

<https://www.ctpost.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

CONNECTICUT POST

<https://www.nhregister.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

New Haven Register

<https://www.thehour.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

The Hour

<https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>



<https://www.greenwichtime.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

GREENWICH  TIME

<https://www.newstimes.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

newstimes.com

<https://www.middletownpress.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

THE MIDDLETOWN PRESS

<https://www.registercitizen.com/opinion/article/Racism-constructed-to-justify-slavery-15449759.php>

THE REGISTER CITIZEN

Opinion: Racism constructed in America to justify slavery

By Preston Tisdale
Monday, August 3, 2020



Photo: Associated Press

Tamara Lanier attends a news conference near the Harvard Club Wednesday, March 20, 2019, in New York. Lanier, of Norwich, Conn., is suing Harvard University for “wrongful seizure, possession and expropriation” of images she says depict two of her ancestors.

For most of white America, talk about racism has been taboo. Racism has been ignored and discounted. There was no honest public acknowledgment and discourse, particularly regarding the main source of racism in America — slavery and its aftermath.

American racism was deliberately constructed to justify American slavery.

As discovered by descendants of one slave-trading family, regarding American slavery, they “knew what they were doing, knew it was wrong and did it, anyway.”

Ruth Simmons, the former president of Brown University, commissioned a self-reflective study of Brown’s connection to slavery. Part of the Brown family accumulated extraordinary wealth as slave traders who owned sugarcane plantations where Africans were worked to death. Their average life expectancy on the plantations was less than seven years. Yet the slavery-induced stereotype has unceasingly maintained that African-Americans were and are lazy.

The demonization and dehumanization of African Americans needed to be powerful enough to obfuscate the horrors of slavery. In every facet of American life, African Americans were denigrated and debased. Slaveowners brainwashed Americans to believe that the enslaved had no history, had no self-worth, were not the economic foundation of American wealth and that their existence was completely defined by their enslavement. Racism became inextricably intertwined within the fabric of American society. Racism became so hardwired within the American consciousness that it has become a default position, undetectable to most Americans.

Proactive steps are necessary to counter these concepts.

For instance, the myths, stereotypes and lies, generated by slavery and the Confederacy, must be truthfully and publicly exposed, along with the horrors and the consequences of slavery. The manifestation of this bigotry, in the bad acts of police officers, should no longer avoid accountability.

Proactive steps, needed to generate massive change, must occur in police departments.

Police departments need to effectively screen out applicants who have demonstrated or who possess racially hostile attitudes. The departments need to remove officers who demonstrate racially hostile attitudes or behavior. What is needed is a defunding of the militarization of police departments. The departments need to reaffirm their commitment to serve as peacekeepers and not as military forces with missions to occupy Black communities. Officers need to undergo ongoing training in effective measures to remove racial stereotypes, myths and profiles from their everyday policing techniques.

We need police unions to step up and support these changes.

The racially biased treatment of Black people by police cannot be tolerated. For example, the gentle police treatment of Dylan Roof, a white mass murderer of Black church attendees, in contrast with the horrific police killing of Philando Castile in the presence of his girlfriend and her 4-year old daughter, is indefensible.

Since slavery, Black reports of violence at the hands of police and others have been disbelieved.

The culture, thoughts and language of slavery continued after it was abolished. Confederate stereotypes, myths and revisionist history have been adopted in whole or part, throughout America. Slavery existed throughout the nation, and the North has been quite receptive to these ideas, as well.

I am part of a team of lawyers at Koskoff Koskoff & Bieder representing Connecticut resident Tamara Lanier in her lawsuit against Harvard University. One of Harvard's most revered professors, Louis Agassiz, promulgated a pseudo-science proclaiming the inferiority of Black people. In 1850, as the debate raged regarding the Fugitive Slave Act, Agassiz's theories were seized upon as justification for slavery and as rationalization for white supremacist ideology that persists to this day.

After the Civil War, the war against African Americans was relentless. Terrorist mobs, which included white policemen, murdered thousands of Blacks. A scheme was developed in the former Confederate states to re-enslave African Americans. They were criminalized for being Black, convicted of phantom crimes.

The 13th Amendment abolished slavery for all, except those convicted of crimes. Many former slave plantations and significant industries, such as U.S. Steel profited. The money for "convict" labor was paid to the municipalities and comprised major portions of the private and public economy for whites.

This period is commonly labeled the Jim Crow era, which many assert should be properly designated the era of Neo-Slavery.

In current years, we witnessed municipalities, such as Ferguson, Mo., which seized upon related concepts to subsidize their governments.

America has never fully acknowledged, nor has it come to terms with its horrific legacy of slavery and racism. That failure has manifested itself in malevolent policies and ongoing systemic racism. The mindset engendered by slavery has been so powerful that many people of good will disbelieved accounts of racism. It required the recordings of modern technology to cause them to realize they have been misled.

The time has come to strip away the toxic vestiges of the past and to engage in truth and reconciliation. Millions are calling for the development of a new chapter of the American experience. The well-being of this nation depends upon a successful response to this call.

Preston Tisdale is the secretary of the Public Justice Foundation. He serves on the Board of Governors of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, the American Association for Justice, and on the Connecticut Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System. He can be reached at PTisdale@koskoff.com or 203-336-4421.