



My Racist Introduction

"Racist ideas make people of color think less of themselves, which makes them more vulnerable to racist ideas. Racist ideas make White people think more of themselves, which further attracts them to racist ideas." (page 6)

"I didn't realize that to say something is wrong about a racial group is to say something is inferior about that racial group. I did not realize that to say something is inferior about a racial group is to say a racist idea. I thought I was serving my people, when in fact I was serving up racist ideas about my people to my people." (page 7)

"This is the consistent function of racist ideas – and of any kind of bigotry more broadly: to manipulate us into seeing people as the problem, instead of the policies that ensnare them." (page 8, emphasis mine)

"But there is no neutrality in the racism struggle. The opposite of 'racist' isn't 'not racist.' It is 'antiracist.' What's the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either believes problems are rooted in groups of people, as a racist, or locates the roots of problems in power and policies, as an antiracist. One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist.' The claim of 'not racist' neutrality is a mask for racism." (page 9, emphasis mine)

"After taking this grueling journey to the dirt road of antiracism, humanity can come upon the clearing of a potential future: an antiracist world in all its imperfect beauty. It can become real if we focus on power instead of people, if we focus on changing policy instead of groups of people." (page 11, emphasis mine)

Chapter 1: Definitions

"James Cone's working definition of a Christian – 'A Christian is one who is striving for liberation.' – described a Christianity of the enslaved, not the Christianity of the slaveholders." (page 17)

"What is racism? Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produce and normalize racial inequities." (pages 17-18, emphasis mine)

"A racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups. Antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people." (page 18, emphasis mine)

"The most threatening racist movement is not the alt right's unlikely drive for a White ethnostate but the regular American's drive for a 'race-neutral' one. The construct of race neutrality actually feeds White nationalist victimhood by positing the notion that any policy protecting or advancing non-White Americans towards equity is 'reverse discrimination.'" (page 20)

"Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society." (page 20)

“An antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are equals in all their apparent differences – that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group.” (page 20)

Chapter 2: Dueling Consciousness

“Black leaders joined with Republicans from Nixon to Reagan, and with Democrats from Johnson to Bill Clinton, in calling for and largely receiving more police officers, tougher and mandatory sentencing, and more jails. But they also called for the end of police brutality, more jobs, better schools, and drug-treatment programs. These calls were less enthusiastically received.” (page 26)

“My parents – even from within their racial consciousness – were susceptible to the racist idea that it was laziness that kept Black people down, so they paid more attention to chastising Black people than to Reagan’s policies, which were chopping the ladder they climbed up and then punishing people for falling.” (page 27)

“Americans have long been trained to see the deficiencies of people rather than policy. It’s a pretty easy mistake to make: People are in our faces. Policies are distant. We are particularly poor at seeing the policies lurking behind the struggles of people. (page 28, emphasis mine)

“Assimilationists can position any racial group as the superior standard that another racial group should be measuring themselves against, the benchmark they should be trying to reach. Assimilationists typically position White people as the superior standard. (page 29)

“The history of the racialized world is a three-way fight between assimilationists, segregationists, and antiracists. Antiracist ideas are based in the truth that racial groups are equals in all the ways they are different, assimilationists ideas are rooted in the notion that certain racial groups are culturally or behaviorally inferior, and segregationist ideas spring from a belief in genetic racial distinction and fixed hierarchy.” (page 31)

“To be antiracist is to conquer the assimilationist consciousness and the segregationist consciousness. The White body no longer presents itself as the American body; the Black body no longer strives to be the American body, knowing there is no such thing as the American body, only American bodies, racialized by power.” (page 34)

Chapter 3: Power

“At seven years old, I began to feel the encroaching fog of racism overtaking my dark body. It felt big, bigger than me, bigger than my parents or anything in the world, and threatening. What a powerful construction race is – powerful enough to consume us. And it comes for us early.” (page 37)

“I still identify as Black. Not because I believe Blackness, or race, is a meaningful scientific category but because our societies, our policies, our ideas, our histories, and our cultures have rendered race and made it matter.” (page 37)

“From the beginning, to make races was to make racial hierarchy.” (page 40)

