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The Steps of Racism in America

The horrors of racism of the 18th to 19th century have many analytical steps that took the United States from the lie of stereotypes to the maltreatment of minorities to the realization that racism is wrong to the fight against racism and lastly the aftermath of it all. The whole history of racism and the future of African Americans, Native Americans, and the Chinese all fall into these common steps as well as the many factors that contributed to the cause as well as the ways minorities can fight against these types of threats. To prevent these types of incidents from happening in the future, everyone needs to know why and how they occurred. Unless humanity is well informed, racism will repeat its horrors.

To understand the history of racism, we should start by examining a common lie that was spread to deal with minorities against the Native Americans. Stereotypes and common lies are often used to justify the exploitation of minorities to benefit the perpetrator's race. An example of this is how the Americans spread rumors about the Native Americans to take their land, one such media is about an American woman reporting her experience on how she was captured by the Native Americans and portrayed as savage, even going into details on the gruesome practices, one such as "Scalping which is a practice in which they cut the crown of an English person's head off and carry it with them as a trophy" (O'Hara, Female Captivity pg. 49). The idea that Indians were cruel and treated their captives poorly is wrong many of the captures were treated fairly and some even decided to marry into the society. Lies like this one were very believable

and spread out easily, allowing for a justification for an exploitation of the minority race. Many Americans at that time did not know any better and had never thought to question the narrative that was given to them, whether the Indians were inferior to the rest of the world or not. It was in this instance of thought that the United States obtained its justification for “taking the lands that were owned by the Indians, causing millions of Native Americans to perish, resulting in the greatest human catastrophe in history” (Race in America pg. 54). This goes to show that America’s racism and stereotyping and later genocide of the Native Americans came from greed. American was closed off from the rest of the continent and decided to invade west of the continent. It is not uncommon for many of the conquered lands to be sold off or handed over to American settlers. The Native Americans had many approaches to fix or stop the Americans from invading their lands, “Even Indians who chose to cooperate or negotiate rather than retreat or fight did badly” (Native and Strangers pg. 6). Native Americans were the true victims as they tried everything to make the relationship between them stop. Even at the first encounter when the English arrived on the continent, they were helped hugely by the Native Americans, with resources such as food and shelter. Even with their well-being and friendliness, the Americans still dehumanized them by placing a greater emphasis on wealth than on people. Today in the aftermath of it all, the Native American’s tragedy would eventually be recognized by the United States and the tragedy of what they did will be still on them. And now the Native Americans are given some of their lands back as Indian reserves. However, some of the racism and stereotypes are still around today. For example, a comic book has shown racism towards Native Americans showing as savages, an example of this is Action Comics 148 where in the story, Native Americans were seen as savages and they even downplayed their racism and the genocide on their people, minimalizing it to “the Indians sold to the white men the land where the city of

Metopolis now stands” (Complex). The problem in today’s society is that not enough people know about how truly bad the genocide and racism of the Native Americans are. Americans must be knowledgeable about what happened in the past. Most Americans are unknowingly racist to this day by grouping all the tribes of Indians as one. Ultimately, Indian oppression began with believable lies about them that dehumanized them and led the Americans to value their greed over the lives of Indians. In the end, due to greed, a genocide occurred, and many Americans today are neither remorseful nor knowledgeable about the events of the past.

This cycle of racism, starting with believable lies, dehumanization of people, exploitation, the realization of the crimes, and lastly the aftermath of it all also applies to African Americans and how they were mistreated by America. To start with this story we have to look at the wrongful rumors that started the dehumanization of these people. One such instance of this is how Saartjie Baartman was seen, "forced as an animal to be in a cage fully naked and be shown as an exhibit to showcase her oversized butt throughout Europe" (Time). These early depictions of her made the Europeans and the Americans view an assumption that the African race was savage and a product of monkeys no less than animals. It became widely believed, and was not doubted at all, and became scientific knowledge at the time that Africans were the link between humans and apes. Consequently, Africans were dehumanized due to this notion that they were inferior. This dehumanization in combination with greed as a way to profit from the new world caused the horrors of the Atlantic Slave Trade, “as much as 12.57 million Africans were sent away between 1601 to 1867, most of them were packed into the bowels of ships by hundreds, many treated like animals” (Race in America pg. 60). Many of them had unimaginable experiences being forced to leave their lands, their family and their traditions to unknown lands far away from where they live being exploited and violated in every which way on the journey.

The journey was so bad and cruel that about a huge percentage aboard died as a result of starvation disease and overcrowding. When arriving the exploitation continued as slave workers on plantation farms, “Maximization of productivity was the goal, owners had them to a science on average, worked sunup to sundown for six days a week” (Race in America pg. 62). In those days, a slave would not expect to take a vacation almost ever. The overworking was so bad that even pregnant women were only allowed two weeks off from work each year. In addition, the slaves were treated badly, they were whipped, beaten, and separated from their families. A major factor in the atrocity was greed; the Southerners were willing to make a huge profit at the expense of human life. Their human rights violations were mostly overlooked because they looked like animals. Not until the violations became clear did people start to associate evil with slavery and fight against it. The fight against racism lasted a long time and multiple waves of fighting against it had to happen to stop the racism. A major step against racism was taken by the Civil War, which led to the abolition of slavery which would only have been possible with the support and dedication of a large number of people who were against these violations. However the racism did not stop there, although slaves did not exist, racist laws such as the Jim Crow laws were prejudiced against the blacks. Another fight or protest had to happen to stop such laws. Even after that, racism still existed, and the common folks still treated them like inferiors, even more protests like Martin Luther King’s protests had to happen. Even after that racism stereotypes are still seen in the media, a prominent example of this is blackface where “a character in a show would cover their face black and act stereotypical against blacks” (CBS). Many of these shows were eventually discontinued as many of the viewers of the show decided to take action on the racism of the show. In the end, a false lie about the blacks caused many of them to be enslaved and mistreated and it took many fights against this oppression to stop it.

To conclude, the othering against the Africans and Native Americans throughout history was very similar in terms of the steps it took. Both started with false rumors presenting the minority race as inferior and like savages no more than animals. This false rumor would spread and would eventually make that minority race be dehumanized which allowed for the eventual exploitation of that race for the perpetrator's benefit. Lastly in the aftermath the racism would eventually slow down or stop due to many people fighting against it.

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