

RACE AND CLASS REVISITED: THE CASE OF THE NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH AFRICA

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Listen to the Winds, O God the Reader, that wail across the whip-cords stretched taut on broken human hearts, listen to the bones, the bare bleached bones of slaves, that line the lanes of Seven Seas and beat eternal tomtoms in the forests of the laboring deep; listen to the Blood, the cold thick blood that spills its filth across the fields and flowers of the Free; listen to the Souls that wing and thrill and weep and scream and sob and sing above it all. What shall these things mean, O God the Reader?

W.E.B. Du Bois The Gift of Black Folk.

Preliminary Remarks

Race and class, or class and race. These are central questions in the modern world. According to Sweezy (1964:241) "The class system of society is no part of the natural order of things, it is the product of past social developments, and it will change in the course of future developments". On the other hand, races are part of the natural order of things. At what historical point then do race and class become issues, and/or at what historical point does class and race develop in association?

W.E.B. Du Bois in the passages quoted above describes "the anguished existence" of African slaves "in the face of soul destroying labors on the plantations of European immigrants in North America" (Abraham 1982:21). That is, the economic exploitation of Africans (a class act) is rooted in the growth and expansion of the world capitalist system beginning in the fifteenth century. The most race-conscious societies have descended from the early outposts settled by Europeans

in the era that Marx described as the rosy dawn of capitalism: North America and the Republic of South Africa. It is in these societies that race and class and class or race are primary issues of sociological, philosophical and political discourse. This is not to suggest that other societies have not experienced race and racism or class and classism but that North America and South Africa have experienced this particular problem in its most pathological form.

Many recent writings compare the development of the two societies, among them Stanley B. Greenberg *Race and State Capitalist Development in Comparative Perspective*, George M. Frederickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* John Cell, *The Highest State of White Supremacy: the Origins of Segregation in South Africa and American South*. Eric Williams (1962) wrote an earlier path-breaking study: *Capitalism and Slavery*, which was followed by Oliver Cox's *Cast, Class and Race*. Cox, like Williams, pointed to close parallels between the development of capitalism and racism.

What then is the significance of race and class in North America and South Africa? Are race and class mutually exclusive categories or do race relations underline class relations? These are important questions, which need be resolved in any serious theoretical formulation.

In the study of any phenomenon, we should be careful never to lose sight of the character of the epoch that produced it. Thus, our first task should be to define the character of the epoch that gave rise to race and class. Then we must ascertain the substance and direction of the modern world's development, and establish what class or classes were a dominant force in the emergence of race and racism as social facts. Only by taking account of both historical and contemporary elements - and not disparate episodes in individual countries - can we grasp the thrust and the basic features of race and class. This, in turn, can serve as the foundation for understanding the features that define the role of race or class.

Race and Class defined

What is racism? class? A UNESCO conference of biologists and social scientists in 1947 published the biologists' conclusion that:

race is a taxonomic concept of limited usefulness as a means of classifying human beings, but probably less useful than the more general concept of populations. The former term is used to refer to "groups of mankind showing well developed and primarily heritable physical difference from other groups". The latter refers to a "group whose members marry other members of the group more frequently than people outside the group" and hence have a relatively limited and distinctive range of genetic characteristics. In any case, however, whether we use the concept of race or population, the experts agree that human population groups constitute a continuum, and that the genetic diversity within groups is probably as great as that between groups. (Hiernaux 1965; quoted, Rex 1970: 3-45).

The concept of race, then, as used by biologists has no relevance for political and class differences among population groups. And because the whole notion of race and racism is inextricably intertwined with political and class differences, what does the nature of situations that are described as racial actually imply?

Before I proceed any further, a definition of classes is appropriate. With the caveat that definitions tend to oversimplify, Lenin's definition of classes will suffice.

Classes are large groups of people which differ from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions and mode of acquiring the share of social wealth of which they dispose. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy. (Collected Works 29:421).

Lenin's definition emphasizes the relations of exploitation, and also, that the relations may be enforced by law. Discriminatory laws are keys to enforcing inequality between "races". That is, so-called race-relation situations are first and foremost relations of exploitation, dominance, and violence. The real context of the race and class dialectic

is the consequence of what are known as the voyages of discovery. If the plantation society, the mining compound, and the urban slums and ghettos are looked upon as due to race prejudice (a term that is hypocritical rather than technical) the elements that define the essence of the race relations situations are left unconsidered. As used by Marx, exploitation means the appropriation of part of the product of the labor of others in a commodity-purchasing society -the so-called surplus value.

Lenin's definition of classes used with Marx's analysis of the workings of capitalism solves major problems that have plagued discussions of race and class and/or class and race situations. Class essentially denotes a relationship of domination and exploitation which are supported by laws. In bourgeois sociology, the effects of domination and exploitation, i.e., the right exercised by the bourgeois class over the labor of the so-called inferior races, are explained as the consequence of race and racism. Indeed, as Guillamin (1980, 54) explains:

The modern idea of race derives not from observation in the field of natural sciences but from the instigation of society and politics. Political and social theories, not only those of professional thinkers, but also popular areas of which the latter have taken advantage, raised questions to which the natural sciences sought to find answers, in the form of roots and traces, during the years that followed. The racial theories of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, those of Spencer, of the social Darwinist school - and those of Hitler - preceded intense activity on the part of the biologists during the thirties and great efforts by physical anthropologists in Europe obsessed with race

Class and Race in the United States and South Africa

Comparison of the manifestation of racial and class oppression in North America and South Africa must of necessity be qualified. Although the histories of two societies differ in substantial ways, their underlying kinship is real. Both are settler societies that were established by the middle of the seventeenth century. Although some of the settlers came as indentured servants and were exploited, the truly colonized and exploited peoples were the Indians and black slaves in North America and the Malaysian and black slaves in South Africa. For

some Indian tribes in North America and for the San and Khoikhoi in South Africa, colonialization accelerated their extermination. The American Revolution of 1776, which freed American colonies from British colonial rule and the independence granted to South Africa in 1910, far from procuring self-determination for the slaves and minority groups, tightened their chains of exploitation.

The social heritage of settler colonialism in North America and South Africa, was not merely a rigid class structure with an elite of wealth, status and power at the apex and, at the bottom of a pyramid, a mass of poverty-stricken, marginal, powerless, and subordinate people. Such class structures have flourished elsewhere. The tragedy of settler colonialism was a class structure further stratified by color and physiognomy - by what anthropologists call phenotype; an elite of whites or near whites and a mass of people of color. Ruling classes in North America and South Africa learned quite early that they would perpetuate social inequalities far more effectively when exploitation and the maldistribution of the fruits of exploitation are buttressed by racism (f. Stein and Stein 1970:57). The class structure defining white settlement in North America, South Africa, and other such colonies is the result of what has been called "the fact of conquest". The wars against the indigenous peoples took the forms of genocide, theft, and swindles. The relation of racism to conquest is explained by Hilferding:

Since the subordination of foreign nations proceeds by force, that is to say in a very natural way, it appears to the dominant nation that it owes its mastery to its special natural qualities, in other words to its racial characteristics. Thus in racial ideology there emerges a scientifically-cloaked foundation for the power lust of financial capital, which in this way demonstrates the cause and necessity of its operations. In place of the democratic ideal of equality there steps the oligarchical ideal of mastery (quoted, Sweezy 1964, 310).

