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12/13/22
Anthropology
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Anthropology Final: Race and Capitalism

Race has an interesting position in cultural anthropology as anthropology was born out of the colonial era, the subject of race and understanding it is integral to understanding modern anthropology. The construct of race was born out of the colonial era and has continued to influence the world today. The scars of European colonialism are felt throughout the world, the nations considered developed all reaped the benefits of colonialism and those deemed undeveloped have been historically exploited or continue to be exploited. The study of race in anthropology is an interesting subject, especially in regard to how it has affected culture. The study of race and capitalism in parrticular is interesting due to how it pertains to cultural relations. It becomes very apparent that patronizing relationship of former colonial powers to the nations and people they exploited persist and racial inequality allows for eurocentric nations to continue to exert considerable power over this people/nations while acting under the guise of helping or asisting. The relationship between race and capitalism highlights a component of white supremacy that dates back to the colonial period, the idea that white way of doing things is superior, and this is used as justification for the power they exert over others.

Race and capitalism are intertwinned. Mudimbe's "The invention of African gnosis,philisophy" outlines the relationship between colonial capitalism and the modern day neocolonialism. The nature of colonialism and capitalist infrastructure creates a cycle of instability and undervelopment. Mudimbe states,

> "It should also have produced a kind of empirical technique for implementing structural distortions by positing four main political propositions: first, priority given-to the industrial revolution over the agricultural revolution; second, the simultaneous promotion of all branches of industry with a preferential approach to heavy industry; third, emphasis on tertiary and service activities; fourth, preference for exports to the detriment of the total economic system (Amin, 1973)."

This system turns the colony into a factory for the main nation. It focus is on building and manufacturing. During colonial times the Western nations often left the dangerous and unwanted labour to the locals who had little protections. The labourers got very little in wages and the goods they made were shipped overseas where they would never see the profit and the local

community would not benefit from the manufacturing of goods as they were traded outside of the country. While official colonialism had ended, this process continued and created a cycle of underdevelopment. Mudimbe continues,

> "The outcome of these policies was the process of underdevelopment initiated everywhere colonialism occurred. This process can be summed up in three points: First, the capitalist world system is such that parts of the system always develop at the expense of other parts, either by trade or by the transfer of surpluses. Second, the underdevelopment of dependencies is not only an absence of development, but also an organizational structure created under colonialism by bringing non-Western territory into the capitalist world. Third, despite their economic potential, dependencies lack the structural capacity for autonomy and sustained growth, since their economic fate is largely determined by the developed countries."

That's the key to understanding the state of the world and the remnants of colonialism. The supposed underdeveloped nations have been locked into a cycle in which they are unable to advance as they are dependent on their former colonizers who benefit from their current position. Since capitalism depends on exploitation, the nations will never fully be free. An effect of this is the devaluation of locals in regard to economic growth and recovery. Pierre's article on development in West Africa sheds light on this, "Thus, the claims of the Norwegian OfD program for Ghana depend upon two presumptions: first, that there is something called a "resource curse," and Norway managed to avoid it; and second, that Ghana cannot handle the management of its resources without outside help, especially from Norway." The assumption is that since Norway has a stead economy and Ghana does not, that Norway is clearly more educated in the ways of business and that Ghanaians left to their own devices will squander their resources or mishandle it. This of course is rooted in colonialism and white supremacy belief stating that Ghanaians are incapable of utilizing their own resources to the fullest potential and the belief in Western superiority, as well as the clear profit margins that the Norweign business will make off of Ghana's oil. Once again an African nation's economic fate is left at the mercy of Europeans and this itself locks the former colonies into cycles of underdevelopment.

