Highlighting the chameleon nature of power  
The social practice and ideological effects of the label "African-American"

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This essay uses a poststructural/critical race analysis, and provides a specific example of how the social practice of labeling serves to create major ideological effects, which produce and reproduce unequal race-based power relations. Certain U. S. citizens are ascribed/branded with the seemingly politically correct label, "African-American". Many believe that the shift from "Black" to "African-American" in 1988 was the result of Blacks exercising political power and achieving a hard-won right to change their identity. Also many view the new label as the common sense preferred alternative to "Black". This article deconstructs the term "African-American" and views it within the context of the macro and micro interactive forces of politics, economics, sociology, history and socio-cultural phenomena. Instead of the intended purpose of fostering a sense of self-esteem, the label has also served to reinforce the socially constructed binary dualisms characterizing "Blacks" as being fundamentally different from "Whites". Moreover, the notion of Black pride, self-esteem and heritage are concepts with the power to shift culpability and blame onto the victims of a race-based system. Power appeared to have been exercised by Black/African-Americans. However, the shift to African-American was not the result of autonomous thinking. It was a "reflex without reflection" (Billig 1991:8). It "echoed" dominating ideological structures of power. The "new" label unwittingly serves to further perpetuate racist ideology inherited from a foundational institution of slavery. America can enjoy the image of having a culture of freedom, equality and egalitarianism, while maintaining justifiable race-based political, social and economic inequality gaps.

Keywords: African-Americans, labeling, identity markers, deconstructing labels, color-blind racism
Many theorists have analyzed and debated the various forms of power. Likewise, many have written about identities and representations, and the social construction of race. Images are carefully designed and selectively represented to the public. Certain acts of patterned representations serve to confirm widely held stereotypical belief systems. Power can be found in decisions made which result in the constant replication of patterned representations. This essay provides a specific example of one such pattern of representation — the social practice of labeling people as "African-American". This social practice carries the power to create major ideological effects, which produce and reproduce unequal race-based power relations. This form of power is like that of a seed, which has produced fruit, which produces more fruit — it is difficult to trace. Many believe that racism today is like Adam Smith's invisible hand — "no longer something done by individuals or groups to others, but something hidden and working away in "the system", even when nobody wants it". A keen point of challenge for this assumption can be launched by deconstructing the widespread use and acceptance of the label African-American. Power is not like an invisible hand. It is more accurately described as being like a chameleon — difficult to see because it blends into relevant environments. Today, it is politically correct to ascribe the label "African-American" to certain people. This is in spite of the link to damaging and self-destructive psychological and social effects. Admittedly, some of these effects are positive, however, too many are negative. The labeling of African-Americans is a social trap. Overall the net effect might be mapped in terms of social indicators. Recent social indicators (income, employment, unemployment, education, housing, death rates and healthcare) demonstrate that citizens categorized as "African-American" are found to be disproportionately located at the bottom of the quality-of-life scale. Racism today is no longer viewed as the culprit; it enjoys the guilt-free stance that Blacks have demanded to be different and separate. Labeling people as "African-American" has aided the maintenance of an unacknowledged, undisturbed, race-based system of social stratification. Similar arguments can be made for those Americans categorized as "Asian-Americans", "Hispanic-Americans" and "Native-Americans".

Furthermore, the notion that this label could somehow foster a sense of self-esteem was an unachievable myth. Particularly in light of the broad and pervasive negative social construction of African-Americans. Many social scientists, politicians and economists treat race as an incidental factor that simply correlates to the unequal distribution of material wealth and the accompanying privileges and benefits. It is widely known that people of color occupy the bottom rung of inequality in U.S. society. However, few agree on the cause(s) of this phenomenon. Some argue that race is no longer a key determinant to a person's material success, and that economics and the free market are to blame (Wilson 1980, 1987). Others argue that race is still a key determinant of a person's probability of material successes and that racial discrimination has just been repackaged for the modern era (Sears, Sidanius & Bobo 2000; Tuch & Martin 1997; Omi & Winant 1994).

Tuch and Martin (1997) uncover what seems to be a paradox today, the way most Whites turn their noses up at Jim Crow laws and the overt insistence on segregation. Contrarily, Tuch and Martin (1997) point out that large numbers of White Americans view widespread race-based inequality as being acceptable so long as it is based on free market and egalitarian principles. In other words, Gunnar Myrdal's (1944) thesis — that race in the United States is still socially meaningful. Tuch and Martin point out that 50 years after Myrdal's work was published there has been a dramatic decline in overt racist behaviors. Still, "racial antipathy" still exists and is a prevalent operator in today's American society. In other words egalitarianism is a myth.

After all, we must remember that racist ideology in the United States became the dominant ideology, from the beginning. Legal, educational, psychological, social and political underpinnings of this system are still with us today. The U.S. "is a house founded upon racial discrimination" (Feagin 2000). Anti Black racism was the key for justifying slavery. By denying multiracial realities with the one-drop rule, this system was able to create a justification for enslavement of a significant portion of the population. Many of the founding fathers and elites at the head of the new U.S. supported, or at least were not uncomfortable with a permanent slave society. There was a contradictory combination of freedom and equality for all, and enslavement for Blacks (Feagin 2000). This essay adds support to Tuch and Martin's (1997) evidence supporting the position that racism still exists and is an influential force in today's U.S. society. More importantly it not only demonstrates that racism still exists, it also points to an overlooked site of benevolent discourse on racism which serves to promote segregation. In many ways this essay helps to elucidate the paradox of how the American culture of freedom, equality and egalitarianism can and is co-existing with race-based political, social and economic inequality gaps.
Identity, stereotypes and social construction

The points made herein also support the argument made by Essed that "racism as ideology is present in everyday activities and serves to cement and to unify, to preserve the ideological unity of the White group" (1991:44). Essed (1991) and Hall (1986) explain that racism includes a whole range of "concepts, ideas, images, and intuitions that provide the framework of interpretation and meaning for racial thought in society, whether systematically organized in academic discourse or in causal, everyday, contradictory, ambivalent, common-sense thinking" (Essed 1991:44 citing Hall 1986). Identity is viewed by many as being a very complex, cultural construct, which varies with particular discourses and varies depending on context (Gee 1990). Furthermore, identity is so embedded within historical, cultural and social contexts that it can shape how we view ourselves (Erikson 1968; Tatum 1997). It doesn't matter whether a person self-identifies as being "multi-cultural", or something other than "African-American". We will be perceived and consequently reacted to as though we are "African-Americans", irrespective of personal declarations or insights. The same holds true for our children and their children, and there are many effects, which derive from this "peculiar" identity. Consequently, this reality has the power to shape how we view ourselves and the goals that we determine are realistic, or unrealistic for us to attempt to achieve.

