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SYSTEMIC RACISM AND UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY: THE MORAL ISSUES

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Abstract

This paper discusses how the Ubuntu philosophy could be applied to address the negative impacts and the moral issues in systemic racism. Discovering the heterogeneous nature of humanity, the paper holds that every human being has an instinct of racism as seen in reverse racism. The work conceptualizes the concepts of race and racism, trying to establish a distinction and the origin of racism. It cross-breeds the ideas and notions of different philosophers and thinkers including the reverse racists who came as Pan- African thinkers. The paper listed the causes of racism and went ahead to explain systemic racism and its criticism. It espouses the Ubuntu Philosophy of the Bantu people, tracing its history too. The paper suggests that systemic racism raises serious moral issues ranging from dehumanization, discrimination, injustice, unfair treatment, inequality, emotional trauma and physical harm that sometimes results in death. The paper opines that if humanity will adopt and practice Ubuntu philosophy of "I am because we are, and if we are, therefore I am", then human beings will understand that we are all from one stock, hence we should be careful of what we do to others, despite their colour, race or ethnic nationality. To address this menace, the paper calls for moral education embedded in self-awareness and conscientization of all persons and races.

Keywords: Morality, Racism, Ubuntu Philosophy, Systemic Racism and Inequality.

Introduction:

On the 13th of July, 2013, we attended a Priestly Ordination in one of the dioceses in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. The candidates were drawn from different parts of the country and we were fortunate to have one of the candidates from our parish in Akwa Ibom State. In such an occasion that had people drawn from different parts of the country, one expected that a more general understandable and acceptable language would be used for the celebration of the Holy Mass, at least if not for anything, but to show sense of accommodation, oneness, and inclusivity. But we were shocked that the Holy Mass was celebrated in the language of the local people, leaving the rest of us in awe, following the postures and gestures of the Holy Mass

since we were all catholic faithful. That event reminded me of the happenings at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

Genesis chapter 9: 18-28 records a story of Noah and his sons and the curse on Ham. "The sons of Noah who went out of the boat were Shem, Ham and Japheth (Ham was the father of Canaan). These three were the ancestors of all the people on earth…When Noah was sober again and learnt of what his youngest son had done to him, he said,

> "A curse on Canaan!
> He will be a slave to his brothers…
> Canaan will be a slave to Shem. May God cause Japheth to increase!
> May his descendants live with the people of Shem.
> Canaan will be a slave of Japheth…"

The literary interpretation of the story in Matthew 15: 21-28 involving Jesus Christ and the Canaanite Woman. In that passage, responding to the request of the woman from Canaan to heal her daughter possessed by demon, Jesus Christ is quoted as saying "…it isn't right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs". Such remark by the all-knowing Saviour is the height of racism, discrimination, segregation and degradation.

Pondering on the stories and reflecting on the passages paraphrase above prompts different questions. If that Ordination Mass was held in our town, what would have been done differently? Will we have sacrificed our local people for the visitors? Was it an opportunity for cultural promotion? Is such scenario peculiar to the South Easterners? What was their basis for doing what they did? Knowing fully well that the language they used was not lingua franca? Why was one of the ancestors cursed to serve others in a bible that promotes equality? Why was the woman addressed in such a derogatory manner by Christ? Were the other two ancestors without faults throughout their existence on earth? Was inequality the order of creation in the universe and equality human's creation? If Ham was not cursed, does it mean we would have had equality in the society and there would be no racial discrimination?

Further reflection on the creation story as recorded in the Bible raises more questions of the origin of racism and why it has permeated every system, sector, society, institution and facets of life. Even in a monogamous family, there are still elements of racial discrimination. This paper explores the different views of great thinkers about this global menace and how it can be mitigated using the model of Ubuntu philosophy.

The Concept of Racism

The word 'Race' means many things to many thinkers. Technically, it is almost generally agreed that a race is that population whose members share a greater number of physical traits among themselves than they do with populations living in other areas. This definition seems to be coming from the cultural angle. But no one can totally deny that there is a direct relationship between race and culture. Scientifically, race is simply a statistical statement about the occurrence of certain physical characteristics. According to William Haviland et al (2007), a race is a superiority by which one group justifies the dehumanization of others based on their distinctive physical characteristics. It is not just discrimination of ideas, values, or attitudes, but it is also a political problem. Race is the isolation of other geographical group of people for the benefit of another. It can be defined by culture or society.

