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The Roots and Present Stakes of the Race Problem in the United States of America

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ABSTRACT:

The American history is deeply linked to the race problem. Right from the beginning of the nation's existence, the racial issue represented a point of tension between the different sections of the American population. Racism has been a problem the USA confronted from the beginning of its existence. With time, it deeply engrained in the mentalities as well as in the political and economic systems. This work aims at assessing the depth of that prejudice and see whether it can be eradicated. The situation remained unchanged until recently. This dissertation examines the emergence of new stakes in the mid-twentieth century that precipitated a change of attitude towards racism making the race problem a most urgent issue. Several factors- domestic as well as international- led to this general change of attitude. Great progress was made but racism has not been eradicated. Several obstacles still exist that prevent the full elimination of racism to be given the final blow. Among them are the white resistance to racial equality and a deep racial prejudice. Racism is far from being a problem solved in the 1960s, it still persists under subtler and less direct forms. This dissertation intends to answer the following question: can racism be eradicated or is it so deeply-rooted that it has become impossible to eliminate?

RÉSUMÉ:

L'expérience Américaine est profondément liée au problème de race. Depuis le début de l'existence de la nation, la question de race a représenté un point de tension entre les différentes sections de la population. Avec le temps, le racisme s'est profondément ancré dans la société Américaine. Durant plusieurs siècles, la jeune nation se développa sur des bases malsaines en tolérant et supportant des attitudes racistes à travers la discrimination. Le but de cette dissertation est d'évaluer la profondeur de ce préjudice. C'était le mot d'ordre jusqu'à peu. Au milieu du vingtième siècle, on peut remarquer une consternation générale contre le racisme, ce qui donna lieu à un grand mouvement pour l'égalité. Plusieurs facteurs-domestiques ou internationaux sont responsables de ce changement d'attitude. Des grands progrès ont été réalisés mais le racisme n'a pas été éradiqué. Plusieurs obstacles persistent freinant une élimination totale du racisme ; parmi ceux-ci, la résistance blanche à l'égalité raciale ainsi qu'un profond préjudice racial. Le racisme est loin d'être un problème résolu dans les années soixante; il persiste encore sous des formes plus subtiles et moins directes. Cette dissertation examine les différents défis et enjeux qui ont récemment émergés faisant du problème racial un des plus urgents.

ملخص:

منذ بداية وجود الأمة الأمريكية مثلت مشكلة العنصرية نقطة توتر بين مختلف أطياف المجتمع و مع مرور الوقت تجدر التمييز العنصري في المجتمع الأمريكي، و بتراكم السنين نشأ المجتمع الحديث و تطور على أسس و قواعد سيئة، قوامها وأساسها مبدأ التمييز العنصري. حيث كان هذا المبدأ هو السائد في المجتمع الأمريكي إلى غاية منتصف القرن العشرين حيث بدأت حركة إحتجاجية عامة ضد التمييز العنصري، تلتها حركة احتجاجية عنيفة من أجل المساواة، حيث ساعدت مجموعة من العوامل المحلية و الدولية في تغيير سلوك المجتمع الأمريكي تجاه العنصرية، و رغم إنجاز العديد من المشاريع الكبرى إلا أن التمييز العنصري لم يبلغ كليتها، و ذلك راجع لعدة عوامل و عراقيل حالت دون الزوال النهائي للعنصرية و نذكر من بينها مقاومة البيض للمساواة و العدالة مع السود و كذلك الأفكار المسبقة تجاه بعض العنصريين. إن مشكلة العنصرية في الستينيات بقيت بعيدة عن الحل و حتى يومنا هذا بقيت العنصرية مستمرة و لكنها بطريقة خفية و أقل حدة من ذي قبل، و قد هزت مؤخرا عدة تحديات جعلت من التمييز العنصري احدى اهتماماتها من أجل وضع حد لتنامي هذه المشكلة العويصة.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

“A bridge is never stronger than its weakest point.” This saying summarizes well the American situation with respect to racism. The latter has been America’s tragic flaw since the formation of this nation. The assumption that the human species is divided into different races with some superior to some others lies at the basis of racist doctrines. It also serves the white supremacists to impose their domination on the other races. Racists give deaf ears on the results of recent research according to which the notion of race has no scientific justification. It is rather a social product since scientifically the different races have no genetic differences such as to prevent their reproduction. Thus, the human species should not be divided into races. The different “races” may be rather called ethnic groups.

The American society being a society composed of an incredible diversity of peoples, race has always occupied a central place in its history. Indeed, questions of colour and race have been at the centre of some of the most important events of American experience and Americans continue to live with their unhappy consequences. Having been the first to settle the northern continent (after the Natives who were there before any other group), the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) have given the American culture its major features. Strong with an unshakable belief in their superiority, the WASPs sought constantly to dominate and make the other ethnic groups conform to their customs and religion.

An incredible panel of peoples of many origins established themselves in North America seeking the promised equality, freedom and fortune. However, they could not coexist peacefully and the race problem soon became one of the most persistent and tricky issues the future USA had to face. Although racism is a widespread ill that existed in almost all the countries, in America it had continental dimensions. The USA being known as a land of welcome for all the oppressed without distinction, a land of liberty and opportunity, it

received incredibly large flows of immigrants from all origins and colours. As the American continent cannot be claimed by any people (except for the Native Americans), one should have normally expected it to be exempt of racism and be a land of equality. Indeed, because all the Americans are immigrants (except for the American Indians), the different peoples should have cohabited peacefully without racial prejudice. America should have been “the” land where racism should have never existed. It is nevertheless not the case and racism pervaded in America and spoiled its early and revolutionary ideals.

Similarly, the American continent is vast and rich in natural resources; there was enough space for all immigrants and enough resources to enable everybody to have a decent life without the exploitation of others. Human greed for land and money at all costs, had had the upper hand and had spoiled America and the American dream by the institution of slavery which gave birth to the practice of racism in all fields of American life. It is all the more unfortunate as the United States had all the assets to become really an ideal society given its richness in natural resources, ethnic diversity, and character. However, racism took root in the American society and shaped its life.

My choice to study racism in America, its roots, forms and stakes was motivated by the fact that race is taking a dominating role in American life and is becoming a most urgent problem. Given its importance, I thought it would be interesting to investigate how racism emerged in America because such a development in such a country seems somehow paradoxical.

The aim of my research is, by opting for a descriptive as well as analytical approach, to assess the depth of the roots of racism in both the mentality of the Americans and in their political and economic systems. For this purpose, I strive to trace back to the foundations- be it human, political or economic- of the nation. Of much importance, I will end my dissertation by studying the turning point in the existence of racism which occurred in the

twentieth century. Indeed, that century witnessed a change of attitude towards racism in the USA and a subsequent determination to eliminate this flaw.

The relevance of my subject to the present time lies in the fact that new stakes appeared lately that are making the race problem in America even more urgent than in the past and an almost unbearable pressure is felt in the USA to solve this problem which has lasted too long. These stakes will be dealt with in my last chapter. But before dealing with these, I start my research by a theoretical part in which I will attempt to clarify some abstract or controversial notions related to racism. The notion is given full examination as it is the principal theme of my research paper. What is racism? How was it born? What are its forms and effects? These are all questions I will try to answer in the theoretical part of this dissertation. In a second step, I will attempt to explain the political and economic foundations of the American nation in relation to race. I will see if they are theoretically equalitarian.

In the second chapter, I will strive to trace back the very origins of racism in America going back to the colonial period. I will account for the existence of racial prejudice in early America. This will be achieved through the assessment of the first impressions and attitudes of the colonists in face of any kind of differences characterizing the people encountered: colour and physical appearance, religion, culture and national origin were the object of racial prejudice. Besides, I judged judicious to look into the treatment of the coloured people so as to show the existence of racism in early America.

My third chapter will be devoted to assessing the existence of racism (or rather racial discrimination) in the political and economic foundations of the American nation. In other words, my aim at this step of the dissertation is to see if the American political and economic systems are inherently racist and if they enabled racism to occur. For this purpose, I will examine the founding documents of the American nation – the Declaration of

Independence and the Constitution— as well as the founding principles of the American political and economic principles to assess their racist potential.

In my last chapter, I will tackle the stakes that appeared lately making racism a most urgent issue. Starting by explaining the factors that led to the change of attitude towards racism, I will then assess the extent of the progress made in the elimination of racism. It will be my interest here to deal with the different challenges the USA is facing in its attempt to solve the race problem which has become a most urgent issue. Nevertheless, several obstacles persist for the full elimination of racism as we are going to see. The very existence of the nation is endangered or at least its credibility is at stake. I will strive to answer the question: Can racism be eradicated or is it so deeply-rooted that it has become impossible to eliminate? This represents the thesis statement of this research.

All throughout my research, I strived to rely on primary sources as much as possible. I was equally inspired by a certain number of captivating books such as The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America by Kenneth Janda, the collection of essays titled US Race Relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Challenges and Alternatives by Gail E. Thomas. Of much interest to my subject, Promises to Keep: African-Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present written by Donald G. Nieman, proved to be a fascinating book. To a lesser extent, in order to enrich my research, I resorted to the internet from which I used serious sites.

Chapter One

Terms' Explanation and Clarification: Racism and the founding principles of the American Nations

Introduction:

Before entering into the core of the subject, it would be most useful to clarify a certain number of terms so that no room is left for ambiguity. The bulk of this work deals with racism but before defining it, one needs to define race which is another concept very much interrelated with racism. The latter cannot exist without the former; indeed, racism cannot exist without the belief in the concept of race.

I_ Racism and Interrelated Notions:

1/ Race:

The notion of race is rather controversial; it originates from popular conceptualizations derived from the 19th and early 20th centuries scientific formulations. These old racial categories were based on “externally visible traits, primarily skin colour, features of the face, and the shape and size of the head and body and the underlying skeleton.”¹The concept of race implies that the human species is divided into different races according to the colour of the skin and to physical characteristics. These biological differences between human beings reflect both hereditary factors and the influence of natural

¹ The American Association of Physical Anthropologists, “AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of race,” American Journal of Physical Anthropology, vol. 101, 1996, 569-570, 9 Feb. 2000, 21 march 2005 <<http://www.physant.org/positions/race.html>>.

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and social environments.³ They arise for instance from the climate or the way of life. For instance, the hotter is the climate, the darker is the complexion and vice-versa.

The origin of the division of the human species into different races coincided with the European exploration and conquest of the world in the nineteenth century.⁴ On those occasions, the Europeans encountered peoples completely different from themselves. These peoples' physical appearance and cultures strikingly contrasted with those of the Europeans. This contrast triggered the belief into the notion of race. To justify the subjugation of these peoples, the Europeans developed the theory about the existence of different races within the human species in order to "ease unsettling questions about the appropriateness of such treatment of humans."⁵

The division into different races entailed a classification between the races with some judged superior and others inferior. This classification was at the root of racism, it fuelled racist prejudice and attitudes. In the United States of America, the classification of human beings into different races led to tensions and conflicts from its formation to the present. A nation of immigrants, the American society is ethnically very heterogeneous. Hence, race is a central issue in American life. The inhabitants of the United States are classified into different races which comprise the European or white Americans, the Native Americans and the Afro-Americans (and later the Asian-Americans and the Hispano-Americans).

Nevertheless, this classification is biased and arbitrary, it has no scientific basis. Indeed, categorization of this or that race was neither made at random nor scientifically motivated; this classification served some tacit purposes. For instance, because of its alleged superiority, membership to the White race is the most difficult to prove; one must have a pure

³ Alfred C. Maldonado, "Ethnicity, Race and Racism," Sept. 2001, 6 Feb. 2004
<<http://www.austincc.edu.com/>>.

⁴ "Definition of Race," Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, 27 Aug. 2005, 3 Sept. 2005
<<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/racism/>>.

⁵ "Definition of Race"

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white ancestry.⁶ Besides, according to the “one drop rule”, any one with a percentage of Black blood, whatever minute, is considered as Black even if his perfectly white complexion would logically classify him as a member of the White race.⁷ In contrast, the Indians are defined by a certain percentage of Indian blood. They had to prove their “Indianness”. These criteria of classification of races in the United States have nothing to do with biological differences and it can be made out how this classification enabled racism to develop. It led to the subordination of some races to others as well as to exploitation and abuse. Old racial concepts persist up to now as social conventions that foster racial prejudice and institutional discrimination.

Race in the United States has always been a controversial issue and a sensitive and tricky question. That is why it was judged necessary to delimit this concept through dealing with its definition, its origin and to tackle the question of race as far as the United States of America is concerned. After having somehow clarified, this tricky notion, one may look then into the concept of racism.

2/ Racism:

2.1_ Definition:

As mentioned earlier, the division of the human species into different races or rather ethnic groups, implies a classification with some races judged superior and others inferior. This hierarchisation of the different groups led to the emergence of racism. As racism is the central theme of this work, it is very important to understand it in its very essence. Racism refers to beliefs, practices, and institutions that negatively discriminate against people

⁶ “Politics of Race,” Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, 15 Jan. 2005, 21 March 2005
<<http://www.nostalgia.wikipedia.org/wiki/race>>.

⁷ “Politics of Race.”

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based on such racial characteristics as skin colour, culture, nationality and religion.⁸ Furthermore, racism may be expressed individually and consciously, through explicit thoughts, feelings or acts, or socially and unconsciously, through institutions that promote inequalities among races.

2.2_ The Forms of Racism:

Different forms of racism are thus considered in this work: first, there is racial prejudice which is a pre-formed personal opinion about individuals on the basis of their race.⁹ Second, there is racial discrimination which is based on difference of treatment of people according to characteristics that may be classified as racial including skin colour, culture and religion;¹⁰ and finally, there is institutional racism which refers to racial discrimination by governments, corporations or other large organizations.¹¹

Furthermore, we need to understand racism as a social construct that affects members of all races, where privileges are administered to some groups and disadvantages to some others. There are two sides to the notion of racism: power and prejudice without which racism cannot occur. Power may be defined as “the ability to influence others. Groups use their power to discriminate against other less powerful groups in order to maintain their characteristics and privileges.”¹² As to prejudice, it may be defined as:

Characterizations or stereotypes that once aimed to organize and simplify the abundance of information that exists in the world, but now has become insufficient and distorted. People, from these insufficient and distorted characterizations, make pre-judgement about other groups of people that are, in many instances, negative and biased.¹³

⁸ Brian D. Ricker and Kelly Warren, “Racism,” University of Cincinnati, 2006, 20 Dec. 2006
<<http://www.psc.uc.edu/SH.racism.com/>>.

⁹ “Racism.”

¹⁰ “Racism.”

¹¹ “Racism.”

¹² “Racism: Deconstructing It,” The Bonner Foundation, University of Princeton, NJ, n.d., 3 Dec. 2005
<http://www.bonner.org/resources/modules/modules-pdf/BonCur_Racism/>.

¹³ “Racism: Deconstructing It.”

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Combining these two definitions, we can say that racism, therefore, is the combination of power (manifested through discrimination) and racial prejudice that has traditionally functioned to systematically oppress and even exterminate groups of people based upon perceived racial inferiority. These two elements are essential for racism to occur. Indeed, a group which is powerless cannot discriminate against another; it can just breed its prejudices in silence. It is also true that without prejudice power does not systematically lead to racism. Many people in power, because they have no prejudice, implement and support just and non-racist policies discriminating against no other group on the basis of its race.

2.2.1 Racial Prejudice:

To continue this clarification, it would be useful to define the concept of prejudice as it is a prerequisite to racism. It has been defined earlier as pre-judgements that are generally negative and biased that one group nourishes against members of another racial group. There exists an array of kinds of prejudice as far as the American society is concerned (as it is an aspect of the interest here). This is due to the unprecedented diversity of the peoples that have poured into America and have come from all the corners of the globe. In order to have a general view of the different forms of prejudice, I propose to review them briefly.

As seen earlier, discrepancies in skin colour or origin as well as religious and cultural differences can foster racial prejudice. First, because of its immediate visibility, the skin colour is the most frequent criterion fostering racial prejudice. As far the United States is concerned, the most striking examples are those of the Black and Native Americans. The colour of their skin and physical appearance contrast sharply with those of the majority of the American population which is white, originating from northern Europe. Equally creating prejudice are the differences in national origin. The majority of Americans of British or

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Northern European descent developed a feeling of superiority towards peoples of other nationalities. The more different they were, the more hostility they encountered. This sentiment was first directed against the non-English then against the non-British, then against the non-European immigrants to the New World. Likewise, people having a different culture or religion were also prejudiced against in the United States. An illustration of this prejudice is the non-recognition of the Indian and Black cultures and their condemnation as heathens. This was also true for the Catholics, the Jews and the Muslims who were in turn subjected to racial prejudice. This aroused from a belief in the superiority of the white Anglo-Saxon culture and religion: Protestantism. In a nutshell, it may be advanced that all those who were not white, not Anglo-Saxon and not Protestant suffered at one time or another from racial prejudice.

2.2.2_ Racial Discrimination:

The formation of racial prejudice may or may not lead to racial discrimination, that is, the denial of rights and privileges enjoyed by the majority of the population to some group on the basis of its race. For instance, one group may be denied the right to vote, or to apply to a given office or to live in a certain neighbourhood. People may experience discrimination in a variety of ways. Racial discrimination has more or less overt forms.¹⁴ In its most overt form, racial discrimination can occur as a result of stereotyping, prejudice and bias, it can also occur as seen earlier through subtler forms of differential treatment. In the USA, the members of all the non-white groups have suffered at one time or another from white discrimination. Racial discrimination has been ever-present in the American society since its very formation. It is an expression of racism. Racial discrimination is all the more

¹⁴ "Racism and Racial Discrimination Fact Sheet," *Queen's Hunter for Oveteraw*, 2005, 28 October 2007 <<http://ohnc.un.ca/en-text/publications/racism-and-racial-discrimination-fact2.shtm>>.

damaging as we are concerned hereby with acts, not simply thoughts and opinions as in the case of prejudice.

3/The Origins of Racism:

Having clarified these terms, one may return to the notion of racism and try to examine its origin; in other words, when did racism appear, in what circumstances? In dealing with this question, one must be careful “not to confuse between recent forms of racisms and earlier forms of ethnic and national conflicts.”¹⁵ In fact, in most cases, ethno-national conflicts seem to owe to conflict over land and strategic resources. One may give the example of the Muslim Turks and the Catholic Austro-Hungarians whose differences of race and religion were not the primary motive of their enmity. In other words, differences in ethnicity were not the triggering factors of a conflict; it was more often disputes over land and/or strategic resources.

In its modern form, however, racism appeared with the European exploration of the world and the encounter and subjugation of new peoples or as Dr. Brian D. Ricker put it:

In its modern form, racism evolved in tandem with European exploration and conquest of much of the rest of the world, and especially after Christopher Columbus reached the Americas, as new peoples were encountered, fought and ultimately subdued.¹⁶

Likewise, nowadays, one must be careful not to confuse between racism and other acts that may seem to be racist but which are in fact motivated by non-racial motives. Instances of aggressions perpetuated by whites against Blacks exist which are not primarily motivated by racial hatred but by other reasons that may be personal. The Amalgamation is often made. This work will strive not to fall into this generalization.

¹⁵ Ricker and Warren, “Racism.”

¹⁶ Anup Shah, “Racism,” 20 December 2004, 28 October 2007
<<http://www.globalissues.org/HumanRights/racism.asp/>>.

4/ Reasons of the Existence of Racism:

4.1 The White Privilege Doctrine:

Having presented the definition, the forms, the origin of the notion of racism, this work will now deal with the assumed reasons of its existence. This leads to look into another important concept which is the white privilege doctrine. While there are several theories explaining the perpetuation of racism, the theory of White Privilege gains most focus.

It is defined as:

[t]he package of benefits granted to those members of society with white skin. Moreover, it's the privileges that white people have been granted, which allow certain things in the society that are not readily, easily or available at all to persons of color.¹⁷

Racism has been used to maintain the dominance of the white (western) culture.

4.2 The White Supremacy Doctrine:

The notion of white privilege finds its justification in the doctrine of white supremacy. Convinced of the superiority of their race and civilization, the whites use all the available means to keep control of the government of the country and keep away, through discriminatory practices, the other racial groups. The whites justify their conquest of coloured people's land by an avowed intention to civilize this people. Part of the white man's "civilization" is religion. Many of the original settlements and conquests were motivated by a will to bring knowledge and Christianise the allegedly heathen peoples they encountered. This widespread thinking is well illustrated by Senator Thomas Hart Benton who said in 1846:

It would seem that the white race alone received the divine command, to subdue and replenish the earth [...] they arrived, after many ages, on the shores of the Atlantic, which they lit up with the lights of science and religion, and adorned with the useful and elegant arts.¹⁸

According to the doctrine of white supremacy, the white race had the duty to enlighten the whole world and subdue all the peoples encountered until the whole planet is doomed to the

¹⁷ "Racism: Deconstructing It."

¹⁸ Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Jon Gjerde, eds. Major Problems in American History, to 1877, I (USA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002) 241.

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white civilization. This has been the American policy right from the beginning of its existence. The peoples encountered on their “march for civilization” had two choices: either submit to the white civilization and adopt it or be exterminated. Senator Benton summarized the fate of these peoples: “Civilization, or extinction, has been the fate of all peoples, who have found themselves in the track of the advancing whites.”¹⁹ But according to the Americans themselves, civilization has always been preferred to extermination and attempts to subjugate peoples pacifically have been undergone instead of systematically using violence. This is the old refrain the whites constantly repeat to defend themselves.

4.3_ The White Man’s Burden:

What ensued from the belief in the White Supremacy Doctrine is a sort of responsibility; this is what is meant by the notion of the White Man’s burden. This term has first been used by the English poet Rudyard Kipling. The White Man, endowed by God with a superior civilisation, must take the responsibility, hence the use of the term “burden”, to bring light and salvation to the rest of the world. This notion of responsibility appears through the following verses:

Take up the white man’s burden
Send forth the best ye breed
Go behind your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need
To wait in heavy harness
On fluttered forth and wilk
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.²⁰

The mind of the settlers was permeated with this notion of responsibility when arriving to the New World though the term white man’s burden was still to be invented. The European colonists attempted to convert and enlighten the “ignorant” Indian peoples. It was the case for

¹⁹ Hoffman and Gjerde, Major Problems, I, 241.