Indeed, there is, in both North America and South Africa, a dialectic of victor and vanquished whereby, in Hegelian terms, the essential nature of the vanquished is aufgehoben - negated, preserved, transcended - by the victor. Blacks in Southern states of North America, both during slavery and after emancipation, and blacks in South Africa became, in the words of Adorno, a "totally administered" group. The denial of self-determination to blacks presaged the

emergence of the totalitarian state.

The settlers, in spite of disagreements over policy questions, were partners (in the case of North America) of English mercantile imperialism, and (in the case of South Africa) of Dutch mercantile imperialism, not its victims. They were not part of what Fanon called the damned of the earth; instead, they were what W.I. Kiernan called the lords of creation. The settlers enjoyed the fruits of mercantile capitalism at the expense of slaves and indigenous communities, and when they had accumulated enough capital in their own right fought for their independence from the mother country. Thus, in the political economies of North America and South Africa, racism and capitalism are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality. This is not to imply that the capitalist mode of production is inherently racist but that history made North America and South Africa's brand of capitalism racist, and that settler societies are inherently racist. This is the only rationale by which they could legitimately settle alien lands.

In North America racism became a driving force of the system of white supremacy in the context of the uneasy coexistence of a form of capitalism based upon "free labor" in the Northern Colonies and upon slavery in the Southern Colonies. The stirring up of racial antagonisms was a convenient method to direct attention away from the negation of the bourgeois notions of equality, fraternity and freedom. Engels noted the bourgeois hypocrisy in proclaiming inalienable human rights while practicing slavery.

It is significant of the specifically bourgeois character of human rights that the American constitution, the first to recognize the rights of man, in the same breath confirms the slavery of the colored races existing in America; class privileges are proscribed, race privileges sanctioned (Engels 3rd edition; 939;117).

Franz Oppenheimer (1975:26) aptly described political democracy under capitalism as "the bastard offspring of slavery and freedom". In South Africa, Dutch settlers not only committed genocide and conquered the indigenous peoples but the remnants were absorbed as "unfree labor" to coexist with imported slaves. Thus both in North America and in South Africa, settlers went out of their way to use slavery on an unprecedented scale and to create a new system of servile labor based on race and totally at variance with bourgeois notions of

human rights.

To institute and maintain the system of white supremacy and black oppression and exploitation, given the ideology of the Enlightenment, required that rationalization be clothed in scientific garb and be given out as deduction from scientific facts. Only then, would racism and the doctrine of white supremacy emerge to make sense of the contradictions inherent in the simultaneous advance of "free" labor and chattel slavery within the single process of capitalist development.

Given the fact that the conquerors and slave-masters belonged to the white race, in "scientific" treaties, the rationalization of white overlordship assumed the form of a theory that argued that there are not only radical differences between the 'races' of humanity, but also human races can be ranked into 'superior' and 'inferior'. Furthermore, the argument went, only the white race fully possessed those qualities of character and mind that would guarantee orderly government and the development of the world resources. Blacks by nature not only lacked the qualities to participate in social and political life, but also lacked the ability on their own to manage wisely their economic affairs. Therefore, to justify their existence, they had to work under the tutelage of white masters. Their slave status was not only profitable but was the only means by which they themselves can be elevated from their uselessness, idle and indolent and often sinful life. Slavery, the only condition worthy of such people, was a beneficial status for them. Indeed, what was being proposed was a principle of dividing humanity into masters and enslaved nations.

The southern states of North America and the settlers of South Africa, were not the first societies based on conquest and slavery. Therefore the theory expanded by the beneficiary of slavery in those societies was not new in its essentials. The ancient Greeks justified their rule over slaves on the grounds that the bulk of slaves were people of a different breed. This is what Aristotle for example said. He divided people into two categories: those destined by nature to rule over the others, whom fate had destined to be slaves. Influenced by ideas of the Greek and Roman philosophers and the nostalgia for the social systems and ideas of the Greeks and Romans, educated opinion in modern Europe determined to reformulate those ideas to fit the new world order which capitalism was creating.

The Evolution of Capitalism as a System: A Synopsis

Capitalism as a dominant mode of economic organization has gone through three distinct stages: the era of primitive accumulation, dominated by merchant capital; the era of industrial capital; and the era of monopoly capital, brought about by the merger of industrial and finance capital that resulted in imperialism. In each stage in the North America and in South Africa black labor was articulated as a key but subordinate component in capital accumulation in certain sectors of the economies of the two countries, which explains the evolution of the culture of racism in these countries and that of the Western world in general. Because in North America and in South Africa black and white live the same territorial space, race oppression and class exploitation are interwoven into their social systems in one historical process. That is, class relations were transmuted into "race relations".

The African slave was not only ready-made capital but also labor-power for the production of Europe's first commodities in agricultural labor camps of the New World. The relation between slaves and masters was a peculiar class relation. Peculiar because, whereas under capitalism workers own their own labor-power, which is sold as a commodity to the capitalist, slave owners owned the labor-power of slaves. "The slaveholder", wrote Marx (1974:776), "considers a Negro, whom he has purchased as his property, not because the institution of slavery as such entitles him to that Negro, but because he has acquired him like any other commodity through sale and purchase". Furthermore, both the slave trade itself and the extraction of commodities so produced, were funded by the mercantile capital and circulated within the global circuits of capital (cf. Hall 1980:320).

Beechey (quoted, *ibid.*, 320) argues,

Slaveholders were both merchants, dealing with the purchase and sale of commodities on the world market, and slaveholders exploiting their slaves within the plantation system which emerged as a specialized agricultural region, a kind of internal colony within the expanded world market.

It seems to me, then, that the object of inquiry in the study of the articulation of race and class must be to understand capitalism as a world system that exploited black labor, and to understand how race and class articulate at a concrete level. As Hall (1974:320) put it: "Slave plantation owners participated in a general movement of world capitalist system; but on the bases of an internal mode of production -

slavery in its modern, plantation form - not itself 'capitalist' in character".

It needs to be understood further that race and class are not givens from the beginning of time but products of historical development and also the motive forces of that development. The settlers who enslaved Africans were not innocent adventurers. I have already noted some of the ideas that offered a back-drop to racism. It now remains to remind ourselves that some of the social institutions that were transported to settler colonies came out of long years of conquest and looting. Fox-Genovese and Genovese (1983, .2-.3) write that European Models of forcible seizure of the wealth of others:

can be found in such precocious undertakings as the Albigensian Crusade, the establishment of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and other crusading states, and the Reconquista. These projects, like the somewhat later but even more portentous English conquest of Ireland, underscored the extent to which the overseas expansion derived from the values, habits of warfare, and territorial ambitions of feudal nobilities and their monarchs. The mercantile models, such as the plantation economies founded by the Italian merchants, afforded instruction in the appropriate forms of profit and the methods by which it could be secured, but centuries would pass before these models would triumph over the rapacious, short-term lust for gold, spices, and Christian converts before the value of staple crops would be understood by the most powerful monarchs.

If the history of racism has any dialectic at all, it is one that links anti-semitic racism and modern forms of white supremacy and racial exclusiveness. The separation of Jews from Gentiles in European countries created a heritage that made racism not such an aberration after all. It is not necessary to dwell at length on the genesis and growth of anti-semitism in Europe, for many authors have dealt with the subject. It is sufficient to recall the first crusades, the first vectors of Western expansion. The prejudice and forms of discrimination that would be used against the African were first used against the "accursed" Jew, who, until the eighteenth century at least, was to play a central role in shaping the destiny of Christian Europe (cf. Rozat and Bartra 1980, 289).