On the other hand, racism is the belief that human races possess distinctive features, abilities or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as superior or inferior to one another. Racism holds that a group of humans possess different behavioural traits corresponding to inherited attributes and can be divided based on the superiority of one race or ethnicity over another. Steven Egbo affirms the above assertion when he said "racism is seen as a belief that race is a primary determination of human traits and capabilities, and that racial differences produce inherited superiority of a particular race" (Nkanta, 2019). It is a process by which systems and policies, customs and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people. According to David Wellman (1993), racism is a system of advantage based on race. It is one of the major forms of social differentiation and structural inequality in any society. On its part, the United Nations does not define racism, rather, it looks at Racial Discrimination. In its International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965, the UN states, "Racial Discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."

Origin of Racism

According to history, the word racism is relatively recent. It is a modern concept that came during the European age of imperialism. It became widely used in the 1930s in the West when it was used to describe the nazists ideology: Nazism. But it is also agreed that before the coinage or usage of the word, the actual practice was there. Like Aristotle, as quoted by Bernard Lewis (1990) would say in his discussion of slavery, while the Greeks are free by nature, non-Greeks are slaves by nature too.

Aristotle description was not about any particular race, but how can some be created naturally free and others, naturally slaves. The height of racism.

Racism may be institutional, it may be economic, it may be cultural, it may be colour blind and it may also be aversive or the reverse.

Philosophers' Theories on Racism

Different philosophers have made diverse contributions on the subject of racism. While some submissions come in form of the conceptualization of the concept of racism, others make reference to it in their different philosophical postulations; and yet, others come in the form of anti-racism, attacking the dominant races, the reverse racism.

Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher of the 18th Century is one of those that have made contributions on the subject matter. Though known and applauded widely for his moral views, maybe because of the humble and pious background of his family, but he is seen as one of the racists who promoted Eurocentrism. In his work, *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), Kant can be seen degrading the Africans, Asians and other non-Europeans. To him, Africans are lazy, stupid and indolent and are inherently inferior to the Europeans. They have no feeling that rises above the trifling. Africans and the black skin colour are intellectually dwarfs, morally blank and rationally empty. In his *Lecture on Physical Geography* (1792), Kant is further seen promoting racial hierarchy that places the Europeans and their cultural/traditional practices at the top and the black Africans and other non-Europeans at the bottom. Because of the high regards he was held in his society, his Eurocentric ideas helped in justifying slavery, colonialism, suppression, and other forms of oppressions.

But a closer study of Kant's racial idea and his moral philosophy presents a sharp contradiction. In his moral philosophy, Kant advocates human equality and the respect for human dignity. In his *The Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* published in 1785 and translated by Paton in 1934, in the second of his three Categorical Imperatives which is considered as the 'Principle of Humanity', he states *"So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only"*. Ezedike and Dominic (2016) capture the interpretation of this principle to every human thus:

Since human beings, according to Kant, by virtue of rationality are the only class of beings that belong to the kingdom of ends, we must treat one another with dignity and utmost respect..., see themselves as having an intrinsic, absolute worth and

irreducible dignity.... Hence, no rational being should see the other as merely an object of a relative worth.

his principle in practice disapproves every form of violation including discrimination based on race, colour, economic, educational or Political status, etc.

In *The Racial Contract* (1997), Charles W. Mill, a Jamaican-American philosopher took a swipe on the Social Contracts of Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacque Rousseau and John Locke. He accused them of deceiving the society with their social contracts which in reality are embedded in racism of colour, excluding the blacks with equal rights and privileges. His idea of Contract is that of the creation and enforcement of racial structures and hierarchies. His Racial Contract is rooted on the supremacy, the dominance, the superiority of the white. Contract, to Mill, is a tool for colonialism, segregation, oppression and slavery. It is seen as an agreement making the white to continually maintain superiority over the non- white race. Mill pointed out that Racism is a systemic creation of the society; and racism is embedded in systems and institutions and not individuals. Individuals are only agents of the systems. Though Mill's idea of racism is considered as being too wide and broad, it has not changed his submission that racism has moved from individual parts to systemic whole.

