

Racism: A Persistent Societal Dilemma

Root Cause Analysis and Solution

Seventy years have passed since the Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which declared "separate but equal" education unconstitutional. However, civil rights leaders and advocates acknowledge that the ruling did not completely eradicate segregated education. Many school districts remain racially divided due to residential and economic disparities, with federal courts occasionally stepping in to enforce integration efforts.

Efforts to desegregate schools have historically met substantial resistance, particularly in the South, where the "Southern Manifesto" encouraged states to oppose integration. This resistance manifested in violent opposition and prolonged legal battles, as seen with the Little Rock Nine in Arkansas and the decades-long struggle in Cleveland, Mississippi, which only officially desegregated in 2016. Gary Orfield, a UCLA professor and co-director of the Civil Rights Project, notes that while non-White student enrollment has increased, many students attend "intensely segregated" schools today, more so than 30 years ago, due to the rollback of desegregation orders.

The persistent racial divides in American society highlight the deep-rooted and institutionalized nature of racism, which remains prevalent despite decades of civil rights activism and legislative efforts. Despite the Supreme Court's decision, racist bullying and discrimination persist in integrated schools. Hate crimes in schools have surged, with 13,300 reported in 2022, a significant increase from 8,500 in 2018, with Black students frequently being the victims. Over 700 school districts and charter schools remained under desegregation orders as of 2020. The NAACP's Legal Defense Fund continues to litigate numerous school desegregation cases, addressing ongoing disparities in resources and educational opportunities between majority-White and majority-Black schools.

Racism is fostered by the culture individuals are exposed to. Despite proclamations of minority rights domestically, genuine change in societal values towards race and color has been slow and difficult. We must re-evaluate the cultural and ideological foundations that perpetuate racism.

Islam was revealed to a society plagued with racism and slavery; thus, it provided an intrinsic solution that uprooted racism from the hearts before it uprooted it from the system. Therefore, system changes become natural and long-lasting once the ideological beliefs are set in the hearts and minds of people.

Allah (swt) indoctrinated society with humanistic equality and values; Islam strongly condemns racism and emphasizes the equality of all human beings, regardless of race or ethnicity. This principle is evident in the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

From the Quran examples of basic beliefs:

1. Creation of Humanity from a Single Soul, stressing the equality and unity of humanity.

- Quran 4:1: **﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾**
“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.”

2. Diversity as a part of Allah's design and that superiority is based on righteousness, not race or ethnicity.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَأْتُمْ إِنَّ﴾
«O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.»

3. Acknowledgment that the diversity of languages and colors as signs of Allah (swt), emphasizing that such differences should be appreciated and respected if we to understand it.

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾
“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed, in that are signs for those of knowledge.”

From the Hadith - Statements of the Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him.

1. Farewell Sermon of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) a powerful proclamation of racial equality and the insignificance of racial distinctions.

- In his final sermon, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) declared: «يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَلَا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاءَكُمْ»
“All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white; none have superiority over another except by piety and good action.”

2. The Hadith on brotherhood reiterates that the only criterion for superiority in Islam is piety and good deeds, not race or ethnicity.

- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: «الْمُسْلِمُونَ إِخْوَةٌ، لَا فَضْلَ لِأَحَدٍ عَلَىٰ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَىٰ»
“You are all equal. Nobody has superiority over others except by piety and good action.” (Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Hadith 6219)

3. Respect for Bilal ibn Rabah

- Bilal ibn Rabah, a former slave of Ethiopian descent, was appointed by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the first muezzin (caller to prayer) of Islam. His appointment and the respect he received from the Prophet and the Muslim community highlight the practice of equality and anti-racism in early Islamic society.

- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) praised Bilal for his righteousness, saying: «فَبِأَيِّ سَمِعْتُ دَفَّ»
“I heard your footsteps in Paradise ahead of mine.” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 1149)

Islam's condemnation of racism and advocacy for equality is deeply rooted in its scriptures. The Quran and Hadith emphasize the unity of humanity, the insignificance of racial distinctions, and the importance of righteousness and piety as the true measures of a person's worth. These teachings promote a vision of a society where all individuals are respected and valued regardless of their race or ethnicity.

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