Europeans who colonized North America and South Africa can be said, paraphrasing Marx, to have made history but not just as they pleased. They did not make it under circumstances they chose but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted. The social and ideological traditions of the recent feudal past weighed like a nightmare on the brain and practices of these settlers. No wonder, then, that one is confronted by a strange spectacle in the behavior of the Founding Fathers of the United States. Just when they seemed engaged in revolutionizing the colonial structures to create a society such as never existed, the doctrine of race supremacy became part of the American heritage. By denying the humanity of black or, let me say, by undervaluing the humanity of the black slaves, they conjured the spirit of the past to their service. Likewise, in the late nineteenth century, the British, in spite of their liberalism, unashamedly created white supremacist state in South Africa. How do we explain such contradictions?

One need not be a cynic to marvel at the ability of North American and British statesmen to speak of human equality while simultaneously practicing racial politics. The charades are just too glaring examples of the organic hypocrisy of bourgeois civilization. The irony did not escape W.E.B. Dubois (1935,3) who wrote of the United States:

From the day of its birth, the anomaly of slavery plagued a nation which asserted the equality of all men, and sought to derive powers of government from the consent of the governed. Within sound of the voices of those who said this lived more than half a million black slaves, forming nearly one-fifth of the population of a new nation.

The enslavement of Africans, like the colonization of Africa, was a brutalizing economic relationship based on the denial of indisputable human rights. It could not help but distort human relationships, producing by fiat the superior and inferior races.

The commitment of the bourgeoisie of North America and South Africa to the racial and political domination of blacks have no parallel in history. As the two settler societies became addicted to the use of black labor their best minds set about not only to produce a store of knowledge to counter nature but also to find "scientific" justification for subjugation and exploitation. As Dubois (1969,43) explained;

The using of men for the benefit of masters is no new invention of modern Europe. It is quite as old as the world. But Europe proposed <in the case of Blacks, B.M.> on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no former world ever dreamed. The imperial width of the thing - the heaven, defying and audacity - makes it modern newness...

The intellectual effort that was invested searching for scientific proof that black and white constituted inferior and superior races produced some strange results. One irony of attempts to prove "scientifically" the inferiority of blacks further substantiates Marx's assertion that ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. Europeans of all backgrounds would be taught to be conscious of being members of the dominant white race. Indeed, in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, the white settlers everywhere regarded the idea of equality between the races as blasphemy to be fought against with all the brutality they could master. Recall the lynching experienced by blacks following emancipation.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many political economists acknowledged the prime importance of the African slave trade for prosperity of England and its Western Indian colonies and America. An anonymous pamphlet of 1749 set forth a long settled British view.

The most approved Judges of the Commercial interests of these Kingdoms have ever been of the opinion that our West India and African Trades are the most nationally beneficial of any we carry on. It is also allowed on all Hands, that the trade to Africa is the Branch which renders our American Colonies and Plantations so advantageous to Great Britain: that Traffic only affording our Planters a constant supply of Negro Servants for the Culture of their Lands.. The Negro-Trade, therefore, and its natural consequences resulting from it, may be justly esteemed an inexhaustible Fund of Wealth and Naval Power to this Nation. (Quoted by Calder 1981:112).

Karl Marx, whose work provides a brilliant insight into the

origin and development of capitalism and its reliance on African slave labor was thus not indulging in flamboyant rhetoric when he described the centrality of slavery in the development of capitalism in these words:

Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton: without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is of the greatest importance.

Without slavery North America, the most progressive country, would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe out North America from the map of the world, and you will have anarchy - the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Cause slavery to disappear and you will have wiped America off the map of nations (Marx N.D.:94-5).

While the cotton industry introduced child slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage earners in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the New World. (N.D. Ibid).

The importance of slave trade saw the hardening of racial attitudes. In the sixteenth century there had been little attempt to distinguish between sorts of humanity on anatomical, physiological or culture grounds.

As long as all men were considered brethren in the family of God, as long as no efforts were made to classify some men among the beasts, as long as no political or economic interest called for a theoretical imputation of debasement with respect to any group of dependent people, neither skin color nor the natural anxiety caused by conflict with enemies such as the Muslim or the Tartars led to anything like what we now know as racial "tension" (Quoted, Calder, 112).

The above quotations draw attention to the class relations between European owners of capital and black slaves or workers, and their extreme exploitation which generated a need to ideologically reduce them to "the lesser breeds without the law".

The enslavement of blacks and the harshness of imperialism in the nineteenth century made the institutionalization of racism inevitable not only economically but socially, politically and indeed ideologically.

In a fundamental sense, a theory of class-race articulation must come to grips with Marx's notion that "direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery and credits". Hall (1977,166) correctly pointed out that "it was in the crucible period of slavery that the absolute identification between race and class was first established. The dominant white plantation society viewed slaves as "unfree" chattels and goods not people, black, African and powerless. The whole idiomatic framework of racism and normative degradation were cast by the syntax of slave society". Thus, to oppose race and class, to make race a defining criterion of North America and South Africa apart from class, virtually all that remains is self-pity and flagellation by liberals. The articulation of class and race made the anguished existence of blacks acceptable as natural, immutable, and indeed deserved. As Fanon (quoted Abraham 1982,26) put it:

We say once again that racism is not an accidental discovery. It is not a hidden, dissimulated element. No superhuman efforts are needed to bring it out. Racism stares one in the face for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole; that of the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development. This is why military and economic oppression generally precedes, makes possible, and legitimizes racism.

In both South Africa and North America slavery was preceded by the indenturing of European indigents. U.B. Philips, who according to Bennett Jr., was wrong about many things in the discussion of the Southern regime, was at least right when he wrote: "In significant numbers, the Africans were latecomers fitted into a system already developed". (Quoted, Bennett Jr. 1975:41). Not only were indentured white servants one of the bases of wealth of early colonies, the

conditions under which they lived were tantamount to slavery.

The system of indentured service in its social effects, differed but little, if a at all, from the system of slavery. It really accentuated the social divisions among the whites more distinctly than the presence of the institution of slavery did... It gave purely class distinctions a recognized standing in the colonial courts of law. It was not until the end of the century that Negro bondsmen became numerous on the plantations, and yet in social spirit the seventeenth century in Virginia did not differ from the eighteenth. The ever-increasing multitude of African slaves after 1700 simply confirmed the social tendencies which had previously been fostered by the presence of the indentured whites. <Quoted, Bennett, Jr. 1975, 56-57>.

These historical notes point up that the rise of capitalism and the rise of racism were contemporaneous. A number of scholars have suggested not only that African slaves inherited their chains from white indentured servants but that class and race relations are two sides of the same coin.

Under slavery race and class were identical, and race relations expressed the class relations. Racism, however, did more: it was the reinforcing agent of class exploitation and it also was the lightning rod redirecting the antagonism of poor white workers and those who labored under class oppression (cf. Sales, Jr. 1978, 23). In time a subtle, dangerous, and enduring association of ideas was established: certain forms of hard dirty work, e.g., plantation agriculture, could be done only by black slaves. Slaves were also denied rights that lower-status white groups may have had. Laboring on plantations and in the vineyards of the Cape of Good Hope came to embody the worst features of ancient slavery reinforced by the cash nexus (cf. Baron 1971, 4).