Karl Heinrich Marx is another philosopher whose philosophical ideas have bearings with Racism; his racial idea is embedded in his economic philosophy. Marx idea of racism is about the stratification and structuring of the society; he stratifies the society into economic substructure and superstructure. In his capitalist economic ideology as contained in his book *In The Capital* (1867), the bourgeoisie class oppresses, alienates, exploits and victimizes the proletariats. They do so to maintain power, proof superiority and continually keep themselves at the top. The class struggle of Marx presents the rich and the poor, one that owns resources and means of production and one that has only human labour. The rich owns everything, the poor owned only labour and only work for the rich. Marx observes *In the Capital*: "the man who possessed no other property than his labour power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of the men, who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labour. He can work only with their permission, hence, live only with their permission". (Ushie & Uduigwomen in Uduigwomen et al, 2016).

Despite his efforts in structuring and stratifying the society, Marx, in *The Civil War in France* (1986) criticizes the capitalists for creating and perpetrating inequality. He tries to bridge the class struggle and social change created by capitalism, and encourages the working class, the proletariat to abolish the class economic racism. The abolishment, to him will create a communist society based on equality. Notwithstanding his efforts in this, there are still domination, exploitation,

oppression, and slavery of the working class by those that have the means of production. Marx affirms, "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another" (1986).

There are also these set of philosophers that popularize Reverse Racism, most of them are Africans and non-Europeans. Reverse racism is a concept used to describe acts of hostility, discrimination, and racialism against members of a dominant or majority race or ethnic group, favouring members of the minority race or ethnic group. However, many thinkers view this reverse racism as a myth rather than a reality. It is like the case of Frederich Nietzsche's idea of ubermensch; you cannot condemn evil by creating another evil.

Leopold Sedar Senghor, a renowned poet and philosopher, a Senegalese, born in 1906 to a catholic parent, was one of those reverse racists. After abandoning the priesthood which was his parent's desired vocation for him, he went to Dakar and later France for his education. It was at France that Senghor discovered the uniqueness and contributions of Africans to the development and civilization of the world. To drive his defense for Africa, he postulated 'Negritude'.

Negritude is derived from the word '*Negro*', meaning '*black*'. Negritude came as a philosophical idea and movement against the French Policy of Assimilation; it is a philosophy of rediscovery of Africa's pride. Oduora Asuo (2012) puts it that: "Negritude was an attempt at self-realization, actualization and restoration of the hitherto bastardized image of the African Personality". To Nwokereke (2005), Negritude was "a philosophy of rediscovery and cultural emancipation aimed at giving the African people a sense of pride and dignity in their culture as distinct from French culture and identity as Africans".

Negritude came as a weapon to attack the evil of colonialism that washes the Africans' personality leaving only the colour. It came to fight not only the French political policy of assimilation but also the intellectual hegemony and domination of the French. It also came to promote African race through the cultivation of indigenous African languages and traditions.

Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian philosopher, political theorist and a historian also wrote in defense of the oppression, segregation and colonization of the Africans. His works attacked the colonization, westernization and devaluation of Africans and their cultures. In *Critique of Black Reason* (2013), Mbembe holds that 'blackness' is historically a product created to justify the oppressions, slavery and colonization policies of the white. He went on to challenge the ideas of modernity and capitalism

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as being exploitative of the blacks and called for African epistemology by advocating for the decolonization of knowledge. Following his submission, it therefore means that, ontologically, there was no skin colouration, but rather blackness was only created for the white racism policy. But how can we return the society to a colourless and raceless state?

In one of his poetic pieces, *Telephone Conversation*, Noble Laureate and one of Nigeria's renowned playwrights, Wole Soyinka (1963), explores the theme of Racism which he avers transcends every society and nation. In the conversation, a man of the black race is heard calling a white landlady to inquire securing an accommodation in the woman's house. Instead of offering an unbiased response, the landlady first question is the skin colour of the proposed tenant. This scenario exposes the cruelty that racism has caused humanity. People are no longer relating with others based on who they are, their intrinsic value, but on skin colour and race. Martin Luther King (Jr.) foresaw this in his Washington address of August 28, 1963, when he said, "I have a dream that one day my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" (Anagwouye, 2008).