As Segal (1995) explains, the history of the specific form of racism, which sought to sustain slavery and subsequent forms of subjugation or discrimination, was based on the socially constructed notion of "Blackness" rather than being based upon geographical distinctions or identities. Within this paradigm, "Blackness came to include lighter complexions, and any other features, such as lips, nose, and hair, which revealed traces of a Black ancestry". Historically, the notion of Blackness functioned as the pivotal signifier — determining and justifying who could participate in certain arenas of social, political and economic life. This system is still with us today. This labeling process amounts to a re-packaged form of the "one-drop rule" and it serves to perpetuate legitimized separate categories of citizenship. African-Americans are react to on the basis of this notion of racialized categories, irrespective of their actual skin color. It is, as Fanon observed, Blackness is the element that enters a room and chases reason out" (Gordon 1995:3). Having a system of racial signifiers is the glue that facilitates race-based inequality represented by unequal and ongoing social indicators. This has harmful implications for democracy.

The labels "African-American" or "Black" are both linked to negative stereotypes, which have been socially constructed, through textbooks and articles, movies and the media, music, conversations, expressed and interpreted attitudes, gestures, images and imagery. This link between identity, stereotyping and the social construction, is so pervasive that usually on sight, an African-American person is reacted to automatically on the basis of their category. Not on the basis of behavior, appearance, class or content of their character. Also, this labeling process has had the effect of isolating African-Americans in such a way that they are taught one lesson — that they are "undeserving of equal citizenship" — while teaching the non-Black population a different lesson (Schneider and Ingram 1997).

Our nation was formed and based upon bone chilling, inspiring notions of equality and opportunity for all. Today's form of hidden unacknowledged racism is but a sore, which has grown a scab. We will not be healthy until the scab has gone away. Schneider and Ingram's (1997) conceptual approach offers a framework for explaining how this sort of phenomenon can be damaging for democracy. They explain that the process of denying full rights of citizenship is carried out by "intentional ("divisive") social constructions", which are designed to "stigmatize certain populations and extol others". As in the case of African-Americans, this is problematic because these social constructions are not based upon actual deservedness or merit; rather they are based upon who has political power to establish the public agenda. This spills over into policy-making and has tremendous implications on which populations get to be represented or over represented within the various institutions and sects of our society. In addition, Schneider and Ingram (1997:192) argue that social constructions are "illogical, deceptive, contain divisive constructions of target populations, and systematically ever-present, overscribe, and over fund certain groups in the society (the "advantaged"), at the expense of others'. This dynamic results in certain people being treated differently. In other words, it establishes a system capable of justifying glaring race-based inequalities.

"African-american": As the only politically correct alternative

Feldstein (1997) warns that the political Right tends to use "speech codes" of the Left and to use PC issues to foster racism. Taking this argument one step further, hegemonic structures can be so pervasive that even Left-sounding gestures can be the result of socialization by the dominant ideology. The
argument made herein takes a different stance to political correctness — outside of the debate between liberals and conservatives over whether "the imminent downfall of Western culture is analyzed and blamed on the liberal agenda that has been instituted since the 1960s" (Choi & Murphy 1992). The concept of political correctness has many meanings (Williams 1995). It can refer to initiatives for inclusive institutions, open discussions and flexible discourse, that enables full participation of citizens (Choi & Murphy 1992; Levitt, Davies & McLaughlin 1999). The label African-American is viewed as beyond reproach and "politically correct". In my experience, within the context of interpersonal conversations, when I express my discontent with being labeled African-American, the most vehement attacks have come from liberal minded individuals. Critiquing the label African-American is taboo. To do so seems to rock the boat of a well-settled issue. However, I find the labeling process repressive, hegemonic. I must live with the brunt of the label and all of its symbols, therefore, I feel that I have a right to critique it.

Widespread use of the label "African-American" is viewed as the preferred common sense alternative to "Black". Oftentimes people's intentions are accepted without interrogation simply because they are believed to be representing a liberal or politically correct agenda. Propositions deemed to be politically correct can result in no more than echoes of ideology filtered down from structures of power (Billig 1991). This was the case with the 1988 shift to "African-American". Many believe that "African-American", as compared to "Black", is the politically correct alternative. Most people tend to argue over which term is most appropriate without asking why the labels Black and African-America are basically the only proffered alternatives. The momentum behind the widespread use of the term began in December of 1988 with a news conference held at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel in Chicago, Illinois. Jesse Jackson, who had twice run for President of the United States, presided over this conference. During this conference Jesse Jackson announced that Black Americans preferred to be called "African-Americans". Jackson was accompanied by "leaders of seventy-five Black groups" (Martin 1991). The campaign was led by a group of African-Americans to replace the term "Black". It was then accepted in the national press (Martin 1991). The theory behind this change was that the label African-American had "cultural integrity", and would serve to place Black Americans in proper historical context (Martin 1991 quoting Jesse Jackson). Jackson reasoned, "Every ethnic group in this country has a reference to some land base, some historical cultural base. African-Americans have hit that level of cultural maturity. There are Armenian-Americans, and Jewish-Americans and Arab-Americans and Italian Americans; and with a degree of accepted and reasonable pride, they connect their heritage to their mother country and where they are now" (Martin 1991 quoting Jesse Jackson). Survey data indicated that Blacks "were not especially taken by the idea — a 1989 Chicago-area poll showed that there was only twenty-six (26%) support among Blacks — but it seemed to be slowly catching on in the media..." (Seligman & Patty 1992). Noblit & Pink (1995) propose a relevant question: "Whose knowledge is privileged most and on what basis [are] these competing knowledge bases constructed". The process through which certain Americans were labeled "African-American" was not natural. Nor was it automatically accepted by all Black Americans. The process through which the shift in ideology occurred was a complex web involving cultural politics, state regulation, and the power-knowledge nexus. Power appeared to have been exercised by Black/African-Americans. However, the shift to African-American was not the result of autonomous thinking. It was a "reflex without reflection" (Billig 1991:8). It "echoed" dominating ideological structures of power.

Language — written, spoken, nonverbal communication, visual images (photos, videos, movies) and music — operates in social life "to reinforce certain hierarchies in social practices" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:38). This label was the result of the subtle process of interaction, and it also shapes the nature of social interaction. The proponents of the new label "unthinkingly accepted the inheritance of the past and the environment of the present". They were "becoming and reproducing stereotypes" (Billig 1991:8). Social practices (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:38) include interpersonal interaction at work, at play, in the home, in the street, in elementary classrooms, aftercare programs, university and college campuses, workshops, meetings, boardrooms, conference rooms or at police stations, are affected by perceptions which are shaped by labels and language. Language is how we comprehend each other because language affords "remarkable power" (Fanon 1967). Fairclough (1999) explains that systemic functional linguistics views language as dialectically "structured and structuring", therefore language is the channel for social change. Before we can change race-based inequality gaps, we need to revisit the labeling processes through which we perceive each other.

