

# Race, Class & Reconstruction

Tony Zaragoza ∞ Reconstructing New Orleans Lecture 4/17/06

## Lecture Outline

- I. Into: Race/Class Inventory
- II. Towards a (Political Economic) Theory of Racism in the US
- III. Mechanisms and Impacts of Racism
- IV. Nurturing Racism: Land, Labor and Social Control  
Ethnic Notions, Birth of a Nation, Ida B. Wells  
  
∞Break∞
- V. From Xenophobia to Racism
- VI. The Surplus Plus Value of Racism
- VII. Blaming the Victim
- VIII. Diversity or Equality or Both

## Sources of Displayed Text and Graphs

State of the Dream 2005: Disowned in the Ownership Society. Betsy Leondar-Wright, Meizhu Lui, et al. <[www.FairEconomy.org](http://www.FairEconomy.org)>  
The Growing Divide. 2004. <[www.FairEconomy.org](http://www.FairEconomy.org)>  
The Plantation Notebooks of James Henry Hammond, 1832-1858.  
<<http://www.usdn16.org/mfoley/plantation/>>

## Films in Lecture

*Birth of a Nation*. D. W. Griffith. Pyramid Film Productions, 1915.\*  
*Ethnic Notions*. Marlon T. Riggs. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2004, 1986.\*  
*Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice*. Washington, DC: PBS Video, 1989.\*  
*Reconstruction: The Second Civil War*. Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 2004.\*\*

## Films for Further Viewing

*The Color of Fear*. Lee Mun Wah, 90 min, 1994.\*  
Edward Said on Orientalism. North Hampton, MA: Media Ed Foundation, 1998.\*  
Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker. FRIF, 48 min, Joanne Grant, 1986.\*  
People Like Us: Social Class in America. PBS, 2001.\*\*  
Persons of Interest. Alison Maclean and Tobias Perse, 2004.\*\*  
A Place of Rage. Women Make Movies, 1991.\*  
Race: the Floating Signifier. With Stuart Hall, by Sut Jhally. MEF, 1997.\*  
*Race: The Power of an Illusion*. San Francisco: California Newsreel, 2003.\*  
*The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. San Francisco, CA: California Newsreel, 2002.\*  
Savage Acts. American Social History Productions, Inc., 1995.\*  
Struggles in Steel: A story of African-American Steelworkers. SF: CN, 1995.∞\*  
W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography in Four Voices. San Francisco: CN, 1995.\*

\* Available at the TESC Library

∞ Available at The Labor Center (Sem II E)

\*\* Available via Summit

## For Further Reading and Research

Berger, Maurice. *White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art*. Baltimore, MD: Center for Art and Visual Culture, 2004.  
Berry, Mary Frances. *Black Resistance, White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism in America*. NY: A. Lane, Penguin Press, 1994.  
Coates, Rodney D. *Race and Ethnicity: Across Time, Space, and Discipline*. Boston: Brill, 2004.  
Collins, Chuck and Felice Yeskel *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality & Insecurity* NY: New Press, 2005.  
Dailey, Jane. *Before Jim Crow: The Politics of Race in Postemancipation Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.  
Faust, Drew Gilpin. *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1981.  
Harris, Cheryl. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review*. 106 (1993):1709-1791.  
Heagerty, Brooke, and Nelson Peery. *Moving Onward: From Racial Division to Class Unity*. Chicago: People's Tribune/Tribuno del Pueblo Press, 2000.  
Jones, Jacqueline. *The Dispossessed: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present*. NY: Basic Books, 1992.  
Lui, Meizhu, et al. *The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide*. NY: New Press, 2006.  
Mills, Charles. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.  
Ngugi wa Thiong'o. *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. NH: Heinemann, 1993.  
Patterson, Thomas C. *Inventing Western Civilization*. NY: Monthly Review Press, 1997  
Prashad, Vijay. *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.  
Reed, Adolph. *Class Notes*. New Press, 2000.  
Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.  
San Juan, E. *Racism and Cultural Studies: Critiques of Multiculturalist Ideology and Politics of Difference*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.  
Samson, Jane. *Race and Empire*. NY: Pearson/Longman, 2005.  
Smith, Andrea. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005.  
Steinberg, Stephen. Ed. *Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Issues and Debates*. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.  
Thompson, C. Bradley. Ed. *Antislavery Political Writings, 1833-1860: A Reader*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004.  
Watkins, William. *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2001.

