

RACE IN THE WORLD SYSTEM

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DAVID THEO GOLDBERG, *The Racial State*. London: Blackwell, 2002, 319 pages, ISBN 0-631-19919-5, \$66.95.

HOWARD WINANT, *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II*. New York: Basic Books, 2001, 428 pages, ISBN 0-465-04340-2, \$32.00.

Most American social scientists interpret racism as an individual malady and miss, ignore, or simply do not believe in the institutional and global nature of “White supremacy” (Mills 1997). Two limitations that ensue from this myopia are, first, the assumption that societies are not racialized entities (for a critique, see Bonilla-Silva 1997) and, second, a high degree of analytical provincialism—most studies by American scholars are narrow in scope and often are confined to the United States (for early exceptions, see Cox 1948, 1959; Du Bois 1920, 1945).

Fortunately, the books I review here do not suffer from this myopia. In fact, the authors whose books I review have distinguished themselves for taking seriously the structural dimensions of racialization as well as for insisting on its word-systemic character (Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant, 1994; Winant 1994). In their respective books, Goldberg and Winant advance the idea that modernity and the structures it created are racialized phenomena. Although these books are not faultless (no intellectual creation is), I regard both as major contributions to the literature on race and ethnicity. I proceed in this review as follows. First, I review Goldberg’s book. Then I review Winant’s book. Lastly, I conclude by briefly suggesting what ought to be the next steps in the agenda of those concerned with analyzing and working toward the dismantlement of world-systemic White supremacy.

In *The Racial State*, David Theo Goldberg examines the institutionalization of Western racist culture (Goldberg 1993) into the dominant political structure of modernity: the racial state. Goldberg’s claim is strong and unambiguous: the modern state . . . is nothing less than a racial state. It is a state or set of conditions that assumes varied, racially conceived character in different sociospecific milieus (p. 2). In his view, race, and modern states are co-articulated (p. 4) and, thus, one cannot study one without studying the other.

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In Chapter 1 Goldberg excavates the occult racial hybridity of early metropolitan states and their efforts to project a homogeneous racial image in opposition to their colonial others. He also discusses the transition from the management of diversity strategy in the colonial era to the unifying of difference in the postcolonial. And, despite appearances, these are two strategies of regulating the other (see particularly Goldberg's discussion on pp. 33–34).

In Chapter 2 Goldberg introduces one of the central themes of this book, the notion that there are two competing racial traditions in the modern and postmodern world, naturalism, represented by Hobbes, and historicism, represented by Locke. One tradition essentializes racial others, and the other, rooted in the Enlightenment, assumes their temporal inferiority. Although the latter tradition, which has become progressively the major one in the modern era, may be regarded by some as politically progressive, Goldberg shows that this is not the case. He dedicates one entire chapter to the debate between Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill on the proper place of Blacks in society and concludes that despite their real differences, both had a common thread of racist presumption, bald and vicious, on the one hand, polite and effete, on the other, but both nevertheless insidious and odious (p. 71).

Goldberg uses the dichotomy between naturalism and historicism to examine how racial states rule (Chapter 4), to describe regime forms of the racial state (Chapter 5), and to analyze the legal apparatus of racial states (Chapter 6). According to Goldberg, naturalist states are born out of might (e.g., Germany and South Africa), rule through terror, and have an instrumental legal system to legitimate racial domination. In contrast, historicist states are born out of capital accumulation (e.g., England and France), rule through law, and have a universalistic legal system.

In the last three chapters, Goldberg addresses the central role of states in the creation and policing of racial boundaries (through immigration and naturalization policies, interracial marriage laws, etc.), the emergence of so-called raceless states and color-blind politics (this is a very important chapter), and speculates on how we might go about creating truly democratic states.