Too often ideologies and labels are accepted at face value as being politically correct. We must consider that certain ideologies associated with political correctness, may appear to be so through carefully constructed images and ideology put forth, or endorsed by structures of power. This includes authorized media representations, textbooks, articles, movies, music or the arts.
Images and ideology go through a process before they hit the general public. In many ways this issue poses an ideological dilemma because racial and ethnic minorities do benefit politically and culturally from identity strategies. Personally, I would feel a devastating sense of loss to give up the label. However, my concern is for my son, his generation and their children. Identity labels also serve to perpetuate and allow conversations reinforcing negative social constructions and stereotypes. Yet, this contradiction was explained away by the ideology promoting the label African-American, which consequently overlooks the operation of power in our society (see also Billig 1988). Furthermore, the media’s announcement that "Black" would be replaced by "African-American" did not fall on the ears of "helpless targets of a one-way flow of carefully filtered and orchestrated communications"; people paid attention to whatever "caught their interest, ignored, reorganized and interpreted" this news announcement in a way consistent with their own worldviews and belief systems (Newman, Just & Crigler 1992). Stereotypes of Blacks and Africans are still widely held.

Therefore, there is a contradiction between the label’s power in theory, compared to the effects faced in everyday life. The real life effects of the socially constructed identity and negative stereotypes for Black Americans negate the theoretical ideology that Black Americans would somehow benefit from the new label. The label African-American was supposed to bolster self-esteem, pride and heritage. This is impossible for two reasons. The terms Black and African-American are used interchangeably. This is so even though the term African-American has been uniformly adopted as the politically correct term to use today. For example, many written or spoken references made about Black Americans will alternate the use of the term Black with African-American. Second, the negative social construction for Black people still exists; it was never dismantled. The negative social construction of Black people has informally been transferred onto the newer label, African-American. Therefore, in many situations, it has been impossible for the label, in and of itself, to foster Black pride or a sense of heritage as it was believed when society adopted the new label.

Part of the mobilization of ideology which promoted widespread acceptance of this new term involved the use of guilt. The media, literature, textbooks, art, music and the conversations during the setting of this social construction into stone revolved around painting the picture that individuals had only two choices: either you were a Black American who was proud of your African roots, or you were an African-American who was ashamed of your African-American roots. Also, Blacks have been repressed from claiming any form of their White ancestry or any other non-Black ancestry under the guise if you are Black, you are "Black" — end of story. To attempt to claim any other ancestry except for "African" or "Black" is typically viewed as being pretentious, or attempting to "be something that you are not". Hating your Blackness, is the way it was viewed from the 1950s onward. Many African-Americans are a vast mixture of numerous categories including Black, White, Hispanic and/or Native American heritage. But, through various socialization processes Blacks have been silenced and shamed away from claiming any other facets of identity. Therefore, the transfer was successful with little or no resistance.

Real life and social indicators

Strangely enough, the label, "African-American" is widely viewed, as a political success story. It is usually represented as a hard-won right, or something that Black Americans should be proud of achieving. However, the new label "African-American" triggers the same economic, social and political effect as did the prior labels: "Negro" and "Black". Contrary to popular belief, Black Americans are really not much better off today than they were in the 1960s. By deconstructing this "popularized" new label, it becomes easier to explain the proposition that the label maintains the stigma of less than full U.S. citizenship. The fact that Black Americans (irrespective of class and irrespective of actual skin color) are still labeled as a separate category, supports the argument that race in the United States is still socially, economically and politically meaningful.

Recent social indicators: income, employment, unemployment, poverty, education, housing, death rates and healthcare, demonstrate that citizens categorized as "African-American" are still found to be disproportionately located — at the bottom of the quality-of-life scale. Whatever the positive outcomes of the new label, the net effect seems to have served the maintenance of an unacknowledged, undisturbed, race-based system of social stratification. Furthermore, the notion that this label could somehow foster a sense of self-esteem was an unachievable myth. Particularly in light of the broad and pervasive negative social construction of African-Americans. More specifically, Affirmative Action policies have helped to narrow some gaps, for example in education and employment. However, the absolute economic position of African-Americans has not actually improved since the 1960s (Pollman 1999:55). For example, contrary to popular belief, Affirmative Action employment legislation has not equalized the playing field. Statistics demonstrate that equality does not exist in the workplace. As a result of many advantages, white
men earn significantly more than women and minorities, especially minority women. Women with a college education earn less than men with a high school education. Comparisons of wages for full time white male workers and minority women are especially dramatic. For example, African-American women workers earned sixty-two cents ($0.62) for every one-dollar ($1.00) earned by white male workers in 1988.  

These differences are attributable to many factors. Employment discrimination is only one aspect of the systemic subordination of women and people of color to Whites and men, particularly "White men, under rules, practices, and standards made by white men and preserving their power". To add a thought, "in a society in which neither race nor sex affected future access to economic security and power there would be both a more equitable distribution of resources and less subordination". In addition, the median income of poor Black families is also some twenty percent (20%) lower than for poor white families. Therefore, as a consequence, Blacks are not only disproportionately poor, but the Black poor tend to be poorer than their white counterparts. By way of further example, with respect to unemployment, "Black unemployment seems to have become fixed at roughly twice the White rate, Black family income has remained at only slightly more than one-half of White family income during this same period, and as a group, Black families made fifty-one percent (51%) of what White families took home in 1947". This figure "grew to sixty-three percent (63%) by the end of the reform-oriented 1960s, but had slipped back to fifty-five percent (55%) by the 1990s" (Pollman 1999:54). Black Americans or African-Americans are still overwhelmingly and disproportionately poor. Approximately "three out of every ten African-Americans were still categorized as poor in the mid-1990s, and approximately one-half of all Black children found themselves in families living below the poverty line" (Pollman 1999) 20 Half (50%) of African-American children under-age six live in poverty as compared with seventeen percent of White children. This situation is exacerbated by the inextricable link between poverty and gender. Fifty-one point eight percent (51.8%) of African-American families, with children under 18 years are headed by women. Add to these statistics the understanding that African-Americans are usually characterized as having high rates of family disruption, joblessness, low educational achievements and work skills and this functions to exacerbate poverty and disproporionate lack of resources.

Another factor maintaining the poverty status of Blacks is education. Education is a key resource needed in order to enable individuals to increase their available resources, such as employment, housing and food. The percentage of Black students at universities amount to a paltry four percent (4%) of the student body, about the same as it was twenty years ago. It is worth noting that a college education is a key valuable resource in order to have access to other key resources necessary for a more enjoyable survival in our society. Moreover, admissions statistics for Blacks at the college level have plummeted since the 1980s, and drop out rates have soared. Historically, at the primary and secondary levels, the institutional structure is arranged in such a way that test scores for students attending predominantly Black schools indicate that students are often years behind their white counterparts.