As capitalism evolved in the United States of North America and in South Africa in particular and in other Western countries in general, racism and classism became institutionalized. According to the dual character of their exploitation, blacks have constituted a "race" and a class group at the same time. Blacks became the Other onto whom economically powerless white groups and strata could displace their own frustrations and resentments. The black struggle against exploitation was simultaneously a struggle against racial oppression.

The institutionalization of inequality through legalized racism remains a deadly enemy of all blacks (cf. Abraham 1982,22). There were and still are marginal exceptions in the coupling of the two factors: the small black petty bourgeoisie is mostly a victim of racism rather than class oppression.

The Advent of Industry

The transition from plantation and mining capitalism to industrial capitalism inevitably brought about the deployment of black labor in factories which necessitated their movement into the urban centers. The color-line became distorted, requiring *ad hoc* adjustments in the ideology of racism. "Vulgar racism in its biological form", which, according to Fanon (1964,35), corresponds to exploitation of arms and legs, gave way to "scientific racism", that is, "the perfecting of the means of production which inevitably brings about the camouflage of the techniques by which man is exploited, hence the forms of racism".

Instead of a vertical color-line that defined the institution of slavery and separated blacks from whites, industrial capitalism required segregation and Jim Crow laws to allocate more systematically the burdens of exploitation among white and black workers. Segregation provided a ceiling that moved up and down depending on economic circumstances. "Last hired, first fired" is an expression of how racism apportions and distributes the burdens of capitalism unequally between black and white workers.

The exclusion of blacks from labor unions created among white workers a sense of security and anticipatory socialization with the dominant classes. At the same time, Jim Crow laws created and maintained a surplus black labor force ready to be dipped into and to serve the needs of capitalism as it went from the manufacturing to the industrial stage. Even during the period of primitive accumulation, as we have seen, capitalism had already created two forms of slave labor; white indentured servitude and black permanent slavery.

Developments in the nineteenth century tell us that racism was no chance occurrence but it is a process shaped by the purposeful actions of powerful classes. Nothing but lack of an understanding of history can explain the attempt by bourgeois social scientists to pose the issue of race and class as mutually exclusive. Political developments in North America following the Civil War and the abolition of slavery show the articulation of race and class under specific circumstances.

There is a strong connection between the failures of Reconstruction and the post-Civil War rise of monopoly capitalism and imperialism. In South Africa, too, abandonment of what is called the "Cape Liberal Spirit", whereby certain classes of Africans were given a qualified franchise, cannot be explained except in the context of the rise of imperialism and its need for a powerless black proletariat to work in the gold mines. The Jim Crow laws in the United States of North America and the segregation laws in South Africa passed in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century were linked to an offensive by the capitalist class against blacks in general and the black working class in particular. The laws are characteristic of the emergence of urban industrial capitalism as a social order. Whatever else the laws did, they incorporated the priorities of the capitalist class. Thus, Dubois (1968,630) wrote of the Tilden/Hayes compromise of 1876:

The bargain of 1876 was essentially an understanding by which the federal government ceased to sustain the right to vote of half of the laboring population of the South (i.e. black workers) and left capital as represented by the old planter class, the new Northern capitalist, and the capitalist that began to rise out of the poor whites, with a control of labor greater than in any modern industrial state in civilized lands. Out of that there has arisen in the South an exploitation of labor unparalleled in modern times... There began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curtailed, was bribed by high wage and political office to be united in an exploitation of white, yellow, brown, and black labor in lesser lands and "breeds without the law"... Sons of ditch diggers aspired to be spawn of bastard kings and thieving aristocrats rather than of rough - handed children of dirt and toil. The immense profit from this new exploitation and world-wide commerce enable a guild of millionnaires to engage the greatest engineers, the wisest men of science, as well as pay high wage to the more intelligent labor and at the same time to have enough surplus to make more thorough the dictatorship of capital over the state and over the popular vote, not only in Europe and America but in Asia and Africa.

What Dubois said about the U.S.A. in 1876, can be said, with only minor modifications, about South Africa after its own "Civil War", the Anglo-Boer War of 1900-02. Colonial Britain bargained away African political rights, as the Federal government had done in North America, creating a political system that gave the settlers undue political clout. In South Africa, as in the North America, there began after 1910 "a new capitalism" based on the enslavement of African labor. Lord Milner, high commissioner for South Africa and governor of the Cape and Transvaal (1897-1905), agreed just prior to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1900 that the welfare of white settlers depended upon increasing the white population in South Africa "but not at the expense of its quality". He put it:

We do not want a white proletariat in this country. The position of the whites among the vastly more numerous black population requires that even their lowest ranks should be able to maintain a standard of living far above that of the poorest section on the population of a purely white country... However you look at the matter, you always come back to the same root principle --the urgency of that development which alone can make this a white man's country in the only sense in which South Africa can become one, and that is, not a country full of poor whites, but one in which a largely increased white population can live in decency and comfort. That development requires capital, but it also requires a large amount of rough labour. And that labour cannot to any extent, be white, if only because, pending development and the subsequent reduction in the cost of living, white labour is much too dear. <Quoted, Marks and Tropicdo 1979,66>.

One conclusion is inevitable, race and racism are not simply an expression of, nor a means for, guaranteeing the bourgeoisie's political dominance; in North America and South Africa discrimination has always had the full sanction of the monopolistic bourgeoisie. Jobs and investment opportunities could be denied to blacks, wages could be depressed below prevailing levels, and the white workers could enjoy substantial material rewards. The aim of racism was to justify the very unequal incomes of classes cum races, to convince blacks that their wages reflected of their inferiority to whites and vice-versa.

The stirring of racial antagonism that has characterized the U.S.A. and South Africa since the middle of seventeenth century makes it

difficult not to conclude that capitalism as it developed in the two societies needed a subaltern class that would be especially exploited and brutalized to divert attention from class struggle - which the possessing classes perceive to be more dangerous than racial antagonism. Through force and legal machination, social systems were built in both societies that denied the elementary humanity of all those who supplied most of the manual content of the total social work output. Second-class citizenship became the ultimate expression to legitimate and ascribe class position according to race, and this was sanctioned by law. The system was based on the hope that it would petrify into custom, as had caste in India.

The dynamism of capitalism has not allowed racial stratification to harden. Racial stratification has had to renew itself, to adapt itself, to change its appearance. It has had to undergo the changes experienced by the cultural whole that informed it. Consequently, racism in North America which after passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 was generally thought to be in its last days, is being revived as a new "scientific" discovery.

The last three decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century witnessed capitalism develop in breadth and depth. It was precisely this period that also witnessed final shaping of North America and South Africa as "white" nations with unequal black and white sectors. In 1900 W.E.B. Dubois asserted that racism had become overdetermined and made his now-famous prophesy that the "problem of the twentieth century will be the problem of the colour-line".

Why had racism become overdetermined? Dubois understood that the abolition of formal slavery meant not the end of black exploitation but its extension to the whole world. In 1936 he wrote: (1936, 48)

The abolition of American slavery started the transportation of capital from white to black countries where slavery prevailed, with the same tremendous and awful consequences upon the laboring classes of the world which we see about us today. When raw material could not be raised in a country like the United States, it could be raised in the tropics and semi-tropics under a dictatorship of industry, commerce and manufacture and with no free farming class.