So what are my criticisms of this important book? First, although I am sympathetic to Goldberg's focus on race as an organizing principle of society, I am not convinced that the deterministic notion of *racial* states helps us to better understand the racialized aspects of states. All states crystallize *social power* (Mann) and serve as the matrix where social domination congeals (Poulanzas). Thus, readers may wonder why shall the analysis of state power be circumscribed to *one* of the multiple sources of social power. Goldberg himself wishes to avoid the instrumentalist view of state power (p. 7), and acknowledges throughout the text the gendered and capitalist (see pp. 101–103) aspects of the state. Yet, the theoretical tension between his *racial* state and his attempt to avoid determinism is unresolved in the text.

Second, Goldberg's dichotomy between naturalism and historicism is too rigid and, hence, less useful. Albeit Goldberg himself goes at length to show that these traditions do not constitute two mutually exclusive logics (see pp. 45–56) and tries to show the reciprocities and ambivalence contained in both (see p. 155), but he falls short in this attempt. A more fluid understanding of these two traditions and of the fact that all states contain various combinations of both would have been more useful as a lens to read the history of all modern states.

Third, I appreciated Goldberg's attempt at going beyond the usual suspects (Brazil, South Africa, and the USA) in his analysis. Nevertheless, the discussion was still unbalanced. I, for one, expected to see a more robust discussion of Latin American, the Caribbean, and Asian states.

Fourth, gratuitous attacks on a few scholars seriously distracted me—and I think most readers—from appreciating Goldberg's important ideas. In a writing style that reminded me of Lenin, Goldberg scorns radical authors such as Carol Pateman, Catharine MacKinnon, and especially Charles W. Mills, authors with whom one would expect Goldberg to have major coincidences. Instead, we are treated to his cartoon-like descriptions and misrepresentations of these author's work, a strategy that left the strong, foul, odor of personalism in my mind days after I finished this book. (Why would Goldberg waste valuable space criticizing *ad nauseam* these authors instead of concentrating on advancing his agenda?) Lastly, this book would have benefited from a good editor. His writing is obtuse, often pedantic, and at various points, plainly impenetrable. Those of us who have read and admired Professor Goldberg's work (I cite him in my own work) have been very patient with him. But, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that reading him is, as a friend of mine told me, like going through glue. To understand Goldberg's work and get his many (but mostly scattered) brilliant insights, one needs the patience of a blind man trying to thread a needle. I hope Professor Goldberg pens his next books with a larger audience in mind and free of the yolk imposed (or self-imposed?) by the postmodern writing style. We need his work to be clear to push us into new, wonderful directions.

I now turn my attention to Howard Winant's, *The World is a Ghetto*. Winant's premise in this book, similar to Goldberg's, is that the racialization of the world is both the cause and consequence of modernity (thus, *The World is a Ghetto*, p. 3). And the main thesis he explores is the idea that in the post-WWII era there has been a global rupture or *break*, in the continuity of worldwide White supremacy (p. 2). (Advise for lazy readers: Chapter 2 is an excellent summary of this book.)

To explore this thesis, Winant relies on Myrdal's ideas of circularity (ideas and practices are cyclical) and cumulation (the cycles always create new syntheses). His journey begins with the early processes of race-making in both the creation of nation-states in Europe as well as in colonies abroad. These processes, Winant argues, had historical antecedents in early slavery and anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim campaigns (an example of circularity) but also established new precedents such as brutal racially-based slavery (an example of cumulation).

In Chapter 4, Winant analyzes the multiple forms of resistance against slavery by enslaved populations in the Americas ranging from slow-downs, to maroonage, to open rebellion. He also discusses how abolitionism, despite its immensely emancipatory component, curtailed revolutionary anti-racism and thus constituted "the worldwide debut of racial *hegemony*" (p. 81). Hence, the abolition of slavery brought new nightmares (Chapter 5) to racialized workers in South Africa, Brazil, and the United States, the three major examples discussed by Winant. Slavery was replaced by peonage everywhere leading later to apartheid in South Africa, a segmented labor market in the United States, and a longer period of peonage for former slaves in Brazil (European immigrants were the ones massively incorporated into the wage labor economy of Brazil). This new racial order was rationalized by nineteenth century scientific racism and crystallized into varying forms of *herrenvolk* political structures.

