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Dept: International Relations and Diplomacy

Course: G.S.T 122-Communication in English.

My topic: RACISM

Question: You were taught that in writing an academic essay, you should start with the perception of a problem. Perceive a problem in your present environment, formulate a researchable topic for it, and await further instructions in our class on Thursday by 10 am.

Racism has been in existence basically throughout human history. Racism can be defined generally as the prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

It can also be defined that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

It’s the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, characteristics, abilities or qualities, especially so as to differentiate them as inferior or superior to one another. It has influenced slavery, wars, the formation of nations and also legal codes.

During the past 600-1000 years, racism on the part of western powers towards non-westerners has had a far more significant impact on history than any other form of racism (such as racism among Western groups like Africans or Asians, etc). The worst case of racism by the West has been slavery, specifically the enslavement of Africans in the new world. This enslavement was accomplished because of the racist belief that Black Africans were less fully human than white Europeans and their descendants. One of these despicable examples was when a young Black African female toddler was put on display in a white people’s zoo. Another example is a very recent case. A man named George Floyd who was killed on the 25th of may 2020 due to unfair police brutality. His neck was knelt upon for approximately 9 minutes by a white police officer.

Racism is basically as old as time itself. Back in the 19th century, Bernard Lewis cited the Greek philosopher Aristotle who, in his discussion of slavery, stated that while Greeks are free by nature, ‘barbarians’ (non-Greeks) are slaves by nature, in that it is their nature to be more willing to submit to a tyrannical government. Though Aristotle doesn’t specify any particular races, he says that people from nations outside Greece are more prone to the burden of slavery than those from Greece. While he makes remarks about the most natural slaves being those with strong bodies and slaves souls (unfit for rule, unintelligent) which would seem to imply a physical basis for discrimination, he also explicitly states that the right kind of souls and bodies don’t always go together, implying that the greatest determinant for inferiority and natural slaves versus natural masters is the soul, not the body. This proto-racism is seen as an important precursor to modern racism by classicist Benjamin Isaac.

While 19th century racism became closely intertwined with nationalism, leading to the ethnic nationalist discourse that defined the race with the folk, leading to such movements as pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, etc, medieval racism precisely divided the nation into various non-biological races, which were thought to be the consequence of historical conquests and social conflicts.

‘’If I wasn’t hearing bad things about myself, I wouldn’t think ,,oh, I’m a bad person, I can’t do this, I am not going to do it’’. Whereas if no one said anything bad about me, I would push myself harder into doing things and knowing that I can do it, no matter what happens I will do it … but I just can’t.’’

-Ekta, 15

Racism can cause a lot of damage to both individuals and communities. For individuals, it can have a huge mental health impact on them most especially the young ones. It can make them experience ongoing feelings of sadness, anger, depression and being left out. Some may even begin to have the constant fear of being verbally or physically attacked. Some may not want to go to school anymore. Some may no longer have any trust or faith in anyone apart from family. These impacts can reduce people’s ability to work or study, and to achieve their future goals. It also affects people’s general wellbeing when they are denied equal access to jobs, services and education.

‘’Racism makes me question myself and why things have to be this way … I wondered one day what it would be like to be white and how much better my life would probably be. That was a low point.’’

* Andrew, 19

As for how racism affects societies, it creates societies where people don’t trust and respect each other. When it’s allowed to flourish, it lessens us as people. There’s literally excuse for racism. It’s very wrong. And in many cases, it’s against the law. So it shouldn’t be promoted neither should it be practiced.