The use of blacks on plantation of the southern United States and on white farms and in the gold mines of South Africa illustrates the effects of uneven development (over the long term) upon "racial modalities". As is well known the North American cotton and tobacco economy and the South African farms and gold mines developed an early dependence upon unfree black laborers, which once generalized, became an obstacle to the use of modern technology and to democracy. The black community in each country was circumscribed by a legal mechanism that set it apart economically, socially and politically in the interest of fractions of capital. In North America black efforts to migrate into northern industry were throttled through collaborationist policies of northern industrialists and southern planters; in South Africa blacks efforts to go to the cities were blocked by farm and mine owners who did not want to lose cheap black labor. Southern cotton and South Africa's gold were both destined for export to Britain.

Industrialization in North America and in South Africa offered further proof that capitalism in both countries was based on the extortion of high profits from the labor of politically powerless blacks. Far from allowing social integration and equal rights, power holders made segregation rigorous in social practice and encouraged lawlessness and racism. In both societies capital accumulation progressed through the expansion of capitalist relations (capital - wage labor), and through what has been called permanent primitive accumulation of black labor - its expropriation through noncapitalist relations of productions circulated into capitalist expansion) (cf. Binford 1982).

In February 1913 Lenin wrote, in "Russians and Negroes" that the scandalous treatment of the descendants of former slaves was due to the fact that capitalism had no "room" for them other than legal emancipation - and even emancipation it curtailed in every possible way. Commenting on the high (44.5%) illiteracy rate among blacks in North America in 1900 Lenin said:

Such a scandalously high percentage of illiterates is a disgrace to a civilized, advanced country like the North American Republic; especially if one took account of the fact that among whites in America the proportion of illeterates was not more than 6 percent (LCW Vol. 18; 543-544).

Illiteracy, of course, is a mark of slavery and of enforced ignorance to facilitate exploitation. Depending on the tasks to be assigned to various categories of labor, the ruling class also decides on the education to be given the various other classes. Education is a social product and the manner of its distribution is likely to influence and shape social mobility and hence class consciousness. The generation of surplus value among "ignorant" groups calls for (indeed, depends upon) more intense forms of exploitation and more coercion in the productive process itself than are required among educated, skilled, or semi-skilled workers. Unequal access to education - a social product - became an inducement to class-collaboration by white workers as a class at the expense of black workers.

In 1915, in New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Agriculture, Lenin returned to the subject of blacks in the United States, criticizing a Mr. Himmer, who had argued that the country had never known feudalism: "This is the very opposite of the truth, for the economic survivals of slavery are not in any way distinguishable from those of feudalism, and in the former slave-owning South of the United States of America these survivals are still very powerful". (LCW Vol. 22: 24) In a further discussion of black illiteracy rate, (roughly seven times greater than the white rate), Lenin stated: "One can easily imagine the complex of legal and social relationships that corresponds to this disgraceful fact from the sphere of popular literacy". (Lenin 1964:25) Lenin then spelled out the economic basis that produced and continued to support what he called "this fine superstructure": "semi-feudal or - which is the same thing in economic terms - semi-slave share-croppers" (ibid,25).

In 1910, free, republican-democratic America had 1,500,000 share-croppers, of whom more than 1,000,000 were Negroes. And the proportion of share-croppers to the total number of farmers is not decreasing, but is, on the contrary steadily and rather rapidly increasing. In 1880, 17.5 % of the farmers in the U.S.A. were share-croppers; in 1890, 18.4 %; in 1900, 22.2 %; and in 1910, 24 %... the share-cropping area, both in America and in Russia, is the most stagnant area, where the masses are subjected to the greatest degradation and oppression. Immigrants to America, who have such an outstanding role to play in the country's economy and all its social life, shun the South.

Lenin's analysis of the U.S.A. South would also apply to South Africa's agriculture. There, farm workers were faced with ever far worse restrictions: they could not legally abandon the slave-like employment on white farms without an employer's written permission.

It is only when we understand the immediate economic and social stake in cheap black labor of fractions of white capitalists that we can understand the enduring realities of racism. Racism became a social force because it had a class base: the need for cheap labor of capitalist farmers and mine owners, who would resort to various political mechanisms to ensure its adequate supply. In short, racism is explicable only as a mediated outcome of the social dynamics and imperative of capitalism in specific circumstances. In 1920, W.E.B. Dubois (1920: 41-42) noted:

The European world is using black and brown men for all the uses which men know. Slowly but surely white culture is evolving the theory that "darkies" are born beasts of burden for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier, traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark in mind as well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent, of trailer, cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxisms; they have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical idiots, - 'half-devil and half-child'.

Such degrading left its mark, and cannot be ignored in any discourse about race and class and/or lack of unity between black and white workers.

Lenin (L.C.W. vol. 23: 55-56) asked and answered the question that is often ignored by those adopting an essentialist view of class: the problem relating to relations between workers of the dominant and subordinate groups. That is the nature of the race/class dialectic in social formations, which are "structured in dominance".

Is the actual condition of the workers in the oppressor and in the oppressed nations the same, from the stand-point of the national question?

No, it is not the same.

1. Economically, the difference is that sections of the working class in the poorest of nations receive the crumbs from the super profits the bourgeoisie of these nations obtained by extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. Besides, the economic statistics show that here a larger percentage of the workers become 'straw bosses' than is the case in the oppressed nations. a larger percentage rise to the labour aristocracy. This is a fact. To a certain degree the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of their own bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

2. Politically, the difference is that, compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a privileged position in many spheres of political life.

3. Ideologically, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt of all the workers of the oppressed nations... Thus all along the line there are differences in the objective world that is independent of the will and consciousness of individuals (emphases added).

There is the rub - subtle: white workers are bribed, effectively. With great sorrow and regret Dubois (1920,47) wrote: "Were they not lordly whites and should they not share in the spoils of rape? High wages in the United States and England might be skillfully manipulated results of slavery in Africa and of peonage in Asia".

The rise of imperialism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was critical not only for the future of the working class but also for black-white relations. The elevation of sections of the white working class into a labor aristocracy required a concomitant systematic reproduction of the low and ascribed status of black labor, as a specific fraction of the "free laboring" classes of industrial capitalism; hence the necessity of explicit segregatory laws and discriminatory practices (cf. Hall Ibid:339). In the era of imperialism a further elaboration of a culture of white supremacy was even more systematic: North America and South Africa became the bearers of the "White man's burden". The usefulness of this ideology cannot be overestimated. It turned conquest and genocide into a "humanitarian" justification of Anglo-Saxon

world domination (cf. Sweezy 1964, 311).

Writing of the developments of Jim Crowism in the United States, Oliver Cox (1948, 381-82) concluded : that

What segregation really amounts to is a sort of perennial imprisonment of the colored people by the capital. Moreover, this imprisonment provides the proper milieu for the planned cultural retardation of the colored people. Here they may mill and fester in social degeneracy with relatively minimal opportunity for even the most ambitious of them to extricate themselves.

The Jim Crow laws enacted during the second half of the nineteenth century vividly bring to life the race-class dialectic. The essence of the laws was to circumscribe class relations and advance domination of black workers in the interest of capitalist super-exploitation while fostering a "superiority" complex among whites that would be supportive of the policies that kept blacks out of remunerative jobs. The survival of capitalism required economic and political relations that prevented the development of a working-class consciousness that cuts across the color-line. Only in that way would capitalism be able to control the class struggles inimical to its survival. To the extent that black and white workers were treated as equals, to that extent was the power of capital to exploit race prejudice limited.