Causes of Racism

The following may be considered as causes of racism:

➤ **Greed and Selfish Interest**: Man is inherently a greedy and selfish being. Though this is one of the ongoing discussions among thinkers considering the complex nature of man, but man's motives and intentions for actions and inactions reveal the greediness and selfishness of man towards another man. If not for man's greediness and selfishness, why would a group of persons see themselves as superior and others, inferior? It is this selfish mentality that promotes racial discrimination in the world. The different ethnic wars and conflicts are towards preservation of either territorial boundaries or material and mineral properties/resources. The advent of this results in the segregation, oppression, exploitation of one race by the other, even in the face of altruistic theory which is meant to negate all these.

➤ **Discriminatory Policies**: Certain laws, rules, regulations and policies of government are encouraging and aiding racism. Some of these policies and laws institutionalize inequality, limit opportunities for some against others, and perpetuates stereotypes among nations and races. For example, the Apartheid policy in South Africa discriminated against the black South Africans. The Jim Crow laws of USA restricted Africans from voting, from acquiring education and even public accommodation.

➤ **Inferiority Complex**: It was Pascal, a French philosopher who exclaimed "What a chimera is man, bundle of contradiction!" (Omoregbe, 1990). Despite his state

of contingency, man is the greatest being in the universe, yet man is so weak, wretched and fragile in some situations. Imagine a fellow man seeing himself as inferior and another superior to him. There is this disturbing term we are yet to clear our minds from in the Nigeria construction sector; that word is 'Expatriate'. A typical Nigerian is dreaded by the mention of that word, because it represents one person with a white skin from another country. Even the Nigerian Government and most African countries protect these so call 'expatriates' and value them more than their own citizens. These persons are given security officers on uniform to protect them, while the citizens are left unsecured. The men of the underworld, the kidnappers, place higher ransom tag on them than the citizens. This practice places the citizens as second-class humans; it makes them look inferior to their white skin counterparts. Unfortunately, most of the citizens can do better, intellectually, than most of these expatriates. This parasitic practice has found its way into other sectors in most African countries. We copy and adopt without questioning whatever comes from our white-skin brothers. Little wondering why the French Policy of Assimiliation succeeded in some African countries.

➢ **Indolence/Indifference**: One of the problems faced by humanity is the problem of indifference. Indifference and indolence have caused so much harm in the society. An anonymous philosopher once said that the reason evil persist in the society is because of the silence, the indifference attitude of those who are supposed to speak out. Such people ignore and show no interest in finding solutions to the issue of racism, because it does not directly affect them. Even if the question arises in their mind, they suppress it. To such persons, Socrates warns that those with such life are living unexamined life, and they are not worth living.

➢ **Bias and coloured representation in the media**: The media supposed to be the watchdog of the society by speaking against any societal ill. Unfortunately, the supposed societal watchdog is even the object and medium by which certain ills are perpetrated in the society. Bias and coloured reportage have been in the increase. The media does the bidding of their paymasters and owners against the society. Racists are encouraged by media houses and platforms to promote their racial agenda.

Systemic Racism

The term was first coined in 1967 by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in "Black Power: The Politics of Liberation" (Wikipedia). Systemic Racism otherwise called Institutional Racism or Structural Racism or state racism is a form of discrimination that is based on race or Ethnic group. It is discrimination by governments, corporations, religions or other large organisations with the power to influence the lives of many individuals. It includes policies and practices that exist

throughout a whole society or organization that result in a support of continual unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment to others.

According to Sir William Macpherson (1999), systemic racism is "the collective failure of an organization to produce an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic group. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours that amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantaged minority ethnic people". From Sir Macpherson, it can be seen that most of the perpetrators of this act are thoughtless and ignorant. It is a stereotype they came to see and they continue without asking questions. The Merriam Webster Dictionary sees it as the oppression of a racial group to the advantage of another as perpetuated by inequality within interconnected system.

Systemic racism is different from individual racism; according to Carmichael and Hamilton (1967), while the latter is easily and often identifiable because of its overt nature, the individual racism is less perceived because of its less overt, 'far more subtle' nature. Systemic racism is carried by respected forces in the society, hence less of public condemnation. Systemic racism manifests itself in areas like criminal justice, employment, housing, healthcare, education and political representation.