But, as Winant discusses in chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, these political structures generated resistance from subaltern others in all these societies. In the United States, through well-known processes, the Civil Rights Movement led to a major racial reform in the 1960s. In South Africa, internal and external pressures forced the collapse of the apartheid regime. And in Brazil, Blacks through periods of cultural and political resistance, have forced a critical race consciousness or sensibility (p. 240) that has fractured the national ideology of the country as a racial democracy.

The post-WWII historical break in global White supremacy, as Winant aptly points out, has serious limitations. In the United States, a discourse of color blindness has limited the space for contestation; in South Africa, Africans are now free to lose (in part because of the non-racialist stance of the ANC); and in Brazil, Blacks acknowledge race, but reject political mobilization around it.

This is to date Howard Winant's best book. The scholarship, intellectual rigor, and writing are, as we have come to expect in a Winant project, top notch. More significantly, I am happy to see that in this book he has moved somewhat away from the postmodern affectation he took in the 1994 edition of *Racial Formation*. However, as with all human conceptions, this creation has some limitations. First, although I applaud Winant's concern with doing world-systemic analysis of racialization, in truth, his world ghetto is a rather small one—mostly the well-studied cases of Brazil, South Africa, and the United States (but see Chapter 10 for a discussion of contemporary racial matters in Europe). As with Goldberg, we learn very little about Asian and most Latin American and Caribbean nations as well as contemporary racial and ethnic stratification in African nations other than South Africa.

Second, because of the magnitude of Winant's project, he is not able to develop or demonstrate many important points. An example of the former is his comment on the political conditions that led to the development of intermediate categories (see p. 120). This point deserves a more rigorous discussion as it may well explain the differences between how race and racial stratification work in Western and non-Western nations. An example of Winant not demonstrating important claims is his provocative contention that Jim Crow was not truly eliminated in the 1960s and 1970s (see p. 168). Although I believe this is overkill, the contention deserves full intellectual inspection. My view on the character of post-civil rights racial structure is that Jim Crow has been replaced by a "new racism" that works in a subtle, institutionalized, and apparently non-racial fashion (for a full-elaboration, see Chapter 4 in Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Third, despite some very interesting observations about intermediate racial categories in Latin America and the Caribbean, Winant still subscribes to the dominant American way of reading race in these parts of the world. He regards Blacks in Brazil as lacking in racial consciousness or as not being aware of the fact of Blackness. But what about the fact of Brownness? What if these intermediate groups constitute a loose racial category with distinct racial interests? (Wade 1997). This, I have argued elsewhere, is the secret of race in Latin America and the Caribbean (and maybe of most societies in the world racial order), that is, the reality and politics of a middle-racial category (Bonilla-Silva 2004). Winant claims that there is no evidence of *pardos* having a higher status than *pretos*, or of either of them having a distinct consciousness. However, the sparse survey work cited for this claim has some serious methodological limitations (see Wade 1997, pp. 72–73).

Fourth, this book is, given the previous work of the author, surprisingly light on theory. Besides resurrecting some ideas from Myrdal, Winant does not do much else. I, for one, was expecting to see, given the title of the book, a world-system theory of racial structuration. However, I do understand why one of the most formidable racial theorists of the modern era would produce a racial theory-lite book. This is the best way of conveying an important and complex story to a broader audience (I can imagine the editors demanding him to tone down the theory). Maybe Professor Winant ought to write a long paper elaborating the central theoretical coordinates for global racial analysis for the more academic audience.

Lastly, is a point that I believe only a Puerto Rican reviewer like myself would raise: Winant cites the rebellion in the Dominican Republic in 1522 as the first armed

revolt against colonial domination in the Americas. However, there was one such revolt in Puerto Rico in 1511, just three years after Juan Ponce de Leon began colonizing the Island. The chroniclers report that *Taino* Indians killed about 300 Spaniards who later massacred 2,000 Indians (many were impaled on the beaches of *Boriken* to impose fear on others thinking about rebelling) (Fernández Méndez 1964).