²⁰ Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” Internet Modern History Sourcebook, Paul Halsall, August 1997, 28 October 2007

<<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mot/Kipling.htm>>.

the early conquest and settlements and it has been the case ever since. The belief in the notions of White Supremacy doctrine and the White Man's burden conditioned the white man's reactions and attitudes towards the coloured peoples; here lies its relevance to the subject of this work.

5_ The Mechanics of Racism:

In order to further shed light on all the aspects of racism, one may examine its mechanisms. How and why is the racist feeling born? What triggers racism in the people's mind? It was seen that through the white supremacy and white privilege doctrines, the white men, deeply convinced of their superiority, developed racist feelings and attitudes to serve their own interests so that the white culture keeps dominating. The use of all means is good to keep the other races in a permanent inferior status. The practice and the incessant repeating that Europeans are superior to the others brought about a widespread belief that indeed Europeans are superior to other peoples. Any challenge to their supremacy is thus hampered.

One way to keep the white men supreme is to prevent the other races from advancing. The members of other non-white races are denied any opportunity to succeed in society and to improve their lot. This has been done in the past by a variety of means such as through disfranchisement, the barring from education and holding high offices. Discrimination, social as well political, and economic, has been the tool for this purpose.

Another way to keep the white race supreme is by keeping the white "race" pure. For a long time, interracial marriages or sexual intercourses were banned. Even at the present time, interracial mixing is rather rare so that no blending of both races could occur. The white supremacy doctrine serves this purpose; as a consequence, the white race would regard any mixing with the other races as degrading and as degenerating the race.

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Let us consider how the racist feeling is born. Most of the times, one can say that racism is triggered by ignorance and fear as M. Quinn, a psychologist noticed: “at the root of racism reside bigotry, ignorance and fear.”²¹ He added that “that is why logic is not a chief ingredient of [the] racist doctrine, and [of] behavioural patterns.”²² Indeed, in the individual, fear and ignorance are destructive as they have led to tragedies. Innumerable instances exist in any nation’s history and particularly in the American one. The worst aspect is that it has, as the author puts it, always given way to irrational behaviour.²³ When the white race comes into contact with other races, especially the dark races, it develops a certain fear that is triggered by the contrasts, physical as well as cultural between the races. Ignorant of all that is connected to the other races, the whites instinctively developed a fear of the unknown. That fear originates in the fact that the whites were afraid to lose their supremacy at the hand of the other people. They were equally afraid that the other peoples might endanger the white culture and identity. Judging the other races as inferior because of their skin colour and apparent savage state, they began to despise them. Because of their complexion and because their appearance contrasted sharply with theirs, the whites looked at the coloured peoples as savage and unworthy of respect.

A well-known theme in psychology is the fact of canalizing one’s fear by projecting one’s anxiety on other individuals.²⁴ Indeed, aggressive behaviour makes one feel better and enable one to assuage his anxiety. Historically, lynchings are the best illustrations of this behaviour. In the past, angry white mobs used to beat black people to death. The

²¹ M. Quinn, “The Social Sickness of American Racism, (and the Need for Corrective Strategies),” 1 Oct. 2005, 31 Jan. 2006 <http://www.timbooktu.com/m_quinn/sickness.htm>.

²² “The Social Sickness.”

²³ “The Social Sickness.”

²⁴ A. Sivanandan, “Poverty Is the New Black,” The Guardian, 17 August 2001, 31 Jan. 2006 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/globalisation/story/html>>.

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incredible violence of such acts let appear a latent fear of the other races. Such behaviour enables the members of a given race to canalize their anxiety and to assuage their fear²⁵.

Furthermore, the presence of other races in the United States has been accompanied by a fear of a loss of identity.²⁶ Historically, segregation and interracial marriages' bans originated from such a fear. Violence as a response to fear of the unknown has been also used when the colonists came into contact with the Indians. Ignorant of the Indians and eyeing on their lands, they reacted in a completely irrational way by attempting to exterminate them. Instead of facing the problem posed by the Indians, they preferred to make it (them) disappear.

Moreover, another reason for the existence of the racist feeling is that it is psychologically reassuring to have one inferior to oneself.²⁷ It has above all been true for the white lower classes. The presence of an even lower group helped them to accept more easily their fate and their misery²⁸. To keep repeating to oneself that there were people more miserable than oneself refrain one from falling in a state of despair.

6/ The Effects of Racism:

Eventually, in order to complete the portrait of racism, one may look at the effects of racism. In 1961, Malcolm X, the Black American militant stated: "The worst crime the white man has committed has been to teach us to hate ourselves."²⁹ Racism is terribly damaging for those who are victims of it. It is damaging for the personality and self-esteem of the victims. Charles Silberman, a historian, provided a good general survey of this aspect as far as the Blacks are concerned:

²⁵ Benjamin Quarles, The Negro in the Making of America (USA: The Macmillan Company, 1964) 37.

²⁶ "Poverty is the New Black."

²⁷ "Poverty is the New Black."

²⁸ "Poverty is the New Black."

²⁹ Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in White and Black (USA: Random House, Inc., 1964) 12.

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A major part of the Negro problem in America lies in what these three hundred fifty years have done to the Negro personality: the self-hatred, the sense of impotence and inferiority that destroys aspiration and keeps the Negro locked in a prison we have all made.³⁰

Racism is highly destructive in a proper as well as in a figurative sense. Racism is physically destructive as it has led to countless number of deaths, lynchings and racist murders. This is the visible part of the iceberg. But also and above all, it has been psychologically and morally destructive. This aspect is highlighted by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) in the following statement: “The expression of prejudice involves the mistreatment of people and thus it is often psychologically distressing and socially damaging.”³¹ The fact of being repeated that one is inferior and treated as such, one comes to believe in his inferiority and starts despising and hating himself. The low esteem and the helplessness felt imprison the members of a given race in an inferior social condition or status. This distress is further increased by the fact that racism is generally destructive of the culture of other races, so that the members of the dominated races find themselves without marks. This is the general process through which the members of other races lose their marks and are generally alienated from the society in which they live.

This clarification on the psychological effect of racism is necessary for the rest of the research. All throughout the research, one will come back to this theoretical explanation; together with the dealing with the following interrogation that entails from this: Are the effects of racism irreversible or do they fade away with generations? What if discrimination ends, will this be sufficient to erase the depth of the scars done to the personality and mind of the victims?

³⁰ Silberman 13.

³¹ “AAPA Statement on Biological Aspects of race.”

II The Theoretical Foundations of the USA in Relation to the Race Issue:

After having reviewed the notions that are judged essential to a good understanding of racism, this chapter proceeds to look into the principles of the American political and economic systems in relation to racism. In theory, how do these two systems deal with racial matters? It will be the aim at this step of the research to see if the USA is theoretically (and theoretically only) a racially egalitarian society or if it is the contrary? To answer this question, critical to the subject of this work, it is important to look into the founding documents of the American nation. One will equally assess the American economic system which is based on capitalism.

1/ The Ethnic Foundations of the American Nation:

1.1 The Ethnic Composition of the American Society:

To understand the race problem in America, it is essential to look into the ethnic composition of the American nation. The ethnic composition of the American society is exceptional by its diversity. There is no other nation in the world that has a population coming from such a large array of origins as pointed out by John H. Franklin, a historian:

[t]he USA is unique in the ethnic composition of its population. No other country in the world can point to such a variety of cultural, racial, religious, and national backgrounds in its population.³²

The diversity of its population has been a salient feature all throughout the American history and it continues to be so.

Such a medley of people converged towards the American continent because of a tradition that the Americans developed very early: a tradition of welcome and openness to all the oppressed of the world, promising freedom and equality of opportunity for all. The

³² John H. Franklin, Race and History: Selected Essays, 1938-1988 (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 321.

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latter values came to be identified with the USA more than with any other nation in the world; they became American values by excellence.

To understand how the American society was formed, one may briefly recapitulate the circumstances surrounding the presence of the different ethnic groups on the American continent. The Indians were in America on the arrival of the first Europeans. They are the only true Americans. In the seventeenth century, the North American continent started to be settled by immigrants from the European continent: from Great-Britain and North-western Europe more precisely. This section of the population was to become the dominant ethnic group giving the American culture a major contribution. These immigrants came to be identified as the WASP- White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant- and constituted and still constitute the nucleus of the American society. Not to be neglected and even more different, a great number of involuntary immigrants were forcibly brought as slaves from the African continent starting from 1619 up to the nineteenth century. The Black people came to form a large section of the American population. Later, immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe came to be added to this nucleus. Differing slightly from the WASP majority, they endangered the intended homogeneity of the American population as it was denounced by the WASPs themselves. Later other groups of immigrants followed from other corners of the globe: Asia, Central and South America. The latter represents today the major providers of immigrants to the USA.³³

1.2. The Coexistence between the Races: Mixing or Juxtaposition?:

One may wonder how such a variety of races coexists: do they in fact mix or not? Several experiments were tried to assimilate the various ethnic groups. At first, the

³³ Charles B. Keely, "E Pluribus Unum: the Impossible Dream?" U.S. Race Relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Challenges and Alternatives, ed. Gail E. Thomas (USA: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1990) 127.

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Americans preached Anglo-conformity;³⁴ that is, the different groups had to conform to the dominant WASP majority and adopt their language, culture, religion as well as their way of life. Clashing with the different ethnic groups' resistance to give up their own traditions and way of life, the Anglo-conformity ideal was never fully achieved.³⁵

Another notion was used to describe the American experience: the "melting pot". It was the idea expressed by Saint John de Crèvecoeur according to whom all the races melt to form a new man, the American: "[h]ere", according to de Crèvecoeur, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will cause great changes in the world."³⁶ This ideal would have given birth to a population that would be homogeneous biologically and culturally.³⁷ However, the birth of the American, this new man did not take place since the different ethnic groups did not melt.

There remains the theory of the "salad bowl", or cultural pluralism, which seems to be the relevant depiction of the American experience and reality. Indeed, it seems to describe more accurately the American society and experience. This means that, as in a salad bowl, all the components of the salad (the American society) coexist without melting. This phenomenon was described by David Alvirez, a sociologist: "Pluralism is a form where all the different ethnic groups would coexist keeping their culture and traditions, contributing to the richness of the American society."³⁸

This reality of the American society as pluralist has been constantly refused and rejected by the government and the dominant WASP majority who backed policies favouring assimilation and Anglo-conformity.³⁹ This was a legacy of the puritans who used to

³⁴ Keely 129.

³⁵ André Siegfried, Les Etats-Unis D'Aujourd'hui, (Paris: Editions Armand Colin, 1951) 21.

³⁶ Franklin 322.

³⁷ Daniel Royot, Jean-Loup Bourget and Jean-Pierre Martin, Histoire de la Culture Américaine (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1993) 289.

³⁸ David Alvirez, "Issues in Ethnic Diversity and the Politics of Inequality in the 1990s," U.S. Race Relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Challenges and Alternatives, ed. Gail E. Thomas (USA: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1990) 162.

³⁹ Alvirez 161.

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preach forced conformism to the dominant culture for all the newcomers. They have always, however, stumbled against the desire of the ethnic groups to preserve their identity and culture.

Thus, the assimilationist policy cannot be applied to the American experience.⁴⁰ Similarly, some ethnic groups are thought to be inassimilable. Either the dominant majority is reluctant to admit such or such groups-this is the case for Blacks and Hispanics for instance, or the ethnic groups themselves refuse to assimilate into mainstream society-this is the case for the Indians and the Chinese most notably.

The more different the ethnic groups are from the dominant majority, the more separate they are kept from mainstream society. The distinction made between the different groups and their subsequent different treatment is a manifestation of the existence of racism in the American society.

Cultural pluralism, in spite of governments' and most Americans' reluctance to admit so, seems to be the most appropriate policy given the variety of the American society. Another policy would be unfair as the American national character and culture was shaped by all the diverse ethnic groups. It is from the contributions of all the different ethnic groups that the USA derived its richness as well stated by the sociologist Ronald A Burchell:

As a nation, our whole history has involved a continuous reception and absorption of aliens. Our language, literature, fine arts and music, science and technology, agriculture and industry, education, law and politics are marked at nearly every point by contributions from practically every race, nationality, class, and creed in the world.⁴¹

Racism implies a refusal to admit the contributions from the different groups to the American culture and character. America would not be as it is now without these contributions.

The melting having not taken place, the fusion between the different races being incomplete with some races excluded and others willing to maintain segregation, some

⁴⁰ Siegfried O3.

⁴¹ R.A. Burchell and Eric Homberger, "The Immigrant Experience," Introduction to American Studies, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and Temperley (USA: Bradbury and Temperley, 1981) 53.

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even advance that there is no American race in the proper sense. The American race does not exist; there is only juxtaposition between the different races.⁴²

Thus, one may wonder what unites the American people. It is probably their commitment to the American values and ideals as it was noted by Judge Cruz Reynoso:

Americans cannot be now, and never have been, one people linguistically or ethnically. America is a political union-not a cultural, linguistic, religious or racial union. It is [the] acceptance of our constitutional ideals of democracy, equality and freedom which acts as a unifier for us as Americans.⁴³

It is often this commitment to the American ideals which is considered as a unifier, it is the common point between so diverse a people. Thus, let us proceed to look into these original founding principles of the American nation

2/ Assessment of the Founding Principles of the Nation:

1.1 _ Through the Declaration of Independence:

To look into the founding principles of the USA, this work will start with the very beginning of the existence of the American nation. Before being an independent nation, the eastern part of the territory now known as the United States of America was colonized by England. The original colonies declared their independence in 1776 in the Declaration of Independence. This document is unavoidable as it still influences peoples all around the world to fight for their independence. It undoubtedly remains an inspiration for all democracies today.

In the heat of their revolution, Americans forged doctrines of liberty and equality that quickly became an integral part of American political culture.⁴⁴ These revolutionary ideals were translated in the Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas

⁴² Siegfried 03

⁴³ Brent Ashabranner, The New American: Changing Patterns in US Immigration, (USA: Paul S. Conklin, 1983) 26.

⁴⁴ Donald G. Nieman, Promises to Keep: African-Americans and the Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present, (USA: Oxford University Press, 1991) 5.

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Jefferson, a Virginian statesman. It set the premises for the birth of the American democracy.

In its famous preamble it states:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.⁴⁵

The American democracy has been founded on the principles stated here of liberty and equality. The famous words have never ceased to sound in America, and one can say that as Ralph Barton Berry, a historian said: “The history of American democracy is a gradual realization, too slow for some, and too rapid for others, of the implications of the Declaration of Independence.”⁴⁶ The Declaration of Independence leaves no room for any doubt about the equality of men as it is illustrated by the expression: “truths to be self-evident.”⁴⁷ The document makes no distinction of gender, religion or race. According to the Declaration of Independence, God has created men equal and it is not to men to discuss this equality; it is a divine command. Furthermore, all men, without distinction whatsoever, are entitled to the same rights bestowed upon them by God. These rights are “inalienable”. This word is of the highest significance as it means “that cannot be taken away.”⁴⁸ Therefore, according to the Declaration of Independence, theoretically all men of any sex, any race, any religion or national origin are entitled to the same basic rights which are: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Of most significance is that these rights cannot be taken from them. These rights must be enjoyed universally, by the entire mankind, without the risk of them being taken away. Theoretically thus, no one can be deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness on the basis of racial distinctions. Here lies the significance of the Declaration of Independence to the subject of this work.

⁴⁵ The U. S. Declaration of Independence, 1776.

⁴⁶ Ralph Barton Perry, “Puritan and Democracy,” (New York, 1944), qtd in The Penguin History of the United States of America, Hugh Brogan (London: Addison-Wesley Longman, 1985) 177.

⁴⁷ The U.S. Declaration of Independence, 1776.

⁴⁸ “Inalienable,” Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (England: Longman group, 1995) 717.

1.2_ The Founding Principles through the American Constitution:

Furthermore, one may examine the implications of the American Constitution on the race issue. Written in 1787, the American Constitution is the oldest and most enduring constitution worldwide. The principles of the American democracy lay in this famous document which is considered as a masterpiece that has inspired many nations from all over the world. It is the basic law that has established the American system of government.

Generally speaking, the role of a constitution is stated in the following lines; it is:

[t]he fundamental document that establishe[s] the form of government of a sovereign state. It describes the powers and duties of government institutions (legislative, executive and judiciary) and defines the relation between them.⁴⁹

First, the framers of the Constitution created a system of government based on the power of the people but intended to prevent any majority from oppressing the minority. This was translated by James Wilson, one of the framers, who said that he was for “raising the federal pyramid to a considerable altitude, and for that reason wished to give it as broad a basis as possible.”⁵⁰ The government instituted under the Constitution derives its powers from the people and the very aim of its existence is to protect the rights of the people as it is said in the Declaration of Independence: “That to secure these rights [life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness], governments are instituted among [M]en, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”⁵¹ To protect the people from governmental abuse, the framers used several devices.

As a matter of fact, the Framers separated power- vertically and horizontally- horizontally, creating three branches of government each balancing the others. Indeed, the framers created distinct powers for each branch but also left overlapping zones of powers. In other words, they created “points of tension between them to insure that those powers would

⁴⁹ Fatima Maameri, A History Of The United States: From the Origins to the Civil War, Part One (Constantine: University of Mentouri, 2004) 118.

⁵⁰ Henry S. Commager, “A Constitution for All the People,” The Constitution: Is It an Economic Document? (USA: American Heritage, 1958) 102.

⁵¹ Hugh Brogan, The Penguin History of the U.S.A (London: Addison- Wesley Longman, 1985) 175.

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not be abused.”⁵²This is what is meant by the notion of “Checks and balances” which is the fruit of the framers’ genius and which is what made the America system of government so effective and lasting.

Vertically, they created two levels of power, the federal government and the states. Powers are reserved for each with the federal government made stronger and having final authority over states’ government; this is Federalism, an American particularity. It is “the form of government that was established by the constitution of the United States whereby political power was divided between the central government and states’ governments.”⁵³This entire arsenal was designed to prevent the abuse and mishandling of power by some factions. The latter were much feared since they can be destructive to government. In this respect, this is what was pointed out by James Madison in Federalist, No 10:

All civilized societies would be divided into different Factions and interests, as they happened to consist of rich and poor, debtors and creditors, the lands, the manufacturing, the commercial interest, the inhabitants of the district or that district, the followers of this political leader or that political leader, the disciplines of this religious sect or that political sect.⁵⁴

There was a fear of majorities abusing minorities. This was also tackled by James Madison: "In all cases where [m]ajority are united by a common interest or passion, the rights of the minority are in danger..."⁵⁵ According to him, the solution to this tricky problem is:

In a Republican government, the majority if united have always an opportunity to oppress the minority. What is the remedy? The only remedy is to enlarge the sphere, and thereby divide the community into so great a number of interests and parties, that in the first place a majority will not be likely at the same time to have a common interest separate from that of the whole or of the majority; and in the second place, that in case they should have an interest, they may not be apt to unite in the pursuit of it.⁵⁶

All the measures given in the Constitution translate a fear of power and the dangers of it being mishandled. The government is designed to serve the people; this is the reason of its existence. It must watch over and secure their rights; but, at the same time, prevent abuse

⁵² Maameri 121.

⁵³ Maameri 118.

⁵⁴ James Madison, “Federalist No.10,” qtd in Commager 103

⁵⁵ Madison, “Federalist No. 10,” qtd in Commager 101.

⁵⁶ Madison, “Federalist No.10,” qtd in Commager 101.

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through controlling people's excesses. According to this aristocratic view, too much democracy is indeed destructive to the people themselves as human beings are not perfect. Said otherwise, if power was entirely put in the hands of the people, this would lead to anarchy as it would be then impossible to control people's excesses. The interest of the nation would be entirely neglected in face of individual interests.

This leads us to conclude that the American system of government has been in theory created to protect the inalienable rights of all the people as in no part it makes any distinction be it social, political or racial and it has strived to prevent any abuse from any faction or from the majority . So, theoretically, it leaves no room for racial discrimination.

The rights of the people are further secured by the Bill of Rights which is ten amendments added to the original Constitution of 1787 and ratified by the states in 1791. These were added to reassure some framers who wanted to enumerate the powers of the people to protect them from governmental abuses. In a nutshell, amendments 1-3 guarantee the freedom of speech, press, and worship, the right of peaceful assembly, petitioning the government, and to bear arms. Amendments 4-8 protect the individual against unreasonable search, arrests and seizure of property and unusual, cruel punishment.

Theoretically, all the citizens of the United States are supposed to enjoy these rights as they are not reserved to some but to all without distinction. This leads us to conclude that these rights shall not be infringed on the basis of racial differences. This is of the highest importance to the subject of this work. Henry Commager, the well known American historian, denying any intention on the part of the Framers to make distinctions, states:

What they succeed in doing was to create a system of checks and balances and adjustments and accommodations that would effectively prevent the suppression of most minorities by majorities.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Commager 102.

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For Commager and for Madison, the balance of interests was the solution to any faction abusing the rest of the society. For them, the diversity has created a variety of interests and this in turn has created a natural brake to any abuse by any majority. Commager stated that:

[T]hey [the framers] took advantage of the complexity, the diversity, the pluralism, of American society and economy to encourage a balance of interests. They worked out sound and lasting political solutions to the problems of class, interest, section, race, religion, party.⁵⁸

Overall, one can say that the Constitution is intended to lay the foundation of a democracy where all the peoples without distinction would have a say.

As seen, the founding documents of the American nation made of equality one of the principles of the young nation. In no part did they say that there must be a distinction based on class, religion or race. In theory, the documents are unconditionally committed to equality. But we denote some great silences as well as some ambiguity in both documents which may let room for a differentiation between men. This aspect will be tackled in depth in chapter three where one will try to answer the following interrogations: did the documents enable equality to be unconditioned or did they let room for racial distinctions to occur? Is there a contrast between the theoretical commitment to equality and the reality? Does the American government, as instituted in the documents, promote and defend equality or does it enable discrimination to occur? Was there a breach in the system which led to the existence of racism and racial discrimination? All these aspects will be dealt with in the third chapter as for now the concern was to deal with the theoretical framework organizing the USA.

3/ The American Economic System and Equality:

After having dealt with the political system of the USA to see if it is equalitarian in theory, this work will now proceed to look into the economic system of the USA and see whether it is theoretically equalitarian or if it is inherently unequal. The American economic system is based on capitalism which is "a system of production and trade

⁵⁸ Commager 102.