Equally important, inequality is depicted in the area of African-American health. For example, life expectancy for African-Americans declined from sixty-nine point seven (69.7) years in 1984 to sixty-nine point four (69.4) years in 1989. By contrast, Whites have a life expectancy of seventy-five (75) years (Bureau of Census 1988). African-American babies are "twice as likely as white babies to die" before the age of one year old, and "obesity is a problem for forty-four 44 percent" of the population. The mortality rates for African-Americans have worsened over the past two decades due to poverty and poor socioeconomic circumstances of African-Americans. Also, Quaye (1994) argues that the "health care status of African-Americans is a function of their marginal position to the U.S. health care and a direct result of poverty and discrimination". Quaye also points out that "thirty years after the Kerner Report, the gaps in income between African-Americans and the rest of the American population remain as wide as they were in 1960". Going a step further, "one in 21 Black males will be murdered, with murder being the most common cause of death for Black males between the ages of 15 and 24" (Pollman 1999:57). Segal (1995) presents empirical evidence of killing as the leading cause of death among young Black men and women, suicide comes third; twelve percent of Americans are Black, yet they make up more than 40 percent of all murder victims. In addition, incarceration and death sentence rates for Black/African-American males are approximately equal to that of White males, yet Black males only make up an estimated fifteen percent (15%) of the population.

There is a history behind these social indicators. Few today believe it, but the lingering effects of a once legalized system racial discrimination is the main reason why Blacks are disproportionately poor. It is important to link the racialized legal footprints to the inequalities and disproportionate poverty experienced by African-Americans today. Only by Unking the history of legalized discrimination can we be convinced that currently, race functions as an unspoken underlying rationale, to support social norms of maintaining inequities.
To understand how the race-based system of social, economic and political stratification has been maintained, it is necessary to link the labeling of African-Americans to recent social indicators which demonstrate that in many important aspects of life: income, employment, unemployment, underemployment, education, housing, death rates and healthcare — those bearing this label are not experiencing proportionate equality. The power of naming and labeling people is the type of power capable of a subtle, psychological and subconscious exercise of power. This type of power facilitates the perpetual internal control of individuals. It is a type of power invisible to the naked eye and detectable only to the deepest level of sensitivity. Usually the exercise of this type of power is not recognizable until long after the effects of its fallout have been made obvious. So subtle and pervasive is this type of power. It is rigged-up and color-coded so that one or two words carry the power of summoning storehouses of pictorials, past discourses, conversations, television programs, music and ten thousand other sites of activities — drumming up a vast culmination of assumptions and presuppositions across the expanse of time and continents. This labeling process serves as a tool to link storehouses of red flags, buzz words and negative stereotypes capable of triggering the subliminal message of undeservedness onto a group of people. The negative side effects of the everyday reality of bearing this label are widely ignored. Meanwhile the label unwittingly serves to further the perpetuation of a racist ideology inherited from a foundational institution of slavery. Instead of fostering a sense of self-esteem the label has served to reinforce the socially constructed binary dualisms characterizing "Blacks" as being fundamentally different from "Whites".

Our everyday consciousness is in direct contradiction to the philosophy that a change in identity marker would somehow benefit and improve the representation of people categorized as African-Americans. Furthermore, the shift away from Black, involved the realization the word Black in the English language was synonymous with everything that is negative. What these "Black leaders" didn't anticipate was that all of the negative stereotyping and statistics would be transferred over to the new term. Now the category newly referred to as "African-American" carries the baggage of a negative social construction which triggers race-based perceptions, expectations, fears, likes and dislikes. The proponents of the "new" label did not seem to realize that the term "African" or "Africa" suffers from similar negative representations (Mudimbe 1988). Those in positions of power to make "knowledge" have systematically deployed discourse and regimes of representation (Escobar 1995) to such an extent that the concepts "Africa" or "African" have been "invented" (Mudimbe 1988). In real life, other ideologies are at work shaping and reinforcing negative stereotypes, assumptions and presumptions associated with Black/African-Americans. Gramsci (1971) suggested that "philosophy shapes the common sense of the common person, as the ideology's hegemony is fashioned around philosophical principles" (Billig 1991:7). In other words, Jesse Jackson and the others who pushed for the label African-American were merely reproducing an "unconscious echo of a master's voice" which is built into the "structure of language itself" (Billig 1991:7). Hence by advocating the use of the label African-American, they were further aiding the process of subjugation by identity marker.

Today the world is ideologically divided into the First World, Second World and Third World. Although many nations within the vast continent of Africa are thriving, Africa tends to be represented as a web of poverty, devastation and despair. A problematic representation of Africa is the dominant mode of thinking, promoted through the channels of representation: the media, textbooks, articles, movies, music and conversations. This is typically contrasted against all of the oppositely good qualities. Gould (1996) critiques the "scientific" discourse measuring mental ability and psychometrics; he points to the footprints whereby "science" promoted racist ideology. Gould (1996) elicits the fallacies contained in anthropological and craniological postulates of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries wherein theorists attempted to establish that mental ability could be categorized on the basis of race. Gould points out that the universal theme of this literature was that those falling within the category of Negroid were lesser in intelligence that those categorized as Caucasoid. The history of the link between academics and the policymaking process is replete with instances of what has been referred to as ideological hegemony. Since the rise of the print medium, painstaking efforts were undertaken in order to socially construct Africa in negative ways. The production of what is to be treated as knowledge is a political exercise. Historically, it has involved the exercise of power (Said 1979).

Critically analyzing discourse, language and labels

The main goal of critical discourse analysis is to examine the use of language, and to explore and explain how language and power are connected. Critical Discourse Analysis involves doing more than accepting the discourse at face value; it requires that we interpret the use of language within the context of the macro and micro interactive forces of politics, economic, sociology, interpersonal
relationships, history and socio-cultural phenomena (Fairclough & Wodak 1998; Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard 1996). A critical study of the label African-American would not allow the term to go unexamined. Such an analysis would revisit the term and the promises associated with it. The use of language is powerful because it serves to construct the identities of millions Americans into one (separated) category. This target group of Americans are African-American would not allow the term to go unexamined. Such an belief system. After all, anthropologically speaking, aren’t we all of African White Americans to pick only one line of ancestry. The assumption underlying this rationale is that all African-Americans were former slaves. This is the only "history" that is treated as relevant, generally. Family histories are completely ignored is this process. This is problematic because these labels then become inescapable. In spite of individual achievement, in spite of individual heredity, in spite of everything.