Systemic racism manifests in different dimensions and sectors in different countries. Hardly is there any country in the world without some forms of systemic racism. In Nigeria, for instance, the indigenization policy or State of Origin, as some call it, is very pronounced. Its pronounced nature led to the promulgation of the Federal Character principle. Yet, even with this, some non-indigenes of some ethnic groups in Nigeria are still being treated as minorities and second-class with denied opportunities and privileges, especially in areas of employment, education and political appointments. Also, the marginalization and human right violations of the people of the Niger Delta region in Nigeria is another clear example. The region is dominated by the Ogonis and the Ijaws who are considered minority in the larger State of Nigeria. Despite accounting for more than 50% of the revenue of the country, the region is still plagued by underdevelopment, pollution and victimization. In South Africa, the practice was very much in practice, especially during the apartheid regime. One clear case was the native Land Act of 1913 that reserved more than 80% of land for usage by the whites against the blacks.

Criticism against systemic racism
Critics of this concept advance the following criticism against systemic racism:

➤ Loss of individual ingenuity and ignored progress: by looking at a whole instead of considering individual progresses, contributions and values, the concept discourages innovations and creativity among individuals.

➤ Ignorance on cultural differences: human society is a complex society with differences in cultures, traditions, ethos, values, beliefs and practices. This concept ignores these differences.

➤ Lack of clear sense of judgment: the concept seems not to be clear on the problems so as to proffer solutions, rather engages in vague assumptions and notions on handling systems.

➤ Promotes and Encourages Group Stigmatization: the concept can lead to erroneous stigmatization of an entire race or institution instead on encouraging cohesion and unity.

➤ False prey of fallacious reasoning: promoters of this concept sometimes commit fallacy of *argumentum ad populum* and *argumentum ad ignoraciam*, because they seem to exploit the prejudices and widely-held beliefs of some people out of ignorant in basing their judgements.

The Philosophy of Ubuntu

An anthropologist proposed a game to African tribe kids. He puts a basket full of fruits near a tree and told them that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he told them to run, they all held each other's hands and ran together, arrived the tree together, then sat together enjoying their fruits. When he asked them why they had run like that as one could have outran the others and have all the fruits for himself, they said UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?

The above story explains the philosophy of "I AM BECAUSE WE ARE". This is expressed in Xhosa culture in one word as UBUNTU. The philosophy has its root in the Bantu language in Southern Africa. According to Mangena (2016), Ubuntu is "the ideal of being human, derived from a worldview based on the guiding injunction: *Umuntu ngumumntu ngabantu (Nguni/Zulu/Ndebele)* which can be expressed in English as 'a person is a person among other persons'". To the Bantu people of South Africa, this is not just an individual created philosophy, but a communal way of life.

Historically, ubuntu's contemporary meaning and intellectual usage can be traced back to pan Africanism. Pan Africanism is really the expression of an intellectual and spiritual movement that dominated West Africa and later Southern Africa throughout the colonial period. Gade, as quoted by Ukanga in his unpublished research project, avers that before the 1950:

All written sources mentioning ubuntu were authored by people of European descent... Alexis Kagame, a Rwandese historian, philosopher was the first African to publish a text containing the term 'ubuntu' in 1956. In this text, entitled, *la philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'etre* (The Bantu-Rwanda Philosophy of Being). Ubuntu is translated as *'liberalite'* (liberality) (Ukanga, 2017).

Commenting further on the claim that ubuntu means that a person becomes a person through other persons during the South African transition process, Gade, as quoted by Ukanga (2017) says, "This particular idea that ubuntu means that people are interconnected may have developed as an argument against the segregation ideology of the previous apartheid regime. Ubuntu always seems to be defined as a human quality; more specifically, all the descriptions of a moral quality of a human being/person".

According to Miller J. (2016), Ubuntu is "considered to be a dispositional quality of human virtue based on connection, community, and mutual caring for each other. It is the belief that sharing a universal bond connects all humanity" (192). For the South African Nobel Peace Laureate, Desmond Tutu (1999):

> Ubuntu speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give praise to someone we say, "Yu, u nobuntu", "Hey, he or she has Ubuntu". This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life.... The common definition however follows: "we are because you are, and because you are, definitely I am (34-35).

