

Jon Mills

On Lunacy in the Culture Wars

We are well into a societal imbroglio dubbed the culture wars. What is this exactly? Since the racial reckoning, and especially after the police murder of George Floyd, progressive Left enthusiasts including the Black Lives Matter activism movement have determined that so-called “white supremacy,” including structural, systemic, and institutional racism, lies at the heart of everything. After worldwide antiracism protests sparking riots, looting, and shooting occurred, critical social justice avengers called on to defund the police in many large US cities from Minneapolis to Portland, Seattle, Austin, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and New York City, just to name a few. It should be no surprise to anyone that when police presence is withdrawn from communities, crime only goes up, and often the people most affected are disenfranchised groups, marginalized minorities, people of colour, the vulnerable, and those who are poor. After such lunacy invited a spike in crime, many of those very same police departments are now refunding their law enforcement in order to reign in illegality and keep their communities safe.

There is a big difference between those who believe that their race is inherently superior to other races and should have control over them, let alone advocate hate simply based on the colour of one’s skin—the premise of “white supremacy” that most Caucasians do not endorse, versus those who (consciously or unconsciously) harbour racist sentiments or attitudes directed toward alterity. Most decent people keep such thoughts to themselves along with a degree of shame, guilt, or humility as it is not the better angels of our nature. But it is quite a different matter to accuse an entire population of being white supremacists by virtue of simply being white.

The notion that contemporary society is governed by white supremacy is a progressive ideology that has no basis in fact. It is an offensive myth based in hysterical hype wielding a blatant political agenda. Just because a person is of Caucasian background does not make them a white supremacist let alone a member of the KKK or the Proud Boys. The very notion that just because you are white you are indicted of feeling superior to others based on your skin colour and furthermore want to dominate and oppress them a fortiori is not only ludicrous, it is itself obscene. Moreover, it is a racist insult based on sophistry designed to gaslight the public who wants to blame “whitey” for the historical sins of slavery.

Racism is a fact in every society, and there is no need to deny or disavow its ubiquity. Psychoanalysis has long showed that prejudice is part of human nature whether we like it or not. Nobody gets a free pass. Anyone claiming not to harbour racist thoughts or dispositions is simply lying, posturing, or wanting to appear morally virtuous. Give me one hour in a clinical interview with anyone and I will prove my point. Do I have any takers? Everyone is racist, it's just a matter of degree. But when the more egregious forms of racism prevail, it hurts all of society. The question becomes: What do we do about it?

What does "dismantling systemic racism" really mean? Do we mean "fighting racism?" Well, that sounds reasonable, and is an ethical thing to do. But do we really believe that every institution in society—from municipal to state and federal government, public corporations and private industry—is racist to the core? That there is a consolidated conspiracy by white people everywhere, acting cryptically yet in earnest, to keeping the Other down? Given that immigration, multiculturalism, and the intersectionality of race and ethnicity are infused in the very fabric of North American and British societies, this would mean by logical definition that all these non-Anglo citizens are also (directly and indirectly) participating in a racist plot to subjugate alterity, hence themselves.

If this is indeed the case, why would they conspire to harm their own people and self-interest at the same time by supporting and actively engaging in a so-called racist system engendered by global society they directly participate in and contribute to? What logical rationale would account for this? To say that social collectives are unconscious of their behaviour, do not consider their lives or actions as partaking in a racist system they themselves sustain, are generally unreflective, powerless, subjugated, brainwashed, or are simply conditioned sheep in the meadow is a most condescending exoneration. We should not treat grown adults like children and assume they should be sheltered from truth and reality, are too stupid, lack the ability to think critically, and patronizingly need to be told what to think and how to act. I can think of no greater form of infantilization. So, then what motivates their complicity? Is it perhaps as simple as everyone lives together in our multicultural world of diversity where we are more or less interdependent on one another due to globalization, geopolitical cooperation, international trade, and collective capitalism? So how could this globalized

macrosystem of economic trade and intercontinental collaboration be inherently systemically racist when peoples of the global majority are not Caucasian? Predictably, the mantra goes, it is because the slave-holding whitey has colonized them—Itself an affront to their agency.


The Racist Trope

Now the controversial new rave is about Critical Race Theory (CRT); once an obscure legal theory has now been annexed by popular culture where white babies are supposedly born racist immediately after coming out of the womb. Public schools that attempted to implement "race essentialist curriculums" and started to get kindergarten children to think of themselves as white perma-oppressors and black perma-victims were bound to shock, especially when school districts and the media blundered by trying to deny, deceive, and cover-up that any of this was happening at all. No wonder why "Stop Woke" laws, "Don't Say Gay" bills, and book banning in school curriculums came out of the conservative woodwork, legislation deliberately designed where you can't talk about race, gender, or sex period—Itself a retrograde attempt to censor free speech and rebuff important social issues that need serious discussion. But the question still becomes: when is it appropriate to introduce such ideas to children?

