

Post Civil Rights Racism and the Need to Challenge Racial/Ethnic Inequality beyond the Limits of Liberalism

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A large body of sociological literature suggests that post civil rights racism in the United States is often hidden behind widely celebrated liberal principles such as individualism, meritocracy, free competition, and equality of opportunity. Much of this literature emphasizes how whites often defend their unearned advantages (either consciously or unconsciously) by invoking these liberal values in a society that structurally benefits them and disadvantages ethnic and racial minorities. A “racialized social system” is thus reproduced and legitimized behind a liberal façade. Our central argument in this article is that racism does not simply hide behind a liberal façade but rather is inherent to liberalism itself. Accordingly, we briefly outline the history of liberal philosophy to show how it supports a type of abstract universalism that ultimately leads to hierarchy and exclusion. Furthermore, we discuss how problems associated with liberalism are magnified by neo-liberalism. Lastly, we suggest that achieving racial/ethnic equity in the United States demands anti-racist projects guided by alternative social imagery that breaks from the typical trappings associated with liberalism/neo-liberalism. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: http://www.transformativestudies.org ©2010 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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