



The Snail's Pace of Racial Progress in America **Sociological Insights from a Participant Observer**

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Abstract: This self research essay is a personal reflection on what I know of and how I know the experiences and racial relations in America generally and in my immediate surroundings particularly. This self exploration will focus on several special incidents that are pivotal in my understanding of racial relations. Based on the exploration undertaken, I would like to submit that racism is real, alive and well in our society. The prospects for improved racial relations are there, but unfortunately they do not cut across the larger United States. In much of the rural and countryside America, in the face, discriminative and prejudiced racial practices continue to shape the relations between white and black America. On the other hand, in the urban and suburban areas crude, in the face racist practices like denial of seats in public arena's is fading only to be replaced with the much crafted institutional forms of racism championed by state agencies. Personally I see the race relations improving though at a snail's pace. The election of people of color to public office, more minority students at universities and colleges and the increasing number of inter-racial relations are examples. The more people become enlightened of each others contribution to the whole, the more we are likely to accept our differences and forge ahead. I see friendships of all races at major colleges and campuses and personally I've extended my hands to reach my white brothers and sisters to openly discuss social issues and what we can do to improve them. With the minorities of yesterday becoming the majorities of today, race harmonization is a matter of priority. The optimism espoused by presidential candidate Barack Obama of a color blind America is indeed a step in the right direction that should be followed by those charged with policy execution, for it is these policies that pertain to housing, the criminal justice industry and the job market that have a crucial influence on racial matters.

INTRODUCTION

This self research essay is a personal reflection on what I know of and how I know of the experiences and racial relations in America generally and in my immediate surroundings in particular. This self explo-

ration will focus on several special incidents that are pivotal in my understanding of racial relations.

First and foremost, as a black child growing up in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Uganda on the African continent, my knowledge of race issues was very limited. My immediate family, the schools I at-

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tended and the people I interacted with were basically of the same **race**, a homogenized society. However, there are people from different ethnicities that make up the Ugandan population. These different ethnic groups have a different language and culture quite different from mine that I became aware of as I grew up. The Bantu ethnic group that I belong to control the power and resources of the nation and as such inevitably there is constant friction between the different ethnic groups for survival.

Apart from occasionally seeing white people on television and newspapers, my parents did not dwell so much on explaining to me why there were people different from me, and whether for that matter anybody's color mattered at all. I suspect they had other crucial issues to think about; especially if there was something for me to eat, how to pay my school fees and how to deal with the ever present fear of malaria. Later in the mid 1980s, I recall the rising calls to end the powerful forces of apartheid in a segregated South Africa and how Nelson Mandela was championing the cause of black South Africans to freedom and independence. This knowledge for the first time gave me an insight to think about the racial dichotomy of black and white and to ask my teacher then, "why the white man would oppress a black man in his land?" I further gained valuable knowledge through learning about the history of **colonialism**, where country after country on the African continent was occupied by the white man, exploited of its resources and the native people left largely exposed to the horrors of generational poverty and the divisive politics of religion. The savagery and barbaric acts of slavery that stripped the African continent of most of its resource—the people only to be reduced to sub-humans working on the white man's plantation in the Americas—also gave me a snap shot on **racial relations** in society.

HOUSING

In 2001 I migrated to the United States. Since then I've been struggling with the question of who I am in a racialized society while dealing with the most critical issues that cut across the racial divide including: housing, immigration, employment, the criminal justice system and interracial romance.

For many immigrants, their first real feel about the tenets of **racism** is when they are looking for housing. I and my cousin set out to look for some nice apartments especially those that had the "for rent signs" posted. This was in the city of Waltham largely occupied by middle class white Americans. We were always received with smiling faces but once we opened our mouth, we were told "how we had an accent and asked where we were from." I remember one landlord asking me if we had tried public housing or thought about the Dorchester area where "public transportation is easily accessible." To me this was blatant racial discrimination that was intended to inevitably bundle me with my own kind. The point had been made that the accommodation I was seeking was not meant for people like me even though I could afford it. When we eventually got an apartment for rent through an agent who charged us a month's rent, we were excited and moved into an area we revered for its safety but also a growing number of African immigrants. To our disbelief when we moved in, the white neighbors in the opposite apartment who rarely talked to us moved out. This trend consistently continued as more immigrants moved in, almost all white families left as if in protest. In fact, just like in "The Making of Groveland," "There would be about seven or eight of us (blacks) and about thirty of them (whites). But, you know, you'd see a white family move out and a black family move in, and soon it was more of us" (247).