In order to demonstrate that there is more involved with this embedded assumption than a simple statement of fact, it is necessary to deconstruct this belief system. After all, anthropologically speaking, aren’t we all of African descent? According to Stringer and McKie (1997)

"all modern humans are the descendants of a very small band of people who lived in East Africa about 200,000 years ago. We find the earliest known remains of both Homo sapiens and its precursors in that region. In addition, detailed studies of the genetic material of current human populations show the greatest diversity in East Africa, with diversity decreasing in proportion to distance from that area. These statistics point unerringly to the central trunk of the human genetic tree" (Zubrin 1999:4).

So why not call all Americans "African-Americans"? What's the purpose of the label and the accompanying social construction? Because, the term's purpose is not to validate a truth claim; instead the purpose of the term is to perpetuate third class citizenship and to maintain a separate solidarity for a group of people who might otherwise be able to voice a rightful reparation claim against the U. S. This strategic system of naming serves to maintain the status quo, and the term African-American is a powerful metaphor capable of triggering up paradigms of slavery, oppression and the civil rights struggle — whether or not the individual bearing the label was ever involved. African-American does not mean "African-American", it means so much more. The sheer utterance of the term or its Siamese twin, "Black" denotes a specific power hierarchical structural arrangement, established during slavery colonial times. For instance,

People who are of a biracial mixture with Blacks are pretty much excluded from most racial categories except for Blacks... Blackness, then, functions as a constant, underlying marker of racialization. Its persistence suggests that the fluidity of racial identities point upward in continuing spirals of potential Whiteness (Gordon 1995:5).

Moreover, the term African-American itself "is ambiguous since Africa is an extremely diverse continent made up of dozens of countries and hundreds of ethnic groups and languages" (Hall 1997:1). Today, it is fair to assume that all Americans (Blacks as well as Whites and others) represent an amalgamation of traits "so infused with our historical experiences in the New World that it is more appropriate and necessary to view ourselves as "American" (Hall 1997:2). And, "if Black Americans possess a common ethnic identity, it is not something that was transported from Africa and preserved. It is something that gradually evolved from our American experience" (Hall 1997:2).

White Americans, for example, are no longer socially expected to pay allegiance to labels such as Irish-American, French-American, German-American or Polish-American — to name a few. They do so when convenient or when they choose to; they are not forced to be classified as such in each and every aspect of their lives. Usually after two or three years of assimilation, White Americans are allowed the privilege of considering themselves, and of being perceived as "American" or "just American". The case is different for African-Americans. With respect to a U.S. citizen who falls within the category of "Black" or "African-American" — even people who are ten, twenty or thirty generations vested into this country — are not perceived as "American". This should seem peculiar. Particularly since most Black Americans or African-Americans, like White Americans, tend to represent a diverse amalgamation of gene pools (Gordon 1995).

In addition, when the label "White" is used it does not have the same negative effect as when the label "Black" or "African-American" is used. There are historical reasons for these differing effects. As one theorist explained, "White functions as the standard in terms of a normative standpoint of humanity, they normally live as raceless" (Gordon 1995:11). In other words, "colored means not to be White and White therefore means to be colorless" (Davis 1995). In other words, in the U.S., "White" has historically enjoyed a favorable social construction. Unlike being "Black", there is no history of legalized discrimination and social stigma attached to the label "White". Historically, in the U.S. "White" Americans were always in positions of power, or on top of the color-coded hierarchical power structure. This system of race-
based power has governed rights to social, political and economic opportunities. This has included such things as marriage, or how our children feel about themselves, in terms of what they believe they are entitled to achieve in life. This race-based system of psychological markers is loaded with buzz words, red flags, bell and whistles, black-marks, trigger phrases, stories, narratives and symbols, that with a few choice words, the system can mobilize subconscious lines of thought in such a way that individuals believe that they themselves are the authors of certain beliefs. To be labeled Black means that even in the New Millennium, people are still reacting to racialized classifications, first — before other considerations are made regarding an individual. Therefore, this phenomenon has a racialized effect on the material lives of people. Perhaps this helps to explain why, for instance, Blacks are still chronically underrepresented in professional occupations in spite of decades of Affirmative Action policies. Affirmative Action policy in the U. S. has consistently been under attack since the 1980s. Opponents have used strategies to eliminate Affirmative Action policy from the agenda. There is mass confusion, wide spread myths and general lack of knowledge regarding these ameliorative policies.36

After all, "Black" doesn't really mean Black and "African" doesn't really mean African in the context of the racialized markers branded to the hides of African-Americans. History is ignored for the purpose of politics and maintaining certain ways of thinking. To call attention to these points might disrupt the oppositional boundaries in place perpetuating the social construction of Black people as a victimized, dominated, oppressed people — and therefore, problematic group. Only specific types of data is reported and only certain points of history are represented in ways which serve to further perpetuate negative stereotypes Black people. This involves politics and power through the use of language. The very use of language carries power (Fanon 1967). Even benevolent sounding language can serve as a tool to perpetuate this phenomenon. The label "African-American" is a political tool — which facilitates a subtle exercise of power. This population of U. S. citizens who are labeled today as "African-Americans" are not African people who have taken steps to gain American citizenship. Rather, this group of people are "Americans" in every connotative sense of the word. However, they are not recognized as such for social, economic and political reasons.

For this reason, we must revisit the label and deconstruct it. Although widely criticized, deconstruction does serve the unique purpose of distancing certain social science phenomena from their naturalized contexts, in order to elucidate hidden implications. By deconstructing the label and making it seem strange, we can open up a space for highlighting the relationship between power and identity maintenance disguised as self-proclaimed identity formation. Americans should have wondered why this new label "African-American" was accepted with no opposition from the systemic powers. Perhaps it was because, similar to the label "Black", this gesture was consistent with the maintenance of the status quo. Bearing the label African-American or Black serves as a qualifier to denote incomplete citizenship. It maintains the notion of binary dualisms and a clear-cut dichotomy between "Black" and "White" people. These labels serve as a red flag, dovetailing into the discourse and conversations which have served to problematize all falling within the category. It seems "natural" and politically correct to call all "Black" Americans "African-Americans". This is so irrespective of any personal identity preferences — these are never considered.

Deconstructing the term African-American allows us to see that even a politically correct, benevolent and widely accepted term can play a role in protracting injurious consequences. The term was socially constructed as being a "new" and politically correct way to identify a certain "caste" of people. However, it tends to serve the purpose of maintaining stigma. The fruit of which is a system best described as a "labeling-social construction-reaction" process. This process has become widespread and automatic. In other words, Blackness still "functions as a constant, underlying marker of racialization" and it has been persistent (Gordan 1995:5). This arrangement permits a very subtle exercise of power in that it preserves a system of thinking, action and reaction on the basis of racial categories. Hence, it allows racism to persevere, while enjoying the status of having been removed. This situation serves to subtly prevent the experience of real U. S. citizenship. The most interesting part is that this systemic phenomenon is perhaps occurring unintentionally. By our acquiescence, we all participate in keeping this system alive, whether we acknowledge it or not.

