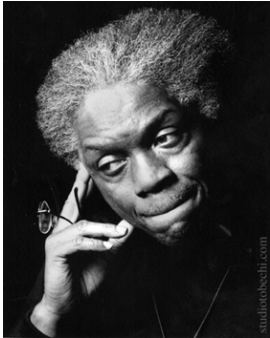


Race and racism: Myth and reality

Written by

Wednesday, 09 April 2014 14:20



"From today's perspective in a media-soaked world all too familiar with the genomic footprints of human DNA and the tracings of the double-helix back to an African origin, it has become considerably easier to accept the notion that, like nations, 'races' are what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined communities'—social constructs, fabrications made in history by historical forces, and which acquire meaning only in relation to identifiable others.

But it is also easy to forget that just 20 years ago, the explanatory power of race had not yet been deconstructed thoroughly enough to prevent the best-selling publication of... Charles Murray's "The Bell Curve," wherein the ancient logics of racial inferiority and domination were reconfigured in full display, with all the illusory trappings of authoritative social science."

-- From the Introduction by Professor John S. Wright (page 2)

The Genome Project has proven scientifically that there's only one race, the human race. But despite definitive proof that race is purely a fabrication of man's imagination, racism continues to persist.

That confounding conundrum is the subject of "The Myth of Race, The Reality of Racism," a collection of enlightening essays by Mahmoud El-Kati.

Professor El-Kati, a distinguished lecturer in History at Macalester University, makes the most of this opportunity to trace the derivation of the word "race" back to 1570 before chronicling the subsequent evolution of racism into an oppressive political and cultural ideology employed by Europeans to rationalize the exploitation and marginalization of so-called "inferior races."

Defining racism as "prejudice plus power," the author sees it as "largely an institutional phenomenon" based on "aggression, domination and greed." However, he warns that it can also be observed on the individual level in a variety of everyday social "habits, nuances and traits," like in a condescending look or a halfhearted handshake.

Nevertheless determined to eradicate the false notion of "race," Professor El-Kati assails it as a superstition no less ridiculous than the belief in witches that once led to innocent women being burned at the stake. For, he would argue that it is patently farcical to associate a host of negative stereotypes with black skin ranging from criminality to laziness.

The book comes equipped with viable solutions for the problem, too, as it suggests we not only create a new vocabulary, but condemn racist institutions and become actively involved in

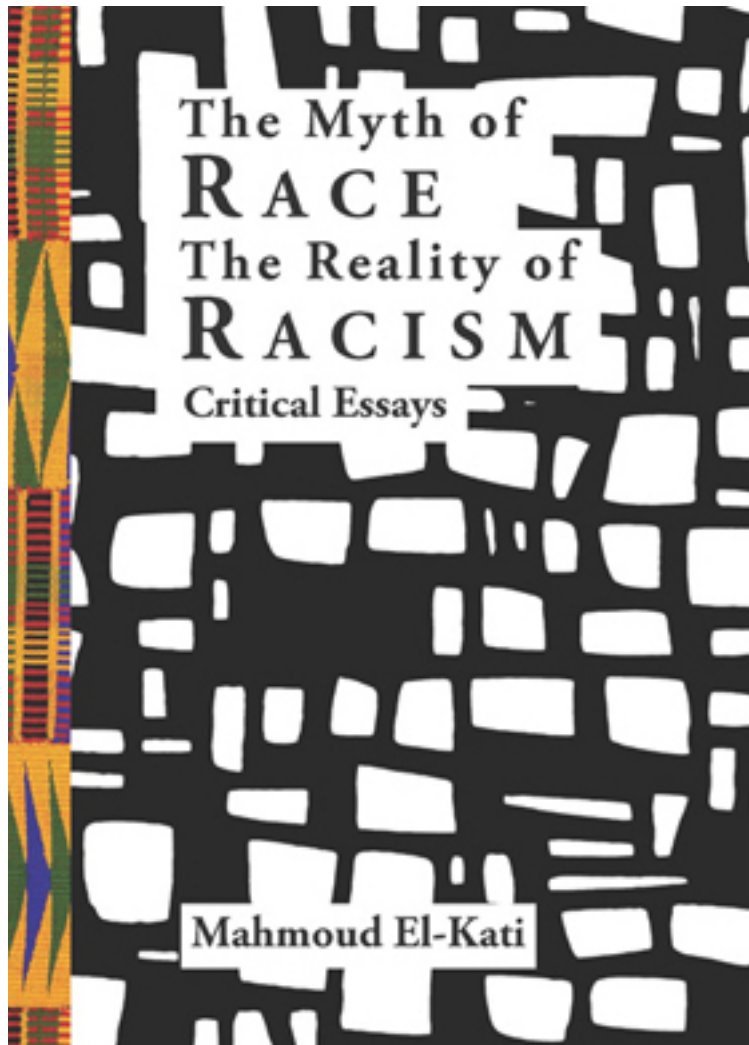
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overhauling society. After all, as in Ralph Ginsburg's encyclopedic study "100 Years of Lynchings," until relatively recently, "no white person had ever received the death sentence for taking the life of a black person in the whole history of capital punishment in the United States."

An insightful tome repositioning America in the Age of Obama as less a post-racial utopia than a work in progress in terms of dignity for all and the demise of white supremacy.



"The Myth of Race, The Reality of Racism"

by Mahmoud El-Kati

Papyrus Publishing

Paperback, \$8.00

92 pages

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To order a copy of The Myth of Race, The Reality of Racism, visit:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0988288338/ref%3dnosim/thslfofire-20>

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