Now even the sciences are under attack, where STEM subjects such as technology, engineering, medicine, and math are considered to be hotbeds of racism and misogyny. Most ridiculous is the premise that mathematics is historically based in white supremacy despite the fact that major advances in the field have come from Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, Chinese, Indians, and Arabs—and whatever ethnicity a mathematician is they seem to get similar results. From the American Medical Association to prestigious journals such as *Scientific America* and *Nature*, virtually every science organization has become woke, claiming that systemic racism and white supremacy has infiltrated all corners of the globe. Leaders in science and medicine are now apologizing for their own race in creating social injustice and structural forms of oppression.

Even more absurd is the notion that professionalism, perfectionism, objectivity, and a sense of urgency are labelled white supremacist values and traits, as if these characteristics do not appear cross-culturally all over

struthers & co



Plainfield • Free Local Delivery

Artisan Wood Furnishings & Home Decor
www.struthersandco.com

Ceremonies by Lisa

Licensed Officiant for All of
Life's Celebrations



Just Married

Lisa Van Meer
613-813-4389
Serving the Quinte Area
and Prince Edward County
lisa.vanmeer.on@gmail.com



SIDESTREET GALLERY
Local & Regional Artists • Custom Framing
and more...



264 Main St. Wellington, Ontario
613.399.5550
sidestreet264main@gmail.com

the world and from every shade under the rainbow. Tell that to your employer when you lose your job—Oh, yeah, it was because he was black. Who could support such a daft distortion of reality?

But if you were to question any of this dogma in academia, social media, or popular culture, you will be labeled a “racist”—a fine sophist tactic to spring on any critical reflection on a topic in order to shut it down. Requests to explain oneself, to ask for clarity of definitions, demonstrations of proof, let alone challenging the self-predicating circularity of arguments, is enough to muffle any other competing narrative passed off as bigoted offence.

But does any of this scapegoating, blaming, or hating whitey help? Does it move us toward a more just and equitable society where people can engage these complex social issues in civil discourse and humanitarian fashions with a united egalitarian goal in mind? Or does it simply keep divisions in place that actually harm racialized groups from achieving more equity simply because they want to pillory or lynch their imaginary white master? Casting false and emotionally reactionary manufactured accusations of oppression/victimization/colonization/imperialism against one's neighbour will only get people's backs up, discredit the legitimacy of any social justice initiatives that are offered in good faith, and ensure that rage, entitlement, and condemnation of white alterity will bring no desire to sit down at the table to find viable solutions. This type of crass activism is simply a sure way to shoot each other in the foot.

The crucial moment in any social movement is when ideology has become a hegemony. The new fetishized ideological object of mass consumption is white supremacy. Now people are being called a white supremacist for simply being white—oh, I forgot, only whites can be racist—didn't you know that?—where self-flagellation, conscripted apologies, embarrassing confessionals over white privilege, guilt inducement, and shaming have all become public spectator sports. Poor and working-class whites derived no benefits from slavery, as they certainly had no cotton plantations in the American South or the Caribbean, only the rich elite, and yet they get tarred with the same brush even today. What this hyperbolic (unmeasured, free-for-all) embellishment really has to do with is animus over power relations and class inequalities that disproportionately advantage some groups over others, yet they are exploited within any given social milieu regardless of what colour,

gender, or country you happen to be from. And of course, anyone who is decrying “privilege” simply wants it for themselves, as envy is staring us plainly in the face.

This is not meant to diminish the historical effects of slavery and the transgenerational transmission of trauma on the lives of its descendants. Living in the aftermath of humanity's barbaric practices, cultural genocide has traumatized many peoples, indigenous or not, including those displaced through the African diaspora, or more contemporaneously, as we live in the shadow of the Holocaust. But when we focus exclusively on one peoples' plight, we tend to forget others.

Long before the transatlantic slave trade that dominates contemporary discourse in the United States, especially since the New York Times 1619 Project that reframes history and places slavery at the centre of American society—itsself a fallacious exaggeration of history—as if every English settler and their descendants were slave owners, we must not forget that much of civilization was built on slave labour. The Indian Ocean slave trade goes back to at least 2500 BCE involving ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, the Indian subcontinent, and the Arab world such as Persians who all traded slaves across the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and sub-Saharan Africa that preceded European colonialism. What is further appalling is that modern slavery and human trafficking in the forms of forced labour, criminal and sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and domestic servitude affect over 40 million people throughout the globe today. Modern slavery occurs in every region of the world with the highest prevalent rates in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Arab States. Victims are often vulnerable persons enslaved and trafficked due to coercion, violence, and fraud where they are kept in captivity and work in abominable conditions controlled physically, economically, and psychologically through fear, threats, dependency, and debt bondage where an estimated one in four victims are children.