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based on property and wealth being owned privately, with only a small amount of industrial activity by the government."⁵⁹

At the birth of their nation, the Americans derived pride from the fact that the youth of their history has prevented class differences to occur as it was the case in Old Europe. In the USA, there were no aristocracy, no titles of nobility. There were no great differences of wealth. Equality of opportunity is celebrated as one of the American particularities. Indeed, according to this opinion, any new comer has equal opportunity to make his way and become rich.⁶⁰ It only depends on himself and his efforts. This principle, part of the American dream, has attracted millions of immigrants to the USA. It was generally believed that with hard labour and discipline, one may succeed in society and become rich. The fact that there is no aristocracy, no titles of nobility put all the peoples on the same scale. They are not endowed with such or such title that makes them superior to the others from their very birth. At their birth, all the people in the USA have theoretically equal chance to succeed in life.⁶¹ They are put on an equal footing without distinctions. Equality in the United States is thus an equality of opportunity not of economic condition. Equality there implies "an equal right to achieve distinction without regard for class, race or creed."⁶² The American economic system is open; it only depends on the people to have a share in the general wealth.

So, one may say that theoretically, there is no room for discrimination in the American economic system: all people are put on an equal footing and all without distinction can "make their way". This is as far as theory is concerned. Later in this research, however, one will look into the capitalist system and see if it enabled racism to emerge. Is it as fair as it pretends to be or is it bound to produce racism so as to ensure its existence?

⁵⁹ "Capitalism," Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (England: Longman group Ltd, England, 1995) 187.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey N. Berry and Jerry Goldman, The Challenge of Democracy: Government in America (USA: Houghton Milton Company, 1989) 11.

⁶¹ Janda 11.

⁶² Peter H. Odegard, et al., American Government: Theory, Politics and Constitutional Foundation (USA: Roy, Peterson and Company, 1961) 70.

Conclusion:

Our theoretical part consists of a twofold approach: the notion of racism itself and the theoretical foundations of the American nation in relation to race. Having clarified such notions and terms as judged essential for the understanding of the subject, this work will now proceed to the historical background of racism that is at its very roots.

Chapter Two

Historical Background:

The Origins of Racism in the United States

Introduction:

Racism in America has always been at the origin of many social conflicts and inequalities. In so an ethnically diverse society, this stands as a serious problem. The fact that it is deeply rooted further aggravates the matter since, as it is going to be seen, racist sentiment is older than the United States of America itself. To understand how racism emerged in America, this chapter will trace it back up to the colonial period and see how it developed. The aim at this step of the research is to tackle the roots of racism in America. To look into the roots of racism is motivated by the fact that one cannot tackle and fully understand a problem without studying its origin.

I_ The Settlers' State of Mind before Arrival:

For this purpose, one will first examine the early settlers' state of mind when they first arrived in America. Then, focusing on the four criteria of differences between people, one will assess the settlers' reactions to the peoples they encountered, i.e. the Indians and then the African Americans who were brought from Africa against their will as slaves.

For this purpose, this study will look into the first contact ~~encounter~~ between the white men (the Europeans) and the other peoples (the Indians and the Black Americans). What were their first impressions? Were those impressions prejudiced or rational? How did those first encounters affect the rest of the history of race relations? In a nutshell, how was racism formed in the white men's mind?

First, the early comers to the American continent were for the overwhelming majority white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant (the WASPs); they arrived from the British Isles for the most part of them. In arriving to what was to become the USA, they brought with them their way of thinking, their culture, and their religion. Thus, one can say that they brought also their prejudices. In a society where all that is white has a positive connotation and all that is coloured, a negative one, the settlers' reactions to the peoples encountered was is-biased and prejudiced. The connotations included in the words "white" and "black" fuelled racist thought. To further explain this aspect, let us look into the usual connotations found in these words. Some standard definitions of these words which have undoubtedly influenced the early comers' reactions are: "white": "free from spot or blemish;⁶³ free from moral impurity; innocent; —"not intended to cause harm;⁶⁴ favourable or fortunate."⁶³ Furthermore, the white colour symbolizes "purity, virginity, virtue, beauty, beneficence, God."⁶⁴ All that refers to the white colour is positive. In contrast, "black" or more precisely the concept of blackness is loaded with intense meaning; it is badly connoted. Some usual definitions present black as: "dirty, soiled, thoroughly sinister or evil, wicked;⁶⁵ indicative of condemnation or discredit, very sad, gloomy and calamitous, marked by the occurrence of disaster; characterized by hostility or angry discontent, connected with the devil."⁶⁵ Black conveys also the meaning of: "danger and repulsion."⁶⁶

— Thus, the concepts of whiteness and blackness are loaded with intense meaning. In the early colonists' mind and culture, all that was black evoked negative thoughts and must be rejected. The white colour and the black one conveyed much emotional impact. This impact undoubtedly conditioned the reactions of the settlers towards the peoples encountered. This contrast between the white and dark peoples is further deepened by the

⁶³ "Racism: Deconstructing It".

⁶⁴ Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black, American Attitudes Towards the Negro, 1550-1812 (New York: WW Norton & Company Inc., 1968) 7.

⁶⁵ "Racism: Deconstructing It".

⁶⁶ Jordan 7.

following physical definition: ~~White~~^{white}: “being a member of a group or race characterized by reduced pigmentation and usually specifically distinguished from persons belonging to groups marked by black, brown, yellow or red skin.”⁶⁷ The corresponding definition of black is “having dark skin, hair; and relating to any of the various population groups having dark pigmentation of the skin.”⁶⁸ The complete opposition of the connotations carried by those colours applied to people preconditioned the ~~further~~^{subsequent} separation of the white race and the darker races.

The prejudices against what is black were not born at the first contact the Europeans had with the Africans; Prejudices against what is black were deeply seated in the Europeans’ mind long before they ever encountered any African. This state of mind was pointed out by the historian Winthrop D. Jordan who stated: “Long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most engrained values.”⁶⁹ The impact of these “definitions” led the European settlers to react emotionally to the encounter with the other peoples. Could they have reacted otherwise? The question may be asked but one may reply by the negative because of the strength of the emotional impact conveyed by the cultural connotations of blackness and whiteness in the European minds. The connotations of blackness and whiteness were so deeply engrained in the ~~Europeans’ mind~~^{Europeans’ minds} to have triggered any other reactions. Furthermore, what also conditioned their reactions in their early contact with other peoples was their belief in the superiority of their culture. They considered themselves as the most civilized people. Along with this cultural belief is their belief in Christianity as the only true religion and themselves-mostly Puritans at the beginning- as a chosen people. These

⁶⁷ “Racism: Deconstructing It”.

⁶⁸ “Racism: Deconstructing It”.

⁶⁸ Jordan 7.

⁶⁹ Jordan 7.

unconditioned and deeply engrained beliefs helped by a materially more advanced way of life tended to maintain other peoples in a state of inferiority.

II. The Whites' First Contact with other peoples and their reactions:

First, let us look into the early Americans' reaction towards the Native peoples and see how racial prejudice was fostered on their first encounter. As the Indians had lived on the American continent long before its discovery by the Europeans, the Indians were the first people to be encountered by the latter on their arrival to America. The striking contrast between the two peoples in every respect, i.e. physical, religious, cultural, conditioned to a certain extent the violence of the reaction.

1/ Impressions on Skin Colour and Physical Appearance Differences:

1.1. The Native Americans:

This part of the study will probe the differences between the two peoples and will enquire on the emergence of racial prejudice. First, sharp differences in skin colour and physical appearance fostered racial prejudice towards the Natives in the British colonies in America. Immediately visible, the skin colour and physical appearance of the Native Americans helped contributed to create prejudice towards so “different” a people. First, the Indians' skin colour is “reddish”, which is unusual for the early Europeans settlers who had started settling the American continent. In a society with a culture where white —has a positive connotation and conveys such ideas as purity and innocence, all other colours seemed strange. The Indians' complexion was nevertheless not as repulsive to the white men as the blacks' one.

_____ Moreover, the Indians' physical appearance had further upsettledupset the settlers. Indeed, it contrasted so sharply with the settlers' one that the latter failed to see

beyond it. Descriptions of the Indians by early settlers provide some hints about how they were perceived. The Red Man was depicted as "savage" and "beastlike."⁷⁰

⁷⁰This view, which was widespread among the Europeans settlers, can be explained by some characteristics of the Indians' physical appearance. To begin with, their relative nakedness - the Indians wore only few clothes, if any, especially the tribes living in a warm climate⁷¹ shocked the early settlers (the decent ~~Purotans~~Puritans) and was taken as a proof of the backwardness of the Indian people. Besides, the Indians used body-paintings which were highly symbolical for the Natives themselves but which were not understood by the colonists. These were consequently deemed as a sign of primitiveness. Thus, judging them only on the basis of their appearance, the white men condemned the Indians as primitive groups of people. So, from their very first contact with the Indians, the Europeans settlers, shocked and disturbed by the Indians' appearance, developed a sense of superiority and prejudice and began to despise the Natives.

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1.2. White Settlers' Attitude towards the Blacks:

Similarly, the Black people experienced prejudice from the European colonists because of the colour of their skin and their appearance. The first contact between the two "races" can be traced back to the arrival of the first Africans as indentured servants to the continent in 1619. Indeed, badly in need of ~~labor~~labour, the founding companies encouraged immigration and ~~indenture~~indentured servitude ~~is-as~~ a way for the poor to come to the new world. According to the terms of indentured servitude, the person, in exchange of his transportation to the New World, was engaged to work for a number of years to ~~repay~~pay back his voyage. This was valid only for the Europeans. As far as the Africans were concerned, they were captured and, against their will were taken to America where they were

⁷⁰ Stephen Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America (New York: Athenum Press, 1981) 14.

⁷¹ Maameri 121.

sold. However, there seems to exist some evidence to show that the first Africans brought to America had the status of indentured servants. Some of them were freed at the end of the period of servitude and were given a piece of land to work on. Nevertheless, later Africans were treated as slaves.

Because they were predominantly British and thus so remote from Africa, the first settlers, for the overwhelming majority, had never encountered Africans and on their first contact with them in the New World, they had a rather violent and repulsive reaction. From then on, the Africans were regarded as different and inferior.⁷² In this respect, skin colour was a determinant factor leading to racial prejudice; indeed, the “blackness” of the Africans with all what it conveys was rather strange and repulsive to the white men.⁷³ This can be explained by the fact that the colonists, issued from the European culture, were conditioned to see ugliness and evil in the black colour. In the ~~colonists'~~British ~~colonists'~~ British-made mind, the black colour was associated with negative notions such as evil, baseness, wickedness, dirt and this association played a major role in the whites' perception of the black man as an inferior human being. The repulsion of the blacks' skin ~~ee~~made a deeper impact on the colonists than the red ~~ee~~colour of the Indians whose complexion was not too repulsive to the white man. This may be explained by the fact that the African's skin ~~ee~~colour was more strikingly different from the ~~white~~White men's and that the Indian was less dark; but above all it can be explained by other motives as stated by Winthrop D. Jordan:

By very reason of their intention to plant themselves in America, Englishmen had from the first been under pressure to describe the Indian's complexion in terms which would render the prospect of settlement in the new world an attractive one.⁷⁴

Most of the time, the settlers' reactions to other peoples were motivated by the context of the encounter and their goal. Thomas Jefferson illustrated this widespread thought among the

⁷² R.C. Simmons, The American Colonies from Settlement to Independence (Harlow, Essex: Longman Group Unlimited, 1976) 88.

⁷³ Gary B. Nash, “Red, White and Black: the Peoples of Early America,” 1974, 2 Feb. 2004 <<http://www.African-AmericanHistoryResource.com/AfricanAmericanAlmanach.com/>>.

⁷⁴ Jordan 239.

~~settlesettlers~~ by stating that the ~~eolor~~colour of the Blacks was the aesthetic sign of their inferiority.⁷⁵ So, the complexion of the Indians and the Africans had had undoubtedly an emotional impact on the colonists and had certainly played a crucial role in fostering prejudice.

_____ Similarly to the Indian, the physical appearance of the African nurtured prejudice in the colonists' mind. Indeed, the nakedness of the former as well as his physical strength made the colonists think of him more as an animal rather than a human being: the African was considered a "beast of burden."⁴³

⁷⁶The colonists went so far as to contest his humanity. "Indians and Negroes...[are] scarcely consider[ed] as of the human species..."⁴⁴

⁷⁷In the early years of settlement, the Indians were equally described in a variety of ways all denying them their humanity: they were "more brutish than the beast they hunt, more wild and unmanly than that unmanned wild country, which they range rather than inhabit"⁴⁵, "the" or more crudely: "The animals vulgarly called Indians."⁴⁵⁷⁸ So, the complexion and the physical appearance of the Indians and Africans were repulsive to the white men and aroused prejudice towards them.

2/ Cultural Differences:

Similarly, the cultural discrepancies between the early European settlers, the Indians and the Africans led to racist sentiment in early America. Both the African and the Indian had a distinct culture that may be considered materially not as advanced as the white man's; nevertheless, the richness of that culture cannot be denied. However, the European

⁷⁵ Elise Marientras, Les Mythes Fondateurs de la Nation Américaine (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1976) 239.

⁷⁶ Brogan 64.

⁷⁷ Brogan 64.

⁷⁸ Brogan 64.

settlers failed to see that richness and condemned the cultures of those peoples as backward and primitive.

First, the alleged cultural backwardness of the Native Americans helped to create a feeling of superiority among the White men. One may not deny the fact that the Indians were never considered culturally the equals of the whites even by those who were sympathetic to them⁷⁹. Their alleged inferiority has always been a matter-of-fact in early America as it is conveyed by the use of the term “primitive” to refer to them. This term in fact disdains the culture and way of life of the Natives. To the colonists, the Indians were not a civilized people; this implies the inferiority of their culture. Illustrating this view which prevailed among the colonists, Samuel Purchase, a missionary, described the Indians as “bad people, having little of Humanities but Shape, ignorant of civilities, of arts, of religion...”⁸⁰ The terms “primitive” and “savage” widely used to characterize the Natives not only refer to the backwardness of their culture but also to the backwardness of their mind. Indeed, the Whites did not consider the Indians as fully developed intellectually and the latter were often described as having a child’s mind. The condemnation of their culture as inferior can be explained by the fact that at the time of their first contact, the Indians were not as advanced technologically as the white Europeans; by that time, they used only rudimentary tools. In addition to this, the majority of the tribes had still a “primitive” way of life: hunting, fishing and gathering fruits.⁸¹ Thus, the colonists failed or feigned not to see beyond these surface observations and refused to acknowledge the richness and complexity of the Native culture condemning it to an inferior status.

Second, similarly to the Indians’, the culture of the Black people is considered as debased though the case of the Africans is rather different from that of the Indians. Indeed, the Africans’ civilization was not very visible since America was not its natural milieu;

⁷⁹ “Red, White and Black.”

⁸⁰ Brogan 64.

⁸¹ Maameri 1-2.

Africans had been transplanted from Africa. As a consequence, the colonists judged the Blacks after their way of living and behaviour and ignored the possibility that the Africans could have a genuine culture. In addition to this, the fact that in the colonists' mind, Africa was associated with the animal world had led to doubt the humanity of Blacks. It was even assumed that the African was an intermediate species between beast and man.⁸² This doubt about the Blacks' humanity highlights the strong degree of racial prejudice that the Whites developed against the Africans. The idea of the animality of Blacks was further strengthened by their sexuality which is reputed to be rather unrestrained. This particular trait- an animal-like trait- was developed by historian Winthrop D. Jordan who wrote:

_____ Englishmen tended to set Negroes over against themselves, to show what they conceived to be radically contrasting qualities of colour, religion and way of life as well as animality and a peculiarly potent sexuality.⁸³

The Africans more than the Indians, were presumed to be deprived of culture. This came from the fact that they were transplanted from their native land and obliged to adjust to the White man's culture and way of life. They were stripped off their culture as they were not allowed to continue to practice their traditions in the New World. Indeed, they had been obliged to give up their religion, their traditions and even their African names. This interdiction to adorn to their culture made the African culture deem inexistent as not visible. So, the alleged cultural inferiority of the Negroes further enhanced racial prejudice towards them.

3/ National Origin Differences:

_____ The view that differences other than colour aroused prejudice may be confirmed by the fact that hostility was displayed towards non conformist whites. In fact, the colonial society was highly intolerant (except for the Quakers) and distinctions in religion or national origin aroused racist feelings. This represents a paradox as the early settlers were

⁸² "Red, White and Black."

⁸³ "Red, White and Black."

themselves persecuted and rejected in their European societies of origin; their escape to America was mainly due to intolerance in Europe.

First, racial prejudice based on national origin was not uncommon in the colonies; it was first directed against the non-English; and, later against the non-British immigrants to the New World. At the beginning, colonists of English descent down-looked non-English immigrants. The first settlements in America were established by British settlers who were predominately English so that the early population of the colonies was overwhelmingly composed of Englishmen. Thus, the rest of the early American population of the colonies adopted the English language and the English ways voluntarily for some, reluctantly for others. Indeed, new comers had to adapt to the already established communities or move elsewhere where they were not sure of surviving alone in the wilderness. Those new comers, though coming in majority from the rest of the British Isles and from Northern Europe, were not welcomed by the English communities who regarded them with suspicion and often developed a hostile attitude towards them. Indicative of this, one historian writes on the colonial period: "At one time or another, immigrants of practically every non English stock incurred the open hostility of earlier comers."⁸⁴

Xenophobia- hatred of foreigners- was a widespread sentiment in the colonies. The settlers of English origin resented the coming of non-English immigrants but they had no choice than to tolerate them: America being a vast and virgin land, every hand was needed to fight the wilderness and to exploit the richness of the country. Without a shortage of labour, it can be assumed that the English settlers would have closed the door to non-English new comers. Non-English immigrants were often not allowed to settle in English communities and when they were tolerated, they were not put on an equal footing with the English who despised them. As a matter of fact, this xenophobic sentiment was illustrated by the fact that

⁸⁴ Steinberg 11.

the non-English nationals such as the Germans, the Irish and the Scots were discriminated against. A proof of this is that in several colonies, the English communities excluded other nationalities from holding office⁸⁵ because the English were convinced of their own superiority and wanted to keep their community pure from non-English blood.

Likewise, this xenophobic sentiment of the English descent went on exacerbating when immigrants of more different nationalities came to America. Those immigrants were coming from Southern and Central Europe: Slavs and Jews for instance. Here, the English incorporated the other nationalities of the British Isles and North-western Europe to form what they considered to be an Anglo-Saxon elite. These attitudes of the British towards their fellow European immigrants illustrate the high degree of their intolerance as even the slightest difference such as national origin, without any distinction of colour or religion, fed prejudice.

4/ Religious Differences:

Differences in religions very frequently fed racial prejudice and intolerance between the colonists. Primarily, contrasting with the settlers' religious fervour, the Natives' and Africans' supposed heathenism further confirmed them in their inferior position. The first colonists were very religious and religion governed almost all aspects of their life: this was true for the Puritans and for the Quakers. So, to these early colonists, the Africans' and the Indians' apparent absence of religious beliefs appeared to be a grave defect and a proof of their inferiority. Here again the matter differs between the Indians and the Africans. The Indians actually practiced a religion. For the most part, they venerated natural forces and spirits. These can be undoubtedly considered as a religion as the Natives devoted themselves to prayers or followed various rites. As for the Africans, it was a different story. They were

⁸⁵ Richard B. Morris, The New World: Prehistory to 1774, I (New York: Time-Line Books, 1969) 69.

stripped off their culture and religion which they were not allowed to practice in the New World. In addition to this, the African slaves were often forced to convert to Christianity and drop their ancient practices. In fact, Indians as well as African slaves had their own religions but their forms of worship differed so much from those of the white settlers that the latter failed to understand them. Indeed, the white settlers considered their own religion the only acceptable and right one.

Not only were the Indians considered irreligious but they were also denounced as demons. Their alleged fiendishness was put forward by the Puritans.⁸⁶ According to the latter, the Indians are followers of the devil. This feeling was intensified because of the resistance the Natives opposed to the white invaders which the latter attributed to the cruel and warlike nature of the Indians. With respect to Africans, there was a general feeling among most of the whites that blackness was a curse.⁸⁷ Blackness, which was, according to them, a proof of God's disapproval of the African people, enhanced their inferiority. For the early white European settlers, it was an important point of difference and it motivated them to set the Negro apart. The fact that they were a "cursed people" set them apart from the "chosen people": the white European colonists who were the Christians. The Africans cannot melt. Thus, heathenism was an important criterion for the Whites to justify the subjugation of both the Indians and the Africans. It is even assumed by some researchers that for the Englishmen who settled in America, the specific religious differences were initially of greater importance than colour.⁸⁸

Equally, religious differences among the whites themselves led to prejudice and intolerance between the different sects and religions. Fleeing from intolerance and even persecution in Europe, many religious groups and sects settled in the New World seeking to create a model society for themselves or they were simply in quest of freedom of worship.

⁸⁶ Nash.

⁸⁷ Jordan 19.

⁸⁸ Jordan 97-98.

Puritanism with all its branches (Presbyterianism, Anabaptism, Congregationalism, Separatism, Quakerism, etc) was the predominant faith. All the adepts of those sects were ill-tolerated or rejected in Europe; indeed, they were more or less unwanted. Following this overwhelming body of Puritan settlers, other religious groups established themselves in the New World seeking also religious freedom as Catholics and Jews who constituted the greater part.⁸⁹ All these denominations and religions did not coexist peacefully and intolerance prevailed in colonial America.

From the beginning, there was hostility between the different branches of Puritanism itself. Religious toleration was hateful to them;⁹⁰ the Puritans refused settlement in their communities to whoever was different in faith, to whoever was not conforming. The Quakers, particularly, were persecuted by the Congregationalist and Separatist Puritans who went as far as hanging four Quakers.⁹¹ Even in the Puritan settlements where religious freedom was promised, it was reserved only for the various sects of Protestantism. The Catholics and the Jews, even if tolerated, were discriminated against.⁹² As for instance in Rhodes Island where the Catholics were disfranchised and the Jews were denied the right of naturalisation.⁹³ The fact that the Puritans considered themselves as God's chosen people led them to develop a sense of superiority towards adepts of other religions; they viewed these religions as wrong and inferior. We can say that of the different factors leading to racism, religious differences gave way to particularly aggressive and hostile attitudes.

