
Looking into the Lessons of the Past and Engineering the Future

As we analyze society and culture in the present day, we first have to look into the past using Social Imagination. To do so we have to ask the questions, what made our society the way it is, why do people act in certain ways, and most importantly, how did these differences and categories of race, class and gender arise and maintain so important in society today? The similarity between these categories, they were all created by society and allow for a consistent division and segregation between individuals in each. Individuals who are either oppressed or empowered based off of where they lie in each category in which intersect one another.

Science seems to play a strong and important role in the past and present. Discovery, biology, and facts. As humans we want facts. We want to know the truth, and we believe the truth based off of facts and physical evidence. This may have influenced are desire and obsession with distinction and separation between groups of people. Biological and scientific differences that initially lead us to the idea of a superior and inferior group of people based off of these unnecessary facts.

Race: "a social definition based on shared lineage and a real or presumed physical, biological characteristics" (Lect Notes). Race, just as gender and sex, is a socially constructed idea. An idea that separates and distinguishes one individual from another, forming different groups based off of looks. One's "race" of course, comes from ancestry. If your ancestors came from Africa, Europe, etc. Previously we looked at Zinn's A People's History of the United States, and interestingly saw the actual circumstances in which Columbus used and enslaved seemingly "inferior" races. This all to benefit himself and the European "dominant" western culture, in hopes of maintaining their own new property and land, soon to become the United States.

History allowed for these more powerful and wealthy individuals to take advantage of others, others that they viewed as "animals" (Zinn). This demonstrated and leaves an understanding using the Social Imagination of how exactly racism and an ultimate divide, as well as the maintaining of power by the white man came to be, and still in our "free" society seems to still be obvious. As much as we would all like to think, there is still a strong divide among races. Due to history, blacks were always at a set back, as this is how they came in America, at a disadvantage. The freedom that they received was not complete freedom due to the prior history they encountered. This kept them at the lower class, making them a minority, among other more poor non "white" individuals. With almost no opportunity or ability to move up due to

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circumstances that the white europeans put them in, as I'm sure though they were considered "free", white people still saw them as less powerful than them, ultimately leading to a equal dislike between both.

The past circumstances, and the inevitable oppression that black people face in our society today is still clear. We see it everyday in the news, a white officer shoots a black man. They are still seen as inferior and these stereotypes allow for a never ending divide. It is hard to break a stereotype that history has constantly reinforced. No change can be made this way, especially while society in America does not allow minorities to rise up easily, based mainly on the continuous white power in the government which rules everything.

In a society built off of wealth, money, and power, class plays a role in each individuals life. Class System: "An economically based hierarchical system characterized by cohesive, oppositional groups and loose social mobility" (Lect Notes). As a white 22 year old women, I was born automatically with expectations. My parents always expected me to go to a private school, then to college, without any worries of money. I didn't have to struggle to get into college, I was accepted with an advantage of going to a prestigious private school. It wasn't until college, as I branched out and learned of different experiences, that I realized what I had. This was White Privilege.

While my parents had expectations of my life, I never questioned it, not even how easy I had it. Using the Social Imagination, I could see if my circumstances were any different, it would be more difficult for me to maintain my parents expectations. If I had grown up in a different area where I couldn't even go to private school, and I went to a public school with less will to fulfill students needs. If I was a different race, if I lived in a lower class neighborhood, I would not be strong enough to fight for those opportunities myself. I was given them by my parents. Furthermore, I was given it by my white ancestors who came to America. While those black ancestors worked for the more powerful whites, they did not receive an education, they did not receive opportunity. Still today the face this disadvantage, this oppression.

As minorities are seen as a lower class, living in a more poor neighborhood with less prestigious schools, they still lack these opportunities. They lack the easily maintained education that a higher class white folk would automatically receive. Further affecting their future and there chances at college, along with their future career. What we like to think as a free country, as a land of opportunity and equality was built off of an unequal and unfair culture of white Europeans whose main concern was money and power. The equality should be more clear now then it was before, as we see a never ending stand still for minorities today.

Not only are the White Americans allowing an unequal and unfair society, but the individual minorities do not try to escape. It is a different lifestyle and experience being a young black

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youth in America. Imagine being raised in an environment of violence on your own kind. Not being able to see your father because he works all day for minimum wage. Being raised by older boys in your neighborhood who were also taught that nothing but violence and stealing is the way to live. Being forced to steal food to be able to feed your family. Being raised in this society, already gives children no hope for their own future. It causes young black boys to think that this is the only option for them, that their is nothing more.

Lastly, an intersection division that separates male from female and is also socially constructed based off of biological factors, gender. Gender: “based on a set of social or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female” (Lect Notes). Just as race, gender divides people based off of biological factors. You are born with sexual organs, automatically determining your socially constructed “gender”. Therefore you are already set up for a life of expectations to fulfill based off of your gender. Presumptions are made of how one should act, who they should like, marry, what they should do and wear. All based of of biological factors, not even perceiving what the individual may desire within him or herself.

Men of course through time are seen as strong and powerful, and women weak. This is based off of biological factors of men, of course maintaining a more strong body mass then the smaller women. This fact has influenced history and proceeds to day in the daily life. The set expectations of a women to be a housewife, a mother, a caretaker of men. While men work and financially take care of women. Of course as we see today in many circumstances such as transgenders, homosexuals, etc, these stereotypes and the division of men and women could not be anymore wrong. Not only are women intelligent, powerful etc, but we now know that the biological body part you are born with may not determine who you really are. Society only reinforces these biases based on facts and science, along with the strong will to keep the divide between men and women there.

Now for the intersection of these three divisions. The minority in each or the inferior are of course minority races, for example black who were oppressed for centuries especially in America. Then for class, which is of course the lower class, we see the minority race among them. Lastly, gender, which the minority or inferior are seen as women. Now using Social Imagination imagine a black lower class women in America. That is an intersection among all which maintain a strong oppression based off of categories and stereotypes placed. Imagine the lifestyle that this black women in America faces, being discriminated against and oppressed based off of her ancestors past. Automatically being deemed more weak than men. Being raised in a lower class neighborhood where she may not have the same opportunity to strive.

Now once someone realizes this, realizes the intersections and the oppression based off of biological factors which were granted important since the beginning of time, we can realize the way someone acts. Why they may do certain things, live a certain way. We finally may realize

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the true inequality a black lower class women faces in America, and this is the only way we may be able to change.

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