

Conclusions: Race as social fact and scientific fiction

The JAS forum on race in science and society started last year with contributions from countries in the global north including the United States (Goodman, 2017) and countries in the European Union: Italy (Destro Bisol *et al.*, 2017), the UK (Ellison *et al.*, 2017), France (Hayer, 2017), Germany (Kattmann, 2017), Norway (Kyllingstad, 2017), Greece (Lefkaditou), and Portugal (Rocha, 2017). This year we expanded southward and further away from the epicenter of racial science to Australia (Kowal & Watt) the Americas with contributions from Mexico (Peña-Saint Martin & Vera-Cortés) and Brazil (Calvo-González & Santos), and Africa with contribution from Nigeria (Heyward-Rotimi & Owoye) and Ghana (Pierre).

These essays on the dynamics of race and racism in scientific, legal and social spheres highlight a wide variety of interesting dynamics linked to histories and cultures. I think, however, that the main observations are universal. Race is a scientific fiction; racism is a social fact.

The language of race may or may not be used currently in scientific and social discourses. Some countries such as the United States and Brazil use race in official documents and public policies and the salience and meaning of race is frequently part of public and private conversations. Conversely, many countries including Norway, France and Australia have made efforts to move beyond race and eliminate race from official documents, and to dampen and even criminalize the use of race is public discourse. Unfortunately, however, racism remains, everywhere. The forms and manifestations of racism vary, but racism always remains. I contend that racism remains mostly because it is such a hegemonic and powerful ideology. Racism remains because it is buttressed and allowed to remain because the old, well established, worldwide ideology that races are biological, natural, and is hierarchically arranged is alive and well in science and society in all corners of the globe. This view of race is deeply reified. And as a result, when things

get tough, marginal individuals of different colors and so-called races are scapegoated. Whether or not race is biologically real, and whether or not race is part of political and everyday speech, racism lives and thrives as social, political and economic fact.

A big part of the continued racisms, and now many newer racisms (found in for examples anti-immigration and Islamophobia) is the deep disconnect between the ever growing scientific knowledge about human variation and legal and everyday widespread ideas about race. Paradoxically, the essays in this forum show over and over again that racism is a social, political and economic fact at the same time that race is shown to be a scientific fiction. Why has the new science that shows that race is a genetic myth not had more impact on policy and society? Some tentative conclusions are that this disconnect between science and society is a result of scientist turning away from political engagements and focusing on their more comfortable, more predictable and more controllable laboratory lives. As well, scientists and anthropologists since WW II have found it hard to deliver a more complex message about what race is and is not. Rather than a simple soundbite, race is unstable, local and both real and unreal. And it is not what it seems to be. Understand the illusiveness of race and that it is not what seems obvious requires sustained engagement. Finally, politicians do not often lean against public opinions. Last, we have all underestimated the political and ideological power of racial ideology.

The world does not sit still. When I first wrote my essay on race in science and society in the United States (Goodman, 2017), Barack Obama was president. The son of a Nigerian father and a white Midwestern anthropologist mother, he understands the complexities of race, ethnicity, ancestry and identities. With his election and leadership there was reason to be optimistic that the United States would have a deeper discussion about race, racism, even whiteness. Then, the candidacy and election of Donald Trump changed hope to pessimism, and

for good reasons. Trump's election tapped into an underground torrent of white supremacy, xenophobia and racism. Since then, Trump's rhetoric has fanned racist flames. Neo-Nazis and White Nationalist, previously most visible online such as in their virulent Nazi and racist websites such as Stormfront (<https://www.stormfront.org/forum/>) and Vdare (<https://vdare.com/>), have more often shown their faces. For examples, in August, 2017 the *Unite the Right* rally brought many of them to Charlottesville, Virginia to march with guns and torches, shouting over and over "Jews will not replace us." This event presaged the tragedy in Pittsburgh in October, 2018. On a quiet Saturday morning Robert Bowers entered the Tree of Life Synagogue and killed eleven individuals, including a 97-year-old survivor of the holocaust, while shouting "All Jews must die." The depth of the connection between White Nationalism and Antisemitism has come from smoldering memory to the front burner. Anti-Semitic hate crimes have skyrocketed.

Meanwhile, other forms of racism mix into the White supremacists' stew. Trump accuse Muslims on a nearly daily basis of somehow being tied to immigration to the US from Mexico and countries to the south. Central Americans and Mexican continue to be denigrated as less than and fears are stocked that they mean to take away what "we" have and have rightly earned with hard work and intelligence.

The myth of meritocracy holds that one has what one has because we have earned it on the equal playing field. Racism tries to hide behind anti-immigration and nationalist rhetoric. Violence against African Americans, often by the police, the very individuals that should be protecting them, is a daily occurrence. In the days before the shooting in Pittsburgh a white man with a history of violence shot and killed two African-Americans at a supermarket in Kentucky following his failed attempt to barge into a black church. The so-called elite that supports "globalism" is not immune now from attack. During the same week as the hate crimes in Pittsburgh and Kentucky, a dozen mail bombs were being sent to people who had been criticized

by the President. The suspect is a man who had railed against Democrats and minorities with hate-filled messages online.

This above speaks to how the United States is doing when it comes to educating about race and human variation and in reducing racism. Not good.

Everyone is struggling. Other countries are doing no better. Of the other eleven country essays, none report big successes. Countries such as Nigeria that are more racially homogeneous in the classic terms of Africans being one race biologize ethnic differences. Countries that have tried to officially move beyond race are doing no better. What is most important to note is that as race goes underground, geneticization, the explanation of current situations as due to genetic differences, remains. Often, ethnicity because bio-genetics. We have not gotten out of the racial smog.

The essays show similarities in the dynamics of race and racism with local variation. The variations sometimes are related to classification patterns, the types of and relative importance of admixture and immigration, and the histories of race and racism, for examples. All countries, even those in the global south, share the dominant ideology of race as deep, primordial and based in genetics and science. This is true from Ghana and Nigeria to Brazil and Mexico, to Australia, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Norway. Race and racism are everywhere.

It is my hope that this forum has provided a glimpse into the dynamics of race and racism. It is a glimpse onto a picture that is not pretty. It is shameful. It also reaffirms the importance of anthropology. Anthropology was the field that helped invent race and a racial thinking. It can now be the field that is most responsible for education that race is a scientific fiction. Showing clearly what race is and is not will not eliminate racism. However, I contend that it is a necessary step that we need to take, soon, now.

Alan Goodman

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA USA

e-mail: agoodman@hampshire.edu