This study of the mentality of the Puritans as a rather intolerant people is important to the subject of this dissertation as the Puritan character was the major component of the American character at large. Indeed, the puritan character deeply shaped the early American character. This explanation is intended to stress the highly intolerant character of

⁸⁹ Malcolm Bradbury, Introduction to American Studies (USA: Howard Temperley, 1981) 158.

⁹⁰ Morris 78.

⁹¹ Maameri 74.

⁹² Morris 80.

⁹³ Morris 80.

the early English settlers and to show that colour but also other distinctions such as religion, culture or national origin bred racial prejudice. One may now return to the coloured peoples as they are the ones who had most suffered from American racism.

III Early Treatment of the Coloured Peoples:

The early treatment of the Indian and the African peoples denotes the existence of racial prejudice in the early English colonies of America. In this respect, the historian Hugh Brogan gave a clear picture of the early treatment of both Blacks and Indians by the Whites:

The African was clearly a beast of burden, and might be enslaved, The Indian was a hunting beast, and might be shot (especially since on the whole he made poor material for slavery).⁹⁴

Enslavement and extermination were the respective tragic fates which were reserved for the African and Indian peoples.

1/ The Tragic Fate of the Indians:

At first, the early relations between the Indians and the Settlers were for the most part friendly and cooperative as the former helped the Europeans to survive in the Wilderness. Hostility began when the Europeans' greed for land became insatiable. They began, as a consequence, to eye on Indian territories. The European settlers chased the Indian tribes and if they encountered resistance, they fought them, killing without distinction men, women and children; peaceful and hostile tribes. In a conduct of territorial expansionism according to which it was the White Man's destiny to expand his civilization and territory all over the continent,⁹⁵ the settlers coveted the Indians' territories. Pushed always westward, the tribes had to adapt to unknown and most of the time hostile lands and were deprived of their basic means of subsistence. Deeply touched by unknown diseases brought by the Europeans,

⁹⁴ Brogan 64.

⁹⁵ Brogan 66.

the Indians nearly vanished. For the White Men, the Indian was a primitive and obsolete people whose fate was to vanish;⁹⁶ it is the law of survival of the fittest. The White men's cruel treatment of the Indian was motivated by racial prejudice and let appear a latent racist feeling. The Europeans, allegedly, the most civilized people, must spread over the continent; the Indians being inferior had the choice either to subdue or to perish.

Primarily motivated by the White men's greed for land, the near extermination of the Indians was tinged with racist flavour. For the White men, the Indian and his culture were not worth existing. Indeed, blinded by their belief in their superiority, they failed to see and did not want to acknowledge the richness and complexity of the Indian cultures. In a nutshell, for them, the Indian is a savage with a backward culture and his life is worthless, he must be sacrificed for the sake of the advance of the white civilization. This early racism caused much harm to the Indian cultures extinguishing numerous tribes and nearly exterminating others.

2/ The Enslavement of the Africans as an Expression of Racism:

_____ Illustrating the racist attitudes of the Whites towards peoples of colour, the enslavement of the Blacks (and the aborted attempt to enslave the Indians) proved the existence of racial prejudice and its intensification. Disagreement exists among the historians over what precedes the other: Was racial prejudice the cause of slavery or was it slavery which entailed racism? One may answer that probably racial prejudice was a sine qua non condition of the existence of slavery. Prejudice precedes slavery but the latter further intensified and deep-rooted the former. Slavery, which may be defined as a forced labour system instituted by the Whites based on racial differences,⁹⁷ deeply ruined and wrecked the

⁹⁶ Brogan 64.

⁹⁷ John Hope Franklin, Race and History: Selected Essays 1958-1988 (USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 132.

Black people; its consequences are still visible today. The Black population has not yet recovered from the scars left by the institution of slavery.

Indeed, without solid racist feeling, slavery could not have existed and lasted. Originally, the African people came to the New World against their will as indentured servants but their servitude soon turned perpetual and hereditary. Why did not the Whites enslave the other Whites coming as indentured servants? This may prove that they could only reserve this inhuman treatment to races they considered inferior.

Several factors sealed the fate of the coloured peoples into slavery. First, economic motives led to slavery. Being a vast, virgin land, America needed hands to be exploited. The flow of voluntary immigrants was far from sufficing, the settlers had to find a solution to supply labor, labour. It was first made through indentured servitude but still more manpower was needed. Slavery represented the ideal solution for this urgent problem. There would have probably been no enslavement without an economic need, i.e. without a persistent demand for labor, labour.⁹⁸ That shortage of labour was above all felt in the huge plantations of the South. Thus, the economic factor was the decisive drive which led to the enslavement of the Africans and it was also this factor which made the institution last so long.

Besides, racial prejudice was determinant in the emergence of slavery. Primarily, the fact that other whites were not enslaved proved that slavery was racially selective. Several criteria entangled the Negro into this inhuman institution. But first, one needs to precise that at the beginning, the White settlers attempted to enslave also the Indians but it was a failure for several reasons. First, the Indian had no urban and European like farming knowledge; he appeared to the colonists to be more inclined to rebel and less submissive than the African. The former was very inclined to flee and most of the early Indian slaves simply escaped to their tribes. Second, The-the knowledge of the country was an asset

⁹⁸ Jordan 91.

to the Indians as they knew the place better than the White masters and could escape easily. The fact that there was a somewhere where to flee made the Indian a highly unreliable slave.⁹⁹ Third, the white colonists advanced that his weaker physical constitution made him an inefficient slave. Indeed, the Indian, according to them, could not bear much hard ~~labor~~labour, being not as strong as the African and less enduring.

Thus, after several aborted attempts at reducing the Indian into slavery, preference was given to the African. The colonists abandoned then the idea of massive enslavement of the Indian, though a certain number of Indians actually remained slaves. The significance of these attempts must not be overlooked as they illustrate the colonists' early conviction of putting both the Indians and the Africans ~~colored~~ on the same footing, reserving for them the same tragic fate. Thus, the African represented the ideal party. Later, the motives were racially connoted and justification of enslaving the African started to find good reasons. First, the colonists argued that the African, due to his strong physical constitution, supported considerable hard labour. Furthermore, the warm climate made the ~~labor~~labour even more exhausting ~~strenuous~~. The fact that the African was used to the high temperatures of the tropical climate made him resist better the heat of the American colonies. In addition to this, unlike the Indian who was indigenous of this country, the African was transplanted from his native country to a land completely unknown to him. He did not know the place and had nowhere to escape, his native land being across the ocean.

The African once brought from Africa was trapped in the American continent and in his slave condition. This sensation of being entrapped gave way to an apparent fatalism noticed among slaves;¹⁰⁰ hence the wrong though common impression of the slaves being submissive. Contrary to what was commonly believed among the Whites-, the African slaves did not like their lot (and for good reason) and this impression of submissiveness

⁹⁹ Quarles 35.

¹⁰⁰ John A Garraty, The American Nation (USA: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1979) 774.

entailed from the sum of all the suffering of their slave life as well as from that powerlessness. This impression of submissiveness comes also from the fact that the different slave revolts were quelled and severely punished to dissuade the other slaves to protest against their fate. All these factors led to the success of the enslavement of the African rather than of the Indian.

Finally, the Africans were totally helpless in the face of the European aggressiveness and technology.^{65,101} They found themselves at the mercy of these traffickers who kidnapped them and who possessed all sorts of powerful tools and weapons. Besides, the Blacks' visibility made them recognizable¹⁰² in a very hostile environment which hampered any attempt to escape as they could easily be found and recaptured. They could not vanish or melt into society because they were not free people. Thus, all these unfortunate criteria sealed the Black into slavery, an institution which destroyed the African as a person and spoiled the chances of generations of Africans even after its abolition. It had left indelible marks. The historian Claude Fohlen summed up its lasting harms:

The infamous institution was born and turned the Black into a being of inferior quality, completely deprived of rights, to the difference of other human beings and susceptible to be negotiated as goods.^{66,103}

Moreover, the inhuman treatment of slaves illustrates the cruelty and aggressiveness of early racism. It was an incontestable proof of the colonists' deeply rooted racist prejudice. Primarily, the Africans were transplanted forcibly from their land to the New World. They left behind them their country, their family, their culture. They were robbed off everything that was dear to them. Then, they had to bear the inhuman conditions of their transportation during which thousands died from starvation and diseases. Indeed, they lied during weeks in the same position amidst their dirt, with hunger torturing them. Epidemics took males, females and children without distinction. At their arrival, they were sold as mere property. During their slave life, they had to bear intolerable conditions of living. First, a

¹⁰¹ Jordan 91.

¹⁰² Quarles 37.

¹⁰³ Claude Fohlen, *Les Noirs aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965) 8.

considerable amount of ~~labor~~labour awaited them and for the most part, they had to work from dawn to dusk without rest. Of course, slaves' conditions varied according to their place of work and to the character of the master. For those who worked as house servants, life was easier. But the most widespread lot was working on plantations where conditions were unbearable as reported by the historian Roger Daniels:

First of all, there was a great deal of hard physical labor, the tasks of the agricultural year with few labor saving devices and crude tools. A typical weekly food ration would include 3.5 to 4 pounds of salt porks and a peck of Corn for an adult male_ with smaller rations for women, children and the aged. In rice growing areas, rice was substituted for corn, and molasses, salt fish and vegetables sometimes from slave gardens were often added. Clothing was crude and uncomfortable. Most slaves lived in windowless and stoveless one-room huts ten to fifteen feet square with dust floors."^{66,104}

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Slave life was very exhausting and mortality was much higher among slaves than among other sections of the population. Slaves were generally overworked, underfed, poorly dressed. They were treated worse than chattel.

The enslavement of the Africans was motivated by racist sentiment as the treatment of slaves denotes a strong and deeply-seated belief in the superiority of the Whites who had unconditioned control over the lives of other human beings. They bought and sold slaves as mere chattel or property. It also denotes a deep belief in the inferiority of Blacks, reducing them to the rank of animals. In turn, slavery deepened racism and intensified it as the more the White Men treated the slaves like inferiors, the more contempt and scorn they felt for them. This was the tragedy of slavery as it entangled the slaves to an everlasting inferior position. Blacks were confined to a subservient, powerless and dependent position; they only inspired contempt to the white men. The legislation on slavery confirmed this inferior status as it showed how Blacks were gradually "singled out for special treatment in several ways which suggests a generalized debasement of Negroes as a group."^{67,105} The Africans were reduced to an inferior position as they were at the entire disposal of their masters and were

¹⁰⁴ Roger Daniels, Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life (New Delhi: Visual Education Corporation, 1990) 64.

¹⁰⁵ Simmons 88.

even treated as mere property being bought and sold like any other product. As a result, born out of racist sentiment, the institution of slavery contributed to making racial prejudice deep-rooted and long-lasting. This is probably why the African Americans are still struggling for equality, nearly a century and a half after the abolition of slavery.

The consequences of slavery on the Coloured people and on race relations are tremendous. To begin with, slavery was destructive of the Black's personality, talents and culture. Indeed, slavery was a means by which the Africans were maintained in a lower position and forced to accept their lot in an unjust society.⁶⁸¹⁰⁶ Slavery was a means of forced assimilation to the dominant culture which means that Africans had to give up their African names and adopt English- sounding ones, they had to adopt the English language as well as to convert to the Protestant religion.¹⁰⁷ In a nutshell, they had to abandon all what made their personality. Being always treated as inferior and being always despised, Blacks were expected to come to believe in their own inferiority and began to hate themselves as it was illustrated by Malcolm X later "the worst crime committed by the white man is to teach us to hate ourselves."⁶⁹¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the institution spoiled generations of talents as it confined the Black people into menial tasks without regard to their intellectual potential. White masters were not interested in the potential talents of Blacks. Here, one may notice the terrible damages caused by slavery. Furthermore, the state of servitude further fuelled racist sentiment as it is probably the cause of all vices. This aspect was depicted by historian Samuel Hopkins in the following way:

In the state of servitude, the mind of men tends irresistibly to waste away and to contract. Slavery prevents from acquiring any sort of useful knowledge. It precipitates the soul into obscurity and despair. It discourages all activity and progress, and it is normal that it incites all who are enslaved to give up themselves to a stupid heedlessness and to all sorts of vices.⁷⁰¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ André Kaspi, et al. , La Civilisation Américaine (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1979) 51.

¹⁰⁷ Kaspi 51.

¹⁰⁸ Silberman 13.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Hopkins, "A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans," Norwich, 1776, qtd in Les Mythes Fondateurs de la Nation Américaine, Elise Marientras (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976) 248.

Being in a state of total submission, the Blacks were in the impossibility of developing intellectually; they tended to degenerate, having only to obey orders and not to take initiatives and decisions. They lost their capacity of thought: having nothing to think about, they appeared to the White men as stupid and carefree.¹¹⁰ The slave status made the Africans develop a character which was thought to be their natural character.⁷¹ ~~so~~ Thus, the incapacities noted in the slaves are the fruit of their servitude.⁷²¹¹¹ This character which was the consequence of the slave state in turn fuelled racist feeling. Indeed, the apparent stupidity and carelessness of the slaves made them appear inferior in the eyes of the white population. These defects, which were the consequence of their slave state, were taken as inherent to the race. Thus, this character of the slaves further intensified racial prejudice. It was a vicious circle.

Slavery was also irreversibly damaging to race relations. The ~~colored~~ coloured peoples' skin ~~color~~ colour and appearance and supposed absence of culture and heathenism created racial prejudice in the White man's mind. Slavery further deepened this racist feeling making it almost impossible to uproot. The white men developed contempt and scorn towards slaves because of their inferior, entirely dependent and submissive position. As a result, the whites' having total control over other human beings' lives further exacerbated their own feeling of superiority. The racist feeling went on deepening so that with time it became very difficult if not impossible to eradicate. This was aggravated by the fact that a lot of Blacks accepted the idea of the superiority of the white men and of their own inferiority. This low esteem, the loss of confidence as well as the self-hatred felt by a majority of the Blacks are just one of the innumerable damages generated by slavery. No strong enough words exist to express the extent of the other damages done by slavery. Illustrations of these damages are the human losses and suffering, the intellectual wastefulness, the degeneracy of the relations

¹¹⁰ Hopkins qtd in Marientras 250.

¹¹¹ Benjamin Rush, "An address to the Inhabitants of the British settlements on the slavery of the Negroes in America," Philadelphia, 1773, qtd in Marientras 248.

between the races among others. These are illustrations of the danger that racism represents in any society.

Thus, when looking at the early treatment of the coloured peoples, one cannot deny the fact that the early American society was racially prejudiced and highly intolerant of differences. Even those who were against the extermination of the Indians and against slavery did not actually believe in the equality of white men with coloured peoples as illustrated by the belief of Thomas Jefferson himself, the best example one may think of:

I advance it, [...] as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by the time and circumstance, are inferior to the whites in the endowment both of body and mind.¹¹²

Finally, one may conclude that even those like Thomas Jefferson who were “sympathetic” to the Indians and the Blacks did not strive to make of them their equals.

IV The Will to Preserve the Purity of the White Race as an Expression of Racism:

1/ The Tacit Purpose behind Racial Classification:

Indicative of this early racism, the Whites’ will to keep the racial borders clear cut was systematic. They wanted to preserve the purity of the white race and keep it from being stained by other blood. This was done through two ways. First, race membership was not random and obeyed a will to maintain the supremacy of the white race. The American population is divided into several races composed roughly of the European-Americans, the Afro-Americans, the Indian-Americans, the Asian Americans and the Hispano-Americans. Membership to this or that race did not follow logics or science but was biased and arbitrary and had nothing to do with biological differences and because white racists wanted to keep the white race the purest possible, they made assignation to it very difficult to prove. On the contrary, it was very easy to be classified as black since a percentage of Black blood,

¹¹² Franklin 134.

whatever low, suffices. This is the “one drop rule.”¹¹³ This rule finds its justification in the fact that the whites needed as many slaves as possible. The slave population by this way kept on increasing as the child of a black woman and a white master for instance is classified as black. The “one drop rule” is also, of course, motivated by the unwillingness of the whites to have the slightest amount of black blood in their population because for them any mixing with a race they consider inferior was out of question. It would, according to them, degenerate the white race. To the contrary, the classification into the Indian race is very special as all other matters connected with Indians. This classification must be supported by a certain amount of Indian blood. Because Indians’ lands were the object of European greed, the latter made it difficult to prove one’s “indianity” since “in a nation bent on westward expansion, it was advantageous to diminish the numbers of those who would claim title to land.”¹¹⁴ Economically motivated, this classification of the population into different races was prejudiced and did not have any biological or scientific founding.

2/ The Interdiction of Race Mixing:

The colonists’ view of the Africans and the Indians as inferior creatures is illustrated by the interdiction of interracial sexual intercourse or marriage either between whites and Indians or between whites and Blacks though to the majority of the white population mixing with the Blacks was more repulsive.¹¹⁵ This is highly indicative of the whites’ conviction of their superiority. Their blood must not mix with that of the other peoples; so that the white race remains pure and unstained. Interracial marriage was banned but illicit relationships, sexual exploitation, between individuals of different races were widespread as it is proved by the existence of innumerable mulattoes.

¹¹³ “Politics of Race.”

¹¹⁴ “Politics of Race.”

¹¹⁵ “Politics of Race.”

_____ Deeply convinced of the superiority of the white race, White racists were concerned by its protection and were afraid of its degeneracy if they came to mix with members of the other races. Nevertheless, nothing but racial prejudice prevented interracial mixing as, being of the same species, any race can reproduce with members of any other race. Indeed, only biological differences differentiate between the races not genetic discrepancies. The latter would hamper the reproduction between different species as it would give birth to a completely new species, a hybrid.¹¹⁶

_____ Also indicative of early racism is the colonists' refusal to have the coloured peoples assimilated into mainstream society. One way to prevent assimilation was through the interdiction of interracial mixing. It was also done by the interdiction of letting the coloured peoples live among the whites or when the former were tolerated, they were kept at the margin of mainstream society by being denied all rights and access to commodities enjoyed by the rest of the society.¹¹⁷ The treatment of the free Blacks and Indians living among the white society provides a good illustration of this prevailing racist feeling. In early America, the Africans who were freemen did not enjoy equal citizenship with whites. The fundamental rights and privileges granted to free white citizens were denied to the coloured people. As for the Indians, they were parked in reservations where they could practice none of their traditional activities; they became aimless and were reduced to total dependence on white governmental help to survive. Those who lived among the whites were generally reduced to servitude or other menial tasks.

Conclusion:

In sum, one can say that since their first contact with the coloured peoples, the white colonists of America developed deep-seated racial prejudices based on such racial

¹¹⁶ "Politics of Race."

¹¹⁷ Franklin 135.

distinctions as skin colour and appearance, culture, religion and national origin. Furthermore, the early treatment of these peoples denotes early racism as it is embedded in slavery and the extermination of the Indians. Finally, the rejection of any mixing between the races and the refusal of assimilation further illustrates the early existence of racism. This attitude stands against the so-called “melting pot” theory, seen in chapter one, which had announced the birth of “the American” this new man. But the “melting pot” was only valid for the white Europeans and the exclusion of non-whites was an early indication of the later racial and segregational problem that would undermine America. Nevertheless, this early racial prejudice and the subsequent racial separation were reflected as we are going to see in the following chapter in the foundations of the American nation.

Chapter III

Assessment of Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

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Introduction:

This chapter will be devoted to the assessment of the existence of racism in the political and economic foundations of the American nations. This is what is meant by institutional racism. At this step of ~~the any~~ research, ~~the goal is to I will~~ strive to look into the political and economic founding principles of the American ~~nation~~nations and see if they are racially blind. ~~In other words, is or if they enabled racial discrimination to occur.~~

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Is there a breach in the American system which let room for racial discrimination to emerge?

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The present chapter is ~~intended to Our aim is to~~ show that racism ~~through racial discrimination~~ is deeply rooted in the very political and economic foundations of the American nations. This ~~is~~ a logical following to ~~the precedent our second~~ chapter in which ~~the focus was we looked into~~ on the existence of racial prejudice in the mentalities of the Americans from the very beginning of the British settlements.

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I. Racism in the Political Foundations of the USA:

1/ The Founding Documents:

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First, let us explore the founding documents of the American nation and see whether there is in them any intention to discriminate between races. Though ~~with~~ being theoretically committed to equality ~~(among them racial)~~ as ~~it was we have~~ seen in the theoretical part of ~~this our~~ research ~~(chapter one)~~, the founding documents of the American

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nations let room for racism to occur. This was possible through great silences over some points in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and it was possible also through ambiguity. Indeed, some passages of these

documents may be interpreted in completely opposite ways according to the interpreter's intention to use ~~them it~~ as ~~documents a document~~ promoting ~~document committed to~~ equality or the reverse.

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1.1_ The Declaration of Independence:

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Primarily, both the founding documents of the American nation failed to take an "unequivocal, categorical stand against slavery."¹¹⁸

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To begin with, the Declaration of Independence, though completely committed to equality between men as aforesaid ~~we have first chapter~~, does not mention slavery. It is important to mention that Thomas Jefferson, the drafter of this famous document, initially proposed a section condemning slavery. ~~It but it was~~, ~~however~~, opposed ~~objected and finally~~ ~~dropped~~ by the Southern Statesmen ~~and finally dropped~~ so that it does not appear in the final version. The failure of the Declaration of ~~the~~ Independence to overtly denounce slavery, a system where men ~~were~~are denied the inalienable rights proclaimed by the document itself, made it appear hypocritical to the eyes of the world.

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To fully grasp the inconstancy of ~~the American their~~ position in the Declaration of Independence, let us review briefly the revolutionary context. The colonists decided to proclaim their independence from the British monarchy after having repeatedly submitted their grievances to George III, the King of ~~Great Britain the Third~~. They complained of being deprived of their English rights, of being at the complete mercy of arbitrary decisions, and above all of being taxed without being represented in Parliament. They even compared their lot ~~to as~~ that of slaves as it was pointed out by ~~Donald G. Nieman~~, a historian:

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Without rights, subject to arbitrary power, merely enjoying such privileges as their parliamentary masters chose to give them, Americans repeatedly asserted, they were reduced to slavery.¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁸ Franklin 156.

