

Reflections on Re-Creating Biological Race and the Entrapment of Black People

Drawing upon Roberts' talk from the Association of Black Sociologists 2018 meeting, Roberts discusses how the US government -- its policies and practices -- endeavor to "kill the Black body" on multiple fronts. Violent healthcare and child services for Black mothers, the carceral state, and the rise of a new racist science threaten Black bodies. These interconnected topics are mutually reinforced. So, Roberts calls Black sociologists to be abolitionists of foster care, prisons, and myopic branches of biosocial sciences.

Health & Child Care

Systems like healthcare and foster care should be designed to protect mothers' and children's wellbeing. However, in the US these structures are corrupt and neglectful. These systems are not ineffective, rather they are successful once one understands they are aim to punish and disenfranchise Black mothers.

Policy makers minimize Black women's agency in regards to reproductive control. They justify policing Black women's bodies by blaming them for resorting to poor childcare options when facing social problem. For example, the popular image of the Black welfare queen led to a welfare's redesign to a behavior modification program to dictate the sexual, reproductive, and parenting decisions of poor mothers.

The Carceral State

Police violence and the incarceration of Black youths and adults connect a history of lynching with the present realities of police stations and prisons. Recounting violent injustices, Roberts discusses who police forces predominantly work for: white people. Police are first responders for white people while acting against people of color. The abolition of prison systems is crucial to preventing Black death and mass control. Black communities and intellectuals need to "envision and create anti-racist, loving ways to meet social needs and address social harms" (p. 83).

"The US treats police and prison as the ultimate solution to every social problem, and every social solution, regardless of the institution, looks like or leads to prison" (p. 77).

The New Racist Science

Social genomics examines how and if people are genetically predisposed to certain behaviors. Rebuffing old scientific racism, the new racist science uses socio-genomic research to identify so-called "race-based genetic differences" to explain social inequities rather than address the structural roots of social problems.

Recent biosocial science analyzed the brains of marginalized children to explain the academic achievement gap. However, this problem is not biological; it is perpetuated by social structures that limit children of color's access to good education. Roberts questions the motives and utility of these investigations because this research cannot be "socially neutral" (p. 79).

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