Partial representations of history, data and the social sciences literature

Americans labeled as Black/African-American are forced to view themselves in textbooks, media, movies, the arts and literature in negative ways. We are typically portrayed as idiots, criminals, prone to violence, physical talent is a given, but intellectual or financial contributions are treated by the dominant knowledge-power nexus as nonexistent — and this social construction of Blackness has been perpetuated since the creation of the print media and mass
communications industry (Mudimbe 1988). The assumed political correctness of the label "African-American" is supported by the widespread belief that all "Black Americans ultimately have their roots in Africa...” (Baugh 1983:12). This assumption, for the most part, has been accepted as "truth". Contrarily, Egypt has been socially constructed through the knowledge making process, movies, textbooks, articles, art, conversations and various socialization processes — as being non-Black. Accordingly, Jones (1998) argues that this recognition that History is only partially represented is crucial; he attempts to provide hope that Black people could regain their dignity and self-respect, something that is otherwise being denied. For Jones, it is important that we include civilizations such as Egypt into the Black Diaspora and that we question why this civilization has been constructed as belonging to the Europeans rather than to Blacks. Similarly the Moors who dominated Spain for 800 years (Abercrombies 1988) are typically not recognized as being of African descent.

History is represented in such a way that the only part that is viewed as relevant, pertaining to African-Americans, is the part involving slavery or other such events related to oppression. History has been designed and has purposefully "repressed, excluded or downplayed" (Duara 1995) other historical events or facts which contain the potential of refuting the negative social construction of Black Americans — who are "Americans". In order to disrupt socially constructed boundaries or which parts of "History" are important, it is important to consider forgotten points of History; the ones likely to disrupt the way Blacks/African-Americans are viewed, displayed and talked about in the social sciences discourses. By doing this, I argue that this will expose how History gets constructed to further dominance and the exercise of power (Duara 1995) — particularly psychological domination (Fanon 1967) and/or institutional, economic and social subjugation and domination of those who have been constructed as marginal (Tsing 1993).

Data reflecting positive statistics regarding African-Americans is seldom published. To illustrate, we never hear or read about the cumulative tax contributions made by African-Americans individuals, as a group. Moreover, the Internal Revenue Service tax forms do not inquire about race. Data pointing to issues such as tax contributions carries the power to infer certain citizenship rights and entitlements. It is also rare to hear of other contributions such as participation in all of the wars. African-Americans have been in this country, paying taxes and fighting wars since the country started. For example, African-Americans played a significant role in the American Revolution and in exploration and settlement of the "new world". Such links might support a claim of entitlement or first class citizenship. Even when writers are well intended, this negative social construction is so pervasive that the overall effect only adds to a fatally negative imaging of Black people. The social sciences literature is loaded with this impact.

For example, Young (1997:20) states:

Any category can be considered an arbitrary unity. Why claim that Black women, for example, have a distinct and unified gender identity? Black women are American, Haitian, Jamaican, African, Northern, Southern, poor, working class, lesbian, or old. Each of these divisions maybe important to a particular women's gender identity.

These types of associations link Black people to unpopular concepts and concerns, also carrying negative stereotypes and social constructions. As another example of how Black people tend to be represented within the social sciences literature, Theodolou (1996:9) states:

At this point it would be useful to summarize the reasons for the failure of leadership and the absence of the formulation and implementation of a national AIDS policy. First, when the disease first hit, it most deeply affected groups outside mainstream America. As it progressed it then hit most heavily in racial minorities. Homosexuals, drug users, African-Americans, and Hispanics have few political representatives and few advocates. Such groups and their "lifestyles" are viewed by many in "white middle America" with distaste and disapproval.

The assumption here is that the "lifestyles" of African-Americans is generally viewed with distaste and disapproval. Again, the theorist was attempting to support Black Americans, yet stereotypical assumptions seep out. The irony involved is that according to contemporary rhetorical theory of the language of racism, "racism is thought to be perpetuated by antagonistic discourse" (McPhail 1994:3). McPhail argues that few writers have systematically explored "the relationship between race and the underlying assumptions of Western thought concerning both language and difference” (1994:3). In Discourse and Discrimination (1988) the authors demonstrate the many types of discourse through which the dominant group members and institutions discriminate against minority group members. They also demonstrate how this contributes to the reproduction of racism in society. The literature on the discourse of racism has overlooked something — the benevolent discourses towards promoting Black pride and self-esteem, and how they rely on existing social constructions of Blackness handed down from a racist legacy of separatism.
Benevolent gestures: Hiding places for racism

A symbolic consequence of the fertile history of racism in the United States is the benevolent seeming process through which certain Americans have been labeled as "African-Americans". Another consequence of our racialized legacy is the claim that Black Americans are so different from the larger society that a separate language is needed for primary and secondary classroom instruction. These consequences are couched within the discourse promising the promotion of Black pride, self-esteem and Black heritage. Therefore, the process of popularizing the new label "African-American" and the use of Ebonics seems politically correct and benevolent. Especially since these concepts and their supporting ideology tend to be promoted by African-American scholars, teachers and theorists. This provides the stamp of legitimacy, which in turn has allowed these concepts to be set loose upon society triggering the power to mobilize ideology. Enjoying the appearance of benevolence, while having malevolent effects, the labeling process involved in calling people "African-American", and the process of promoting the use of Ebonics/African American Vernacular English, serve as undercover agents — working on behalf of a race-based system. As such both issues tend to reinforce the socially constructed binary dualism characterizing "Blacks" as being fundamentally different from "Whites". Even well meaning gestures towards promoting "Black pride" serve to further the perpetuation of a racialized identity articulated and inherited from a nation founded upon racist principles. Racism today is perpetuated by friendly language. Hence, the link between racialized discrimination and inequality are invisible.

The root of race and racism involves the social construction of Black people as extremely "different". Racism has found a better way of perpetuating segregation and separatist clauses. Language and concepts promising to promote Black pride, are able to simultaneously and unintentionally reproduce racialized effects which are consistent with maintaining segregation and the consequences thereof. Within the larger context of our racialized society, Black pride and self-esteem take on the status of an oxymoron. Looking towards a solution, one insight might be found in Appelt & Jarosch's (2000) explanation that there is "no perfect instrument to deal either with the roots or the effects of discrimination, experts from all over the world have to evaluate existing instruments and develop new ones again and again". Until we focus on dismantling the ideological legacy which has socially constructed notions of "Blackness" as being the exact opposite of "Whiteness" (Gould 1996), even the most benevolent intentions towards establishing Black pride will be unsuccessful in light of the greater forces of political, social and economic power arrangements.