In discussing the issue of housing and how it invokes racist undertones, many of the immigrants in my community have stretched further to have a shot at the bigger American dream, and have failed albeit systematically. Many realtors sold poor, high interest recurring, sub-prime mortgages to immigrants promising them "the best deal ever." However, as reality is sinking in, many of the immigrants specifically targeted by the sheer looks of their ethnicities have lost the houses and the "little" savings they had put in. According to the article "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: The Impact of Subprime Foreclosures on African American and Latino Communities" published by the Poverty and Race Research Council Washington DC., African Americans and people of color are three times as likely as whites to receive a sub-prime loan.

If ownership of a house is an important indicator of one's social standing in the American society and indeed a stepping stone to the creation of wealth, then a great deal of my friends in the sprouting immigrant community and to a large extent the minority population have been left out of this important process. The resultant wealth gap is indeed seen as a racist design to promote the majority whites while exploiting the minority races. This systematic racial impoverishment and the corresponding enrichment is also best described in the documentary, *Race: The Power of an Illusion Part III*, in which both white and black soldiers returning from the World War II were encouraged to take advantage of the housing initiative, popularly dubbed the Fair Housing Act, without having to put down a huge down payment. Again as in so many other times the blacks lost out on this opportunity for they were deemed unworthy and "would inevitably lower the value of these properties if they were allowed to move in." This created the concepts of **red lining** ratings for the poor minority and **green lining** good ratings for the white ma-

jority.

Indeed this had been a life time opportunity for the federal government to level and deal with the issue of racism once and for all, but this chance was lost too. The fact that the federal government failed to take any action in condoning what the Department of Housing was doing under its very nose, was to me the formal sanctioning of segregated living in America. Today in our society I see the same trend of denying minority races equal opportunity in housing with many city and town laws aimed at curtailing black people from moving into suburban areas predominantly occupied by the whites. Some of these include high property taxes where many blacks can't afford and the city zoning laws that demarcate exclusive white neighborhoods.

IMMIGRATION

My **immigration status** has also made me realize how the immigration laws of the United States have consistently prioritized who is urgently needed in this country and who is not. On the one hand, those of us from the poor continents mainly inhabited by people of color have got a raw deal as far as the immigration process is concerned, waiting in lines for years before their cases are approved or even reunited with their families. Those from the developed continents of the world, on the other hand, especially western Europe, have had a red carpet rolled out for them. Less is required of them since their skin color ultimately gives them a free pass to most of the important life-changing resources like access to employment and education. In this clearly calculated public policy, a white man (with the same age as mine) is unfairly propelled in the system for his likeness to the majority white Americans whereas unfairly denying me (of the minority race) the same equal opportunity. This prioritization is a huge determinant of who enjoys the **privileges**,

resources and the wealth of this nation. Such privileges include for example quick and easy access to bank loans, cheaper credit lines and corporate employment. While I struggle with eighty hours of work a week to survive in a capitalist economy, my fellow immigrant from Europe has a leg up enjoying the benefits of **institutional racism**.

In addition to these facts, as an immigrant I have been labeled **alien** in many of the places that I've worked. I've been told, "to go back to Africa and deal with our natural poverty." It has become a heated debate in America today about whether immigrants are any more welcome as it was at the beginning of the century. In many cities and towns across America, white Americans in particular are up in arms protesting the lack of **assimilation** to the American way of life by inferior immigrating subgroups. Just like me, many of the immigrant communities have succumbed to the stereotypes labeled at us: inferior, savage, uncivilized, diseased, and with low intelligence, in comparison to the majority whites. In the article, "Covering Immigration: Popular Images of the Nation" by Leo Chavez (213), the concept of immigration wars seems to be surging. There is a "demonstrable shift to an increasingly anti-immigrant public debate and public policy initiatives during the last quarter of the twentieth century...As Oscar Handlin once wrote, immigration is the history of the nation. But immigrants are also newcomers whose difference and 'otherness' do not go unquestioned or unremarked upon. Their very presence raises concerns about population growth, economic competition, and various linguistic and 'cultural' threats" (214).