According to the American colonists~~them~~, Parliament's program was clearly "a program formed to enslave Americans."¹²⁰ ¹²¹ A year later in 1777, in the Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking up Arms, the Americans were "resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves."¹²² ¹²³ The Declaration of Independence was first a cry for liberty. The colonists wanted to recover the rights they lost ~~at~~ in the hands of the British tyranny particularly when Parliament passed a variety of many acts imposing new taxes on them; but because of the practice of slavery in the colonies and because of racial subordination, the colonists' claim for liberty and rights seemed hypocritical and lost its clout and credibility. Many Americans felt the inconsistency of their position as it is illustrated by Mrs. John Adams who wrote to her husband in 1774 saying:

It always appeared a most iniquitous scheme to me to fight ourselves for what ~~we~~ are robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to ~~we~~ freedom as we have.¹²⁴

This inconstancy and contradiction in the attitude of the settlers was also criticized by Nieman, who in this regard, said:

Nevertheless, many Americans realized that as long as they held half a million ~~blacks~~ in bondage, their defense of liberty rang hollow and argued that fidelity ~~to~~ to revolutionary principles demanded abolition.¹²⁵

During the ~~American~~ Revolution, ~~the Americans fought~~ ~~they fight~~ for principles they denied their black ~~fellow~~ fellow-men. The existence of slavery and racial subordination denied the credibility of the terms of the Declaration of Independence. Indeed, the famous words "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..."¹²⁶ are legendary by their eloquence but their sincerity is ~~are~~ undermined by the

¹¹⁹ Donald G. Nieman, *Promises To Keep: African Americans and The Constitutional Order, 1776 to the Present*. (England: Oxford University Press, 1991) 07.

¹²⁰ Mrs John Adams, letter, qtd in Nieman 07.

¹²¹ A letter by Mrs John Adams as quoted in Franklin, *Race And History: Selected Essays, 1938-1988*, p. 133.

¹²² Nieman 07.

¹²³ Nieman, *Promises To Keep*, p. 07.

¹²⁴ Franklin 133.

¹²⁵ Nieman 07.

¹²⁶ The U.S. Declaration of Independence, 1776.

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Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

~~contradiction~~~~ontraction~~ represented by the existence of slavery. When examining this issue, several logical ~~questions~~~~interrogations~~ come to ~~the our~~ mind: How ~~could can~~ the colonists sincerely fight for principles they denied to the Africans and Indians? How is it that their tragic experience with the British tyranny did not teach ~~them~~ to respect others as they wanted to be respected?

The Declaration of Independence is the stating of the basic principles that were to become part of the American culture and government. Through its terms as seen in the previous parts of this dissertation, ~~the~~ Americans showed that they were theoretically devoted to liberty and equality. The commitment to these ideals was ~~not, however, only negated~~ by the existence of slavery ~~as we have seen~~ but also by the belief in the superiority of the ~~white write~~ race. The existence of racial prejudice and the hierarchization of the races in early America and at the time of the Declaration of Independence show that the Americans did not truly ~~believe~~~~believed~~ in the equality of all men. ~~It may be considered~~~~We can consider~~ that the Declaration of Independence ~~declaration~~ was a profession of intentions to institute equality. But this argument can be rejected by stating that no effort was made in the aftermath to correct the existing racial inequalities and to abolish slavery. ~~These were: these being~~ the most ~~blatant~~~~glorious~~ negations of the founding principles of the American nation proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence ~~declaration~~: liberty and equality. As ~~it was~~~~we have seen~~ ~~in in our~~ chapter two, at the time of ~~Declaration of Independence~~ ~~declaration of independence~~ racism was already deeply seated in the American mentalities.

To conclude then, the Declaration of Independence which is deeply committed to liberty and equality fails to state an explicit rejection or condemnation of slavery. This ~~had~~ ~~will have~~ tragic consequences on millions of people; no explicit rejection or condemnation of racial subordination and slavery is found in the Declaration of Independence ~~declaration~~ and thus slavery and racism are perpetuated, taking deeper and deeper roots in the American

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society. Here lays the paradox or the contradiction between the ideals of liberty and equality and the realities of slavery and the consequent racial subordination as it was stated by historian Peter H. Odegard:

It is a sad paradox that slavery should have taken root in America where nearly every circumstance of man and nature conspired to promote freedom and equality.¹²⁷

Because the contradiction is so glaring, the Americans felt that uneasiness:

Because it was so manifestly opposed to the basic principles of freedom and equality, the institution of human slavery lay heavily upon the American conscience.¹²⁸

It can only be assumed that a firm stand against slavery in the Declaration would have perhaps hampered the development of slavery and racism. An explicit condemnation even if it was not followed by an immediate abolition would have possibly removed the ambiguity of the American position about slavery; it would have given consistence and credibility to the assertion of the ideals in the Declaration of Independence.

1.2 The Constitution:

independence. Similarly, the American Constitution did not explicitly condemn slavery and had thus opened a breach for racism to take root in the early American society. At the outset, we must first acknowledge that the Constitution of the USA is an open-ended document.¹²⁹ It was written in such broad terms that it can be used as a powerful tool against inequality. To begin with, it does not contain any explicit recognition of slavery. In no section do the words "slave" or "slavery" appear. Furthermore, as we have seen in our theoretical chapter, the Constitution theoretically granted rights to and protected individuals without distinctions of race. This is so stated in the Bill of Rights and the preamble to the

¹²⁷ Odegard 71.

¹²⁸ Odegard 73.

¹²⁹ Nieman 34.

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Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

Constitution.¹³⁰ ~~Thus, it can be conceded that~~ So, the Constitution can serve as a document promoting equality. Illustrating this potential of the Constitution as capable of serving the cause of freedom and equality, Frederick Douglass, a former slave, stated:

The Constitution, as well as the Declaration of Independence, and the sentiments of the founders of the Republic give us a platform broad enough, and strong enough, to support the most comprehensive plans for the freedom and elevation of all the people of this country, without regard to color, class or clime.¹³¹

~~This potential of the Constitution cannot be denied but it was overshadowed and overcome by a stronger potential: that of tolerating inequality. This was achieved by the Constitution's great silences on one part and by the interpretation of some clauses on the other part.~~

Primarily, as it was the case for the Declaration of Independence, by failing to overtly denounce the institution of slavery and racism, the Constitution implicitly recognizes it.¹³² For a denunciation of slavery would ~~have equated~~ ~~equate~~ its condemnation; the absence of that denunciation led to an implicit recognition of slavery or at least to a toleration of its existence ~~at least~~. What is worse is that the Constitution could be used as a proslavery document because important concessions were made to slaveholders as it was pointed out by D. G. Nieman:

When the final gavel fell at Philadelphia, delegates had a framework of government that tacitly recognized slavery, offered protection to it, and, most important, strengthened the hand of its advocates in the National government.¹³³

Compromises on slavery were achieved for the Southern States ~~to~~ ratify the Constitution. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the proslavery southerners succeeded in obtaining some important concessions.

~~First, they succeeded in winning some representation on the basis of slavery.~~

This was achieved through the three-fifths clause in Article One, section two:

¹³⁰ Having dealt with this aspect in chapter one, it is not necessary to go back to it.

¹³¹ [Nieman 34.](#)

¹³² [Fohlen 11.](#)

¹³³ [Nieman 12.](#)

Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States [which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those who are bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, and three-fifths of all other Persons].¹³⁴

Avoiding the use of the word “slave” not to give the Constitution an explicit recognition of the institution of slavery, the Framers referred to slaves as “other Persons.” This sentiment was translated by James Madison, one of the Framers, who stated that it would be “wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men.”¹³⁵ In addition to tolerating and recognizing the existence of slavery, these terms let appear the racial prejudice that pervaded among the colonists at that time. Indeed, the fact that the slaves ~~were~~ are not counted as full persons but as three-fifths of a person is tinged with racism through the deeply engrained conviction of the inferiority of the African. To consider a person as not full is the manifestation of the Whites’ belief in the inferiority of the Black race. Thus, through this three-fifths clause, the Constitution was soiled or stained with racism. This allusion to slavery without naming it by its name implies the recognition of the institution which is the embodiment of racial inequality and racism.

Second, the advocates of slavery succeeded in securing federal support for the capture and rendition of fugitive slaves.¹³⁶ This was the second important concession made to the slave States. This provision is contained in Article Four, section two:

No person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour be due.¹³⁷

By the terms “persons held to Service or Labour”, the Framers refer to slaves and indentured servants (~~persons a person~~ bound by contract to serve someone for several years to pay back their transportation to America). So upon these terms, slavery is once more alluded to in the

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¹³⁴ [The Constitution of the United States of America.](#)

¹³⁵ James Madison, ([Farrand, Records](#)) qtd in Nieman [13](#).

¹³⁶ [Franklin 133](#).

¹³⁷ [The Constitution of the USA.](#)

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Constitution. Once more, the words “slavery” or “slave” are avoided but there is no doubt that the words “person held in Labour” refer to slaves. This clause strengthened the slaveholders, legitimized slave-holding and gave slaveholders the guarantee to have their fugitive slaves to them. This Law had led to many abuses where free Blacks were seized and returned to bondage just upon the claim of an ill-intentioned Whites.¹³⁸ Upon So, upon these terms, the Federal Government provided its help and support for the return of fugitives persons to the most inhuman and debasing state of servitude, slavery being which the most tragic expression of racism. As a consequence, the Government here cautions racial inequality and the existence of such a system that so glaringly embodies the negation of the basic principles of the basic principles of the American nation which are liberty and equality. Furthermore, this article concerning the fugitive slaves undermined and spoiled any chance for the slaves to taste freedom. Just as the colonists claimed their freedom to the British Crown, slaves should have equally a right to taste liberty. This law destroyed any hope of liberty in the slaves as, even if they succeeded in escaping to another state, they would be returned to bondage with the help of Government. The clause in the Constitution on the return of fugitive slaves, undoubtedly, deepened the state of despair in which the slaves slaved lived leaving them the slaves with no prospect of a better future.

Finally, the third concession made to slaveholders by the Constitution was the prevention of the closing of the slave trade before 1808. In article One, section 9, it is stated that:

The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.¹³⁹

To begin with First, the use of the term “importation” to refer to persons is tinged with racism.

It can be understood We understand through the use of this term that slaves were not

¹³⁸ Quarles 87.

¹³⁹ The Constitution of the USA.

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considered as persons. For persons, we use normally the term “migration” but “importation” is usually used for goods or chattel. Thus, Africans, here, are denied their humanity and alluded to as simple goods or chattel at best. Furthermore, slaveholders gained an important victory by securing through this article that Congress would not stop the slave trade before 1808. Why can it be considered a victory? Because until this date, the slaveholders and dealers could “import” as many slaves as possible to be prepared for the eventual ban of the slave trade.

The fact that the Congress was banned from taking any immediate, unequivocal stand against slavery proves once more that the Constitution tolerated the existence of such a system. These three compromises done to slavery by the Framers of the Constitution had very heavy and irrevocable consequences on the subsequent development of racism in the foundations of the American nation.¹⁴⁰ It was highly damageable to race relations in the U.S.A. leaving indelible ~~imprints~~marks on the Black personality.

Through its allusion to slavery, the document was stained with racism and reflected the belief of the Framers in the inequality between the different ethnic groups – a belief shared by the majority of people. The presence of racism in the founding documents of the new ~~nation~~Nation is like a “rotten tooth in the bland smile of America.”¹⁴¹ Indeed, the presence of an imperfection in the foundations of a building threatens the stability and the solidity of the whole building.

Finally, let us summarize ~~the thread of our~~ thinking. The Constitution reinforced slavery and racism through the following aspects. First, it fails to take an unequivocal stand against slavery. The Constitution, ~~as we have seen,~~ in no part, ~~condemned~~condemns or ~~denounced~~denounces overtly slavery. This at least means that slavery ~~was is-~~tolerated if not supported. Second, ~~as we have seen,~~ its allusions to slavery signify a

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¹⁴⁰ Marientras 223.

¹⁴¹ Brogan 617.

sanction or at least a tolerance of the system. By three times, it alludes to slaves or slavery giving important concessions to the advocates of the system. In addition to this, the wording of the Constitution was is-sometimes stained with racial prejudice, and let appear we guess the deeply engrained belief in the inequality of men. Such terms as we have seen the three-fifths clause or the use of the term "importation" ranged d the Africans to the rank of chattel or simple goods; they were not considered as full persons. Here, the Constitution sanctions the ambivalent status of slaves: as persons and property at the same time.¹⁴² Similarly, the vagueness or the open character of the Constitution which made it susceptible to various interpretations further deep-seated and strengthened racism. The fact that the Constitution was is written in on-vague terms, open to various interpretations made it serve a cause or its contrary. As true as the fact that the Constitution can be used to promote equality and liberty, it can as well be used the other way, that is, a tool for promoting slavery and racial inequality. This open character of the Constitution, designed to face the temporal changes, had heavy consequences on the foundations of the American nation. The Southerners, in the aftermath, based themselves on the Constitution to defend the legitimacy of slavery.¹⁴³ It was used as a proslavery document. A firmer position against slavery could possibly have avoided this diversion of the basic principles of the document. It would have perhaps hampered the development of slavery by depriving it of a legal sanction. So, in a nutshell, far from hampering the development of racism, the Constitution prepared for it a fertile soil to plant and grow undisturbed. In fact, as it is often denounced, at the Constitutional Convention, "only practical and economic considerations held sway over the slave trade."¹⁴⁴ Humane considerations were simply ignored. About the Founding Fathers, the historian John Hope Franklin stated:

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¹⁴² Marientras 223.

¹⁴³ Cohen 11.

¹⁴⁴ Franklin 158.

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We may admire them for many things [...]. It doesn't follow, however, that we should admire them for betraying the ideals to which they gave lip service, for speaking eloquently at one moment for the brotherhood of man and in the next moment denying it to their brothers who fought by their side in the darkest hours of peril, and for degrading the human spirit by equating five Black men with three White men or equating a black man with a house.¹⁴⁵

Thus, we can conclude that both founding documents of the American nation, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, by failing to take an unequivocal, firm stand against slavery, had enabled racism to take root in America. The silences and the compromises of these documents let room for slavery and racial subordination to develop and perpetuate. The inconstancy between the Americans' devotion to the ideals of liberty and equality on the one hand and their real attitudes and actions on the other hand deprived the Americans from being credible and the existence of prejudice perverted the ideals of the nation.¹⁴⁶ It may be considered ~~I judge it~~ important to study the founding documents of the American nation and their role in ~~instilling~~ installing racism because the race problem that America faces nowadays has its roots in the past. It is the legacy left by the Founding Fathers. Present-day racism has its roots in the foundations of the nation as stated by the historian John H. Franklin:

Racial segregation, discrimination and degradation are no unanticipated accidents in this nation's history. They stem logically and directly from the legacy that the Founding Fathers bestowed upon contemporary America.¹⁴⁷

As it has been demonstrated ~~previously we have showed~~, the role of both founding documents in letting room for racism to develop cannot be dismissed because of its far-reaching consequences. In this respect, J. H. Franklin states that:

The denial of equality in the year of Independence led to the denial of equality in the era of the bicentennial of independence.¹⁴⁸

He added:

The so-called compromises in the Constitution of 1787 led directly to arguments in our own time that we can compromise equality with impunity and somehow use the Constitution as an instrument to preserve privilege and to foster inequality.¹⁴⁹

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¹⁴⁵ Franklin 160.

¹⁴⁶ Quarles 56.

¹⁴⁷ Franklin 161.

¹⁴⁸ Franklin 161.

¹⁴⁹ Franklin 161.

2/ The Political Framework:

2.1 Racial Discrimination by the States' Governments:

After having studied the role of the founding documents in fostering racism, let us now look into the political framework and see how it enabled racial discrimination to develop. ~~It is necessary~~ We do not ~~to~~ lose sight of ~~the our~~ aim in this chapter which is to assess the existence of racism ~~in the~~ very foundations of the American system. To study early institutional racism is to prove that the political framework of the USA as instituted in the Constitution enabled racism to develop in spite of the Founding Fathers' intention to build a system committed to and promoting equality. Thus, let us assess the role of the political framework in fostering racism in the dawn of American existence.

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To begin with, federalism has been responsible for fostering racial discrimination. The Constitution instituted federalism as the political framework adopted by the different colonies. As ~~this notion has been we have~~ already defined ~~in the theoretical part~~ of this dissertation, ~~it would be useful to federalism, let us just~~ cite ~~only~~ its most conspicuous features. Federalism is a form of Government where power is divided between the federal Government and the different States. The Constitution defines the relationship between the federal government and the states ~~and powers are granted to both in such a way that~~ neither will crush the other. The Constitution reserved powers and rights for the Federal Government which shall have final authority upon the States but it also reserved some matters for the States to decide upon and ~~in these internal matters,~~ the Federal Government cannot interfere or intervene. These rights of the States are secured in the Constitution in Article IV notably but it is ~~in~~ the tenth Amendment to the Constitution that their rights ~~are~~ explicitly protected. The tenth ~~Amendment~~ stipulated that:

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The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the States, respectively, or to the people.¹⁵⁰

For instance, one of the powers traditionally reserved for the States is to regulate marriage and divorce laws.

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Nevertheless, two shortcomings in the system enabled racism to develop. The first reproach that one may make to the Constitution is that it remains vague as far as the exact powers of the States are concerned.¹⁵¹ Indeed, these rights are not explicitly enumerated. The Constitution says what is forbidden to the States but fails to enumerate, thus limit, the areas of decisions so that the latter have used this vagueness to implement discriminatory laws with the Federal Government having no authority, or no will, to intervene. Indeed, in the beginning, legal discrimination based on race, religion or national origin was pervasive at the level of the States. Some State laws not only diverted the Constitution but came overtly in contradiction with it as well. This aspect was pointed out by J.H. Franklin:

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The most powerful direct force in the maintenance of two worlds of race has been the State and its political subdivisions. [...] The States and its political subdivisions have been an obstacle to racial equality.¹⁵²

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To illustrate ~~this~~ point, it would be judicious, ~~to let us~~ tackle racial discrimination directed against slaves as well as against free Blacks and Indians. Slavery kept the African at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid. The slave was at first legally defined as less than a man;¹⁵³ he was considered as mere property and was treated as such. Being a chattel or a property, the slave had virtually no right. Furthermore, each state had its "Black Codes", a set of laws regulating slave life. The more slaves there were in a given state, the stricter the laws because of the ever-present fear of slave rebellions and insurrections. Generally, slaves were completely deprived of rights; they were denied the rights enjoyed by other members of the society. The Declaration of Independence having asserted the equality

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¹⁵⁰ [The Constitution of the United States.](#)

¹⁵¹ [The Constitution of the U.S.A with Explanatory Notes, \(United States Information Agency, 1987\) 48.](#)

¹⁵² [Franklin 148.](#)

¹⁵³ Nash.

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of men regardless of race, the coloured peoples should have also been entitled to the rights enumerated in the Bill of Rights (1791). The Founding Fathers enumerated the rights of individuals in the Bill of Rights. These rights cannot theoretically be infringed on a racial basis. Nevertheless, slaves were, in general, denied every right secured in the Constitution. In addition to this, the Constitution stipulated that the rights of the Individuals should not be infringed by the States. But this was not respected as far as the slaves were concerned as J. H. Franklin, summed up:

The slaves were permitted no independence of thought, no opportunity to improve their minds or their talents or to worship freely, no right to marry and enjoy the conventional family relationships, no right to own or dispose of property, and no protection against miscarriages of justice or cruel and unreasonable punishments.¹⁵⁴

Slaves were denied as we notice here very basic rights such as the independence of thought or to enjoy the conventional family relationships. The cruelty and inhumanity of slavery lie in this aspect: slaves were denied very fundamental rights one may think possible to deny to any human being. In addition to this, they were denied freedom of worship, to peaceably assemble which were normally secured in the first Amendment of the Constitution.¹⁵⁵ In contradiction with the second Amendment, they were forbidden to bear arms. Likewise, they were not protected against unreasonable searches and seizures, were denied the right to a fair trial and were deprived of life, liberty and could not benefit from fair trials; due process of law, in violation of the fourth, fifth and sixth amendments to the Constitution.¹⁵⁶ Finally, they were inflicted cruel and unusual punishment, an abuse against which the eighth Amendment gave protection to the individual.¹⁵⁷ It is as though the Bill of Rights did not apply to the Blacks at all. But one should bear in mind that nowhere it is said that there should be any restriction of race or any distinction to the entitlement to these rights. Discrimination based on race existed

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¹⁵⁴ Franklin 132.

¹⁵⁵ The Constitution of the United States.

¹⁵⁶ The Constitution of the United States.

¹⁵⁷ The Constitution of the United States.

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in the beginning of American existence and was deeply entrenched in the American system because of slavery.

Institutional racism was not limited only to slaves, as free Blacks and Indians living within the American society were also victims of racial discrimination. Free Blacks and the Indians enjoyed the status of free men but without enjoying equality with the white people.¹⁵⁸ Although citizens, they lived on the margin of society which used their colour to keep them separate, apart and segregated from as much of American life as possible.¹⁵⁹ This segregation was made possible because of the federal form of Government of the USA.¹⁶⁰ The treatment of the free Negroes and Indians varied from State to State with some Northern States for instance granting them the right to own property. However, they were; but, generally, ~~they were~~ denied the basic rights guaranteed in the Constitution: to possess arms, to hold any kind of office, to be a witness in law courts or to vote.¹⁶¹ among others. Facing racial discrimination in every aspect of life was their everyday lot. Indeed, as Mary F. Berry and John Blassingame put it:

Segregation, unemployment and unequal employment, no education or unequal education, disfranchisement, and prohibition against bearing arms, testifying in court, or serving on juries circumscribed their [slaves'] lives.¹⁶²

Prejudice and discrimination "blunted the free Negro's ambition, crushed his hopes, embittered his heart and threatened his psychic security"¹⁶³ as it was pointed out by Samuel Ringgold Ward, a free Negro. For the free Negro, he wrote, there was always:

The ever-present, ever-crushing Negro hate, which hedges up his path, discourages his efforts, dampens his ardour, blasts his hopes and embitters his spirit.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Cohlen 15.

¹⁵⁹ Daniels 64.

¹⁶⁰ "Les Noirs aux Etats-Unis," Encyclopédie Encarta, 2004 ed.

¹⁶¹ Simmons 88.

¹⁶² Mary Frances Berry and John Blassingame, Long Memory: The Black Experience in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 51.