Chapter 4: Biology

“We often see and remember race and not the individual. This is racist categorizing, this stuffing of our experiences with individuals into color-marked racial closets. An antiracist treats and remembers individuals as individuals.” (page 44, emphasis mine)

“Biological racism rests on two ideas: that the races are meaningfully different in their biology and that these differences create a hierarchy of value.” (page 49)

“When geneticists compare these ethnic populations, they find there is more genetic diversity between populations within Africa than between Africa and the rest of the world. Ethnic groups in Western Africa are more genetically similar to ethnic groups in Western Europe than to ethnic groups in Eastern Africa. Race is a genetic mirage. (page 53, emphasis mine)

“Assimilationists believe in the post-racial myth that talking about race constitutes racism, or that if we stop identifying by race, then racism will miraculously go away. They fail to realize that if we stop using racial categories, then we will not be able to identify racial inequity. If we cannot identify racial inequity, then we will not be able to identify racist policies. If we cannot identify racist policies, then we cannot challenge racist policies. If we cannot challenge racist policies, then racist power’s final solution will be achieved: a world of inequity none of us can see, let alone resist. Terminating racial categories is potentially the last, not the first, step in the antiracist struggle.” (page 54, emphasis mine)

Chapter 5: Ethnicity

“When Black people make jokes that dehumanize other branches of the African diaspora, we allow that horror story to live again in our laughs. Ethnic racism is the resurrected script of the slave trader.” (page 58)

“We practice ethnic racism when we express a racist idea about an ethnic group or support a racist policy toward an ethnic group. Ethnic racism, like racism itself, points to group behavior, instead of policies, as the cause of disparities between groups.” (page 63)

Chapter 6: Body

“History tells the same story: Violence for White people really has too often had a Black face. -and the consequences have landed on the Black body across the span of American history.” (page 70)

“Americans today see the Black body as larger, more threatening, more potentially harmful, and more likely to require force to control than a similarly sized White body, according to researchers. No wonder the Black body had to be lynched by the thousands, deported by the tens of thousands, incarcerated by the millions, and segregated by the tens of millions.” (page 71)

“We were unarmed, but we knew that Blackness armed us even though we had no guns.” (page 73)

“We, the young Black super-predators, were apparently being raised with an unprecedented inclination toward violence – in a nation that presumably did not raise White slaveholders, lynchers, mass incarcerators, police officers, corporate officials, venture capitalists, financiers, drunk drivers, and war hawks to be violent.” (page 75)

“Black people are apparently responsible for calming the fears of violent cops in the way women are supposedly responsible for calming the sexual desires of male rapists. If we don’t, then we are blamed for our own assaults, our own deaths.” (page 76)

“For decades, there have been three main strategies in reducing violent crime in Black neighborhoods. Segregationists who consider Black neighborhoods to be war zones have called for tough policing and the mass incarceration of super-predators. Assimilationists say these super-predators need tough laws and tough love from mentors and fathers to civilize them back to nonviolence. Antiracists say Black people, like all people, need more higher-paying jobs within their reach, especially Black youngsters, who have consistently had the highest rates of unemployment of any demographic group, topping 50 percent in the mid-1990s.” (page 80)

Chapter 7: Culture

“Whoever makes the cultural standard makes the cultural hierarchy. The act of making a cultural standard and hierarchy is what creates cultural racism.” (page 83)

“Segregationists say racial groups cannot reach their superior cultural standard. Assimilationists say racial groups can, with effort and intention, reach their superior cultural standard. To be antiracist is to reject cultural standards and level cultural difference.” (page 84, emphasis mine)

“When we refer to a group as Black or White or another racial identity – Black Southerners as opposed to Southerners – we are racializing that group. When we racialize any group and then render that group’s culture inferior, we are articulating cultural racism.” (page 90)

Chapter 8: Behavior

“It makes antiracist sense to talk about the personal irresponsibility of individuals like me of all races. I screwed up. I could have studied harder. But some of my White friends could have studied harder, too, and their failures and irresponsibility didn’t somehow tarnish their race.” (page 93)