Immigration is another area that I have clearly seen the invisible yet powerful forces of racism in the American society. Having been told earlier on that America is a nation of immigrants, I thought I was indeed at the forefront of those who would be

welcomed with open arms. I can't recall the number of times I underwent **racial profiling** by the police because I looked foreign and my immigration status was highly questionable. One particular incident still memorable to me was when I was riding on a train in the sub way of New York City. The officers asked everyone to have their identification at hand. I was seated next to a white man who did not have an identity card or a passport, both of which I carried. The officer looked at my license and at me and asked where I was going, where I lived, and what in particular I was doing in the United States. To my own embarrassment I answered all these questions in the full presence of all the passengers. Within me I felt a sense of being rejected from a country I loved and respected. My white neighbor, whom I later learned was a 'visitor' from Romania, was told, "to travel with identifying papers next time" and was not profiled like I was.

The notion of being **prejudiced** against people from the point of view of their nationality or origin, as much as is perplexing in America, is not a new phenomenon in the trek of immigrants. According to Herbert Blumer, race prejudice is "the feeling on the part of the dominant group of being entitled to either exclusive or prior rights in many important areas of life. The range of such exclusive or prior claims include: choice lands and sites, right to certain jobs...the claim to certain positions of control and decision making as in government and the law and the right to exclusive membership in institutions such as schools and the church" (171). As a black man I have often felt less welcome at Museums, at the city park in my town or at the Veterans post where I predominantly see the white race.

In the film *Mississippi Masala*, we see how in the 1970s Indian Ugandans were discriminated against and forced out of a country they called home. They were seen as non-Africans and "Uganda was for black Africans." The reality of the matter is that

these immigration sentiments and emotions are not going to end tomorrow just as I realized myself. In fact, in the United States, black immigrants like myself face constant prejudice and discrimination. The task before immigrants is to quickly learn and blend into a racialized society, and jump on any opportunity towards the American dream.

According to Howard Taylor,

Race is multiply defined in this society; that is, there is no one single definition, but several definitions. All these definitions apply simultaneously, and no one definition takes precedence over another. These definitions do however have one thing in common; they are all creations of society. They have been put in place by humans and by their social interactions and their societal institutions. (47)

Earlier, I pointed out that in this essay I will try to show how for quite some time I struggled with defining my race. If I define **race as biology**, the color of my skin would qualify me to be a member of the black race which I openly embrace. According to Clara E. Rodriguez and Hector Cordero-Guzman, "Placing Race in Context," "Race is something more than phenotype and genotype and was influenced by contextual factors such as class, education, language and birthplace. Thus race may be more of a social construction than is generally admitted" (90). For example there are black people with a light skin and there are white people with full lips and curly hair.

When I interacted with different people especially on the jobs, many referred to me as a negro, while my fellow blacks called me incognito because I hanged around white folks and I lived in a place predominantly white. To them my social status was not in any way compatible with the black race and therefore I was not exactly a true

"Brother." Here, **race as a social construction** depends on how different groups of people interact with others. This social process can lead to stereotypes about people just like many of my black friends who didn't see me as a member of the black race.

Race as ethnicity also defies logic. For example, I identify myself as a member of an ethnic group (African) on the basis of a shared common culture. Yet, there are other groups of black people that do not identify as African even though they share some elements of African culture. These include the Haitians and Cape Verdians, for instance. So, to ethnically identify them as racially black Africans would be unacceptable to many of them.

There are people whose **race** in society is defined by their **social class** especially invoking aspects of wealth and status. In some societies like Brazil, those who have been lucky to access these wealth creating resources have been quickly initiated into the white race and those on the bottom rung of the wealth hierarchy, even when physically white have been designated black. In the United States, however, race is primarily defined through biology.

In my own observation I find all these definitions contradictory, and just like Michael Omi and Howard Winant in "Racial Formation," "The designation of racial categories and the determination of racial identity is no simple task. For centuries this question has precipitated intense debates and conflicts in the United States; disputes over natural and legal rights, over the distribution of resources, and indeed, over who shall live and who shall die" (75).

