

Global White Supremacy-comments on Larry Brown's "Terrorism and White Supremacy"

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Larry Brown gave a fine exposition of the history and socially disposing factors from which White Supremacist groups emerge, especially in the Missouri Ozarks region, an exposition that needs no comment as a piece of social science. So my remarks will extend the analysis of White Supremacy in broader terms and from a philosophical perspective following some illuminating suggestions Charles Mills makes in his *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1997). . So, by white supremacy I do not refer to racist hate groups or biologic properties, but to the dominance of whites in our culture over virtually every activity and practice.

Mills argues that as a central element of cultural identity, race should be among the primary categories of social analysis. Attempts to amalgamate race to economic class or to deny its importance in the name of color-blind rationality inevitably distort or disguise the reality of race and racial politics. A Marxist paradigm, for example, cannot readily account for the deep division between white and black workers (historically, the exclusion of the latter from union membership) exactly counter to class interest. Even in these days of *de jure* equality, the trajectory of past racism continues to permeate our institutions and mores. Racial audits continue to confirm this as did the "standardized" tests that determine one's educational destiny in this country. They turned out to be "white-standardized" in ways now more clearly apparent. Kant's view of persons also explains how this can be so: "As Kant states most eloquently, persons are rational self-directing entities whose rights must be respected and who must be treated as ends in themselves rather than merely instrumentally." (ibid 107) And the equality presupposed by contract theory "is henceforth installed as the normative ground floor of the edifice of Western Political Philosophy (107)." During the period of colonial rule and slavery, talk of the rights of "all men" is "intended to apply only to all white men, non-whites being in a moral basement covered by a different set of rules (107)." This is evident in the lack of serious efforts to rectify the situation.

As Mills has it, "genuine equality is preempted by lack of mechanisms and resources to enforce antidiscrimination law ... and by the continuing educational, cultural, and financial handicaps suffered by

nonwhites.... (107)” Rawls shares a similar problem in his construction of an abstract self in the white supremacist context. Behind the veil of ignorance, where my race is stripped away, along with my gender I decide the rules of justice. But what guides my choice? Not my history, as that is stripped from me. But how will I be recognized at last as the person I am when my constitutive history of unjust treatment disappears from me? (One thinks of the stirring words of “Lift every voice and sing” here, the Black National Anthem.) Am I not the person I have become? And what is “rational” to risk may well be a function of my experience, quite different depending on my life as a certain race. My life still bears the onus of non-person or less-than-white person, casting doubt on the color-blind ascriptions of rights to my person. So, political philosophy needs a phenomenology of race , the upshot of which will be reframing categories of social analysis.