¹⁶³ Berry, Blassingame 51.

¹⁶⁴ Berry, Blassingame 50.

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Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

In a will to keep the Blacks and Indians in a degraded and inferior position, the states rived in cunning. They turned their efforts notably towards keeping them away from the ballot. The institution of literacy tests, ~~of~~-property qualifications, ~~of~~-poll taxes, or even the Grandfather clause (The Blacks had to prove that their grandfather had the right to vote), as well as many other more and more subtle tactics served this purpose: “although technically able to vote, poll taxes, acts of terror and discriminatory laws such as the Grandfather clause kept Blacks disfranchised.”¹⁶⁵

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Colour was not the only object of discrimination in early America. Indeed, the State Governments very often reserved discriminatory treatment laws against people of other racial differences such as national origin, religion or culture. Some citizens, for instance, were ~~being~~ denied the franchise or the right to hold any office on the sole basis of their religion. This was the case with Catholics or Jews who experienced racial discrimination. Likewise, persons from this or that nationality may suffer from racial discrimination in a given state. Hispanics provide the best example of discrimination on the basis of national origin. In a nutshell, in early America, all who do not fit into the mould of being White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant were very likely to suffer from racial discrimination. The more different were the people from the elite, the greater the discrimination they encountered.

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Thus, the federal system of the USA has engendered widespread racial discrimination because the States were free to regulate the status of their citizens. This right of the states had given way to numerous abuses and violations of the Constitution and more important than that had contributed to the crushing of the non-white population of America. However, this would not have been possible without the Federal Government ignoring or closing its eyes on such violations.

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¹⁶⁵ “Politics of Race.”

2.2 Racial Discrimination by the Central Government:

~~The~~ ~~Indeed, the~~ federal government's responsibility in the entrenching of early racism must not be overlooked. Indeed, the Federal Government either ignored racial discrimination or supported it. ~~It~~ ~~We~~ cannot ~~be advanced~~ say that the federal government was powerless in face of these abuses since the Constitution ~~gave~~ gives it final authority upon the States. Furthermore, it is its role to watch over the respect of the American ideals of liberty and equality. The supremacy of the National Government is stated in article VI of the Constitution:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the Supreme Law of the Land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.¹⁶⁶

This means that when states' laws happen to conflict with national laws, the ~~latter~~ prevail and ~~national laws~~ are ~~considered~~ superior. It also means that, to be valid, a national or a state law must be in conformity with the Constitution.

Let this work proceed ~~now~~ to tackle the responsibility of the Federal Government in the emergence and entrenchment of racism in early America. From the beginning of its existence, the Federal Government enabled racism to develop be it actively or passively. The system designed by the Founding Fathers to prevent abuse and unconstitutional laws failed to ~~work properly~~ as the three branches were in agreement. Theoretically, the system of Checks and Balances and separation of powers were the tools to secure the correct application of the Constitution. In this respect the Constitution states:

The powers given to each of them are carefully balanced so as each branch would serve as a check on the other two.¹⁶⁷

From the beginning of its existence, ~~thus~~, the federal government failed in its role as a protector of the Constitution, thus enabling racial discrimination ~~to~~ take root in American life.

¹⁶⁶ [The constitution of the USA.](#)

¹⁶⁷ [Maameri 121.](#)

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Racism in the Political and Economic Foundations

These early faults of the National Government had very heavy consequences and ~~consequences~~ are perhaps irreversible. An error in the foundations of a nation threatens its solidity and undermines its credibility.

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Indeed, ~~one~~ We can even say that the National Government is the first responsible of this social sickness¹⁶⁸ which is perverting American ideals and democracy.

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How did this happen? To assess the early role of the National government in fostering racism, let us examine briefly what the purposes of democratic governments are. Governments are

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instituted among men to serve three major purposes: maintaining order (i.e. establishing the rule of law to preserve life and to protect property), providing public goods and promoting equality. Once the Government committed itself through the Declaration of Independence to

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the principle of equality, promoting this equality becomes logically one of its aims. This commitment to equality was reasserted in the Constitution where the Bill of Rights

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enumerated the rights of all individuals without distinction. The basic purpose of the American government and politics is as political analyst Peter Odegard put it: “to ensure

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freedom and equality without reference to such artificial distinctions as race or religion, language or nationality.”¹⁶⁹ The central government is the protector of the Supreme Law of

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the Land; it must watch over the correct enforcement of the laws contained in the Constitution. Nevertheless, the National Government failed in this role from the very beginning of its existence and betrayed its ideals. The central government allowed racial discrimination to take root in the American society through two ways: a passive and active role.

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In this regard, the Federal Government shares the responsibility of the perpetuation of racism in the American society by the fact that it either ignored or closed its eyes on the States’ enactments of discriminatory laws. Racism was pervasive at the level of

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¹⁶⁹ Odegard 93.

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the States as the latter passed countless discriminatory laws, laws that ought to have been judged unconstitutional and nullified by the Central government (by the Supreme Court more precisely). The Government ought to have intervened since it had final authority upon the States.¹⁷⁰ It is the specific power of the Supreme Court (–the judiciary Branch) to judge the constitutionality of the laws enacted by the States. The federal Government ignored these laws or feigned not to know about them. This attitude had two possible explanations: either the Government was in agreement with the States and this was the case most of the time, or it was powerless because of the Southerners' grip on Government. In effect, the Southerners advocated~~advocating~~ racially-discriminating laws. ~~It~~We must ~~be noted~~note here again that in spite of the Framers' intention to avoid abuses, the Constitution failed to protect the minority against abuse by the majority as Southerners took hold of power.

Furthermore, the American Government took an active role in the institutionalization and perpetuation of racism. This was achieved through its support for slavery. The National Government began its support for slavery shortly after George Washington assumed its presidency in 1789.¹⁷¹ The three branches of the government supported and protected discrimination be it through slavery or other discriminatory laws. Being all three working for the supremacy of the White race and the perpetuation of the institution of slavery, none worked as a check on the others. Each branch had its share as it was pointed by the constitutional analyst D. Nieman:

Presidents and Congresses allowed slavery to take root in the old Southwest.[...] Federal officials also worked to insulate slavery from attack; faced with abolitionist petitions, Congress also acted with flagrant disrespect for the Constitution ... It also bolstered slavery by helping slave-owners secure the return of runaway slaves.¹⁷²

President George Washington closed his eyes on discriminatory legislation against free Blacks and Indians notably. Later, another president, Andrew Johnson, acted against advance

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¹⁷⁰ [The constitution of the USA.](#)

¹⁷¹ Nieman 15.

¹⁷² Nieman 16.

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by the African-Americans. Indeed, he vetoed two major pieces of legislation: the Freedmen's Bureau Extension Bill and the Civil Right Act of 1866.¹⁷³ He also condemned a proposed fourteenth Amendment which provided for civil equality. This attitude was illustrative of the presidents' acceptance of racial discrimination.

The Legislative branch had also a responsibility in the entrenching of discrimination. A particularly unjust and discriminatory law enacted by Congress is the General Allotment or Dawes, Act of 1887. It authorized the President to individualize tribal lands, that is, convert them totally to property.¹⁷⁴ The avowed intent was to civilize the Indians by turning them into property holders but in fact this law enabled a massive grab of the Indians' territories. It is discriminatory in the fact that it is irrespective of Indian culture and way of living. Numerous examples exist of discriminatory laws such as for instance the immigration quotas which started in the 1920s and which aimed at a selection of the immigrants.

The Supreme Court for its part failed to declare unconstitutional certain discriminatory laws enacted either by Congress or by States. It even ruled in favor of slavery and discrimination in cases brought before it. For instance, in a series of decisions, the Supreme Court struck down federal statutes designed to enforce the post civil war amendments which were intended to improve the status of the coloured citizens. The most important of these decisions declared a law that outlawed racial discrimination by private individuals.¹⁷⁵ The Court also upheld state-enforced segregation. Illustrations of the discriminatory attitude of the Supreme Court are the famous cases: Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia (1831) and the Scott vs. Sandford (1857). The former concerned the Indians, the latter the African-Americans but both translated a will of exclusion on the part of the Supreme

¹⁷³ Berry 181.

¹⁷⁴ Eric Cheyfitz, "Savage Law: the Plot against American Indians," Cultures of US Imperialism, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993) 113.

¹⁷⁵ "Discrimination," Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2005, 27 Oct. 2007

<http://Encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761573635/discrimination.html/>.

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Court. It was an attempt to legislate the disappearance of the Indians and the descendants of the Africans respectively by judging them neither citizens nor aliens and therefore not legally representable.¹⁷⁶ So, ~~the concessions we can say that the founding Fathers had made by the Founding Fathers important concessions~~ to slavery ~~as we have seen~~ and ~~the vagueness of the Constitution~~ these were used by the central government to create a constitutional order that promoted slavery and permitted racial subordination.¹⁷⁷

Thus, from the beginning, the American political system failed to live up to its creed of equality and liberty. The protection designed by the founding fathers did not suffice to make of the USA a land of liberty and equality. The separation of powers and the system of Checks and Balances failed to stop the development of the social sickness that is racism; it even reinforced it. All the three branches acted against the provisions of the Bill of Rights and none performed its role of being a check on the others.

As a result, ~~we can say that~~ racism took its roots in the very foundations of the American nation. By failing to condemn slavery, the founding documents of the American nation enabled racism to develop. Furthermore, the American political system was designed in such a way as to enable racism and racial subordination to entrench in the American society because ~~enacted laws~~ were in contradiction with the Constitution and the American commitment to the ideals of liberty and equality stated in the Declaration of independence~~w~~.

What is at stake is the credibility of the American ideals of equality and democracy and the very existence of this nation as Alexander Crummel had explained:

This nation has staked her existence on this principle of democracy in her every fundamental political dogma, and in every organic State document. [...] If this nation is not truly democratic then she must die. Nothing is more destructive to a nation than organic falsehood. This nation cannot live-this nation does not deserve to live-on the basis of a lie.¹⁷⁸

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¹⁷⁶ Priscilla Wald, "Terms of Assimilation: Legislating Subjectivity in the Emerging Nation," *Cultures of US Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993) 59.

¹⁷⁷ Nieman 20.

¹⁷⁸ Alexander Crummel, "The Race Problem in America," 1888, 2006, 15 April 2006 <<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/Institutes/2003/race-readings/htm/>>.

II The American Economic System and the Question of Racism:

1/ The Principles of liberalism:

1.1 The "Laissez Faire":

Racism is not only embedded in the American political system but in its economic system as well. The economic system adopted by the USA is based on capitalism. The latter is committed to a certain number of principles and values: individualism, free enterprise, "laissez faire" are the driving forces behind the American economic system.¹⁷⁹ The review of these principles is motivated by the fact that the principles are theoretically powerful tools for equality. Following the doctrine of "laissez faire", the Americans stand against government's intervention in the economy of the country. Suspicion of the government lies behind this reluctance. The system should work without government involvement. This was the rule in the past. Since then, some severe economic depressions in the twentieth century have made the Government intervention necessary. For instance, after the Great Depression of the 1930s following the Crash of Wall Street, Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the much controversial New Deal to redress the American economy which was collapsing. This was the first time the government intervened in economic affairs. Welfare programs have become frequent from that time to correct economic disparities and alleviate gross inequalities. In the past, any intervention of the government to regulate the economy provoked a landslide because of its contradiction with the American economic principle of "laissez faire". These interventions were nevertheless necessary. The Americans are still now very reluctant of any government interference in their economy. Their phobia of communism where the Government's main role is to regulate the economy and to correct the inequalities made their opposition even more harsh and uncompromising. The fact that the minorities are

¹⁷⁹ "Le Capitalisme," Encyclopédie Encarta, 2005 ed.

the first beneficiaries of welfare programmes makes the opposition of the rest of the population even harsher.

1.2_ Individualism:

Individualism which is one of the most cherished values of the Americans is derived from that policy of "laissez faire". According to this value, stress is put on the individual¹⁸⁰ who must rely on himself only and not on the help of the government. The individual must work hard to make his success possible. Thus, success or failure is an individual responsibility.¹⁸¹ If the American succeeds, he can congratulate himself; if he fails, he can only blame himself. One may notice here that individualism is not deprived of a certain amount of selfishness. One may notice that generally the American people want to succeed at any cost and for this reason, humane considerations are left behind. That is why one may have the impression that the American society is merciless and heartless. It seems that for the American people only profit and personal success count. This trait of character is nevertheless one of the strength of the USA and one of the major criteria for its economic success. No country in the world embodies best individualism. It is this value that made their economy so prosperous. The Americans learn from the beginning to rely on themselves for their survival. They expect no help from their Government. This made them work hard. It has prevented the people from becoming assisted as it seen in other Western nations such as France. Indeed, the considerable amount of welfare provided by the French government to its citizens have made the latter relatively lazy and assisted persons who provide little effort knowing well that the Government will be there to help them. What is the right attitude is a matter of much debate and is not the concern of this study.

¹⁸⁰ Odegard 70.

¹⁸¹ Odegard 70.

Individualism was promoted and protected in the Bill of Rights ratified in 1791.¹⁸² This important legislation granted the individual with “inalienable” rights and freedoms: among these is the right to own private property. The individuals are protected from abuses by the government. It is the Bill of Rights which permitted the individual to emerge as an entity. Individualism was thus legally protected and highlighted as one of the most cherished American values.

2/ Promoting Equality as a New Role of Government:

Historically, promoting equality is a rather recent aim of the government. This role, because it so glaringly clashes with most of the cherished American values such as individualism, freedom and "laissez faire", is highly controversial. At the same time, equality is also one of the founding principles of the USA. It was promised to all Americans in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.”¹⁸³ Thus, logically, it should be ensured by the Government which should watch over the enjoyment of equal rights for citizens. Without that guarantee, the American commitment to equality rings hollow. The promotion of equality should be then one of the objectives of the American Government. This has not been the case until recently.¹⁸⁴ This role has been performed with much reluctance and with a lack of sincere devotion on the part of the government.

The new role of the government in this field was triggered by several factors. First, it was forced by severe economic depressions which left the country in such a deplorable state that only government intervention could save it from collapsing. Likewise, this was motivated by the misery of the lower section of the population who are getting poorer

¹⁸² As studied in earlier parts, we do not need to go back to the content of the Bill of Rights.

¹⁸³ The US Declaration of Independence

¹⁸⁴ Janda 06.

and poorer. Finally, it was a consequence of a government awakening on its real role. This new role of the government translated a will on the part of government to live up to its creed.

This role of the government involves the redistribution of wealth: that is roughly saying to take from the rich to give to the poor. It implies taxation for public goods and the financing of welfare programs to promote social and economic equality.¹⁸⁵ This role has been very harshly opposed by the Americans on principle. It is still subjected to lively debate and cannot be effectively pursued as it clashes against rude resistance of the Americans.

3/ Equality in the USA: Illusion or Reality?

3.1 Equality as an Equality of Opportunity:

Theoretically, the American economic system preaches equality. It is based on the "equality of opportunity". That equality implies an equal right to achieve distinction without regard for class, race or creed.¹⁸⁶ It means that "each person has the same chance to succeed in life."¹⁸⁷ Theoretically speaking, capitalism is equalitarian since it is supposed to provide all the individuals with an equal chance to succeed; the same opportunities are theoretically granted to all. In practice, however, it proves to be a highly unequal system. Not only it is unequal but what is worse is that the system depends on inequality for its survival, i.e. on "the utter dependency of this system on the impoverishment of the many to sustain the wealth of the few."¹⁸⁸ Indeed, due to capitalism, the concentration of wealth is increasing. Illustrating this fact, a congressional study of 1983 concluded that the top 0.5% of households

¹⁸⁵ Janda 7.

¹⁸⁶ Odegard 70.

¹⁸⁷ Janda 11.

¹⁸⁸ Walter R. Allen, "The Significance of Race in US economic and occupational life," US Race Relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Challenges and Alternatives, ed. Gail E. Thomas (USA: Hemisphere Publishing Books, 1990) 209.

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in America owned a little over 25% of the general wealth.¹⁸⁹ This number rose to 35% in 1983. Thus, we can note that not only wealth is tremendously badly distributed but that it is also becoming more extreme. Indeed, in the capitalist system, the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer.

The legendary equality of opportunity is not respected as the individuals have obviously not the same chance of achieving success in life. Though it is not the name or the title as in other parts of the world that undermine the individual's chance to climb the social ladder, other factors play a crucial role in hindering this equality of opportunity from being a reality. According to that value, the American, at his birth has equal chance as any other to succeed. He/she is not burdened at his very birth by such heavy obstacles as the name or the title. Economist Edna Bonachich summarized this concept this way:

The individual freed from the "artificial" barriers of hereditary class, creed, or race and given as nearly equal access to education and to social and economic opportunity will achieve his own status in society.¹⁹⁰

This idyllic picture does not represent the American reality. Discrimination of all sorts is an obstacle to equality. The equality of opportunity is actually denied on the basis of the individual's race, religion, nationality or even gender. Race, religion, nationality or gender have become determinant factors of one's success. These criteria will either ease that success or undermine it. Following that logic, a White Anglo-Saxon male has undeniably more chance to succeed than a Black African female. Thus, this equality of opportunity is much more of an illusion. This fact may be supported by an armada of statistics where one may note that the highest positions in society are occupied by the WASP male section of the population and the lowest ranks by the coloured females.¹⁹¹ Indeed, the highest occupations are traditionally occupied by the white section. The African-American continue to be less likely

¹⁸⁹ Edna Bonachich, "Inequality in America: the Failure of the American System for People of Color," US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 191.

¹⁹⁰ Bonachich 198.

¹⁹¹ Odegard 70.

to be employed in high status, high wages occupations. An illustration of this is that in 1986, only 20% of the African-Americans had white collar jobs; whites are twice as likely to occupy such jobs.¹⁹²

3.2 Inequality in Wealth:

Besides denying this equality of opportunity, The American society is vastly unequal in terms of the distribution of material wealth.¹⁹³ This misdistribution of wealth has led to the creation of social classes. The founders of the American nation wanted to avoid this social inequality, they were determined to create an equalitarian society where there would be no classes.¹⁹⁴ The founders' intention to avoid the creation of classes is highlighted by the fact that they wanted to build an equal society. Indeed, they asserted the equality between individuals and forbade the granting of distinctive titles. At the beginning, no great differences of wealth existed between the American people. But, nowadays, viewing the American society as classless does not represent a faithful picture of that society in which the differences of wealth are among the biggest, if not the biggest in the world. The emergence of social classes in the American society made some analysts advance that the real problem facing America today is that of class not of race.¹⁹⁵ This misdistribution of wealth is illustrated in innumerable statistics. For instance, the most highly paid executive earned more in an hour than many people in a year. Indeed, in 1987, the highest paid executive earned 9, 615 dollars per hour whereas a great number of people earned 6, 968 dollars in a year, i.e. 3.35 dollars per hour.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² David H.Swinton, "Economic Progress for Blacks in the Post Civil Rights Era," US Race Relations in the 1980s and 1990s: Challenges and Alternatives, Ed. Gail E. Thomas (USA: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1990) 178.

¹⁹³ Bonachich 189.

¹⁹⁴ Odegard 69.

¹⁹⁵ Janda 11.

¹⁹⁶ Bonachich 189.

4/ Social Inequality Entails Political Inequality:

This inequality in wealth has consequences on the political sphere since economic power goes hand in hand with political power. This was pointed out by Edna Bonachich, an economist:

The U.S. is an immensely unequal society in terms of the distribution of material wealth, and consequently, in the distribution of all the benefits and privileges that accrue to wealth, including political power and influence.¹⁹⁷

Although each person has one vote, all the persons do not have the same political clout: an urban ghetto dweller and the chairman of the board of an industrial or financial firm for example do not have the same influence on politics. Through occupation or wealth, some citizens are more able than others to influence political decisions.¹⁹⁸ Thus political equality is only an illusion. Inequality in wealth entails political inequality. Social equality, i.e. equality in wealth, education and status is necessary to achieve true political equality.¹⁹⁹ Two routes lead to real social equality: providing equality of opportunity and ensuring equal outcomes. Here, the opinions diverge: for some, equality means providing equality of opportunity without assuring equal incomes and for others true equality equates with equality of opportunity as well as equality in incomes. The problem is that the USA is not even providing a real equality of opportunity as seen earlier. If it were the case, a Black female would have the same chance to succeed as a white male. It is nevertheless not the case in the USA. Without speaking of the equality in incomes which may be judged too extremist, the preached equality of opportunity is far from being guaranteed.

5/ Social inequality threatens the American political system:

Too much social inequality threatens republicanism which is the political system of the USA. A Republican form of government needs for its survival some degree of

¹⁹⁷ Bonachich 189.

¹⁹⁸ Janda 11.

¹⁹⁹ Bonachich 189.

material equality²⁰⁰ since: "the lure of opulence would make the very rich self-indulgent and reluctant to sacrifice, while the misery of the poor would provide pliable material for self-serving demagogues."²⁰¹ Indeed, for the system to work and to perpetuate, people must put their confidence in it. People that may be growing unsatisfied by a lack of hope in a better future and by the surrounding inequalities may overthrow the system as it is their right proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. That is why a democratic form of government cannot work with too great disparities in wealth between the people. The poor may grow bitter by their misery when noticing the prosperity of others, they may lose confidence in the system, all the more when their chances of success are undermined by their race or colour. Discrimination clashes with equality and has not its place in a democracy.

6/ Racism Deeply Embedded in the Development of Capitalism:

To prove the existence of racism in the economic system, one may review briefly the history of capitalism and how it emerged. Capitalism has been built on racist foundations. The necessary wealth needed for the development of racism was accumulated on the back of the conquered people. In this sense, Edna Bonachich, an economist, states that:

Without racism, without the racial domination implicit in the early European "voyages of discovery" Europe would never have accumulated the initial wealth for its own capitalist "take off".²⁰²

The European capitalist nations took over the world spreading white domination over coloured people. Capitalism needed expansion for its development because it was in want of new and vast markets, raw materials, cheap labour and investment opportunities.²⁰³ In this way capitalism is deeply linked to racism because it would have never developed without the

²⁰⁰ Nieman 07.

²⁰¹ Nieman 07.

²⁰² Bonachich 199.

²⁰³ Bonachich 199.

conquest of coloured people and their supplying of new markets, cheap labour and raw materials.