EMPLOYMENT

Employment is another critical area where the issue of race has distinctively surfaced. Race is an important determinant of life enhancing opportunities in the labor

market. Many Americans depend on their jobs for their survival and that of their immediate families. From the little savings out of the jobs they get, income which is used to create substantial wealth depends on the nature and type of jobs. It is important to note that a few of my work experiences indicate that work has to a great extent been racialized and indeed shaped by racism. The concept of **racism** is defined as, “a principal of social domination in which a group that is seen as inferior or different because of presumed biological or cultural characteristics is oppressed, controlled and exploited—socially, economically, culturally, politically, psychologically—by a dominant group” (Wilson 1973, as quoted in Higginbotham and Andersen 83). This principle of domination is alive and well in the labor markets today with the dominant white majority determining which race is employed where and how.

In my short work experience as a person of color, there are jobs that I have tried to access only to reach a dead-end. Many of these jobs are found in the affluent suburban communities, offering relatively higher wages, and are strictly reserved for the whites. While searching for a job a few years ago through an employment agency in Billerica, the staff coordinator informed me of an open position in a manufacturing firm for Air controls in Newton. She actually sent me there and the production manager told me that indeed there was an open slot on the assembly line, but he couldn't make a decision then but would call me. I waited for a call and made calls to him until I was told that they needed somebody who lived “close to the plant” and it would be difficult for me to commute from Medford where at the time I was living. It was interesting to note that one could be denied a job for not living in and around the job location. To me this was a flimsy excuse to politely say, “no you are not welcome.” Also a close look at the employees of this factory whom I saw from the parking lot revealed

that a majority of them were white while a minority Asian. To me such jobs that are exclusively reserved for the dominant white majority remind me of the blatant discrimination of the past in which there were signs and posters at job sites that read, “Whites only Blacks need not apply.” Just like my experience with this case, discrimination on the jobs today is not as blatant or straight in your face, but it has taken on “a more elusive and less apparent stance with many companies expending millions of dollars to conceal it” (Herring 277).

Another way work has been racialized through the use of advertisements. In many of the jobs that are exclusively held by the white majority into which access for blacks or other minorities is limited, advertisement has been used as a tool to deny access to those groups. Instead of advertising in the main stream media, for example major newspapers like the *Boston Globe*, many companies are concealing the availability of openings by using area newspapers. In the cities of Waltham and Newton for instance, outlets like the *Waltham Chronicles*, the *Tribune* and the *Daily Sun* are used to advertise jobs in the many manufacturing and biotech companies in the area. Many of the minorities who live in these affluent communities, as recently told by a close friend searching for a job in the nearby factory, do not read these newspapers that are many times delivered through subscription at the door steps of the residents. In addition to this concept of concealed advertisement, my experience has led me to realize how the use of employment networks has racialized the workplace.

There are outstanding channels through which the white majority pass on information about job availabilities, such as pending interviews, who is to carry them out, the possibility of promotions, and how one can improve on their chances of promotion. These include a steady line of well maintained friends, exclusive membership to clubs and other recreation places, and

the extra help extended to the white students by the teachers in terms of referrals, direct job recruitment and vacancy information. This is popularly referred to as **white privilege** as it makes it easier to access resources necessary for success including jobs. Unfortunately this kind of networking is distinctly absent for the minority races, the African Americans in particular. According to Deirdre A. Roster in "How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue collar Jobs,"

...[The] munificent flow of various forms of assistance ... served to convert institutional ties (as teachers) into personal ones (as friends) that are intended to and do endure well beyond high school. (289)

...[The] black males could not effectively use the institutional connection to establish successful trade entry...As a result, black men sought employment using a truncate, resource-impoverished network consisting of strong ties to other blacks. (290)

My experience has also led me to realize that even the types of work minorities of color do and the corresponding status pegged on them is by far **racialized**. Different races have been largely assigned to particular jobs. Low status and less paying jobs without benefits mainly go to minorities of color, while high status jobs with opportunity at promotions and better pay go to whites. I tried on several occasions to get a white collar office job that would provide me with a decent salary and benefits, for I thought with my modest education credentials (an associates degree) I would easily join the entry level rungs. Similar to the first instance where I was rejected for the color of my skin, this time my foreign accent and the lack of knowledge of the base ball game, played an additional role.