For Ekpenyong (2020), Ubuntu connotes solicitude, caring, solidarity, sacrificial living, selflessness and togetherness. It is the logic of existence and interconnectedness.

In a work, *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*, Ramose (1999) presents three proverbs that underlies the concept, Ubuntu. The first is '*Motho ke motho ka batho*' meaning specifically 'to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on the basis, establish respectful human relations with them'. The second proverb or maxim is '*Feta kgomo o tshware motho*' which means 'if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between one's own wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life'. The third is '*kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*' as related to kingship means 'that the king owes his status, including all the powers associated with it to the will of the people under him'.

Different persons have made different interpretations and comments on Ramose three proverbs or maxims. One of such persons is Stella Esirah (2012) in an article titled *"Communalism: An African Traditional Value Vis-à-vis African Socialism; The Need for An Authentic Philosophical Anthropology for Africa Today"*. To the first maxim, she states:

> This is why there is a strong sense of affiliation in Africa as regards commitment to the life and growth of society...a sense of concern for others, care for the needs of a fellow human person, respect for human life, fair treatment to everyone seen in the eyes of the 'we': we are not many, we are a whole not a division, and we are a family not individuals. (97)

Esirah's position on the first maxim affirms the communal spirit of Africans which every human person despite the race should imbibe and adopt. She corroborates the stand of Ramose in the second maxim that human life is sacred and should be valued high and above every other thing, including riches, firm, wealth, money, etc. She states thus for the second maxim:

> This is the true African spirit based on the African cultural value that life is sacred and must always be preserved...and if I wish to preserve my life, I must also endeavor the preservation of your life. You must be for me to be...if you are not and I am what will become of me in matters of sharing my belongings? (103)

From the above diverse views, it is obvious that Ubuntu is the philosophy of humanity, where one is concern about the feelings and concerns of another human despite gender, race, ethnic nationality, skin colour, status, etc. what matters is that, everyone is a human being and should be seen and treated as one without any segregation or discrimination. Ubuntu encompasses the values of humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, generosity, empathy, care, selflessness, trust, kindness, compassion, respect, tolerance, fairness, justice. It captures the idea of oneness of being, and it ignites a relentless self-assurance that comes from knowing that we as humans belong in a greater whole. Nelson Mandela as quoted by Okpo & Ishaya (2017) caps it all "Ubuntu means people are people through other people..."

The Moral Issues

This endemic cankerworm has generated numerous issues of morality in the society. How can individual not be judged and seen base on his personality? Why condemn a whole race because of skin colour, ethnic nationality, and the organization he belongs, etc.? Systemic racism brings to the fore the issue of dehumanization and disrespect of the human person. Humans lost their dignity; they are being disrespected and rendered worthless because of the stereotyped opinion and belief

built about where they come from. Moreover, it encourages inequality, unfair treatment, discrimination and promotes injustices. God created human beings fairly and equally with equal opportunity. Sadly, some groups of persons rise, claiming superiority over others, meting unjust and unfair treatment on others. With systemic racism, those of the perceived inferior race are being discriminated upon. Like what happened in the United State of America between the Negros and the Whites where the blacks were not allowed to enter the same bus with the white. A construction worker in New York protested the hiring of blacks with the comment that "Horses and cows don't mix. Why should blacks and whites do?" Of course, the answer to that fellow is that blacks are humans, they are men and women, they have the same identity as whites, they belong to the same species, the blacks and whites are logically no different, they are neither horses nor cows that belong to different species, they are of the same *homo sapiens* specie.

Furthermore, systemic racism can lead to moral corruption and complicity. A race may decide to corrupt its moral values and principles just to feel among the superior race. This is possible when a particular race sees itself as being inferior to another race. We made mentioned of the issue of 'expatriate' in Nigeria. Another clear case is what the French Policy of Assimilation meant to achieve, making the blacks corrupt and devalue their persons, cultures and values and adopt that of France. Omoregbe (2013) succinctly puts it that: "Policy of Assimilation meant the rejection of African cultures, African values, and African identity as worthless. Africans were expected to consider it an honour to be allowed to adopt the French culture and identity" (34).