The Americentric obsession with race and antiracism activism tends to get more media attention than fighting ongoing racism in Africa perpetrated by other African blacks who discriminate against others and perpetrate murder based on ethnic differences, tribal rivalry, and darker shades of skin colour. It is further worth noting that skin colour hierarchies existed in ancient cultures some ten thousand years before European classification systems and colonization, most conspicuously in India



where the caste system, based primarily on differences in colour hues, is still practised today. The same is true for Egyptians who continue to view Nubians with contempt. This means that various values attached to skin colour were established independently of white imperialist countries by indigenous peoples within their own inter-group identifications tied to identity politics and power imbalances.

Of course, none of this is simple, but the rhetoric around race and colour schemes, such as "white," "brown," "black," or "mixed," is designed to plant wedges, point fingers, and make demands of others that they can do very little about. We are all racialized when social discourse wants to place us in a colour box we don't choose to adopt. As I have said elsewhere, this is the new racism where diversity politics is the new sham. It is also dangerous because everyone will be pitted against each other based on visible difference alone.

There is No Such Thing as Whiteness

Take the empirical fact that "white" is not an ethnicity at all, and yet it often gets treated as if it were the case. It is not. There is no empirical evidence for this postmodern ruse. There are people with ancestry from all sorts of northern climates with a lighter scale of hue on the colour spectrum, but the idea of "whiteness" did not emerge until the colonial era. It came about as a categorization scheme often applied to morphological distinctions across population groups and class differences that has no basis in biology whatsoever. Science shows there is no biology of race. The concept of race is a social construction. According to science, we are all nearly identical with regards to our genetic makeup as a human species, with more in-group variations than between populations. And there are no genetic markers associated with "whiteness." You could come from all sorts of geographic places and get lumped into that category based on skin colour alone due to random bias. How can this magically appear on one's genome at arbitrary points in history—such as when poor Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Hunger who were in no position to dominate anyone, yet were met with extreme prejudice including "No Irish Need Apply" when searching for work? But then somehow their descendants miraculously acquired "white genes." It is all hoopla.

I think such inane posturing of pitting whites as colonial oppressors against all other so-called races simply gets everyone worked up while taking serious attention away from real

racist practices (like redlining, racial profiling, mass incarceration, etc.) that continue unabated. Here racial hyperbole as negation of whites is very counterproductive to responsible activism. In fact, insistence on the racialization of others that pits difference against difference reinforces divisions and polarities that make racism even more entrenched. Psychoanalysis calls this splitting. This is why the case for colour-blindness is metaphorical and not literal: it is more about acknowledging difference without succumbing to essentializing people based on their race or colour alone. This noble social practice of unspoken acknowledgement of visual difference is based on a generic ethic of mutual decency, where the virtues of civility, respect, dignity, and simply being interpersonally courteous is preferred by all. Who in their right mind would prefer to generate immediate antagonism based on racial or ethnic difference unless they wanted to provoke a fight and had an axe to grind? We don't need that kind of hate. We also don't need to be forced to identify people based on such differences as it only stirs up antipathy and provokes resentment.

There is current debate surrounding antiracist theory among the black intelligentsia, i.e., Adolph Reed, Thomas Chatterton Williams, Glenn Loury, John McWhorter, and Coleman Hughes, among others, and we should be mindful that these ideas do not represent black people across the board, but I point to them as evidence of a diversity of views contested by black professionals themselves. By claiming that adversity minority groups suffer is mainly due to systemic racism, social oppression, and victimization across the board, these critics point out how a dehumanizing, supercilious condescension occurs when antiracist sentiment is used as an argument to dignify BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) when it in fact diminishes them as people. All this does is, predictably, lead to provoked defensiveness, outrage, and white backlash, hence making social rifts, indignation, resentment, and animosity more pronounced.

Critical social justice activists alienate others and sabotage their own cause when all they do is blame someone else or some other group for their misery. All that does is lead to an infinite regress where some other person, group, event, or entity is causally responsible for why one is who they are today. That is a pathetic excuse for abnegating existential responsibility to actualize one's potential and transcend the facticity of historical oppression by others, because anyone who claims

to be a perennial victim of history is a slave to history, itself a sorry subjugation to nihilism which they wish to project onto others. This attitude also becomes low-hanging fruit for the far-Right to exploit. Victimization culture likely fortifies a total indifference to alterity because of such strong rhetoric, guilt inducement, scapegoating, and the flagrant trafficking in identitarian language or the discourse of othering that is designed to distance their counterparts, stir emotions and resentment, and simply close the door to meaningful dialogue. Because we are living in an era of lunacy where anyone is licensed to take offence at anyone who is different than them, we should take pause to note that the situation could instantly turn on a dime. Who then will become the accuser and who the oppressor? 🐼

