

Preface

People of color the world over manifest the impacts of a racism originating in a distant era in history. Among Americans, there nonetheless remain professionals who are trained with hardly any reference at all to the biological, social and economic implications of skin color among an increasingly diverse population. Furthermore, those who teach at some of our most prestigious universities have not been exposed to the implications of skin color as a 21st century manifestation of racism.

Throughout my career, I have puzzled over the manner in which racism has evolved and continues to impose consequences upon society. I am constantly surprised by the fact that our obsession with racism gives hardly any consideration of the social and cultural gaps perpetuated by skin color. In fact, most Americans go about their daily affairs without ever mentioning a word about it. It should therefore come as no surprise that Americans have not understood the role of skin color in the conduct of racist social and economic interactions. For many reasons, the topic has remained an unspeakable taboo in practically every sector of the academy and the society at-large. This, I see as dangerous. It serves the tenets of racism and preserves the colonial status quo. In the aftermath, people of color define their worth by their proximity to Caucasian social and biological characteristics.

Racism via race or skin color can be neither understood nor assessed for its impact without a logical frame of reference. The chapters in this book will give readers some insight to the implications of skin color among people of color who may have idealized Western phenotypes as a consequence of the historical influences of colonization. We characterize the secret notion of hierarchy and quality of life perpetrated on the basis of skin color. The contributing authors have illustrated this perpetuation by first giving account of the biology of skin color and its manifestation of racism in the 21st century. Subsequent chapters address the penalties exacted upon society by racism and its pervasiveness. In the final chapter, I close with a summation of the skin color phenomenon.

In multiple respects, this book is unique. It takes readers beyond the black/white racial dichotomy by exposing a manifestation of racism that appears among those who would be otherwise considered victims. This is not an attempt to minimize white racism, or any other social ills. It is not a criticism

or judgment of people of color, but merely a mirror in which our society may view a surprising reflection of itself. We do not presume to be complete or flawless in our presentation. Rather, we hope to promote dialogue about all forms and manner of societal denigration. We engage in this dialogue despite the real danger of stereotyping and cultural misrepresentation, or even worse, misuse for racist purposes.

Some of my colleagues argue that writing about skin color will do more harm than good because it is so provocative. But it is my opinion that confronting a provocative topic is a healthy and socially appropriate way to benefit American society and humanity in general. This book is only a start, but a start is where solutions begin.

In conclusion, I believe the problem for any author who attempts comment upon such a charged topic as racism by skin color may make errors of interpretation. When that interpretation reaches publication, we run the risk of doing disservice to all. In the grist of self worth, the following authors engage in their attempt at discussion under the assumption of dignity and respect for all people. Solution will result to the extent that we maintain openness and a willingness to consider new ideas. Furthermore, those of us stained by the rumors of inferiority associated with skin color indulge an extremely dangerous luxury. By virtue of victimization in modern circles of scholarship there is a tendency to portray ourselves as simultaneously the embodiment of quintessential virtue and cultural piety. Social denigration may be claimed to provide an unchangeable cloak of integrity and an innate nobility that sets one morally apart from oppressors. Victims of racism often feel that they have earned the right to cast a moral stone at the racists among them. There is a tendency to take no responsibility for its social injustice and to delude ourselves into ignoring the implications of skin color because white racism seems worse. I believe it is much better to discuss the very real racist taboos of skin color despite the dangers of discomfort, inaccuracy or misinterpretation.

In the final analysis, humanity, of whatever gender, race or skin color cannot deny the dignity and worth of another without diminishing some measure of its own. For in the image of one's victim, is a reflection of one's self. Study of racism in the 21st century may be an accurate revelation of what we've become. Believing that, it is my sincerest hope and that of the contributing authors that those who read this book move past stereotypes or misinterpretations. They should focus instead on the dynamics of our existence as closely linked members of a common genetic family.

East Lansing, MI

Ronald E. Hall