In the United States today, there are still "Black societies" and "White societies". Massey and Denton (1993) remind us that "a word disappeared from the American vocabulary" between the 1970s and the 1980s — "segregation". Segregation continues to exist; it is widespread. Massey and Denton (1993) demonstrate that racial segregation has become more pronounced in major American cities than ever before. Massey and Denton (1993) distinguish the residential segregation experienced by Black Americans by demonstrating that there are different degrees of segregation affecting different racial minorities, and, that the "sustained high level of residential segregation that has been imposed on Blacks in large American cities for the past fifty years" is in no way comparable to the "limited and transient segregation experienced by other racial and ethnic groups, now or in the past" (1993:2). In other words, contrary to the popular assumption that Black segregation is no different that the segregated neighborhoods of the other "ethnics", they provide segregation data indicating that Blacks, no matter what class they belong too, are more segregated than any other minority or ethnic groups in the U.S.

Challenging Baugh's support for AAVE

Today, many Americans have been socialized to believe that segregation is by choice. Likewise, many believe that the label "African-American" is preferred by all Black Americans. It is rare to hear people challenge or oppose this labeling process. The debate centered around the use of Ebonics mainly began with the Oakland resolution of 1996 which called for defining "Ebonics" as the native language of 28,000 African American students within the Oakland school district (Baugh 2000). The arguments put forth by those who support and oppose the use of Ebonics in classroom instruction are many and diverse (Baugh 2000). Without taking a position within the debate, I use the debate as an additional example of the subtle processes through which Black Americans are segregated. Also, I link this phenomenon to social indicators demonstrating the existence and perpetuation of a race-based system of social stratification. Many believe that Black Americans speak a separate language — Ebonics/African American Vernacular English/Black English, by choice. Without discounting that there is something that we can name Black English, I am pointing out that there is a link between the perceived need for classroom instruction and the perpetuation of segregation.
instruction in Ebonics and segregation and isolation experienced by Black Americans from the larger society and its institutions.

Baugh (1999) argues that "many speakers of Black English view this dialect from an entirely different perspective: they value it. He also states that "their personal and cultural identities are closely linked to the language of their friends, family and forebears. And AAVE [African American Vernacular English] symbolizes racial solidarity". He further states that "as long as the adoption of standard English is perceived to be an abandonment of Black culture, an African American vernacular will continue to survive, and it will do so despite perceptions that Black speech is ignorant" (Baugh 1999:5). This sounds harmless, as harmless as the label "African-American", however the political ramifications are tremendous. As with labeling, the effect that the representation of language has on people's material lives is significant. Unfortunately in the U.S., esteem, self-respect, pride and privilege are linked to what a person has: scale of income, location of housing, level and type of education and type of employment.

Ironically, Baugh (1999:5) uses the following example:

You just can never forget that slavery was a bitch from the get-go. Slaves didn't get no schoolin and they ain't never really given us [African Americans] equal opportunities, so how we supposed to talk like white folks, and why would we want to? It ain't no white people really care about us, cause if they did they wouldn't try to make you turn into a white person, they'd take you like you is. But they don't do that. All my teachers in school kept telling me, "If you don't speak proper, you won't get a job." That's bullshit! I know some Brothers that went to college-y'know, they did the "white thing", with good grades and good English, and they still have problems on the job. They done tol me about this Brother who did all the work for a white boy at his job, and then they [the White] lied on his ass when the boss found out he was fired, and nobody tried to help him. How can you trust motherfuckers that do shit like that, and then they say we stupid cause we don't talk proper. Talkin proper don't feel natural to me, but that don't make me stupid — I see what's goin on, and I see what's comin down, and it ain't got nothing to do with how we talk. It's all about money, power, and politics—plain and simple!

Out of the trillions of statements Baugh could have selected from the mouths of millions of African-American women, he chose this bit of text to support his claim that Black English is valued by those who speak it. A critical analysis of the text selected by Baugh (1999) reveals that this choice serves to perpetuate certain negative stereotypes. Part of the negative stereotype for African-Americans is that we violate certain cultural norms and moral standards. This is linked to the assumption that African-Americans use vulgar and profane language. We are also assumed to lack motivation and the Protestant work ethic (the will to work hard to achieve goals). Another assumption is that we are incapable of speaking good English. Blacks have been socially constructed as being everything that Whites are not. This process has taken a few hundred years. Theorists such as Baugh are unwittingly serving this social construction. To further illustrate my point, this African American woman that Baugh interviewed was absolutely right — unlike Baugh. Baugh used her text in order to illustrate the respect that "Black English" speakers have for "Black English", but she was saying something very different. Her point was that the social structure in the U.S. is so racially stratified that no matter what she does, she will not be allowed to join the greater forces of society as a participating citizen. The interviewee expresses the political outcome and social reality experienced by so many "Blacks"/"African-Americans". Black English does not simply denote a sense of pride of knowing oneself. It also represents the position taken that no matter what a person does, s/he will encounter so many racialized barriers (real or perceived) that esteemed goals will not be met. Many give up trying altogether. Furthermore, Baugh states "imagine the confusion confronting a Black child in school who is trying to use Standard English to convey a habitual state or event. Under such circumstances it would be difficult for the child not to use his or her native grammar" (1999:8). Although Baugh probably intended for the readers to believe that only a percentage of African-American children are faced with this dilemma, his "knowledge" will be perceived as including all African-American children. For example, many children who bear the badge of "African-American" speak Standard English, by choice. However, well-meaning Whites have a strong tendency to speak to them in an awkward form of Black English. Imagine the confusion that these children experience; imagine the message that this sends to them. The assumption that Black people speak Black English has real life effects on people, irrespective of their actual ability to speak Standard English.

"African-American" English, "Black English", or "Ebonics", tend to be represented in an exaggerated manner. Slight strays from perfect English, are usually amplified. This is a problem since many Americans (Black and White) do not speak what the British refer to as "perfect English" or "the King's English". American English, in its various forms, is distinctively different from British English. Ask any person from the United Kingdom. Therefore, Ebonics is to American English what American English is to British English — a
colloquial language variation of a people. To complicate things further, Blacks Americans are not alone in using terms such as "You sho is". Many expressions that theorists treat as "Black English", are not exclusively used by Black Americans. Blacks are not alone in using expressions such as "y'all" or "youse". Most Americans speak with some form of dialect, or in a way that could be referred to as less than "proper" English. Many words in American English do not sound the way they are spelled. For example, the word "schedule" is pronounced "skedual" in the U. S. The words of non-Black speakers usually appear in print as though they were spoken and pronounced with perfect clarity. There are White Americans who speak "country", for example. This is all but forgotten within the context of the Black/African-American/Ebonics debate. Another point missing from the debate on Ebonics is that that phrases and words which make up "Black English" are not universally understood by all Black American people. The meanings and expressions differ across time and geographical space. For instance, in many ways the "Black English" spoken in 1960 in St. Louis, Missouri can be distinctly different from the "Black English" spoken in 1960 in Los Angeles, California. Likewise, the "Black English" spoken in 1980 in St. Louis is different from the "Black English" spoken in 1960 in St. Louis and so on. This is contrary to the assertion made by Smitherman (2000:1) who states that "Black talk crosses boundaries of age, gender, region, religion, and social class because it all comes from the same source; the African American Experience and the oral tradition embedded in that experience". From 1962-1980 I lived in an all-Black neighborhood and attended all Black-schools — until I went away to a predominantly White university. I state with a rich understanding and much thought that many Black Americans do not understand all terms and all words used by all Black Americans, universally or across time. Furthermore, most Black Americans know that the word "couch" also means "sofa"; however on a standardized exam there might be some uncertainty about which answer the graders are looking for. Most Black people also know the difference between "aks" and "ask" — some people's refusal to use "standard English" does not derive from their lack of ability, rather it comes from a lack of willingness to do so.

