

SOCI 309: Food For Thought Assignment

What is the main argument/thesis?

Omi and Winant suggest that the existence and reproduction of different regimes of domination, such as racism, in the United States and beyond have been continuously and consciously created through historical events such as slavery, racialization, scientific racism, and racial projects.

We should discuss this:

The reading highlights how racial difference and discrimination were historically used to justify exclusionary policies, such as immigrant exclusion, segregation, naturalization rights, and forced sterilization (Omi & Winant, p. 117, 2015). This racialization was due to claiming species of distinctiveness among humans, ultimately rationalizing the maltreatment and justifying it as an unfortunate by-product of human development (p. 116). This theme contains parallels to the historical and present experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, who have long been marginalized through policies such as residential schools, land dispossession, and systemic racism. My question is: How does the historical discrimination of Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to shape their treatment today, and what connections can we make between past and present exclusionary practices?

Commentary:

Partway through the reading, Omi and Winant discuss how slavery and genocidal policies toward American Indigenous peoples created a “template” or “master frame” that shaped the treatment of both them and other marginalized groups (p. 107). This racialized framework has shaped the meaning of concepts such as the worker and worker, labour and employment, and supervisor and subordinate (p. 107). This made me think of the past ways in which the Canadian government has treated the Indigenous communities using the master frame, historically creating a divide between the educated white folk and the uneducated Indigenous folk, and the civilized vs the savage. The ongoing legacy of racialized frameworks continues to reinforce systemic inequality, with examples such as the historical categorization of Indigenous people as “savage” or “uncivilized” still affecting how they are perceived and treated in modern society.

Current Event Connection:

As stated by Omi & Winant, “By claiming species of distinctiveness among humans, they rationalized the treatment to which the racial “others” were subjected, and even justified” (p. 116). This theory instantly made me think of the erasure of Palestinian identities during their genocide, ultimately justifying the violence and displacement they are experiencing. As Ahmad Ibsais (2024) notes in his article discussing the justification of Palestinian violence and death, “If Palestinians are somehow proved to be inherently violent beasts in a man-made cage, then our slaughter can be justified”. This racialized framework used by politicians and Western media sources dehumanizes Palestinian individuals by labelling them as terrorists, purposely allowing their extermination to be viewed as an “unfortunate byproduct” of development or national security. Many in the West, especially those in power, devalue Palestinian lives by labelling them as monsters while simultaneously heroizing Israel and the Israeli army (Ibsais, 2024).

References

- Ibsais, A. (2024, August 20). *Palestinians are being dehumanised to justify occupation and genocide*. Al Jazeera.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/8/20/palestinians-are-being-dehumanised-to-justify-occupation-and-genocide>
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States* (Third edition.). Routledge.