Race and capitalism effects extended beyond the colonized nations, but within the supposedly developed nations as well. The practice of gentrification is an interesting case of the marriage between race and capitalism. In Marissa Solomon's "The Ghetto is a Gold Mine", she refers to how value is accessed of neighborhoods and how minority claim is devalued. Solomon defines gentrification as, "Gentrification is but one of many processes within a longer history of

racial capitalism in which the project to value and de-value (land, people, labor, objects) helps to determine the place of waste (whose neighborhood, whose city), where it leaves, and where it "belongs." She essentially states that gentrification is the process that assigns value to neighborhoods and their inhabitants, determining what is trash and what is not trash. This of course often leads to minorities being pushed into neighborhoods with industrial development, landfills, and undesirable areas, until investors find value in the land and then push out the "undesirables" in order to cater to a white majority and turn a profit. This profit is always at the expense of the minority. The same patronizing attitude displayed in regard to Africans controlling their own resources applies to minority neighborhoods,

> "Take, for example, how landfills and toxic factories are overwhelmingly sited in and near communities of color, or how trash in a poor black neighborhood like Bed-Stuy becomes evidence of residents' bad behavior. This article ethnographically explores two apparently separate stories about how poor people laboring waste—in distant neighborhoods connected by the flow of trash from north to south, New York City to Norfolk, Virginia—live out, and about, the legacies of these spatial histories. They speak with and against sanitary regimes in which to "clean up" the'hood defines waste and its routes in proximity to racialized poverty. Under these conditions, clean up becomes a civilizing project to ensure a better, whiter, gentrified future."

This of course brings it back to how colonization has set up a system in which minorities are forced into cycles of poverty and horrible living conditions and eurocentric nations rather than acknowledge that this is a result of racial hierarchies and systems instead blame minorities for bad behavior. The concept behind gentrification is no different than the idea behind the supposed "resource curse" in Ghana. It's the white supremacist belief that they have to civilize to the supposedly "uncivilized". Savannah Shange recounts an interaction at Robeson in which a white man named Jake in a school board meeting is frustrated about the locking of doors being temporary. Shange states,

> "After hearing from staff about the community-oriented, welcoming environment that they had tried to cultivate since Robeson's founding, Jake pursed his lips and pounded his index finger on the table, insisting that "it's different now than it was seven years ago—with all respect to you, Josue—it's different."... Robeson was certainly different, but what Jake missed was that the difference was him... As Josue put it, Jake was "a middle class white [man] not from Frisco"—he brought with him an imagined American geography, a place where kids are more at risk from trenchcoated school shooters than they are from police bullets and handcuffs."

Shange address here is the fact that this man is coming into this meeting as if he knows the community and how things should be run despite him being the new one. The way the school has been run and the issues that the community faces is something that is unknown to him, yet he acts as if he is the logical one and he knows everything. As Shange highlights the community is more at risk from police violence than school shooters, school shooters who are predominately white males. The fact is the issues he is frustrated about are not the issues of the community and if they become a community issue, will mostly likely come from the fact that more people like him are moving into the school district and neighborhood. The attitude that Jake displays is no different than the principles Solomon highlights behind gentrification. It is the white supremacist belief that their way is the superior way.

While the case of Ghana's oil and American gentrification are different, the underlying principle of white supremacist belief that their way is superior underlines it all. Pierre points out that anthropology has acknowledged colonial distinction in regard to capitalistic development, "Anthropologists have demonstrated the interplay of race and language, and the ways "colonial distinctions within and between nation-state borders continue to shape contemporary linguistic and racial frontiers." She points out how the way language is used around "developed nations" and supposedly "undeveloped nations" bares resemblance to colonial days. I would, however, argue that the colonial distinction extends to how non-Europeans are referred to the outside of former colonies and within the supposedly "developed nations". The way Solomon describes gentrification or the way that Shange describes Jake, is really no different than the way that western nation asserts their claim that their way is superior to "undeveloped nations". It all stems from the belief that the Eurocentric way is the best way.

From the perspective of anthropology, it becomes clear that race and capitalism when studied in conjunction serve the white supremacist agenda that their way is the best way, often hidden under the guise of helping and assisting. However, since they benefit from the current state of affairs there is no incentive for them to change the status quo and their actions regularly trap the formerly colonized or the minorities living among them into poverty and underdevelopment. This is also framed under the idea of a civilizing mission, rhetoric often used within the colonial period under the dogma that was "the white man's burden'. Basically, the idea the Europeans and white Americans had to act as benevolent leaders to bring civilization to their colonies, yet as demonstrated by the fact that the minority communities and nations they

touched were impoverished and still considered undeveloped, this was a clear method to justify the status quo and profit.