Similarly, the American economic system was based on slavery which represents the embodiment of racism. The American economic system would have perhaps never prospered without the supply of free labour and the amount of work provided by the slaves. One can say that the Americans have built their economic system on the back of the slaves. Slavery fuelled the prosperity of the American economy. This leads one to conclude that the American economic system is not only unequal but it is based on inequality and racism.

One may wonder here as to what is the link between social inequality and racism? It can be conceded that this inequality is vast and irrespective of race.²⁰⁴ In other words, it touches people of different races and race does not seem to be a determinant factor of poverty. However, people of colour tend to form the bottom of the social ladder so that inequality in the American society becomes also racial inequality.²⁰⁵ In this way inequality touches disproportionately coloured people.

Conclusion:

Thus, the American politico-economic system is bound to racism as is shown in this chapter. Both the American political and economic systems betrayed the ideal of equality. Racism is embedded in the very roots of the American political and economic systems. The latter's foundations have been perverted and were stained by the existence of racism.

²⁰⁴ Nieman 07.

²⁰⁵ Nieman 07.

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Chapter four

The Recent Change of Attitude towards Racism and the Impact on its Eradication

Introduction:

The present chapter will be devoted to the change in attitude of the Americans towards racism. The aim at this step of the research is to ponder on the factors that led to the will to eliminate racism and, through the study of the means used, to assess the extent of their success in eradicating racism. The twentieth century represents a turning point in the existence of racism in the USA. That century was characterized by great Civil Rights Movement which after a bitter struggle brought about a change in attitude of the Americans towards racism. First, let us look into the factors that led to this change in attitude. We can say that domestic as well as international events triggered the questioning of racism in the American society.

I_ The Reasons of the Change of Attitudes towards Racism:

1_ The Domestic Factors:

1.1_ The Shift in Government's Policy:

To begin with, some factors on the domestic sphere influenced the change in attitude towards racism. In the twentieth century, the existence of racism began to be questioned by all the sections of the American society. On the one hand, the white section of the population began to think of all the ills generated by racism and consequently challenged the utility of its existence. This was illustrated by a shift in attitude of the Government. Of

course, the attitude of the American government started to change because there was a pressure in court and a challenge in schools by the African-Americans. Indeed, up to the mid twentieth century, all the branches of Government have backed or passed discriminatory legislation institutionalizing segregating practices and perpetuating racism. Subsequently, all united in an effort to legally end racial discrimination. This shift in the Government's policy was inaugurated by President Harry S. Truman shortly after the Second World War through his Executive Order 9981 intending to desegregate the military forces which was signed on July 26, 1948.²⁰⁶ Afterwards, the other branches of the federal government followed by acting more in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. The Supreme Court as well as Congress made crucial efforts in the struggle against racism.²⁰⁷ First, the Supreme Court, once an institution for perpetuating inequality has expanded an array of legal weapons in the hands of all the minorities to achieve social equality.²⁰⁸ In fact, the Supreme Court, which is supposed to be the guardian of the Constitution had to watch over the correct application of the Supreme Law of the Land (the Constitution) which however started only in the mid-twentieth century to be worthy of its ascribed role. Through a series of decisions, it began to correct the racist direction taken by the society. It ruled against segregation and racial discrimination in numerous cases, the most famous of which was *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954 which led to a gradual dismantling of legal segregation in all areas of life from schools to restaurants, to public restrooms.²⁰⁹ It overturned its own *Plessy vs. Ferguson* "separate but equal" ruling of 1896 in stating that "separate educational faculties are inherently unequal".²¹⁰ This very important decision marked the end of the policy of confining the coloured peoples to a separate and inferior status in society. Following the

²⁰⁶ "Desegregation," *Encarta Encyclopaedia*, 2005 ed.

²⁰⁷ Janda 11.

²⁰⁸ "Les Noirs aux Etats-Unis," *Universalis Encyclopédie*, 2000 ed.

²⁰⁹ Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Jon Gjerde, eds. *Major Problems in American History, Since 1865, II (USA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002)* 34

²¹⁰ "Les Noirs aux Etats-Unis," *Universalis Encyclopédie*, 2000 ed.

general trend, the legislative branch of the American government embodied by Congress started to enact legislation to end racial discrimination and promote racial equality. In a series of acts, Congress sought to open up political and economic opportunities for minorities. The 1965 Civil Rights Act banned discrimination in public accommodations, employment and Labour Unions. The 1966 Voting Rights Act brought political equality to minority voters. Other legislation followed in the aftermath. This entire legislative arsenal translated a shift in the government attitude and let appear a will to end racial discrimination and to achieve racial equality. It is the first time since the Government's formation that it strove to put in practice the ideals for which the Americans fought in the Revolution .It is the first time that it strove to live up to its creed. This change was nevertheless obtained thanks to internal and external pressure and was not a voluntary step on the part of the American authorities. Up to the mid-twentieth century, the American government had betrayed the founding principles of the American nation: liberty and equality and had thus opened a breach for racism to take root and to perpetuate.

1.2_ A New Awareness among Minorities:

The weakening of racism came from a world-wide change in the attitude of the colonial peoples and minorities. During the mid-twentieth century, a general awakening and a subsequent determination occurred among the oppressed groups to no longer accept their fate. This sentiment is well illustrated by Doctor Martin Luther King, the Black militant leader who stated:

There comes a time when people get tired. We are here this evening to say to those who mistreated us so long that we are tired – tired of being segregated and humiliated, tired of being kicked about by the brutal feet of oppression. We have no alternative but to protest.²¹¹

²¹¹ Martin Luther King, "Martin Luther King defends seamstress Rosa Parks," Speech. Montgomery, Dec. 5, 1955, qtd in Major Problems in American History, Since 1865, II, Eds. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Jon Gjerde (USA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002) 615.

From then on, the African Americans stood determined to fight to be treated as equals; they were no longer willing to tolerate racism and were no longer willing to accept this subjugation. The different oppressed minorities united in an effort to gain the equality promised to them two centuries ago. This determination on the part of the minorities to break their oppression was accompanied by the development of an ethnic pride.²¹² Up to the 1950s, the oppressed minorities, because they were violently and incessantly treated as inferiors, had been subjugated and maintained in an inferior status. They consequently learned to despise themselves and the other members of their own race. Indeed, in the American society, the objective was to teach the African Americans to accept the place racist America offered them.

The twentieth century witnessed a change in this attitude and the minorities became proud of belonging to their race. Do not we say that to respect oneself is the first step to win the respect of the others? The minorities, the African Americans, the Indians and the others, began to be proud of their particularities valorising them. They consequently undertook to preserve their culture and to revive dying traditions.²¹³ This was the case of the Indians as well as of the Afro-Americans. This step is necessary to fight racism and is the first battle in the struggle to eliminate it. This shift which reflects the state of mind of the minorities gave birth to action; it was indeed high time to act. Consequently, this awakening in America gave birth to numerous movements to achieve equality and to end racial discrimination. The Black community took the lead with its famous Civil Rights Movement. The struggle of the Afro-Americans inspired other oppressed minorities to follow the same path and to fight racial discrimination. Encouraged by the Black example and despite the opposition and resistance displayed by the majority of the whites, other oppressed minorities, mostly American Indians and Chicanos (Mexican-Americans) reasserted their cultural

²¹² Garraty 772.

²¹³ Garraty 773.

identities and demanded community power and the recognition of their special needs.²¹⁴ Suffering from many of the same disabilities as the Blacks, other minorities launched their own movements as it was said by the historian Kenneth Janda: “the struggle of the Blacks has been a beacon lighting the way for Native Americans, Hispanic- Americans and women.”²¹⁵ More or less successful as one is going to see, these movements embodied this change of attitude on the part of the minorities.

Thus, domestically, the shift in the Government’s policy as a promoter of equality as well as the change in attitude of both the majority section of the population and the minorities triggered the attack on racism and strengthened it. These factors have undoubtedly played a significant role on the questioning of racism. Nevertheless, it was the various international factors that gave the most serious blows to American racism.

2_ The International Factors:

2.1_ The Legacy of the Two World Wars:

International events had a deep impact on the questioning of the existence of racism in the USA. To begin with, World War I but above all World War II led to attacks on American racism. Both wars were claimed to be fights for democracy; it was officially the democratic nations versus the tyrannical ones. The inconstancy of the USA position in the wars precipitated the attack on racism at home since the USA cannot reasonably denounce racism abroad and tolerate it at home.²¹⁶ Indeed, the existence of racial discrimination in the USA damages the American credibility on the battlefield.

Another factor brought by WWII which contributed to the questioning of racism is the consciousness of its dangers. The Americans realized the dangers of racism when they discovered the scale of the massacre of the Jews by Nazi Germany. This massacre

²¹⁴ Janda 10.

²¹⁵ Janda 12.

²¹⁶ Brogan 626.

awakened the American consciousness and triggered a determination to eliminate that racism which could be so destructive.

Likewise, WWII changed the American position on the international scene and this had entailed a questioning of racism at home. First, the USA was forced by its participation in the two world wars to abandon its isolationism. Indeed, until the twentieth century, the USA was turned on itself with a refusal to take part in World affairs. This abandonment of its traditional isolationism led to an openness on the world. In the context of World War II, the Americans came into closer contact with the rest of the world. They learnt more about other people's cultures. This changed the way Americans looked at other countries and their peoples.²¹⁷ As a result, they began to question racism and racial prejudice. This openness made the Americans discovered that the other peoples were not as inferior as they used to think; they began to acknowledge the richness of the other peoples' culture.

2.2_ The USA's New Position as a World Leader:

Similarly, the USA's new position as a world leader helped to create a change of attitude towards racism. The USA emerged from the two world wars as a new superpower and the leader of the capitalist and pseudo-free world. The questioning of racism was in part due to this new position of world leadership.²¹⁸ The new position of the USA as world leader made it a target of criticisms from the rest of the world. The pressure of the world community urged America to revise its racial policy at home and correct the existing imperfections of its system. Racism appeared to be the most urgent problem to solve as it damages the image of the USA abroad. Indeed, Americans were publicly condemned as a people who did not

²¹⁷ Daniels 18.

²¹⁸ Franklin 147.

honour the ideal of equality they defend everywhere²¹⁹ as it was pointed out by the General Attorney of that time:

It is in the context of the present world struggle between freedom and tyranny that the problem of racial discrimination must be viewed.²²⁰

In this way, American racism stood as an “international handicap.”²²¹ Moreover, the other nations were not willing to accept the lead of a nation which tolerates racism within its society. An intolerant society cannot light the path to democracy for other nations. Any flaw in the American system made it more difficult for America to establish its leadership and made the other nations reluctant to follow its lead. Hence a strong determination emerged on the part of the Americans to eradicate racism in American life in order to appear above reproach to the rest of the world.

2.3_ The USA’s Role as a World Model:

Besides, another international factor precipitated the questioning of racism: the USA's new role as a model for the rest of the world. This point is directly related to the former as a leader must also be a model. The USA appeared to the world as a successful democracy with its separation of powers and its notion of checks and balances. The success of the American system which has survived numerous crises since its foundation represents a model to follow for the rest of the nations. Indeed, the American Constitution is the oldest written constitution in the world. The USA boasts of being a perfect model of democracy. This role of a model for the rest of the world has been highlighted since the very beginning of English presence on the American continent when the Puritans saw their mission to be “a city upon a

²¹⁹ Janda, et al. 12.

²²⁰ Janda, et al. 14.

²²¹ Janda, et al. 14.

hill.”²²² Indeed on their arrival the Puritan colonists wanted to build a perfect society which would be a model for the rest of the world. But the existence of racism in its blight denial and contradiction with the American ideals and principles stained that idyllic picture. The fact that the American system permitted racism to take root in the American society was at the basis of the rejection by many nations of the American model as the perfect model of democracy. Indeed, if this model does not work in America itself, how could it be exported as a good model?

2.4_ The Emergence of New Independent Nations:

Finally, the last factor to influence the attack on racism at home is the era of massive decolonization. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the fall of the European empires in Africa, in Asia or still in South America. In a wave, all the colonized countries sought to gain their independence and to get rid of their yoke. This wave after bitter struggles as in Vietnam and Algeria gave birth to numerous new independent nations. Because they had been dominated for so long by imperial powers, these nations sought a model of democracy to govern themselves. The USA strove to have these nations endorse democracy and liberalism and not socialism with dictatorial regimes. This will on the part of the USA to make a democratic world further strengthened the questioning of racial inequality at home. In this respect, a General Attorney stated: “racism furnished the grist for the communist propaganda mills.”²²³ Consequently, the USA made all the possible efforts to convince the new independent nations to choose democracy and not communism. For this reason, the USA had to correct all the flaws of its system and more particularly to remove segregation. Seeing the treatment of their counterparts in the USA, Brown and Black peoples of the new independent

²²² Governor John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1630) qtd in Major Problems in American History: Since 1865, II, Eds. Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman and Jon Gjerde (USA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002) 72.

²²³Janda, et al. 16.

nations were reluctant to follow the lead of a country that permitted racial discrimination and segregation.²²⁴The contradiction between the American principles and reality was not overlooked by the peoples who themselves belonged to the coloured races, so badly treated in the USA. This contradiction of the American authorities was pointed out as follows by the historian John H. Franklin:

Critics of the US were quick to point to the inconstancies of an American position that spoke against racism abroad and countenanced it at home.²²⁵

Thus, the determination of the USA to be a model of democracy and the leader of the Western world triggered a change of attitude towards racism. Because the rest of the world was looking at the domestic policies of the USA, it became urgent for the American government to eliminate a social flaw that would undermine the Americans' aspirations and ambitions. Thus, the international context pressures played an important role in the removal of racist, discriminatory laws in America. It is worth noting here that the blatant contradiction of racism with democratic ideals did not disturb the American conscience until a fear of what the rest of the world would think of them challenged its existence. It is not a consciousness of the wrong and danger of the existence of racism in a society that led to a determination to eliminate it; it is simply new stakes on the international scene. The fact that it did not come from a deep conviction in the evil of racism was to undermine, as it is going to be seen, the success of the struggle. Thus, although domestic factors triggered the attack on racism, this attack was greatly strengthened by international factors. One can suppose that if the USA had followed its isolationist policy and had remained turned on itself, not so many voices would have been raised against racism and it would have taken much more time to achieve more or less positive results. One can even suppose that the questioning of racism would have faded and racial discrimination would have perpetuated. Thus, the international context has undoubtedly played an important role the struggle against racism. To conclude, we can say

²²⁴ Franklin 147.

²²⁵ Franklin 147.

that the mid- twentieth century witnessed a change of attitude of the Americans towards racism and this is the first time since its formation.

II_ The Means Used to Eliminate Racism:

Furthermore, this change of attitude towards racism gave way to a will to act to eliminate that plague. That it was high time to act was the general opinion. A strong determination was born among the minorities but not only: many Whites, too, eagerly joined the struggle. The minorities were determined to no longer submit tamely to oppression²²⁶ and were determined to achieve equality with the dominant White majority. Strong with the active support of Government, a general drive for the elimination of racial discrimination emerged.

Public opinion supported the drive for equality and this had greatly influenced and strengthened the struggle.²²⁷ The role of public opinion in any democracy is not to be overlooked. In the implementation of policies, it may represent a powerful force. The media, too, had without doubt, a deep impact on the questioning of racism.²²⁸ Through their coverage of the different phases of the struggle, they influenced the change in the people's attitude and maintained a pressure against the Government for change. Though its exact influence on the course of events cannot be precisely determined, one thing is sure: it is that media, at least, stimulated the public discussion that culminated into favourable legislation. With the active support of Government, public opinion and the media on one side and the strong determination of the oppressed groups themselves on the other side, all the ingredients seemed to be united to seal the fate of racism through racial discrimination.

Racism was attacked on all fronts, through all possible means. To have an idea, it would be useful to cross-examine briefly these means. Leading the way was the black community which is one of the two communities who had the most suffered at the hands of

²²⁶ Brogan 625.

²²⁷ Franklin 151.

²²⁸ Franklin 151.

the Whites. Although the Afro-Americans differed in style and tactics; they shared the same attitude of mind; they arrived at a consensus as Hugh Brogan, a historian, stated it: “the old complacency had died.”²²⁹ Different weapons were used to put an end to racial inequality. Some people, for whom Martin Luther King was the spokesman, advocated non-violent protest; their aim was to end racial discrimination through civil disobedience. This means “the wilful but non-violent violation of unjust laws”²³⁰ using non-violent means such as sit-ins, picketing, demonstrations and boycott. This philosophy of non-violent protest gained much popularity among the Blacks and other minorities but also among the Whites themselves who were attracted by the pacific principles of this movement. Others preferred to turn to legal means through the appeal to the courts and to the Constitution.²³¹ This trend was represented by the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of The Coloured Peoples) created in 1909 to support the Blacks in judicial affairs. The ambition of the NAACP was to bring political and social equality to minorities through successes in courts. Though the association has doubtlessly achieved some crucial victories, it was denounced for its slowness and for being more representative of the upper classes and intellectuals. The mass of the blacks did not identify with this association. These two movements – the non-violent protest and the appeal to the courts– advocated integration. And another section of the population thought of emigration to Africa and colonization to be the ideal solution. This movement led by Marcus Garvey did have some adepts but it was fully abandoned because of its unrealism and the difficulties of its realisation.²³² Last but not least, others advocated violence as the appropriate means to achieve equality. These rejected assimilation and integration and wanted a voluntary segregation from the White population. By the mid-1960s, some African-Americans began to

²²⁹ Brogan 625.

²³⁰ Janda 19.

²³¹ Cohlen 89.

²³² Cohlen 101.

question the effectiveness of non-violent protest;²³³ hence the birth of this movement. Some militant Black leaders such as Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam and Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party, called Blacks to defend themselves using violence if necessary.²³⁴ The means used to fight racial discrimination are here examined only briefly since they do not constitute a main aspect of the dissertation. Rather, it is one's concern here to assess the results of that change of attitude towards racism; i.e. to weigh the fruits gathered in the battle. Therefore, one should evaluate the achievements of the general move towards equality. In other words, one has to assess whether the attack on racism had been fruitful.

III_ Assessment of the Achievements:

The different movements as well as governmental action generated positive consequences on the decline of racism. Undoubtedly, racism has declined as a direct result of the general effort. Indeed, the minorities achieved a measure of equality. One cannot deny the fact that thanks to the movements and governmental action, several blows were given to racism on different grounds. It would be useful to state briefly the positive effects of that attitude against racism.

1_ Improvement in Inter and Intra-Racial Relations:

The change of attitude towards racism had improved the relationship between and within the races giving way to more tolerance.²³⁵ Among other things, it has created solidarity within the same race and between the races. Members of the same race united to fight for a common cause and derived from the struggle a racial pride²³⁶ of belonging to the same race which increased their self-esteem. To struggle for such a noble cause has made the

²³³ "The Civil Rights Movement," Encarta Encyclopaedia, 2005 ed.

²³⁴ "The Civil Rights Movement".

²³⁵ John U. Ogbu, "Racial Stratification And Education," US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 16.

²³⁶ Ogbu 16.

oppressed minorities overcome their submissive and depressive states. The value of these gains, group solidarity, self awareness and ethnic pride, overshadow the possible achievements in terms of equality with the Whites. It is may be considered even more precious than the promised aim which is equality with the whites. Besides, the drive for the elimination of racism has created solidarity between the minorities. Whatever their differences, the different oppressed minorities identified with each other: “they echoed one another’s statements and demands, each asserting in turn that freedoms guaranteed to some group of people could not be denied to another”²³⁷ as it was noted by historian Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman. This solidarity was derived from the fact that they suffered from the same disabilities at the hands of the dominant majority,²³⁸ though each having special needs. They had the same foe and endured the same sufferings: this is the similar lot the historian Hugh Brogan is describing here:

Although it was true that the minorities had strikingly different problems, they suffered from modes of oppression that in some ways were similar.²³⁹

What united the racial minorities was, according to historian William Chafe: “the immorality of treating any human being as less equal than another on the basis of a physical characteristic”²⁴⁰ which is here skin colour.

Moreover, the general trend has enabled the Whites themselves to learn to know more the minorities and in some cases to be more tolerant and give up their unfounded prejudice. Indeed, the way Whites looked at other races changed. Their contempt and hatred let room for another sentiment. The general change in attitude has raised the esteem of the minorities in the eyes of the Whites who began to question their own attitude.

²³⁷ Cobbs Hoffman and Gjerde, Major Problems, II 342.

²³⁸ Brogan 625.

²³⁹ William H. Chafe, The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 330.

²⁴⁰ Chafe 330.

In a nutshell, the change in attitude among the minorities with the emergence of a new self-awareness and an increase in self-esteem²⁴¹ is a very crucial achievement of the era, if not the most important effect of the movement. This aspect must not be overlooked because it represents the first necessary step in the elimination of racism. Indeed, the minorities must give up their low self-esteem and contempt towards themselves in order to gain the respect of the others and therefore in the fight against racism, the first shoot must be fired by the minorities who have to make a psychological effort to valorise themselves.

2_ Legal Achievements:

2.1_ By the Black Community:

The minorities achieved substantial strides in their struggle for equality through favourable legislation and court decisions. They succeeded in ending racial segregation and securing the Ballot. The desegregation represented a crucial victory and the end of an era of unequal and separate status for the Blacks. Segregation in schools was declared unconstitutional after the famous Supreme Court decision in the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka case in 1954. In the following decade, the legal structure of segregation: “slowly crumbled under the onslaught of the civil rights movement and was given the final blow in the civil Rights Legislation of 1964-68.”²⁴² Consequently, racial separation had no longer the sanction of the law. This was a major stride since the institutions reserved for the Blacks were sensibly unequal to those of the Whites:

The existence of parallel institutions among the races in an already racially separated society as a portent of a rapidly rigidifying and crystallising racial stratification system.[...] A racially stratified social system perpetuated social, economic, educational and political inequalities.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Chafe 330.

²⁴² Farouk Toulbia, American Civilisation, 1941 to the present, (University of Algiers, 2000).

²⁴³ James E. Blackwell, “Current Issues Affecting Blacks and Hispanics in the Educational Pipeline,” US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 35.

From then on, the blacks had theoretically access to the same education and to the same quality of commodities. These were important achievements since they put an end to segregation which was perpetuating racism and strengthening the belief in the hierarchy of races. Segregation was meant to imprison the Black community in a permanent inferior status with no possibility of improvement. Segregation was highly detrimental to the relations between the races and to the ideal of racial equality.

