

Racisms, 'Race' and Racialization Through the Lens of Timothy Stanley's "Introduction: Questioning the Existence of the World"

A Snapshot of the Main Arguments & Theories Posed By Stanley In His Introductory Chapter to *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians*

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Language and Representations Make 'Race' and Allows Racialization

Idea 1

- Language about racial difference does not record or document an external, objective reality of real biological, social, or cultural difference; rather, it creates the idea of such difference, and what appears absolute and natural in one context, even a matter of life and death.
- Representations are the signs, symbols, words, phrases, and sounds that communicate meanings. Things can be known or have meaning only through discourse.
- Racialization is only socially meaningful through the power of language.

Racisms Make 'Race'

Idea 2

- Racisms are not an inevitable outcome of human difference, but the outcome of human action.
- 'Race' is a socially constructed belief system through which racisms create inequalities between different socially constructed societal groups.
- Racisms make particular differences (both real and imagined) count in specific times and places. These racialized differences are phenotypical or cultural differences -- skin colour, ethnicity, religion, language, place of origin, and various combinations of these -- which have historically been made to stand for the essences of persons.
- Racisms are historical phenomena that lead people to believe that racial categories are meaningful and enact consequences on people based on the categories into which they are placed.

Racialization Is the Naturalization of 'Race'

Idea 3

- Racialization is the social process through which racial differences are made, rather than natural or biological ones.
- Racialization is the first condition of racisms.
- Racialized differences can appear to be naturally occurring, immutable, and self-evident by becoming organized into social practices and material arrangements.
- Racializations involve patterns of cultural representation, knowledge production, and social organization that give meaning to what the British sociologist Robert Miles has aptly called 'socially imagined' difference, specifically differences attributed to supposedly innate and unchanging phenotypical or cultural characteristics.
- Racializations are historically produced, with racialized categories and their contents being invented and popularized over time.
- A series of statements or utterances and their material effects (that is, a discourse) make knowledge of racialized groups. Fixing a group through racialization establishes its boundaries, marking its members as those with alleged characteristic X.
- Racializations are always relational: one group is always racialized in relation to another.

There Are Plural Racisms Because Racisms Are Ever-Changing

Idea 4

- Each racism has its own history, manifestation and consequence.
- These changes shape what oppressed groups are able to do, and where and with whom they are able to do it, variously expanding and contracting their terrains of action, who is included in these terrains, and who is not.
- Racisms do not have fixed essences, but change with time and place through their intersection with other factors, becoming more intense in one context and less intense in another.
- The refixing of meanings points to the operations of power that make racializations into multiple exclusions, which makes racializations appear natural and unproblematic.
- People may practice racism towards the members of one group and anti-racism towards the members of another. Even the most committed of racists can make exceptions for the individuals he or she personally knows.
- Meanings associated with a particular representation are not fixed but shift as they enter into circulation as people take them up and remake them for their own purposes.
- Understanding change over time also allows us to understand the constructed nature of seemingly permanent categories.

Racisms Only Exist When Racializations Are Organized Into Exclusions

Idea 5

- Racialized representations are relatively long-lived; they have a habit of returning, often in new forms.
- Exclusions are organized.
- It takes power to organize exclusions.
- Racialized exclusions take many forms: material, social or symbolic.
- Racialized exclusions inevitably involve equally racialized inclusions. If someone is being excluded, someone else is being included.
- 'Non-trivial consequences' are the significant negative consequences for the members of the excluded group. Determining whether consequences are non-trivial necessarily requires taking seriously the self representations of the excluded.

Just As There Are Racisms, There Are Also Anti-Racisms

Idea 6

- Anti-racisms take many forms and have different effects.
- Even people actively promoting particular racisms can have their anti-racist moments, and anti-racists their racist ones.
- If racisms racialize, anti-racisms trouble racializations.
- If racisms organize racialized exclusions, anti-racisms promote inclusions.
- If racisms have negative consequences, anti-racisms try to mitigate these consequences.

Anti-Racist History

Idea 7

- A history that actively contributes to contemporary struggles against racism by examining the past to provide a basis for critical reflection on the present and to better understand the complexities and possibilities of today.
- Develops a language that admits the reality of racist injury without reproducing the categories that are part of the problem.
- Disruption of racializations by indicating whenever they occur. For example, instead of 'white' people, the language should be 'people racialized as white'.
- Placing 'race' in quotation marks signifies that it is a social construction and not a natural phenomenon.