Political intervention and manipulation of "racial" divisions within the working class were both consistent and planned, and proved decisive in channeling working-class politics. White workers, as a result of preferential treatment, in time came to identify their economic, social, and psychological interests with the subordination of black workers- who in certain cases had already been used to threaten white job security. In due course, blacks' "inferiority" and their subordination to whites came to be regarded as part of the natural order of things, and was backed up by an elaboration of the culture of white supremacy. Racism thus penetrated the social, economic, political, and ideological structure of bourgeois society, even as capitalist development created a complex division of labor and huge urban agglomerations.

As a political strategy, Jim Crow laws must be accurately ascribed:

they were an official policy of the ruling class, not only to manage the class struggle, but to shift the disadvantages of capitalism to the shoulders of blacks. Hall (Ibid:339) wrote that:

Race differentiates between the different fractions of the working classes with respect to capital, creating specific forms of fracturing and fractioning which are as important for the way in which they intersect class relations (and divide the class struggle internally) as they are mere 'expressions' of some general form of class struggle. Politically and culturally, these combined and uneven relations between class and race are historically more pertinent than simple correspondence.

There was, thus, no "paradox" in the U.S. and South Africa when political democracy was extended to white men and women and the denial at the same time of the vote for black men and black women. Having denied blacks the vote, capital could exploit black labor without being inconvenienced by the black vote. The granting of franchise to whites was based on a well-thought-out strategy: the free operation of capitalism would not in and of itself reduce inequalities and redistribute income. On the contrary, democratic politics - in which the whites had the vote even though they did not have economic power - was seen as essential to prevent the kind of widening gaps between white classes that would be incompatible with a "healthy" social and imperial order. Politics would redress, at least for the white working class the inequalities generated by a "free"-market capitalism. As a result, in both the U.S. and South Africa the white working class won for itself an increasing share of the national income and increasingly acceptable working conditions.

W.E.B. Dubois (1920: 509) with his characteristic insight wrote:

In modern industrial civilization a disfranchised working class is worse than helpless; it will be diseased, it will be criminal, it will be ignorant, it will be the plaything of mobs, and it will be insulted by caste restrictions.

Capitalism alone may not have worked to increase equality but the white workers' possession of the vote did result in substantial improvements for them. And the white workers' vote made them

responsible together with the ruling class for the laws that oppressed the black workers. The reality for black workers worsened. They could be subjected to a high degree of control and coercion imposed with the acquiescence of white voters. Instead of the exemplars of the success of democracy and the possibility of human brotherhood, the U.S. and S.A. demonstrate their pitfalls and failures so far as blacks were concerned (cf. Dubois 1920, 50).

Democratic politics for only whites in a multiethnic society leads to a racially stratified working class. The politicians make paramount the interests of the section of the working class that has the vote. If universal suffrage produces a welfare state under capitalism, whites-only suffrage gives rise to a capitalism that distributes the class contradiction unevenly on one section of the working class (cf. Simons and Simons 1969:623). The bourgeoisie, the most political class, never had an abstract attachment to democracy; it would extend democracy only as long as democracy would stabilize the rule of the bourgeoisie.

There are many other ways in which capitalism in North America and South Africa endeavored to keep the pressure on itself from becoming too much. One which was the institutionalization of what J.M. Cairnes called the "dual labor" markets, of noncompeting labor groups, has been documented and studied by economists. The majority of white workers until recently have been employed in the primary labor market, which offers relatively high-paying and stable employment, good working conditions, chance of advancement, and equitable administration of work rules. Blacks work primarily in the secondary market of low-paying, dirty, and insecure jobs. Black labor thus constitutes the bulk of what Marx characterized as surplus labor - that indispensable force so crucial for capital accumulation.

Marx (1967, 632) wrote that:

If a surplus laboring population is... the lever of capitalistic accumulation, nay, a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production, it forms a disposable industrial reserve army that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost... It creates for the changing needs of the self-expansion of capital a mass of human material always ready for exploitation... The greater the social wealth, the functioning capital, the extent and energy of its growth, and therefore, also the absolute mass of the proletariat reserve

army... This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.

Capitalism, then not only needs but reproduces surplus labor in the course of its contradictory development. But in the U.S. and S.A. this structural and inherent feature of capitalism is theorized as being reproduced by certain cultural and genetic peculiarities of blacks and other minorities. Thus, to be unemployed or, if lucky, to have a job at the bottom rung, was seen as a natural condition of black workers (i.e., a consequence of their inferiority) rather than an inherent consequence of capitalism. Racism made it appear normal that blacks would be chosen to play the role of surplus labor in highly disproportionate numbers due to their "inferiority" - and it matters little whether this "inferiority" is attributed to nature or nurture or to the structural and sociological conditions. Dubois (1969, 231) explained how the dual labor market is created:

White and Negro labor must, so far as possible, be taken out of active competition, by segregation in work: to the whites the bulk of well-paid skilled labor and management; to the Negro, farm labor, unskilled labor in industry and domestic service. Exceptions to this general pattern would occur especially in some sorts of skills like building and repairs; but in general the "white" and "Negro" job would be kept separate and superimposed.

That black people suffer unemployment at well over two times the rate of whites is well known. But even this quantifiable reflection of racism does not capture the full force of the coincidence of race and class on the entire working class and the industrial reserve army.

Marx identified three forms of the industrial reserve, differentiated by their role in capitalist production as well as their conditions of reproduction. First, there is the "floating" sector which may be said to consist of those who fall into unemployment "normally", that is through the general functioning of the business cycle, the perennial shifts of production caused by the vagaries of the market-place and technological development. Second, there is the "latent" sector related mainly to agrarian 'overpopulation'. The growth in the organic composition of capital in agriculture brings about an absolute contradiction in the demand for labor power. Simultaneously,

small-scale farmers are ousted by large-scale capitalist agri- industry. These processes constantly generate agrarian overpopulation. It is latent because a larger part of surplus agrarian populations fail to find anything to do in the towns. Today, housewives might be included in the category of surplus labor. Third, there is the "stagnant" sector, those who are habitually unemployed and whose life circumstances are significantly lower than those of the rest of the working class. Capitalism also has partial unemployment, which springs from the less than full employment of a large number of workers in view of the chronic underloading or production capacities. A new structural feature of the unemployed today is that the percentage of the redundant people has increased markedly. In the U.S. and S.A. the constitution of these sectors as classes and the class relations ascribed to them function as race relations.

In both countries, blacks make up a disproportionate percentage of the industrial reserve army relative to their numbers in society. The Lumpen-proletariat which constitutes the lowest sediment of the unemployed consists of three categories: a) persons able to work but remaining without work for a long time, and living on charity; b) orphans and pauper children, the poor without any income or means of subsistence; and c) the mutilated, the sickly, the widows, the aged. This sediment "is the hospital of the active labor-army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve army". Marx (1974, I: 643) further explains that:

...the relative surplus population - furnishes to capital an inexhaustible reservoir of disposable labor power. Its conditions of life sink below the average normal level of the working class.. But it forms at the same time a self-reproducing and self-perpetuating element of the working class.

The conditions of life of this "lowest" sediment of the stagnant sector are characterized as follows by Marx (ibid.):

Pauperism is the hospital of the active labor-army and the dead weight of the industrial reserve army. Its production is included in that of the relative surplus-population, its necessity in them; along with the surplus-population, pauperism forms a condition of capitalist production, and of

the capitalist development of wealth (ibid.).

