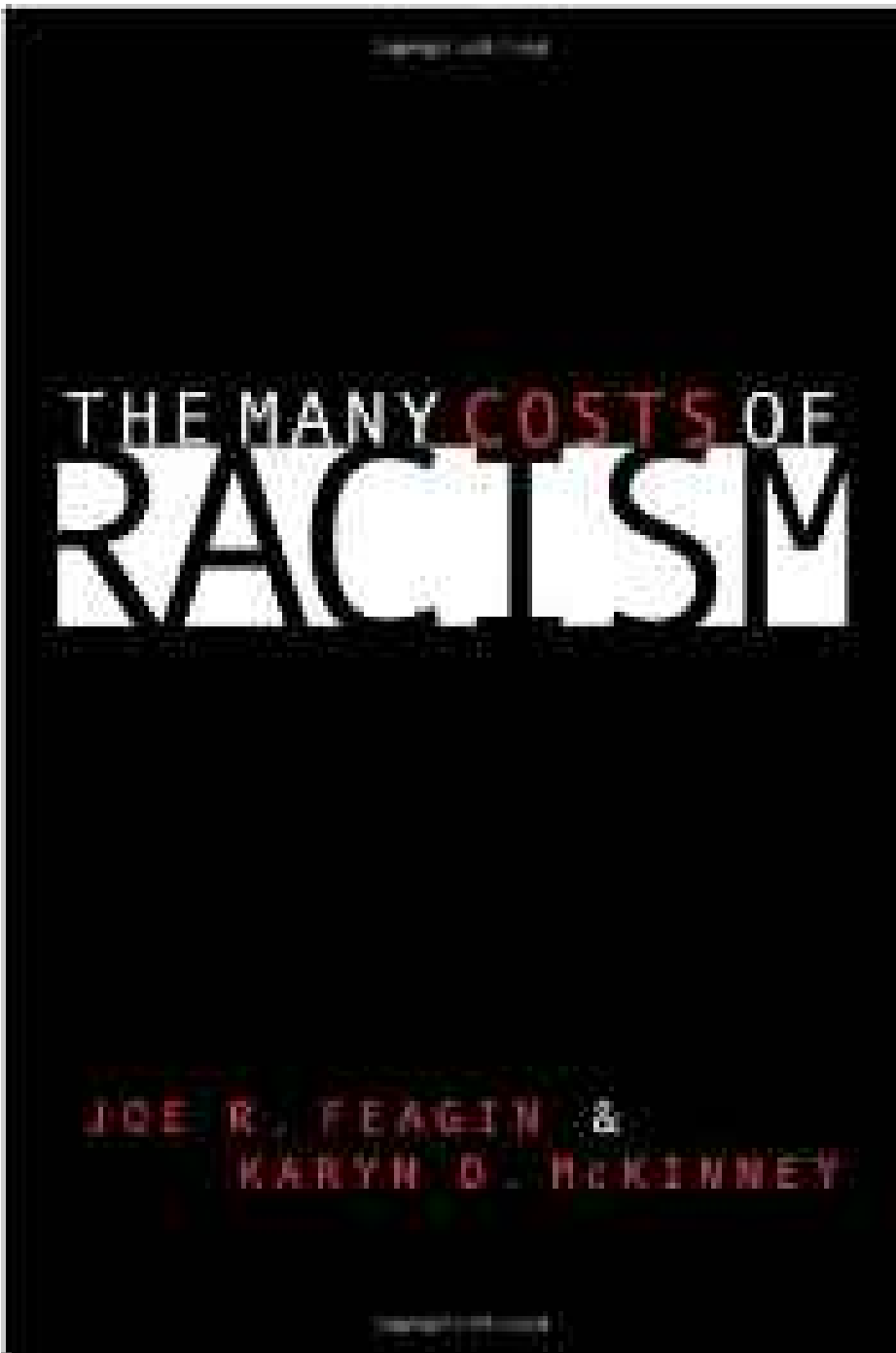


The Many Costs of Racism

Written by Dr. Joe R. Feagin and Dr. Karyn D. McKinney
Tuesday, 24 January 2017 00:00



