions across racial lines, enabling different communities to come together to address systemic issues like police brutality, mass incarceration, and economic inequality (Davis, 1983). The term, contrary to Delacroix' social calculus, does not erase individual identities but rather emphasizes the commonalities that can strengthen collective resistance against racial oppression.

Critics often argue that the term "People of Color" homogenizes diverse groups, but this critique, including the piece by Delacroix, fails to recognize that the term is used in contexts where acknowledging both commonalities and differences is essential. The term is not meant to obscure the unique cultural, linguistic, and historical experiences of different groups but to provide a framework for understanding how racism impacts all non-white groups in various ways. Crenshaw (2013) emphasizes that the term "People of Color"

can be used in conjunction with concepts like intersectionality to explore how race intersects with other aspects of identity, such as gender and class, to produce unique experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 2013).

Using the term "People of Color" strategically addresses systemic racism by highlighting how different non-white groups face similar structural barriers. This collective identity helps to challenge the systems that perpetuate racial inequality, as it draws attention to the ways in which laws, policies, and practices disproportionately harm non-white communities. Alexander (2010) highlights that this collective approach is vital in advocating for policy changes that benefit all marginalized communities, not just one specific group (Alexander, 2010).

The Alleged Reverse Racism

The concept of "reverse racism", as vaguely articulated by Delacroix, is often used to suggest that efforts to address racial inequalities disadvantage white people, but this argument fails to recognize the fundamental differences between systemic racism and individual acts of bias. Reverse racism is a misnomer that ignores the power dynamics at play in racial discrimination and

overlooks the systemic nature of racism as it exists in society.

Racism is not just about individual prejudice; it involves systemic power structures that privilege one group over others. In most societies, including the United States, this systemic power has historically and continues to be held by white people. According to Kendi (2023), racism encompasses both prejudice and the power to enforce those prejudices through institutions, laws, and social norms (Kendi, 2023). Therefore, while individuals of any race can hold biases, only those in positions of power can perpetuate systemic racism. The notion of "reverse racism" conflates individual prejudice with systemic oppression, ignoring the fact that racism is fundamentally about power and control.

The term "reverse racism" is often invoked in discussions about affirmative action and diversity initiatives, with critics claiming that these programs unfairly disadvantage white people. However, these policies are designed to address historical and ongoing inequalities by providing opportunities to marginalized groups who have been systematically excluded. According to Crenshaw (2013)

affirmative action is a necessary tool to level the playing field and combat the cumulative disadvantages faced by people of color (Crenshaw, 2013). Rather than discriminating against white people, these initiatives seek to promote equity by correcting for systemic biases that have long favored them.

Racism operates within a framework of power dynamics where one group dominates over others. In the United States, this has meant that white people have benefited from centuries of laws, practices, and social norms that have disadvantaged people of color. The idea of "reverse racism" fails to account for these power imbalances. DiAngelo (2022) observes that accusations of reverse racism often arise from discomfort with losing unearned privileges rather than from genuine instances of discrimination (DiAngelo, 2022). The term is thus a theatrical strategy used to resist challenges to the racial status quo.

There is no evidence to suggest that people of color have the systemic power necessary to oppress white people in the same way that white supremacy has historically and continues to oppress people of color. Bonilla-Silva and Embrick (2006) assert that

racism is about more than individual attitudes; it is about the societal structures that maintain racial hierarchies (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick, 2006). Claims of reverse racism often ignore this structural aspect, focusing instead on isolated incidents, such as in Delacroix' essay, that do not reflect broader patterns of power and inequality.

The Critique of Anti-Racist Movements

The critiques of anti-racist movements often stem from misunderstandings or misrepresentations of their goals, methods, and impacts. These movements aim to dismantle systemic racism and promote equity, not to create division or promote reverse discrimination. Anti-racist movements are essential in addressing the deep-rooted racial inequalities that persist in society and are based on principles of justice, equality, and human dignity.

Critics (including Delacroix) often claim that anti-racist movements are divisive or that they seek to elevate people of color at the expense of white people. However, the primary goal of these movements is to achieve racial equity, not to invert racial hierarchies. Anti-racist movements seek to dismantle systemic racism, which benefits one group over others, by challenging policies and

practices that perpetuate racial disparities. According to Kendi (2023) being anti-racist involves actively working to create policies that produce racial equity and opposing those that produce racial inequality (Kendi, 2023). The focus is on creating a just and equitable society, not on disadvantaging any group.

Anti-racist movements have emerged in response to centuries of systemic racism that have disadvantaged people of color in virtually every aspect of life, from education and employment to housing and healthcare. These movements are necessary to address the historical injustices that continue to affect people of color today. Bell (2018) postulates that racial progress in the United States has often been met with resistance, and anti-racist movements are crucial in pushing back against this resistance to achieve meaningful change (Bell, 2018). Without these movements, the status quo—which is characterized by significant racial inequalities—would likely remain unchallenged.