The industrial reserve army is kept in being because of the periodic cycle of prosperity and crisis. In a perverse way racism not only acknowledges that a reserve army is a permanently essential part of capitalism but goes on to argue that it is proof of the natural inequality of the races. It is the ascription of the race label and the articulation of racism in the U.S. and South African capitalist formations that ensures that depression-level unemployment among blacks is simply shrugged off as one of the facts of life. This is not the place to show in detail why and how this is so, but there is enough evidence that governments, individual politicians, neo-fascist political organizations, the mass media, employees, institutions of the labor movement, and sections of the white working class all act and articulate racist beliefs, that race becomes the modality in which class is "lived", the form in which white workers fight to escape the injustices of the system.

Hall's (1980, 341) comment on the articulation of race and class is so salient that it is worth quoting at some length:

Racism is, thus, not only a problem for blacks who are obliged to suffer it. Nor is it a problem only for those sections of the white working class and those organizations infected by its stain. Nor can it be overcome, as a general virus in the social body, by a heavy dose of liberal inoculation. Capital reproduces the class, including its internal contradictions, as a whole- structured by race. It dominates the divided class in part, through those internal divisions which have racism as one of its effects. It contains and disables representative class institutions, by neutralizing them - confining them to strategies and struggles which are race-specific, which do not surmount its limits, its barrier. Through racism, it is able to defeat the attempts to construct alternative means of representation which could more adequately represent the class as a whole, or which are capable of effecting the unity of the class as a result; that is, those alternatives which would adequately represent the class as a whole - against capitalism, against racism. The sectional struggles, articulated through race, instead, continue to appear as the necessary defensive strategies of a class divided against itself, face-to-face with capital. They are, therefore, also the site of capital's

continuing hegemony over it. This is certainly not to treat racism as, in any simple sense, the product of an ideological trick.

It cannot be stressed sufficiently that when race and class or class and race coincide, the social consequences become lethal. Although everybody, at least today, concedes that blacks are full human beings in every sense of the word - in the case of U.S. blacks, the Constitution confers full citizenship as well; (Africans in South Africa are expected to become citizens of their own areas) - some Americans, intellectuals and ordinary people, continue to debate an undebatable issue. In its simplest form the issue has always been are blacks poor because of nature or nurture? Do they have the same abilities as whites? An article in the OP-ED page of the New York Times (20 September 1983) typifies the nature and futility of the debate. John H. Bunzel, former president of San Jose State University and senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution of War, Peace and Revolution, at Stanford University after criticizing the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for emphasizing discrimination in explaining the current black plight wrote;

The basic challenge is for those committed to equal opportunity for all to develop fresh perspective with which to confront, for example, the special ills that still trap millions of blacks in poverty and failure. An important beginning would be for the full civil rights community to acknowledge that overt racism is significantly declining - this is not to say it no longer exists - and that new efforts should be directed toward repairing the damage of past racism.

The commission can play an important role. But if it is to expand its influence, it must strive for greater credibility by, among other things, providing a genuine forum for more diverse ideas. Specifically, it should give special attention to the views of those who share civil rights groups' objectives but who regard some of the means advocated or used as mistaken and counterproductive. The commission should be fully open to various remedies, and it should offer specific proposals to promote minority advancement in a less politicized and adversarial manner.

It will also have to treat research differently. Many of its

reports take the line that any disparity in earnings or employment between minorities and non-minorities result from discrimination. Considerable energy has been devoted to analyzing and measuring these disparities, but no sustained research has been undertaken - certainly no rigorous empirical testing - to justify the initial assumption. Discrimination has been used as a "sponge" to absorb and explain almost everything, thus avoiding examination of many major factors (length and quality of education, family background, attitudes toward work, etc.) that could contribute to a deeper understanding of existing disparities.

After a brief mention of the problems threatening the stability of the black family, especially what Bunzel describes as the alarming increase in early, unplanned births among teenage girls, he concludes:

The commission could usefully investigate the sensitive but important question of why blacks generally do not perform well on so many different kinds of written examinations. But it should not undertake such a project with any preconception that the exams are invariably discriminatory. It would be of great use to have more information about why some minorities do so well - the Chinese and Japanese, among other. Over a period of time it would be valuable to study newer immigrant groups, such as the Cuban, Vietnamese, Koreans and Filipinos.

Bunzel argues first that the causes of black poverty may be the blacks themselves. Second, he seems to suggest that Black poverty is a distinct condition to be studied, and perhaps remedied, without reference to the larger organization of the economy and society. Focusing attention on blacks and their supposed defects is not only easier but also in many respect politically safer. What "ails" blacks can be chosen arbitrarily. One addresses what appears to accord with the politico- ideological current popular at the time and ignores those issues that are inimical to the status quo. It is not necessary to be versed in the history of conservative doctrines about "races" and their "abilities" to recognize that the arguments of the modern foes of equality are no more than the shopworn ideas circulated by apologists of slavery and other systems of human oppression. The principle of equal opportunity in an unequally structured society is at best hypocritical, at worst an illusion. Lenin (31: 145) wrote:

An abstract or formal posing of the problem of equality in general and national equality in particular is in the very nature of bourgeois democracy. Under the guise of the equality of the individual in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal or legal equality of the property - owner and the proletarian, the exploiter and the exploited, thereby grossly deceiving the oppressed classes. On the plea that all men are absolutely equal, the bourgeoisie is transforming the idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of relations in commodity production, into a weapon in its struggle against the abolition of classes. The real meaning of the demand for equality consists in its being a demand for the abolition of classes.

Bourgeois social science has worked hard in the past two hundred years to build an armamentarium of arguments in favor of class and racial inequality. In recent years the arguments, especially in the case of the demands for economic equality, have become extremely ingenious. Calling for equal opportunity and deliberately ignoring the intervening conditions of blacks is indeed cynical. It is typical of conservatives to freeze social reality at some arbitrary point and by statistical correlations to universalize the result of their samples - as if the samples reflect historical or current realities. Silence on the responsibility of racism for depriving blacks of the use of their abilities and talents is the greatest indictment against neo-conservatives. Where there is no equality in fact, there can be no equality of opportunity.

Bunzel's arguments not only disregard history but also turns facts and past policies of the federal government on their heads. Thus, the materially deprived condition of blacks, a consequence of the theft of their labor, becomes the proof of their inferiority. In a strange way this twisted argument affirms that capitalism is based on social inequality and that the inequality cannot be reduced without changing the entire society. Equal opportunity in a class based system can only mean one thing; it enriches the upper classes, vulgarizes the middle classes, and brutalizes the lower classes (cf. Arnold quoted in Abraham 1982, 234). The intellectuals who continue to peddle the notion that there is something wrong about Blacks and this something is responsible for their being at the bottom prove once more Marx's assertion that "In the domain of political economy free scientific inquiry meets not merely the same enemies as in all other domains. The

peculiar nature of the materials it deals with, summons, as foes into the field of battle the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private inrest" (Marx 1967: 10). The dismantling of the Jim Crow system in the 1960s, far from mitigating or abolishing the fundamental contradiction of capitalism, poses the contradiction in a purer and more dramatic manner.

What defines capitalist society is its property system and the classes that it spawns. The elimination of legal racism and the worsening plight not only of blacks but of other sections of the working class show concretely that capitalism cannot eliminate poverty. The recent pastoral letter by the Catholic bishops is a sign of the times. It acknowledges, as did Martin Luther's poor peoples movement, that a radical transformation of the existing relations of capital and labor is on the agenda.