Conclusion

Separate racialized categories for certain groups of marginalized citizens are maintained by the process of labeling. That this exists is proof that a system of race-based identification still exists. A dilemma exists in that identity has beneficial purposes. For instance, it can serve as a point for political mobilization. However, even more significant are the problems stemming from maintaining a system of racial identification. This problem is best illustrated by a case study of the group labeled as "African-Americans". This is primarily due to nature of our particular type of social construction and the way that we have been historically stigmatized. Similarly, the perceived need to teach Black American children using a separate language demonstrates the extent to which segregation has created an isolated Black society within America. In my experience through conversations, these two issues are treated with such reverence, that it is forbidden to speak of them as problems.

This paper also points out that democracy is not as pluralists would have us believe, subject to self-correcting mechanisms of "legitimate" groups. Rather, there are stops and roadblocks, all along the way. Not all groups are perceived as being legitimate. Historically the exercise of power has made sure of this. Despite alleged good intentions, the label African-American and the representation of Ebonics in print add to patterns of representation, which tend to support a negative social construction of certain Americans. These processes essentially continue the patterns of thought and conceptions that "Blacks" are a separate category of human beings than "Whites". This is harmful because it helps maintain the psychological justification for the disproportionate race-based social, economic and political inequalities. These phenomena also help to maintain a resemblance to the power structure that has been in place in this country since slavery. This exercise of power is carried out by the use of language that often appears to mean well on the surface. When we deconstruct and look beyond the printed words on the paper, especially the cumulative effect, we can expose how even benevolent sounding words and labels can be used to further negative identities and negative social constructions. Power is like a chameleon; it is so difficult to see that we either fail to notice, or we believe we ourselves are exercising power to draw our own conclusions. There is a price "to be paid for not caring — the quality of democracy is at stake" (Camacho 1998:17). The implication of this phenomenon is that our democracy is prevented from evolving significantly beyond the legacy of slavery, and the past period of legalized race-based discrimination.
Notes


2. Ronald Takaki (1989) in Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans. Takaki stresses the importance of demographic in accounting for differences between the various "Asian" groups in America. Takaki also exposes the model minority concept as a myth; he argues that the belief that any minority can "make it" by hard work is a myth.


5. The notion of Blackness has become a global phenomenon. For example, Segal (1995) uses the term Black diaspora to include the situatedness of Black people in many different countries. See also Chigbo (1999) in "Reading, Writing & Racism: Black Ideology is the Black Child's Most Debilitating Burden".

6. The one-drop rule, also known as the rule of 1/32 applied only to Black Americans. This meant that if a survey of 32 ancestors was conducted and if there was one (just one) ancestor was Black or of African ancestry, the person was deemed to be Black and could therefore, be stripped of his or her life, property or freedom. See Karen E. Rosenblum and Toni-Michelle C. Travis. The Meaning of Difference: American Constructions of Race, Sex, and Gender, Social Class, and Sexual Orientation (2nd ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000. The authors define the one-drop rule and explain that in the U.S. a "single drop of Black blood" makes a person Black at 36.

7. See Debra Grodin and Thomas R. Lindlof (1996) in Constructing The Self in a Mediated World. They provide an explanation of the process through which identities get socially constructed. They point to how interpersonal and mass communication play important roles in formulating how people are seen, and how they see themselves.

8. New York Amsterdam News, 12/04/97, Vol. 88 Issue 49, pg. 4, 1/4p presents that for the past 30 years the political right has assaulted Welfare programs by using the strategic use of racial stereotypes such as the Black "welfare queen" stereotype to paint a picture in the public mind that such programs are going to undeserving beggars. This link between welfare and Blackness has effectively reduced welfare spending and sparked a momentum towards welfare reform. Ronald Reagan, came to office by making scapegoats of African Americans and criticizing The Great Society programs of the 1960s, which media propagandists have characterized as Black giveaway programs; See Jill Quadagno (1994) in The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty. Also, the rage against Affirmative Action is facilitated by this process.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


22. Ibid.


24. Ibid., at 54.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. See "Prisoners Under Sentence of Death, by Race, Ethnicity, and Jurisdiction. April 1, 1999." 1999 Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, issued by Bureau of Justice Statistics. This document presents statistics indicating that of 3,565 prisoners under sentence of death,
1,657 were White, 1,516 were Black, 299 were Hispanic, 48 were Native American, 28 were Asian and 17 were of an unknown race. Note, Blacks almost equal Whites in this statistic, yet they only make up approximately 15% of the overall population.

30. Figures differ on the percentage of the population of "Blacks"/"African-Americans" in the U.S.
34. For example, Mutombo Mpanya (1995) demonstrates the link between international relief aid policy and the way African people are represented as” needy, weak nomadic, homeless, starving, hunger, weak, frail, lacking technical knowledge and not willing to take initiative” to solve their own problems.
37. Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) in *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, present evidence in the form of a historical analysis and other data such as racial segregation indexes to support their argument that the ghetto and the Black underclass has been constructed — not just happenstance or the result of impersonal market forces. Footprints exist showing that laws, real estate practices, restrictive covenants, lending practices and many other factors purposefully aided White flight patterns.
38. David O. Sears, Jim Sidanlus and Lawrence Bobo (2000) in *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Racism in America* explain why there exists overwhelming amounts of White resistance to liberal or ameliorative policies. They conclude that the reason Whites, according to surveys, tend to consistently perceive less discrimination than Blacks, is due to the way Whites tend to view Blacks. Steven Tuch and Jack Martin (1997) in *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change* also present the result of surveys demonstrating that there is a clear-cut Black-White divide on the issue of why inequality gaps still exists. Whites tend to believe that racialized inequality gaps exist due to Black culture or deficiencies.

References


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