2.2_ Achievements by the Indians:

In the fight for emancipation, the Indians also obtained important successes; but, their case differs from that of the other minorities. Why have I chosen the Indians among other minorities? It is because they are, with the Blacks, the peoples who suffered most from white racism. In fact, their case was just the opposite of that of the Blacks. Indeed, throughout American history, Native Americans have been “coerced physically and pressured economically”²⁴⁴ to assimilate into mainstream white society. They were forced to abandon their religion and customs and to assimilate. Indeed, reservations were so desolate and miserable places where the government wanted to force Native Americans to leave such places but the latter clung to their traditional way of life. Before the end of the twentieth century, the government had through inhuman acts (physical extermination and the seizure of Indians’ territories) striven to destroy the Natives’ culture and way of life. The Indian Self-Determination Act of 1970 was a major progress for the Indians who could theoretically at last perpetuate their ancestral way of life. However, this act was not the end of discrimination since the Indians were still discriminated against in their beliefs. They were denied religious freedom until 1978²⁴⁵ and the passing by Congress of the American Indian Religious Act.

²⁴⁴ Janda, et al. 17.

²⁴⁵ Nelcya Delanoe and Joëlle Rostkowsky, Les Indiens Dans L’Histoire Américaine (Paris: Armand Colin/Mason, 1996) 17.

2.3_ Achievements to the Benefit of all the Minorities:

Besides, all the different minorities, led by the African Americans, managed to obtain legislation banning discrimination and secure political equality. Indeed, with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Government put an end to legal discrimination in the public spaces. In this respect the 1964 Act states:

All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodation of any place of public accommodations [...] without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion or national origin.²⁴⁶

It also forbids discrimination in employment.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, theoretical political equality was secured through the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in which the franchise was guaranteed to all citizens without distinction forbidding the use of qualifications such as the reading test or the grandfather clause as a condition for voting:

No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State, or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the US to vote on account of race or color.²⁴⁸

Thus, after the assessment of the struggle against racism and the achievements realized by the African Americans and other racial minorities, one may conclude that major gains were undoubtedly made in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination. With the end of segregation, the interdiction of racial discrimination and the acquirement of the Ballot, the citizens of colour made great progress towards equality. America was forced to consider its citizens of colour on an equal basis and no longer relegate them to a separate and unequal position. It has, in historian Benjamin Quarles' expression, to: "look anew at its colored citizens."²⁴⁹ As it was stated by James J. Kilpatrick, a journalist: "the abiding subconsciousness of the Negro turned overnight into an acute and immediate awareness of the

²⁴⁶ Civil Rights Act of 1964, qtd in Cobbs Hoffman and Gjerde, Major Problems, II 350.

²⁴⁷ Cobbs, Major Problems, II 350.

²⁴⁸ The Voting Right Act of 1965, qtd in Cobbs, Major Problems, II 352.

²⁴⁹ Quarles 238.

Negro.”²⁵⁰ The minorities obtained what they desired most: the end of segregation and the right to vote for which they had fought so long. For them, it was the condition sine qua non of gaining freedom and equality in the American society.²⁵¹ Indeed, Whites had traditionally used tools such as the physical separation and the denial of the right to vote and holding office in order as stated by Frances Berry: “to guarantee the economic and social subordination of the Afro-Americans and other minorities.”²⁵²

Moreover, these victories were important not only as such but also for their consequences on the personality of the minorities. This progress raised their self-esteem and helped to gain the consideration of many Whites. Thus, regarding the Whites’ attitude towards the minorities, one may note a greater degree of tolerance of diversity. This is proved as stated earlier through the massive support of public opinion. Given also the active support of government and the media, one can without hesitation state that racism in America was given a serious blow. Furthermore, this period had changed the nature of the relationship between the dominant society and the oppressed racial and ethnic minorities had become less hostile and looser.²⁵³ Indeed, by the end of the 1960’s, racism had started to decline in the American society particularly with the Acts of 1964 and 1965. Nevertheless, many factors prevent one from concluding very optimistically.

3_ The Inverse Effect on Racism:

In spite of the numerous successes derived from this change of attitude, several points mitigate the plain success of the struggle against racism. To begin with, the advancement of the minorities and their achievements had a reverse effect on racism. It hardened racist sentiment among the white majority. The sociologist David Alvarez pointed

²⁵⁰ James Jackson Kilpatrick, The Richmond News Leader, qtd in Quarles 238.

²⁵¹ Berry 143.

²⁵² Berry 143.

²⁵³ David Alvarez, “Issues in Ethnic Diversity and the Politics of Inequality in the 1990s,” US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 162.

out that this trend: “seemed to awaken latent racism among many non-Hispanic Whites, who suddenly perceived themselves as threatened by Blacks, Hispanics and Asians.²⁵⁴ Indeed, the end of segregation and the opening of opportunities on the political and legal levels frightened the whites who were most attached to their supremacy. The fact that the whites were then obliged to live close to blacks, share the same commodities and compete for the same jobs led to the deepening of racist sentiment and prejudice. Whites looked at the minorities as rivals in employment and in politics because legal barriers for racial integration were withdrawn.²⁵⁵ These changes raised a new wave of hatred among those who were against any integration. This, nevertheless, did not represent the attitude of the majority of the whites.

4_ Persistent Economic Disparities:

By the early 1970s, the Civil Rights Movement had left a legal legacy (legislation, executive orders, regulations, court rulings, social programmes) designed to promote the attainment of economic and social equality.²⁵⁶ However, the social and economic conditions of the minorities did not substantially improve as a consequence of these changes. The legal end of discrimination and the gain of the right the vote did not bring with them a better well-being. A relative bitterness among the minorities was even felt after the achievement of these goals. The minorities wanted political power because they believed it would result in improved economic and social conditions.²⁵⁷ In others words, they believed political participation would solve all their problems and result in the promised racial equality:

They believed political participation would free white Americans from bondage to the practices of racism and inequality and would liberate Blacks from their oppression.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Alvarez 162.

²⁵⁵ Berry 144.

²⁵⁶ D.H. Swinton, “Economic Progress for Black Americans in the post- Civil Rights Era,” US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 167.

²⁵⁷ Berry 143.

²⁵⁸ Berry 143.

They rapidly realised, however, that political power and the end of segregation did not result in the expected racial equality. Although the Civil Rights legislation opened many opportunities for the minorities— opportunities, they could only dream of some decades earlier. According to Hugh Brogan, there was a slight improvement of their conditions; but on the whole, their economic and social deprivations remained as bad as ever.²⁵⁹ The fact that these legal changes benefited some members of the minorities who could enrich themselves and climb the social ladder cannot be denied. Indeed, some members of minority groups obtained appointments and offices in the local, state and national government.²⁶⁰ Illustrating this trend, we note a growing number of Black mayors. In addition to this, a Black, Indian, Hispanic middle classes started emerging but the lot of the masses did not improve.

The overwhelming majority did not, however, benefit from this progress. Some researchers even advance that more minority group members were economically deprived after than before 1965.²⁶¹ Statistics registered after the Civil Rights period to assess the results of the legislative gains on the economic conditions of the minorities corroborate this deprivation as we are going to see. For instance, the minorities are still underrepresented in Government, employment as well as in Higher education.²⁶² Moreover, poverty still plagued the minority population, among which one-third lives in poverty, a rate three times that of White Americans²⁶³. The poverty rate of the Indians for instance is 27.5 in comparison with an average of only 12.7 for the rest of the population.²⁶⁴ Besides, the income gap between minority and White families continues to widen: for example, in the late 1970s, the average Black man earned 60% of the white man's income. Unemployment also ruins the Minorities' aspirations. Indeed, Blacks for instance were 2.2 times as likely to be unemployed as Whites

²⁵⁹ Brogan 642.

²⁶⁰ Berry 184.

²⁶¹ Berry 184.

²⁶² "Les Noirs Aux Etats-Unis," Encarta Encyclopédie, 2005 ed.

²⁶³ "Les Noirs Aux Etats-Unis"

²⁶⁴ John W. Tippeconnic III, "American Indians: Education, Demographics and The 1990s," US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 250.

in 1973.²⁶⁵ Similarly, Indians had an unemployment rate twice that of the total American population.²⁶⁶ Thus, in regard to all these statistics, one can note that the economic and social gaps between the minorities and the Whites remained almost unchanged. Disparities in all the domains of economic life seem not to decrease for the mass of the minorities who are more and more entrenched in poverty and despair. Although, as noted earlier, a few of minority population had grasped the available opportunities to climb the social ladder, socioeconomic inequality along racial and ethnic lines remains highly visible and pervasive.²⁶⁷

IV_ Obstacles to the Full Elimination of Racism:

This lack of substantial progress in the economic conditions of the minorities in the Post Civil Rights era has its roots in many factors that made racism still persistent in American life. Indeed, several obstacles persist on the way of a total elimination of racism in the American society.

1/ A Supposedly Wrong Strategy in the Struggle:

First, the minorities were mistaken in the focus of their struggle. By aiming at ending segregation and obtaining political power, they ignored basic differences in wealth and ownership.²⁶⁸ One may advance that they adopted a wrong strategy because they neglected the very roots of racial inequality. They directed their attacks on superficial problems and if a problem is not taken at its roots, one cannot expect to solve it. That is why the legislative successes and the gain of the franchise did not bring the expected racial equality. The Civil Rights strategy focused on the adoption of laws, regulations, policies and programmes to

²⁶⁵ “Les Noirs Aux Etats-Unis”

²⁶⁶ Tippeconnic 211.

²⁶⁷ Garraty 768.

²⁶⁸ Swinton 180.

eliminate discrimination and differences in human capital. For the economist D. H. Swinton, this strategy implies the wrong assumption that:

Individual minority initiative operating through the free market is sufficient to eliminate racial inequality within a reasonable period of time, given a non-discriminatory environment and improvement in human capital and despite differences in human capital, business ownership and wealth.²⁶⁹

The minorities in their struggle were mistaken in their strategy because their decision to focus on non-discrimination meant that little direct effort was made to eliminate the large gaps in poverty, income and ownership. We can assume that another focus would have had perhaps another turn and better results on the economic and social advancement of the minorities. As a consequence of the quasi-absence of improvement in ownership and wealth, the gaps did not narrow. Once more, the problem was not attacked at its roots. The wrong strategy probably contributed to the failure to totally eliminate racism.

2/ The Persistence of White Resistance to Racial Equality:

Racism persists in the USA because it comes up against white resistance.²⁷⁰

Springing from a deep-seated racial prejudice, the white population has resisted any advance made by the racial minorities. Indeed, they used subtler means to hamper the effective enforcement of the legal gains issued from the Civil rights period.²⁷¹ Because of the white resistance, the legal end of racial discrimination and the acquirement of the franchise were not fully applied in reality. Indeed, racial discrimination continues to exist though not overtly since it misses the sanction of the law. The right to vote did not bring the expected political power and political equality. Although the principle of “one person, one vote” is applied, this does not imply that all the voters had the same political clout and influence.²⁷² The president of an international firm has not obviously the same influence on politics and legislation as a

²⁶⁹ Swinton 180.

²⁷⁰ Franklin 149.

²⁷¹ Swinton 182.

²⁷² Janda 09.

ghetto dweller for instance. Because political clout rhymes with wealth, it is obvious that the minorities had negligible influence on the government's policy. Thus, true political equality is an illusion.

Besides, racial discrimination though outlawed is still visible and pervasive and this is truer for some domains rather than others. Though public places have been desegregated, racial discrimination still exists in major fields such as in education, housing and employment. For instance, one may exemplify the persistence of racial discrimination by taking such an important domain as education. Though segregation has been outlawed, along with its differential staffing and funding, yet many schools continue to use "subtle mechanics to keep Blacks' schooling" inferior to Whites' schooling,"²⁷³ as it was proved by John U. Ogbu:

Some findings of my own research in Stockton, California, show how minorities and Whites may attend the same schools but may not necessarily receive the same education or learn similar rules of behaviour for achievement.²⁷⁴

Another important field where discrimination is widespread is housing despite the existence of laws against such discrimination. As a matter of fact, in this field, owners of habitations continue to choose their tenants. Segregation exists even without such deliberate and obvious acts. Indeed, residential places are too expensive for the minorities who had to live in destitute places deserted by the Whites and this phenomenon gave birth to ghettos: places of indescribable misery and poverty and havens of violence where minorities have to survive in complete ignorance of Governments. These examples, chosen among many, illustrate the persistence of racial discrimination in spite of the existing legislation forbidding it. Racial segregation and discrimination have been so widespread for so long a time that it is unrealistic to expect them to be eradicated in a matter of few decades.

²⁷³ Ogbu 23.

²⁷⁴ Ogbu 23.

The fact that racial discrimination still exists highlights the persistence of racism of the White population who struggle against a full racial equality because behind discrimination lies racial prejudice. The act of denying equal opportunities to other races is a means for the White majority to confine them in a permanent inferior status by undermining the possibility of economic and social advancement of the minorities. The status of the minorities is still in the white majority's hands. In fact, it is the white majority that still controls the government and owns residential places, businesses and factories. This is the reason why the disparity in ownership and wealth is so strong an impediment for the advance of the minorities. Here resides the mistake of the strategy of the Civil Rights movement, as tackled earlier in this chapter. Minorities are still subjected to racial discrimination because they depend on the Whites for everything: jobs, housing, and education. It is the Whites who hold the reigns of society and until this changes, racial equality cannot be achieved. This leads Gail E. Thomas to conclude that:

Racial stratification and racial inequality have changed in nature rather than in significance – from a more overt to a more covert and subtle form of racial isolation and inequality.²⁷⁵

Another point which shows White resistance to racial integration and which also proves the persistence of American racism is the rarity of interracial mixing. There is still a reluctance not to say disgust on the part of the White Americans to mix the races through mixed relationships or marriages. This can be proved by statistics or even by the visual image of American society. One can notice that there are still very few interracial marriages or intercourses. Indeed according to US Census, interracial unions represented only 0.7% of the total number of marriages in 1970.²⁷⁶ It represented 1.3% in 1980, 2.2% in

²⁷⁵ Gail E. Thomas, "The Road Ahead in American Race Relations, Challenges For the 1990s," US Race Relations, ed. Thomas 265.

²⁷⁶ "Statistics in Interracial Marriages," Wall Street Journal, 9 May 1991. Yggelast, 1996, 27 October 2007 <http://www.whitenationalism.com/ms/ms_05.htm>.

1992 and 7% in 2005.²⁷⁷ We notice here a net progression but interracial unions still represent a small quota in relation with other unions. Still today, a couple from two different races is still badly seen and disapproved. This fact translates the determination on the part of the Whites to keep their race pure as mixing, according to racists, leads to the degeneracy of the race. This was the Whites' reasoning in the Colonial period and it is still their reasoning today nearly four centuries later. It must, however, be precised that it is not only a will on the part of the Whites; certain minorities prefer to marry within their community. So, the Whites' refusal and reluctance to interracial mixing reflect their still latent racism and their success in confining races to community marriages which in turn prevents minorities from assimilating into white mainstream society.

3/ Federalism: a Hurdle for Emancipation

Another hurdle to leap for the full elimination of racism is the federalist system of government. As stated in chapter three, the autonomy of the States is an obstacle to racial integration and racial equality. Indeed, the Southern States struggled stubbornly to prevent the registration of the Blacks.²⁷⁸ This in turn hampers the implementation by the Federal government of the civil rights for the Blacks. Historically, the Southern States (not only but predominately) have resisted any advance by the minorities as well as any laws endangering the supremacy of the Whites. Still faithful to their racial inclinations, they resisted the enforcement of all government decisions for the promotion of racial integration. Their attitude can be illustrated by the incident at Little Rock, Arkansas after the 1954 court ruling in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* ending school segregation. The admission of nine Black students to central High school in Little Rock in 1957 was followed by rioting and mob violence, making necessary federal intervention. The Southern States,

²⁷⁷ "Interracial Marriages," *Wikipedia encyclopedia*, 27 October 2007, 28 October 2007
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/interracial_marriages.htm/>.

²⁷⁸ "Les Noirs Aux Etats-Unis."

following any federal law favourable to minorities, organised defiant resistance towards the non-implementation of these laws. The Southerners used many tools for resistance: interposition (a state can interpose its own authority if the National Government oversteps itself),²⁷⁹ economic reprisal against minorities who sought the application of their rights:²⁸⁰ closing public schools, violence, intimidation All the old means were used to resist the enforcement of the civil rights legislation. The resistance of the Southern states is more visible because more overt, but the Northern states are also against racial equality. The extent of the White resistance was shown in a study by two researchers: public opinion expert Oliver Quayle and Stewart Alsop who came to conclude in 1963 that:

The White North is no more ready to accept genuine integration and real racial equality than the Deep South.²⁸¹

So strong and widespread was the prejudice they found that they concluded that:

There is simply no way to reconcile the aspiration of the new generation of Negroes for real integration and true equality with the resistance of the majority of the whites.²⁸²

The result of this research leads to the next point which is the last and perhaps the most engrained obstacle to the elimination of racism.

4/ The Depth of Racial Prejudice:

Still another obstacle to the full elimination of racism is the persistence of a deep-seated racial prejudice. One can say that this represents the highest hurdle to leap. As it was pointed out by the historian Charles Silberman: “if the Whites were to stop all discriminatory practices tomorrow, this alone would not solve the problem.”²⁸³ Time has left an indelible imprint on racism. Racial prejudice is very deeply engrained in the mentalities of the White majority. The end of racial discrimination aimed at by the Civil Rights Movements

²⁷⁹ Quarles 241.

²⁸⁰ Quarles 241.

²⁸¹ Silberman 10.

²⁸² Silberman 10.

²⁸³ Silberman 13.

is only part of the problem. The minorities must also fight racial prejudice which is a very strong foe, all the more since it is invisible. To eliminate a problem, one must pull up its roots. If not, it will grow again. Here lies the problem of racism in the USA. Since the Colonial Period, the USA had developed a strong racial prejudice made even stronger as time passed. From the very beginning of its existence, the Americans had treated the other peoples as inferior. Never had they expressed a doubt about their inferiority. Strong with this conviction, they confined them in a subordinate status. During four centuries, racial prejudice developed and took root more and more in the mentalities of the White population. The long work of time will not be uprooted overnight. The imprint of time will be not only very difficult to uproot but perhaps impossible. This is why it has been judged important to study the roots of American racism.

Conclusion:

To conclude, the purpose was to show the engraining of racial prejudice since the very beginning of America's history be it in the mentalities (chapter II) or in the political and economic systems of the USA (chapter III). This present chapter was intended to study the recent change in attitude of the Americans towards racism which led to major efforts to eliminate it. As seen, under incessant attacks, the whole edifice of racism began to tremble but did not crumble. Indeed, racism has declined in American society but it did not disappear. This day has not come yet...

C O N C L U S I O N

Racism has represented an obstacle to the full triumph of American democracy since the very beginning of America's existence. Representing a blatant contradiction with the American ideal of equality and a manifestation of the inconsistency of the American position, it lays heavily upon American conscience. Being at the origin of many social problems, racism is like a stain in the idyllic image the USA wants to display to the world, a broken tooth in the bland smile of America. It threatens racial harmony and social stability at home and undermines the American credibility and power to influence on the international scene.

Racism is far from being a new problem since it is older than the United States of America. Indeed, throughout our research, we have strived to trace back the roots of American racism up to the Colonial period and the foundation of the new nation. This step was motivated by a will to assess the existence of racism in the foundations of the American nation. This is done to demonstrate how racial prejudice is deeply engrained in the creation of the USA. Furthermore, I judged it necessary to study the first manifestations of racism in America, to understand it fully taking into account its origin and the circumstances surrounding its emergence.

As a first step, we have strived to clarify such notions as we judged necessary for the correct understanding of our subject. To begin with, such notions as racism and all the interrelated terms were examined. Then, the dissertation proceeded to explain the founding principles of the American nation and democracy with a focus on equality.

After having clarified these notions, we have opted to trace back the roots of American racism up to the Colonial period. As we have seen in our second chapter, Americans have developed racial prejudice since the Colonial period. Issued predominately

from a Puritan tradition, they were intolerant of any kind of difference. Discrepancies in skin colour and physical appearance, culture, religion or national origin foster racial discrimination. The more different the people from the dominant White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) majority, the more discrimination they faced. Thus, since Colonial times, racism deeply engrained in the Whites' mentality.

In addition, the objective of our third chapter was the assessment of racism in the political and economic foundations of the nation through the study of discrimination. As a manifestation of racial prejudice, racial discrimination was pervasive in the American society since its formation. This was a legacy of the founding documents of the American nation which opened a breach for racism to take root in the American society. Indeed, the Founding Fathers failed in the documents to take a firm stand against racism. In this way, the political and economic foundations of the nation were spoiled by racism. They permitted racism to take root in the American society. The assessment of the existence racism in the political and economic foundations of the nation was the aim of our third chapter.

From the beginning of the existence of the American nation up to the twentieth century, the situation was unchanged. Indeed, racism through racial discrimination was pervasive and developed deeper and deeper in the American society all the more since governments, far from performing their role of promoting equality, acted against it thereby betraying the ideals of the Nation.

Finally, the mid-twentieth century witnessed a turning point in the existence of racism in the USA, a change of attitude on the part of Government and on the part of public opinion. Fuelled by a change of attitude, the questioning of racism was greatly strengthened by domestic but above all international factors. With the active support of governments and public opinion, the minorities achieved much progress.

Nevertheless, racism still exists in the USA. The problem was not taken at its roots, hence the limited success of the struggle to eliminate racism. Though racial discrimination was legally outlawed, it still exists because of the persistence of racial prejudice. Although racism seriously declined in the American society, it is far from being eliminated. It is only less visible because it has taken more subtle forms.

Since the 1960s, the pressure against racism faded and we notice a degradation of the relations between the different races in the USA. Future stakes will lead to another struggle against racism. For instance, it is estimated that by 2025, the White majority will become a minority because the rest of the population is increasing at a more rapid pace. What will be the implications of this? Will it remain dominant or will there be a shift in power? This is to be added to the fact that the world is changing and it is perhaps international factors that will seal the fate of racism. However, the non-melting of the different ethnic groups leaves room for the perpetuation of differences between the different groups. This trend works against the integration and thus homogenization of the American society. This is sufficient a bed for the emergence of new prejudices.

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