Racism without Racists: Colorblind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the U.S.

By Yesenia King

Many current debates on the topic of race and race relations don’t actually view racism as a principal organizing tenet of social inequality in the U.S. Instead they consider racial inequality as something secondary to social class inequality or as an ideological phenomenon that lacks significance. In *Racism without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva asserts that racism is by no means secondary or less significant than class but in fact takes on a life of its own as a source of social inequality whether it is ideologically, economically, politically, or socially. He states that the placement of actors in racial categories or races is no accident. Much like the intersectionalities of different social positions like gender and class, racism has become its own form of oppression with its own consequences that then configure the allocations of material goods and cultural capital along racial lines.

Bonilla-Silva further mentions that when race is viewed as a peripheral issue to class, it does not present an adequate theoretical base for understanding racial phenomenon. Since the analysis of race is a concept that is usually defined as having a largely ideological basis and fundamentally class reductionist, categorizing race in this way limits its understanding by considering class struggle the primary expounding variable of social life. In turn, racism or race-based struggles are not regarded as actually racial but generally considered a derivative of class regardless of whether it is viewed as fostered by the bourgeoisie, the product of intra-working class strife, or as the product of contingent historical processes.

Furthermore, Bonilla-Silva points out that this poses the problem that if racism is not part of the society but instead the characteristic of racist individuals or an ideology that affects members of the working class, then social institutions cannot be racists and the study of racism should be a matter of surveying the people in a society who hold racist beliefs. As a result of racism not having an independent structural tenet, it can be falsely interpreted as being in decline, only identifying overt racist behavior and missing the subtle and inconspicuous forms of racism that are evident in today’s society. Therefore, I think the analysis of this book is fundamentally important and necessary in understanding the reality of our struggles and highly recommend you check it out.