These two authors have forcefully made the case that the modern world, states, and peoples are thoroughly racialized. But these authors have carved for us an incomplete intellectual highway. To finish the highway, I suggest we need to do the following things. First, we need to conduct a truly comprehensive world-systemic analysis of racial formations. This analysis, I suggest, cannot be done by Winant or Goldberg alone, as the work and necessary knowledge to do this effectively requires nothing less than a global team of scholars. As part of this work, scholars will need to disentangle the differences in racialization patterns between core countries (the traditional Western world), semi-peripheral countries such as Argentina, or Chile, and peripheral countries (most countries in Africa and Latin America). This differential racialization has produced the apparent paradox that racial inequality is more pronounced in non-Western nations that claim to be democracies (e.g., Mexico, Brazil, Puerto Rico, etc.), than in most Western nations. The world may be a ghetto, but there are countries with suburbs and adequate housing for most of its people so that even their “ghettos” look decent when compared to the *favelas* where most “Third World” racial minorities reside. In this vein, analysis of racial states (if, as I suggested above, we keep this concept) must be inclusive enough to specify variations on racial rule across domains of the world-system.

Second, we need to develop a non-deterministic theory of the intersectionality of race, class, and gender.¹ This, obviously, is not an easy task. (I admit that like Goldberg and Winant, I have not done much to advance such a theory in my own work.) However, it is time for analysts to stop just stating that race, class, and gender matter.

Third, it is crucial that we develop an understanding of the practices, politics, and consciousness of intermediate racial strata in the world-system. This is central for properly understanding racial stratification in semi-peripheral and peripheral racial formations and, I contend, increasingly important for understanding the racial stratification of core countries (Bonilla-Silva 2004).

Fourth, we must fight the color-blind logic or ideology (Bonilla-Silva 2003) that both of these authors claim is sweeping the world. If color blindness takes over the core countries of the world-system, as it did the countries in the semi-periphery and the periphery in the past, the struggle against world-systemic racial inequality will be even harder to fight. (The best example of this is how hard it is to discuss racial matters in places such as Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, or Puerto Rico.)

Fifth, analysts must begin studying the systematic social, economic, political, and cultural practices that help maintain White supremacy in peripheral and semi-peripheral societies. Although the (scattered) statistics on race show that racial minorities are significantly behind the majority groups in these societies, there are very limited data on how that inequality is produced and reproduced. It is time to begin documenting how discrimination operates in the labor market, in the housing market, in restaurants and social clubs, universities, and in all sorts of social venues in these societies. Without that evidence, alternative non-racial explanations for existing racial inequality (e.g., “It is class,” “It is because of slavery,” etc.) will remain firmly in place, allowing the myth of racial democracy to thrive.

This is not an easy, scholarly agenda. However, sometimes stating what is lacking is the only way to begin thinking about what must be done. More significantly, this

agenda, unlike most of what we do in academia, has potentially revolutionary implications. Theoretical work, as the old Marx noted, can become a “material force” once it “seizes the masses” (Marx 1977, p. 137). I firmly believe that if analysts work on this (admittedly complex) agenda and, at the same time, establish systematic connections to class-, gender-, and racially-based social movements across the world, this work can become a material force by seizing the masses. If this happens, we will owe Goldberg and Winant a lot for sparking the work that led to the creation of a road map for a global politics for the twenty-first century.

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NOTES

1. The best work on intersectionality has been done by critical legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw and Black feminist sociologist Patricia Hill-Collins. However, we still do not have *the* theory that will allow us to move from stating that all these forms of stratification matter to *specifying* how it is that they *all* matter (that is, specifying the conditions that will allow us to predict their combined and independent effects).

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