“One of racism’s harms is the way it falls on the unexceptional Black person who is asked to be extraordinary just to survive – and, even worse, the Black screwup who faces the abyss after one error, while the White screwup is handed second chances and empathy.” (page 93)

“Racial-group behavior is a figment of the racist’s imagination. Individual behaviors can shape the success of individuals. But policies determine the success of groups. And it is racist power that creates policies that cause racial inequities.” (page 94, emphasis mine)

“To be an antiracist is to recognize there is no such thing as racial behavior.” (page 95, emphasis mine)

Chapter 9: Color

“To be antiracist is to focus on color lines as much as racial lines, knowing that color lines are especially harmful for Dark people. When the gains of a multicolored race disproportionately flow to Light people and the losses disproportionately flow to Dark people, inequities between the races mirror inequities within the races.” (page 110)

To be antiracist is not to reverse the beauty standard. To be an antiracist is to eliminate any beauty standard based on skin and eye color, hair texture, facial and bodily features shared by groups. To be an antiracist is to diversify our standard of beauty like our standards of culture or intelligence, to see beauty equally in all skin colors, broad and thin noses, kinky and straight hair, light and dark eyes. To be an antiracist is to build and live in a beauty culture that accentuates instead of erases our natural beauty. (pages 113-114, emphasis mine)

Chapter 10: White

“The only thing wrong with White people is when they embrace racist ideas and policies and then deny their ideas and policies are racist. This is not to ignore that White people have massacred and enslaved millions of indigenous and African peoples, colonized and impoverished millions of people of color around the globe as their nations grew rich, all the while producing racist ideas that blame the victims. This is to say their history of pillaging is not the result of the evil genes or cultures of White people. There’s no such thing as White genes. We must separate the warlike, greedy, bigoted, and individualist cultures of modern empire and racial capitalism (more on that later) from the cultures of White people.” (page 128, emphasis mine)

“Anti-White racist ideas are usually a reflexive reaction to White racism. Anti-White racism is indeed the hate that hate produced, attractive to the victims of White racism. And yet racist power thrives on anti-White racist ideas—more hatred only makes their power greater. When Black people recoil from White racism and concentrate their hatred on everyday White people, as I did freshman year in college, they are not fighting racist power or racist policymakers. In losing focus on racist power, they fail to challenge anti-Black racist policies, which means those policies are more likely to flourish. Going after White people instead of racist power prolongs the policies harming Black life. In the end, anti-White racist ideas, in taking some or all of the focus off racist power, become anti-Black. In the end, hating White people becomes hating Black people.” (page 131)

Chapter 11: Black

"I thought only White people could be racist and that Black people could not be racist, because Black people did not have power. I thought Latinx, Asians, Middle Easterners, and Natives could not be racist, because they did not have power. Quietly, though, this defense shields people of color in positions of power from doing the work of antiracism, since they are apparently powerless, since White people have all the power. This means that people of color are powerless to roll back racist policies and close racial inequities even in their own spheres of influence, the places where they actually do have some power to effect change." (page 140)

Chapter 12: Class

"Poor people are a class, Black people a race. Black poor people are a race-class. When we say poor people are lazy, we are expressing an elitist idea. When we say Black people are lazy, we are expressing a racist idea. When we say Black poor people are lazier than poor Whites, White elites, and Black elites, we are speaking at the intersection of elitist and racist ideas—an ideological intersection that forms class racism." (page 152)

"Something was making poor people poor, according to this idea. And it was welfare. Welfare 'transforms the individual from a dignified, industrious, self-reliant spiritual being into a dependent animal creature without his knowing it,' U.S. senator Barry Goldwater wrote in *The Conscience of the Conservative* in 1960. Goldwater and his ideological descendants said little to nothing about rich White people who depended on the welfare of inheritances, tax cuts, government contracts, hookups, and bailouts. They said little to nothing about the White middle class depending on the welfare of the New Deal, the GI Bill, subsidized suburbs, and exclusive White networks. Welfare for middle- and upper-income people remained out of the discourse on "handouts," as welfare for the Black poor became the true oppressor in the conservative version of the oppression- inferiority thesis." (page 154, emphasis mine)