## Some Thoughts on Racism and Capitalism

1.) We have sought to distance the slaveholders and their creed, to define them as very unlike ourselves. Yet their processes of rationalization and self-justification were not so very different from our own. (Drew Gilpin Faust)

2.) The psychic and physical devastation that so marked slave and colonial systems echoes into our lives today . . . if we could but see a causal chain, a procession of events linked over time, it might teach us about the long-term consequences of violently exploiting humans as only capital. (Patricia Williams)

3.) racism 1: a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race 2: racial prejudice or discrimination (www.m-w.com)

4.) Difficult as it now may be to imagine, society was not always divided according to racial categories. Race and racism are special products of the capitalist era. . . . Historians have shown that race hatred had to be created. It was anything but natural—instead, it had to be nurtured every step of the way. (Brooke Haegerty & Nelson Peery)

5.) From conquest, to slavery, to colonialism and Jim Crow, racism and the system of white supremacy has been and is implicated in every breath and heartbeat of the United States. At least since the late 1600's, when whiteness as a concept and mark of automatic advantage was developed by the elite so as to divide poor whites from the people of color (black and American Indian) with whom they had substantially more in common, the battle lines have been drawn in an explicitly racial way. And today, we're still held hostage to this system. (Tim Wise, www.timwise.org)

6.) Racism we see as a systematic discrimination against or exclusion, oppression of a group of people based upon an accidental quality, as in skin color, hair texture, shape and size of lips and so forth. It's systematic. It's not something that is simply random acts. Racism ... is much more than chauvinism or prejudice. I might stand here and say that I think culturally or ethnically I'm better. I may have

certain prejudices. And certainly we all do. But racism is distinguished by the fact that it is systemic and it relates to the question of power and capacity. That is to say, racism is about having the power or capacity to translate prejudices and attitudes or feelings of superiority into practice, custom, policy or law. That is a fundamental difference between simply saying, I don't like white folks, or, I don't like black folks, and the ability to in fact impose that prejudice in a way that impinges upon and thwarts the ability of a group to develop. (Ron Daniels)

7.) I cannot understand why so many chiefs are allowed to talk in so many different ways, and promise so many different things.... I am tired of talk that comes to nothing.... There has been too much talking by men with no right to talk. Too many misrepresentations have been made, too many misunderstandings have come up between the white men about the Indians. If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them all the same law. Give them all an even chance to live and grow. (Chief Joseph, 1879)

8.) From the mummies, Jezebels, and breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture, the nexus of negative stereotypical images applied to African-American women has been fundamental to Black women's oppression. (Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*)

9.) Our school was well integrated because it was located in a part of town with a predominantly Latino population. The culture of the school, however, was overwhelmingly Anglo and middle-class. The use of Spanish was frowned upon and occasionally punished. Any trace of an accent when speaking English would be pointed out and sarcastically mocked. This mocking persisted even though, and maybe because, some of the nuns were also "Spanish." By the age of seven, I was keenly aware that I lived in a society that had little room for those who were poor, brown, or female. I was all three. I moved between dualized worlds: private/public, Catholic/secular, pover-

ty/privilege, Latina/Anglo. (Margaret E. Montoya, "Mascaras, Trenzas, y Greñas")

10.) A common complaint about capitalism is that "all the capitalist sees is money." Given that this is true, observe that anyone who "only cares about money," doesn't care about the color of the person where their money comes from. Capitalism is a system of individual rights—it is a necessary political condition to the banishment of racism, where it results in the violation of individual rights. The only protection a man needs from racism is the protection of his rights—specifically protection from the initiation of force, whether it be a knife held at ones throat by a Black Panther, or the noose held by a member of the KKK. (www.capitalism.org)

11.) White supremacy emerged in the throes of capitalism's planetary birth to justify the expropriation of people off their land and the exploitation of people for their labor. (Vijay Prashad)

12.) Race relations and race conflict are necessarily structured by the larger totality of the political economy of a given society, as well as by modifications in the structure of the world economy. Corporate profit-making via class exploitation on an international/globalized scale, at bottom, still remains the logic of the world system of finance capitalism based on historically changing structures and retooled practices of domination and subordination. (E. San Juan, Jr. "Marxism and the Race/Class Problematic")

13.) The political economy of the "New Racial Domain," ... is driven and largely determined by the forces of transnational capitalism, and the public policies of state neoliberalism. From the vantage point of the most oppressed U.S. populations, the New Racial Domain rests on an unholy trinity, or deadly triad, of structural barriers to a decent life. These oppressive structures are mass unemployment, mass incarceration, and mass disfranchisement. Each factor directly feeds and accelerates the others, creating an ever-widening circle of social disadvantage, poverty, and civil death, touching the lives of tens of millions of U.S. people. (Manning Marable, "Globalization and Racialization")