One common critique is that anti-racist movements focus too much on identity politics rather than addressing broader social and economic issues. However, this critique overlooks the fact that

systemic racism is deeply intertwined with economic, social, and political systems. Addressing racial inequality requires systemic change that tackles the root causes of racism, including policies and practices that have disproportionately harmed people of color. Crenshaw ([2013](#)) posits that the intersection of race with other aspects of identity, such as class and gender, means that anti-racist work is inherently connected to broader struggles for social justice ([Crenshaw, 2013](#)). Anti-racist movements are not just about identity; they are about creating a society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources.

Some critics argue that anti-racist movements promote a "cancel culture" that stifles free speech and punishes dissenting views. However, what is often labeled as "cancel culture" is, in many cases, a form of accountability. Anti-racist movements call out racist behavior, language, and policies not to silence individuals, but to hold them accountable for actions that perpetuate harm against marginalized communities. DiAngelo ([2022](#)) mentions that the discomfort that some feel when confronted with their own complicity in racism is often framed as an attack on free speech, but it is a necessary step in the process of learning and growth ([DiAngelo,](#)

[2022](#)). Accountability is crucial for progress, and anti-racist movements play a vital role in encouraging individuals and institutions to take responsibility for their impact on racial inequality.

Despite the criticisms, anti-racist movements have achieved significant successes in raising awareness about racial issues and pushing for changes in policies and practices. Movements like Black Lives Matter have brought attention to police brutality and systemic racism in law enforcement, leading to policy changes and increased public support for racial justice ([Lebron, 2023](#)). These movements have also inspired broader conversations about race and equity, encouraging individuals and institutions to examine their own roles in perpetuating racial disparities. The impact of anti-racist movements demonstrates their importance in the ongoing struggle for racial equality ([Lebron, 2023](#)).

The Historical Context and Power Dynamics

Making sense of racial issues requires a deep engagement with historical context and the power dynamics that have shaped, and continue to shape, society. The critique that discussions of race overly focus on history or power overlooks the fact that these are essential elements in understanding how

racism operates and persists. Historical context and power dynamics are fundamental to grasping the roots of systemic racism and why efforts to address racial inequality remain necessary.

History is not just a backdrop to current events; it is the foundation upon which contemporary racial dynamics are built. The legacy of slavery, segregation, colonialism, and discriminatory policies has left a profound impact on the social, economic, and political landscape of many societies. According to Painter (2011) the construction of racial categories and the development of racial hierarchies have long been central to the way power has been distributed in society (Painter, 2011). Ignoring this historical context leads to an incomplete understanding of why racial disparities exist and persist.

Power dynamics are crucial in discussions of race because they reveal how certain groups have been systematically marginalized while others have been privileged. Racism is not just about individual prejudice; it is about how those prejudices are supported and reinforced by institutions and systems of power. Collins (2022) contends that race must be understood within the context of

intersecting systems of oppression, where power is distributed unevenly based on race, class, gender, and other factors (Collins, 2022). Without examining power dynamics, discussions about race risk oversimplifying complex social realities and ignoring the structural nature of racism.

The historical context of white supremacy is particularly important in comprehending contemporary racial issues. White supremacy is not just a belief in the superiority of white people; it is a system of power that has been institutionalized through laws, policies, and social norms to maintain the dominance of white people over others. Kendi (2016) explains that white supremacy has shaped the legal and social fabric of countries like the United States, influencing everything from housing policies to criminal justice practices (Kendi, 2016). The persistence of racial inequality cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the historical and ongoing impact of white supremacy.

Systemic racism refers to the ways in which racial inequalities are embedded in the structures of society. This concept is closely tied to power dynamics, as it highlights how institutions and systems disproportionately benefit some groups

while disadvantaging others. Bonilla-Silva and Embrick ([2006](#)) cite that systemic racism is maintained through both overt and subtle mechanisms, including discriminatory practices, biased policies, and cultural narratives that reinforce racial hierarchies ([Bonilla-Silva and Embrick, 2006](#)). Addressing racial inequality requires a focus on these power dynamics to dismantle the systems that perpetuate inequality.

Critics who downplay the importance of historical context and power dynamics often exhibit what historian Anderson ([2016](#)) calls "historical amnesia"—the tendency to forget or minimize the significance of past injustices in shaping the present ([Anderson, 2016](#)). This resistance to acknowledging history and power dynamics is often rooted in a desire to maintain the status quo, which benefits from ignoring the ways in which systemic racism continues to affect marginalized groups. Anti-racist movements seek to counter this amnesia by bringing historical and power-related issues to the forefront of discussions about race.

The Call for Colorblindness

The call for "colorblindness" in addressing racial issues is often presented as a well-intentioned

approach to promoting equality, but it overlooks the realities of systemic racism and the importance of acknowledging racial differences. Colorblindness as a concept suggests that ignoring race will lead to racial equality, but in practice, it can perpetuate the very inequalities it seeks to eliminate by ignoring the specific challenges faced by people of color.