Chapter 13: Space

"Racist Americans stigmatize entire Black neighborhoods as places of homicide and mortal violence but don't similarly connect White neighborhoods to the disproportionate number of White males who engage in mass shootings. And they don't even see the daily violence that unfolds on the highways that deliver mostly White suburbanites to their homes." (page 169)

"Just as racist power racializes people, racist power racializes space. The ghetto. The inner city. The third world. A space is racialized when a racial group is known to either govern the space or make up the clear majority in the space. A Black space, for instance, is either a space publicly run by Black people or a space where Black people stand in the majority. Policies of space racism overresource White spaces and underresource non- White spaces." (page 169, emphasis mine)

"Antiracist strategy fuses desegregation with a form of integration and racial solidarity. Desegregation: eliminating all barriers to all racialized spaces. To be antiracist is to support the voluntary integration of bodies attracted by cultural difference, a shared humanity. Integration: resources rather than bodies. To be an anti-racist is to champion resource equity by challenging the racist policies that produce resource inequity. Racial solidarity: openly identifying, supporting, and protecting integrated racial spaces. To be antiracist is to equate and nurture difference among racial groups." (page 180, emphasis mine)

Chapter 14: Gender

"To be antiracist is to reject not only the hierarchy of races but of race-genders. To be feminist is to reject not only the hierarchy of genders but of race-genders. To truly be antiracist is to be feminist. To truly be feminist is to be antiracist. To be antiracist (and feminist) is to level the different race-genders, is to root the inequities between the equal race-genders in the policies of gender racism." (page 189)

Chapter 15: Sexuality

“Queer antiracism is equating all the race-sexualities, striving to eliminate the inequities between the race-sexualities. We cannot be antiracist if we are homophobic or transphobic. We must continue to ‘affirm that all Black lives matter,’ as the co-founder of Black Lives Matter, Opal Tometi, once said. All Black lives include those of poor transgender Black women, perhaps the most violated and oppressed of all the Black intersectional groups.” (page 197)

“To be queer antiracist is to understand the privileges of my cisgender, of my masculinity, of my heterosexuality, of their intersections. To be queer antiracist is to serve as an ally to transgender people, to intersex people, to women, to the non-gender-conforming, to homosexuals, to their intersections, meaning listening, learning, and being led by their equalizing ideas, by their equalizing policy campaigns, by their power struggle for equal opportunity. To be queer antiracist is to see that policies protecting Black transgender women are as critically important as policies protecting the political ascendancy of queer White males.” (page 197)

Chapter 16: Failure

“Incorrect conceptions of race as a social construct (as opposed to a power construct), of racial history as a singular march of racial progress (as opposed to a duel of antiracist and racist progress), of the race problem as rooted in ignorance and hate (as opposed to powerful self-interest)-all come together to produce solutions bound to fail.” (pages 201-202, emphasis mine)

“I grew up on this same failed strategy more than one hundred fifty years later. Generations of Black bodies have been raised by the judges of ‘uplift suasion.’ The judges strap the entire Black race on the Black body’s back, shove the burdened Black body into White spaces, order the burdened Black body to always act in an upstanding manner to persuade away White racism, and punish poor Black conduct with sentences of shame for reinforcing racism, for bringing the race down. I felt the burden my whole Black life to be perfect before both White people and the Black people judging whether I am representing the race well. The judges never let me just be, be myself, be my imperfect self.” (page 203)

“The original problem of racism has not been solved by suasion. Knowledge is only power if knowledge is put to the struggle for power. Changing minds is not a movement. Critiquing racism is not activism. Changing minds is not activism. An activist produces power and policy change, not mental change. If a person has no record of power or policy change, then that person is not an activist.” (page 209)

“The most effective protests create an environment whereby changing the racist policy becomes in power’s self-interest, like desegregating businesses because the sit-ins are driving away customers, like increasing wages to restart production, like giving teachers raises to resume schooling, like passing a law to attract a well-organized force of donors or voters. But it is difficult to create that environment, since racist power makes laws that illegalize most protest threats. Organizing and protesting are much harder and more impactful than mobilizing and demonstrating. Seizing power is much harder than protesting power and demonstrating its excesses.” (page 216)