Conclusion

A few conclusions seem to stand out from the varied considerations that have been presented. In the last five hundred years the lot of blacks in the United States and South Africa has been dictated by the interests of white capital. Their will has been bludgeoned and coerced under some of the most vicious forms of exploitation ever inflicted upon one people by another. Their desperate attempts to liberate themselves and to survive have few parallels in history. Their own material poverty has been a vivid reminder of its opposite: the extraordinary wealth that their labor produced and that has been stolen from them throughout the ages (cf. Hogan 1984, 5).

Class and race derive their quality in the United States and South Africa from particular patterns of the distributions of the poverty and agony of capitalist exploitation and oppression. We have seen that as capitalism changes, the correlation between class and race evolves. Race is a biological category that only under certain circumstances becomes articulated with class. Class, on the other hand, refers to the enduring social relations that emerge from the way in which the means of production are distributed.

The study of the origin of capitalism in South Africa and the United States reveals that the ruling class does not merely create classes (in the strict sense) and races (in the social sense), but polarizes them. That is, the ruling class creates situations that enable it to distribute the inequities of the capitalist system among classes (cum races) in a

variety of ways. Although initially conjectural, the differential experiences of the injustices of the system may over time take on structural aspects. Racism trains black and white working classes to acquire and develop certain capabilities at the expense of other capabilities. Skilled work for a long time was an exclusive preserve of whites; unskilled, dirty work was done by blacks. In time, the acquired abilities were taken to be expressive of the racial abilities, and they governed the relations between black and white workers. The work and the wages became social determinants of each group's social power. The social power relations of the "races", then, particularized forms of class relations. The power relations within the working class weaken it in the struggle against the capitalist class. The white section of the working class indirectly rules the black section, and through this division capital is able to impose its will on the entire working class.

Although there was nothing intrinsic in capitalism that required it to utilize slave labor, the massive historical fact of its having done so influenced tremendously the articulation of race and class. The United State and South African settler societies, in particular, rested psychologically on racism - a mutually conditioning and reinforcing ideology that justified not only slavery and the slave trade but the ravages and the genocide carried out by both societies.

The African in South Africa and the Afro-American in the United States although predominantly members of the proletariat, are also black, and cannot disown or remove their color. Racism forces them to remain as built-in scapegoats onto whom the burdens and contradictions of capitalism can be shifted. The division of the working class by race is no longer a purely superstructural phenomenon but something that strongly influences class interests. Racism, therefore cannot be eliminated without eliminating the reinforcing political economy.

In the United States and South Africa blacks of all classes face two evils: class exploitation and racial oppression. Indeed, exploitation for economic reasons and social oppression for political reasons became indistinguishable. For whereas the class question was at the foundation of black enslavement, which made exploitation central, it was racism which became a reinforcing agent. The white working class, though exploited by capital does not consider itself socially oppressed. Thus, the prejudices of white workers have often meant that black workers have had little choice - if they were to organize at all - but to organise separately from whites. But they have always had to fight

against the separation because it weakened the struggle of the working class as a whole and made it easier for the ruling class to maintain itself.

C.R.L. James (1963,283) put the problem of class and race most succinctly. "The race question is subsidiary to the class question in politics, and to think of imperialism in terms of race is disastrous. But to neglect the racial factor as merely incidental is an error only less grave than to make it fundamental".

What James says requires, therefore, a modified class analysis of history of capitalism and its classes in the United States and South Africa. If human history is a record of the class struggle, we are inevitably forced to ask about both countries, can racial oppression be eradicated without challenging its roots in class society? The answer is obvious: there are two struggles facing humanity today, one against classism and the other against racism. But, unless we mystify racism, we can see it has a material basis; an economic and social system that fosters racist attitudes, ideas, and institutions. The bourgeoisie profits economically and politically from the division of people whose unity could write its epitaph.

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RESUME

La race et la classe constituent des sujets importants dans le monde moderne. A quel moment de l'histoire ces deux sujets se sont-ils transformés en problématiques et/ou depuis quand constate-t-on leur interaction l'un sur l'autre? La race et la classe sont-elles deux catégories qui s'excluent ou les relations entre les races reposent-elles sur des relations de classe? L'étude des concepts de la race et de la classe devrait servir, selon l'auteur, à comprendre que le capitalisme est un système mondial qui a exploité la main-d'oeuvre noire et à appréhender la façon dont les notions de race et de classe s'articulent concrètement. Loin d'être des notions existant depuis des temps immémoriaux, la race et la classe sont des produits de l'évolution de l'histoire en même temps que le moteur de cette évolution.

Cet article se penche donc en particulier sur la question raciale et la question des classes en Amérique du Nord et en Afrique du Sud, deux pays qui ont hérité de sociétés qui sont le produit d'immigration coloniale. L'exploitation économique des africains (un acte de classe) procède donc de l'expansion du système capitaliste mondial. Ainsi constate-t-on que ce sont surtout des premiers postes coloniaux occupés par les européens que sont nées les sociétés où la race constitue un problème majeur; c'est le cas de l'Amérique du Nord et de la République de l'Afrique Sud. C'est en effet dans ces sociétés que le discours politique, philosophique et sociologique s'articule autour de deux questions essentielles, la race et la classe et la classe ou la race. Nous ne tentons nullement de faire croire que les autres sociétés n'ont pas connu ce problème de race ou racisme ni celui des classes, nous suggérons par contre que ces problèmes particuliers ont été vécus par l'Amérique du Nord et la République d'Afrique du Sud sous leur forme la plus pathologique.

La naissance du racisme et celle du capitalisme sont contemporaines. En effet, pendant que le capitalisme se développait aux Etats Unis d'Amérique du Nord et en Afrique du Sud, le racisme et le phénomène de classes s'institutionnalisèrent. Le développement du capitalisme dans ces deux sociétés exigeait la formation d'une classe subalterne à exploiter et à brutaliser de façon à détourner l'attention de la lutte des classes qui sévissait et qui aux yeux des classes riches était plus dangereuse que tout affrontement racial. C'est ainsi que s'institua dans ces deux systèmes, par l'usage de la force et suite à une machination juridique, un système qui refusait de reconnaître l'humanité la plus

élémentaire à ceux-là mêmes qui fournissaient de leurs mains une très grande partie de tout le travail effectué par ces sociétés. On finit par donner à ceux-ci le titre de citoyen de second rang, ce qui permit de justifier et d'attribuer aux classes leur rang en se basant sur la race; et la législation sanctionnait ce comportement.

Vu le caractère dynamique du capitalisme, la consolidation de la stratification raciale fut impossible. En effet celle-ci fut obligée de se renouveler, de s'adapter, de changer d'apparence. Le racisme ne peut s'expliquer que de la façon suivante: c'est un élément qui résulte de l'interaction entre la dynamique sociale et les impératifs du capitalisme dans certaines circonstances bien précises.

Les Africains de l'Afrique du Sud tout comme les Afro-américains des USA restent malgré eux, en raison du racisme, les boucs émissaires sur lesquels le capitalisme se décharge de ses fardeaux et de ses contradictions. Le racisme s'appuie sur un élément matériel, à savoir un système économique et social qui favorise des attitudes, des idées et des institutions racistes. Partant, le racisme ne saurait s'éliminer sans avoir fait disparaître auparavant l'économie politique qui le renforce.