I was subsequently told to understand by a close friend that white collar office jobs were not for us and that he had a place with a ready job for me. This place turned out to be a nursing home catering primarily to elderly white residents. What surprised me was majority of the wage workers were exclusively black and all the senior nursing positions went to the whites. This scenario of events seems to be the trend in the larger American labor market—with risky, no benefit, manual oriented, and less opportunity for promotions based jobs going to the blacks and other minorities, while the high technology, skilled, high wages with benefits and the possibility of upward mobility are reserved for the dominant white majority. According to Cedrick Herring in "Is Job Discrimination Dead?"

There are both primary and secondary jobs, the later reserved for the Whites and the former to the blacks by employers but sometimes by Unions who fear blacks will drive down their wages.

As a consequence, African Americans are locked out of jobs in the primary sector labor market, where they would receive a better pay and treatment, and they tend to be crowded into the secondary sector. As these disparities compound overtime, as primary sector workers enhance their skills and advance, secondary sector workers stay mired in dead-end jobs. (282)

According to Lawrence D. Bobo, the labor market has further been racialized through **laissez-faire racism** by assuming that the government has no hand in racism (either in its creation or its destruction), rather it is the invisible hands of supply and demand in the market which fuel racism.

The idea that everything is to be determined by market forces of demand and supply and that government has limited or

no input is quite self-defeating in itself. Yeah, I can see some progress in achieving a leveled ground for all races to access opportunities. However, I also see institutional racism pro-actively twisting the achievements and systematically threshing out people of color from the opportunity process. Examples of segregated housing and poor inner city public transportation are just points to highlight.

The labor market in America has to a great extent been racialized by the invisible market hands of racism, exclusive networkings for the white majority, and the apportionment of secondary jobs to minorities and primary jobs to the white majority. In essence the hard, less rewarding, bottom of the rung, dirty jobs tend to be predominantly done by the minorities. I've taken on labor intensive jobs like clearing construction sites, snow shoveling and dish washing for very long hours yet earning peanuts out of it. Duty and responsibility bound, full-benefit jobs go to the white majority.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Racism is a powerful force at play in the labor market today; though not very visible, it is structurally rooted. This spirit of group domination has further been used in the criminal industry with large percentages of blacks and other minority races jetted into prisons and jails, not given any opportunity at redemption as a systematic way of ridding them from the social fabric. Many of my friends and people I know in various communities have succumbed to this fatal scenario, where they are either jailed or deported for clearly non-threatening crimes. According to Manning Marable,

The informal, vigilante-inspired techniques to suppress Blacks were no longer practical. Therefore, beginning with the great depression, and especially after 1945, white

racists began to rely almost exclusively on the state apparatus to carry out the battle for white supremacy. Blacks charged with crimes would receive longer sentences than whites convicted of similar crimes. (Marable, as quoted in Eduardo Bonilla-Silva 370)

It can be precisely said that race relations in the United States continue to portray the tensions and mistrust between the white and black races, pushing the wedge in the racial relations further. The numbers **incarcerated** in the prisons for minorities particularly African Americans drive this notion of a systematic group position, and Angela Davis points it out in a most blunt way in her article, "Race and Criminalization: Black Americans and the Punishment Industry," The Democratic and Republican officials have successfully put in place an out of control punishment industry with a huge racial imbalance assuming criminality of Black people and thus evidence of structural racism.

INTERRACIAL ROMANCE

Let me move next to the issue of interracial romance and how it is pivotal in understanding racial relations in our society. Personally I have not been involved in any bi-racial relationships, but who knows what tomorrow holds for man! However, many of my close friends have and are actively involved in these mixed relationships. Their experiences have been quite diverse as the relationships themselves; many have been welcome in these families with open arms especially the women married to or dating white men. On the other hand, some of the black guys dating white women have faced un-believable resistance from general rejection as inferior and uncivilized to the more racist descriptive undertones of being called the N word. A lot

of times the reasoning is white women are for white men and exclusively so. At other times where a bi-racial family has been formed, as is the case of my friend Charles, the offsprings have had a rough time to socialize as they are frequently asked about their parentage and why they for example have black hair or skin. This scenario underscores the mentality widely held of a purified white race, dominant with a group position on many of the social, political and economic undertakings of American society. In the novel *Indian Killer* by Sherman Alexie, we see John a native American Indian adopted and raised by white parents. When he starts to date white girls, "The girls' fathers were always uncomfortable, and grew more irritated as he continued to date Mary, Margaret, or Stephanie..."

'Hon,' a father would say to his daughter. "What's that boy's name?"