The idea of colorblindness is rooted in the notion that if society stops recognizing race, racial discrimination will disappear. However, this perspective is fundamentally flawed because it ignores the deep-seated and systemic nature of racism. Alexander ([2010](#)) adds that colorblindness often serves as a means of denying the existence of racism, allowing racial disparities to continue unchallenged ([Alexander, 2010](#)). By claiming not to see race, individuals and institutions can avoid addressing the specific needs and experiences of marginalized racial groups.

Race plays a significant role in determining social outcomes, from education and employment to healthcare and housing. Ignoring race under the guise of colorblindness can obscure these disparities and hinder efforts to address them. Bonilla-Silva and Embrick ([2006](#)) comment that colorblindness is

a form of "color-blind racism," where the refusal to acknowledge race becomes a way of maintaining racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva and Embrick, 2006). This form of racism operates under the assumption that racial problems will resolve themselves if race is simply ignored, but it allows systemic inequalities to persist unchecked.

Recognizing race is essential to addressing the specific challenges faced by different racial groups. For instance, acknowledging the historical and ongoing impact of racism on Black communities is crucial for developing policies that address issues like police brutality, mass incarceration, and economic inequality. According to Crenshaw (2013), the concept of intersectionality highlights the importance of appreciating how race intersects with other aspects of identity, such as gender and class, to produce unique experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 2013). A colorblind approach fails to account for these complexities and, as a result, is ill-equipped to address the full scope of racial inequality.

Ignoring race can have harmful consequences, particularly in areas like education, where colorblind policies may fail to address the specific

needs of students of color. Research by Ladson-Billings ([1995](#)) has shown that culturally responsive teaching, which acknowledges and incorporates students' racial and cultural backgrounds, is more effective in promoting academic success than colorblind approaches that treat all students as the same ([Ladson-Billings, 1995](#)). By refusing to acknowledge race, colorblind policies risk perpetuating educational inequalities and limiting opportunities for students of color.

Racial bias, both implicit and explicit, continues to shape outcomes in virtually every aspect of life. Studies have shown that people of color face discrimination in hiring, housing, and law enforcement, among other areas. Ignoring race does not eliminate these biases; it simply allows them to operate unchecked. DiAngelo ([2022](#)) claims that the idea of colorblindness is often used to shield white people from confronting their own racial biases and the ways in which they benefit from systemic racism ([DiAngelo, 2022](#)). True racial equality requires acknowledging and addressing these biases, not pretending they do not exist.

Conclusion

The idea of Black supremacy is a false equivalence that detracts from the real and ongoing struggles against white supremacy and systemic racism. It is essential to focus on dismantling the structures of racial oppression that continue to disadvantage people of color, rather than diverting attention with unfounded claims of reverse supremacy.

Recognizing the color line and racial identity is not about creating division but about confronting and addressing the inequalities that have historically marginalized people of color. Acknowledging race is a necessary step toward achieving racial equity and justice, as it allows us to see and rectify the disparities that persist. The goal is not to deepen racial divisions but to work towards a society where one's racial identity does not determine their life outcomes.

The term "People of Color" is not about erasing individual identities but about creating a unified front against systemic racism. It acknowledges the shared experiences of oppression among diverse racial groups while allowing for the recognition of their unique identities. The term serves as a powerful tool for solidarity, enabling collective

action to address the deep-rooted inequalities that affect non-white communities. Rather than homogenizing or diminishing the diversity of these groups, "People of Color" provides a framework for discernment and combating the complex realities of racism.

The concept of "reverse racism" is a flawed and misleading idea that fails to recognize the systemic nature of racism, and the power dynamics involved. Racism is not simply about individual bias but about the ways in which power is used to oppress certain groups while privileging others. Efforts to promote racial equity, such as affirmative action and diversity initiatives, are not examples of reverse racism but necessary steps toward dismantling the structures that have perpetuated racial inequality. The focus should remain on addressing the deep-rooted systemic issues that continue to disadvantage people of color, rather than on unfounded claims of reverse discrimination.

The critiques of anti-racist movements often stem from misunderstandings or resistance to the changes these movements advocate for. Anti-racist movements are essential in the fight against systemic racism and are grounded in principles of

justice, equality, and accountability. They aim to dismantle the structures that perpetuate racial inequality, not to create division or promote reverse discrimination. The successes of these movements in raising awareness and pushing for change highlight their importance and effectiveness in the ongoing struggle for racial equity.

Historical context and power dynamics are not just peripheral issues in discussions of race; they are central to grasping the origins and persistence of racial inequality. Ignoring these factors leads to a superficial analysis of racism that fails to address its systemic nature. By engaging with history and power, we can better understand the roots of racial disparities and work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Lastly, the call for colorblindness is well-intentioned but ultimately misguided. It ignores the realities of systemic racism and the importance of recognizing race in addressing social inequalities. By refusing to acknowledge race, colorblindness perpetuates the very disparities it seeks to eliminate. To achieve true racial equality, it is essential to recognize and address the specific challenges faced by different racial groups, rather

than pretending that race does not matter.

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