Systemic racism also raises the issue of emotional trauma and physical harm that may lead to death among the oppressed. We have heard several wars as a result of systemic racism; the Xenophobia Attack in South Africa, the Nazi War, etc. Many lives were lost in these wars and conflicts as a result of racism. In Nigeria, the story is not different; the Fulani herders clashes with other ethnic groups in the country, it is something that is very worrisome. Thousands of people have lost their lives due to this ethnic crisis. It may not be well pronounced, but it is brewing, it is ongoing because it is systemic. Several revelations through interviews and commentaries show that the issue of Boko Haram killings, maiming and terrorization of citizens, especially in northern Nigeria is a calculated systemic racism that came first as a political tool to capture political power. It then escalated as an inferno, with deep religious undertone.

The Way Forward

It is sad that even those involve in anti-racism end up promoting racism (the Reverse racism). To cope with this menace, moral and philosophical approaches must be

deployed. First, moral education must be practiced to educate and conscientize humanity in line with Ubuntu philosophy. Socrates says that ignorance is a vice, and knowledge, virtue. People take to wrongdoing as a result of ignorance. Most of the current perpetrators of this vice are ignorant about it. If one knows the good, one will do the good. Even the Holy Bible says that my people perish for lack of knowledge.

Second, we should learn to refrain from indolence and indifference, speak out against the menace and also listen to the voices of the oppressed. A popular jingle in media spaces in Nigeria today is 'if you see something, say something'. Though the impact of this jingle is not widely felt among Nigerians, it has recorded some positive impacts. For instance, the South West Security Network, the Amotekun Corps, its Ondo State chapter using this same campaign of seeing something, saying something has successfully rescued more than 100 kidnap victims and criminals arrested between 2023 and 2025. That it does not affect you today, does not mean that it may not affect you tomorrow. The greatest enemies of the world are the few learned and good persons who keep silent in moments of injustice, allowing the unlearned and evil men to thrive. You are a superior or major race in one hand, and also inferior and minority in another way. In Akwa Ibom State, the Ibibios form the majority but in Nigeria, they are one of the minorities. The Oros in Akwa Ibom State are crying of being marginalized by the Ibibios and Annangs because of their minority status, yet the Okobos in Oro are also crying of marginalization by the other Oro brothers that form majority. What this means is that, we should imbibe the golden rule principle of doing to others what we wish others to do to us. No one or race enjoys discrimination, victimization or marginalization of any form. We should speak out for others, those we are more powerful than. Our powers should be their powers. This can only be achievable when we see others as ourselves in line with the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Third, we should discourage and work towards eradicating discriminative policies and programmes. By so doing, we would have promoted inclusivity. For instance, the policy of State of Origin in Nigeria; almost every employer's form or major data collation mechanism has this policy. Instead of persons seeing themselves first as humans, they rather see themselves first as indigenes of this state and that. We will be able to see ourselves in others if such discriminatory policies are eradicated. Like Kant would say, treat humanity as end not means to an end with inclusive policies. To some persons, these set of policies are meant to promote equality; and like in Nigeria, encourage Federal Character principle. But the greatest equality in practice is that which holds and recognize all persons first as human with equal opportunity and right. You will not feel cheated or marginalized if you see others as you. These

principles and concepts only arise to checkmate the perceived racial discrimination, marginalization and segregation.

Conclusion

The United Nations, in its Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978) states, "All human beings belong to a single species and are descended from a common stock. They are born equal in dignity and rights and all form an integral part of humanity". Nature created and placed us in this heterogeneous society that we find ourselves. We can say this about race that there is no evidence to be drawn from history, archaeology, psychology, ethnology, sociology and even philosophy to support the idea that one race is superior, has more potential than any other. Morality demands that we use our diverse strengths embedded in our diverse values, principles, cultures and tradition to the advantage of all, and not to segregate, discriminate, marginalize and oppress others. Our strengths should lie in the weakness of others and we offer support indiscriminately. If systemic racism is not checked, we will end up returning the world to the Hobbesian state of nature, just to promote our races. Therefore, let us encourage moral education that lies in self-awareness, bringing to our consciousness that we are all humans, created equally. That as rich, we need the poor; as superior, we need the inferior; as bourgeoisie, we need the proletariat, because 'I AM BECAUSE WE ARE'.

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