

The following list of behaviors or manifestations of modern racism for the dominant or non-target groups are offered from my colleagues and my experiences to help explain this struggle. The accompanying examples come from our work in educational settings.

1. *Dysfunctional rescuing*: This form of modern racism is characterized by helping people of color based on an assumption that they cannot help themselves; setting them up to fail; being patronizing or condescending; helping people of color in such a way that it limits their ability to help themselves. This “help that does not help” is often motivated out of guilt or shame. It may be conscious or unconscious and is often embedded in the “culture of niceness or politeness” thus making its limiting aspects hard to discern. “Tokenism” is another name for this process of “doing what’s right” without preparing the existing organization for this change.

Examples of dysfunctional rescuing are:

A white teacher “gives” a black student who is making a “B+” an “A” instead of challenging her. The student is active in the black student association and is obviously quite bright. The teacher feels vaguely guilty about societal injustices and worries that the student might see him as racist. The teacher is not active in campus efforts to change institutional racism and believes that if he just “does right by blacks,” everything will be okay. A white department head brings a 30-year-old black female into a previously all white male biology department. He feels good about insisting that she be chosen and denies the importance of the reluctance of his colleagues. All of these faculty have been at the institution for at least 10 years and have failed to support the hiring of any target group members. The department chair fails to recognize the potential set up for failure involved in bringing target groups into a hostile environment without a plan for impacting the culture. “Tokenism” is another name for this process of “doing what’s right” without preparing the existing organization for this change.

2. *Blaming the victim*: In this form, racism is expressed by attributing the results of systemic oppression to the target group; ignoring the real impact of racism on the lives of blacks or other people of color; blaming people of color for their current economic situation; or setting target group members up to fail and then blaming them.

Examples of blaming the victim include:

A black student is labeled as having misplaced priorities because of her work on black issues on her campus; she is considered bright but too busy being angry to study. She was not accepted into a student leaders campus honorary society because her concerns were viewed as “too narrow.” A latina female becomes depressed and exhibits paranoid symptoms in a faculty meeting after being the lone latina and female faculty person for a year in a previously all white male department where she is largely avoided or patronized. The chair recommends she get psychiatric treatment.

3. *Avoidance of contact*: Modern racism may also be manifested by not having social or professional contact with people of color; making no effort to learn about life in communities of color; living in all white communities; or exercising the choice that whites most often have of not being involved in the lives of people of color.

Examples of the avoidance of contact are:

A white university administrator who lives in an all white neighborhood says, “I just don’t have the opportunity to meet black people.” A white supervisor is a very pleasant person but does not confront a situation when two black male employees engage in conflict. The supervisor, however, would confront the situation if the employees were white.

4. *Denial of cultural differences*: In this expression, modern racism means minimizing obvious physical or behavioral differences between people as well as differences in preferences that may be rooted in culture; discounting the influence of African culture and of the African-American or Asian-American experience; or being color-blind in a way that masks discomfort with differences. “What does race have to do with it? Aren’t people just people? Skin color doesn’t matter, we are all just people.” --color-blindness—“I don’t see color, I see people”

Examples of the denial of cultural differences include:

A white faculty member describing the only black faculty member he works with, and trying hard to avoid saying that the faculty member is black. A white administrator says with much exasperation, when being given information about racial differences in retention of blacks in his university, “What does race have to do with it? Aren’t people just people? Skin color doesn’t matter, we are all just people.”

5. *Denial of the political significance of differences*: Finally, modern racism may be manifested by not understanding or denying the differential impacts of social, political, economic, historical, and psychological realities on the lives of people of color and whites, minimizing the influence of such variables on all our lives and institutions. This modern racism may be accompanied by an attitude that cultural differences are just interesting or fun. Such a stance results in an unwillingness to acknowledge the multiplicity of ways in which the impacts of the myth of white superiority continue. The stance also minimizes white privilege as well as the insidious nature of the prevalence of the mentality and practice of “West is Best” by those in positions of power and control in key aspects of life in the United States and most of the world as the beginning of the 21st century. This type of modern racism is firmly entrenched and is perhaps the most binding. Unraveling the hold of a dominant Western perspective will take a massive rethinking of many of our ways of being and doing in the United States.

Examples of the denial of the political significance of differences are:

A white middle level manager came to a workshop very upset about the affirmative action plan his company has implemented. He was convinced that affirmative action was reverse discrimination and said, "We don't need affirmative action here. We hire blacks." Blacks comprised 10% of the management positions (up 8% in two years because of the plan) and 90% of the custodial positions. Reverse Racism – Isn't talking about racism actually racism? – when you bring up race, you're just trying to be divisive

Valerie Batts – Modern Racism: Is Reconciliation Possible?

<http://visions-inc.org/article/is-reconciliation-possible-lessons-from-combating-modern-racism/>