

MEGAN BURKE

COLORBLIND RACISM: Medford MA: Polity. 2018. ISBN: 9781509524419; \$64.95, 200 pages.

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Megan Burke's *Colorblind Racism* explores not only how it has been conceptualised, but also imparts a historical framework for understanding the phenomenon, and novel ways to analyse and combat colorblind racism to "...ensure that a *new* 'new racism' does not take its place." (p. 121). The book provides an accessible yet comprehensive theoretical overview of colorblind racism and scholarship, and covers a wide array of topics of contemporary interest from intersectionality to police brutality.

Burke's experience as an educator as well as developer of her university's Engaging Diversity pre-orientation program is clearly evident in *Colorblind Racism*. The book is exemplary for the teacher-scholar model where Burke's text goes beyond a traditional monograph to serve as an invaluable teaching and learning tool. In addition to the usual discussion questions posed at the end of chapters in textbooks and readers, Burke includes discussion questions embedded within chapters that are relative to adjacent text. Furthermore, at the conclusion of each chapter, she provides a 'further exploration' section that gives students the opportunity to advance research and activism skills through such activities as developing research questions and ideas of how to study them, improving digital literacy, conducting policy evaluation, engaging in role play, and setting achievable goals.

The introduction defines colorblind racism and how it is entrenched in American society. Burke explains that even though colorblind racism has been referred to by several names by a variety of scholars, its core features are that it is used reactively, is complicit with neoliberalism, and relies on continued usage of racial stereotypes. Burke goes on to describe early studies of colorblind racism and synthesise common themes such as abstractness, anti-blackness, covertness, and an institutional-focus. Also included in the introduction is a description of the four central frames of colorblind racism established by Eduardo Bonilla Silva (2003), and an introduction to traditional methods used to study colorblind racism. Burke is at pains here, and throughout the text, to remind readers that overt racism has not disappeared, and colorblind racism does not encompass all racism. She also takes the opportunity at the end of the first (and third and fourth chapters as well) to encourage race scholars to go beyond simple documentation of colorblind racism and instead focus on the mechanisms that continuously reconstruct racism in an ever evolving society.

In Chapter 2, "Colorblindness in Historical Context," Burke examines pre-Civil Rights Movement history to examine how the idea of race evolved in the United States and how colorblind racism has been embedded in U.S. policy. Specifically, she illuminates historical examples of colorblindness prior to the Civil Rights Movement evident in the Declaration of Independence, the Alien Land Act, and Democratic Party policies, as well as demonstrating how colorblind ideology has linked with global policy such as Cold War Politics and Neoliberalism. She applies Bonilla-Silva's (2003) frames throughout American history while

also highlighting how black scholars have been historically marginalised within the discipline of Sociology. Burke also uses more contemporary examples such as Reagan's War on Drugs and Obama's funding cuts to illustrate that legal colorblind racist policies result in sustained racial discrimination.

In Chapter 3, "Colorblindness in Divergent Contexts" Burke focuses on how colorblind racism permeates social institutions such as housing, education, health care, and policing. In this chapter she touches on a range of topics such as the false association between diversity and racial justice, immigration policy, affirmative action, welfare, disaster response, popular culture, home and family life, and white habitus.

Chapter 4, "Contested Colorblindness" demonstrates how colorblind racism changes across time and space. Specifically Burke discusses how colorblind racist ideology is adopted differently by racial groups and across contexts, while also providing definitions for racism, prejudice, and ideology.

Chapter 5, "New Directions" explores the ways in which new research challenges previously rigid classifications of color-blindness, and incorporates subjectiveness and nuanced understanding of colorblind ideologies and actions. In this concluding chapter, Burke makes several calls to action for researchers in the field, stating that future studies should shift their focus from examining whites' ignorance and denial of racism to exploring how whites maintain their advantage by negotiating their knowledge of racism. She also emphasizes that future research should; examine the contextual nature of colorblind racism and its connection to institutions; study antiracist actors, and utilise intersectionality. Apart from scholarly pursuit, Burke calls on readers to address racial violence (including symbolic violence) and inequality by demanding change in their personal and professional lives in concrete rather than abstract ways. Areas in which to devote specific attention include spaces where people of color have experienced discrimination and there has been inaction. Lastly, Burke encourages antiracist scholarship and activism to anticipate colorblind resistance not rooted in the empirical reality of racism and to challenge it.

Not only does this call to action stimulate researchers in the field, the book in its entirety informs and inspires students. It will be of interest to those teaching and learning about racism in sociology, psychology, geography, anthropology, law, political science, and history.

References

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 2003. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 1st edition