"Which boy, daddy"?...

"...Well, adopted kids have so many problems adjusting to things, you know. I've read about it. They have self-esteem problems. I just think, I mean, don't you think you should find somebody more appropriate?" (17, 18)

This is indeed a veiled racist remark made by the white parent to the unsuspecting daughter which eventually continues to strain the race relations in society.

In the film, *Mississippi Masala*, Mina, an Indian-Ugandan immigrant-refugee, is dating a black man unknown to her parents. When they find out, they ferociously fight this relationship and order her to end it. To the parents, "Indian women are for Indian men and not for the inferior poor Blacks." Through my personal experience, it can therefore be said that, when it comes to bi-racial romance many times in our so-

ciety we have pegged onto them a negative indicator further stratifying us along racial lines and inevitably reducing the opportunities towards assimilation.

IDENTITY

In "Finding the Universal: Reflections on a Multi-Prismed Identity," author Mark Hagland explores the notion of identity construction by an Asian American. "I often find myself with multiple identities; 'I'm a man, an American, Asian American, an adult Korean adoptee, gay person, ...journalist and spiritual seeker.'" (39). Through these differences there are "multiple assumptions that people make regarding racial, ethnic and sexual identity that impact how they view and interact with me personally" (39).

I've on several occasions been described as a male, African American, student, single, non-alcoholic and spiritual. This, I've found out, determines my interaction with a cross section of society. Living in the suburbs of the Boston, I've realized as a minority I'm always underlooked, like "not much is expected of me." Kids I meet at the community field are always inquisitive to know whether there are any houses and cars where I come from! The general lack of acceptance of personal diversity to the extent that instead of celebrating it, we just trash it, is in itself another indicator of the domination and exploitation of dominant majority race to subjugate and eliminate the minority races"—another form of racism. The differences in perception that I receive depending on the nature of the identity involved, brings with it further confusion and isolation unknown to others with the same differences in the majority race.

These issues of identity based on skin color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, and faith all lead to wars and conflicts, exacerbating the racial tensions

devastating to personal and group interaction.

In fact, whether it's the majorities or minorities in society today, we all need each other and are indeed co-dependents. The minorities of yesterday will be the majorities of tomorrow, and the majorities of yesterday may be the minorities of tomorrow! Racism targeted towards minority races still rampant in our society, is likely to proportionately decline especially as the number of minority populations swell significantly. I see a comparably high number of ethnicities and races at job sites, in apartment buildings, in the hospitals and much more pronounced in our school system. It is important to note that the gains anticipated from an increasingly racially diverse society could easily be erased by both the structural and institutional forms of racism prevalent in our society. According to Farai Chideya, in "A Nation of Minorities: America in 2050,"

America is facing the largest cultural shift in its history. Around the year 2050, whites will become a "minority." This is uncharted territory for this country, and this demographic change will affect everything. Alliances between races are bound to shift. Political and social power will be re-apportioned. °(11)

The teens and twenty-somethings of the millennium generation are the true experts on the future race, for they are re-creating America's racial identity every single day and are more likely to interact with people of other races and backgrounds than other generations. Critically important is, a third of this generations is non-white, not just black, but Asian, Latino, Native Americans and multi-racial.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to submit that racism is real, alive and well in our society. The prospects for improved racial relations are there but unfortunately, they do not cut across the larger United States. In much of the rural and countryside America, in the face, discriminative and prejudiced racial practices continue to shape the relations between white and black America. On the other hand, in the urban and suburban areas crude, in the face racist practices like denial of seats in public arena's is fading only to be replaced with the much crafted institutional forms of racism championed by state agencies.

Personally I see the race relations improving though at a snail's pace. The election of people of color to public office, more minority students at universities and colleges and the increasing number of inter-racial relations are examples. The more people become enlightened of each others contribution to the whole, the more we are likely to accept our differences and forge ahead. I see friendships of all races at major colleges and campuses and personally I've extended my hands to reach my white brothers and sisters to openly discuss social issues and what we can do to improve them. With the minorities of yesterday becoming the majorities of today, race harmonization is a matter of priority.

The optimism espoused by presidential candidate Barack Obama of a color blind America is indeed a step in the right direction that should be followed by those charged with policy execution, for it is these policies that pertain to housing, the criminal justice industry and the job market that have a crucial influence on racial matters.

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