A [racist](#) society is not a healthy society, for the perpetrators of [racial discrimination](#) as well as for the targets of that discrimination. In an earlier book, Joe Feagin and his colleagues argued that all Americans have paid a heavy price for continuing [racism](#)

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Racist notions have brought ill-gotten resources and benefits to many white Americans. Yet few whites realize the heavy price that they, their families, and their communities have paid and will pay for this institutionalized racism. White Americans have paid greatly in the form of their ignorance and fears, in human contributions and achievements sacrificed, in the failure to create a just and egalitarian society, in the resistance and lashing out of the oppressed, and in the fundamental ideals and egalitarian morality thus betrayed. □ In our view, U.S. society certainly cannot afford white racism in the long run, for it may well destroy this society as we know it sometime in this century.

Clearly, it is African Americans and other Americans of color who pay the heaviest cost for continuing racism, for the price they pay is direct and immediately painful. Notwithstanding, the society as a whole does indeed pay a heavy price for continuing racism.

In 1991, Billy Tidwell crafted this eloquent assessment of U.S. society: "Arguments against American racism have moved beyond the historical issues of morality. The more pressing issue to be addressed is the serious threat that racism poses to our national security. Perhaps, most importantly, [the costs of racism](#) severely constrain this society's ability to produce and progress 1." This is even truer today.

For nearly four hundred years, African Americans have been central to the costly system of racial oppression. Not surprisingly given so many generations of oppression, African Americans have always been among the strongest carriers of the ideals of liberty and social justice in this country. In spite of the weight of racial oppression, most African Americans have creative and more or less successful in building their lives and communities, and many have regularly pressed the society in the direction of greater liberty, equality, and justice. African Americans' sense of social justice continues to have great potential in regard to stimulating further movement by this society in the direction of its formal egalitarian and democratic ideals. African Americans have periodically developed large-scale social movements in U.S. history. Significantly, most African Americans have not retreated to debilitating pessimism, but have slowly pressed onward as individuals, families, and communities. Today, significant numbers of African Americans create and join many religious, civic, and civil rights organizations that are working to eradicate systemic racism, get civil rights laws enforced, and secure better living conditions for Americans of all social backgrounds. There are lessons here for all Americans concerned with building a truly democratic United States.

Today, the United State faces many challenges, not the least of which is the fact that the U.S.

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population is rapidly becoming much less white and European, and much more Asian, Latino, African, Middle Eastern, and Native American in its composition. In spite of these changes over the last few decades, however, at least 95 percent of the country's top leaders--in most of its major institutions--are still white men. And most of the rest are white women. This exclusiveness in leadership now means major and increasing problems for the country. As the members of the white elite look out over the country, most seem ignorant about its racial and ethnic past and fearful about its racial and ethnic future. So, it seems, are many ordinary whites who are reacting to significant increases in the number of Americans of color by seeking greater separatism like that of the old South Africa. Some whites are choosing guarded communities, private schools, and armed militias; others are moving to whiter counties and states, away from the increasingly diverse metropolitan areas on the West Coast, the Gulf Coast, and the East Coast. A key problem for most whites is that they have been raised in, and mostly lived in, predominantly white or all white communities. Most do not understand the painful experiences of racial antipathy and discrimination. Most whites have not seriously listened to the views of those who are not white. As philosopher Laurence Thomas put it, "as far as I can see, many white folks do not think they have to listen to Black people. They seem to think that they understand who we are, what we're about, what our needs are, and where they come from without listening to us²." He adds that whites must not only listen to African Americans, but also respect them and be interested in earning their trust.

This excerpt above is from the masterpiece [The Many Costs of Racism](#) available on amazon.com, .co.uk and .ca

1 Billy J. Tidwell, "More than a Moral Issue: The Cost of American Racism in the 1990s," *The Urban League Review* 11 (1991): 9

2 "[Interview with] Laurence Thomas," in *African-American Philosophers: Seventeen Conversations*, ed. George Yancey (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 297

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About the authors: Dr. Feagin lives in the U.S. He is the author of more than 60 books and 200 research articles. He received a nomination for a Pulitzer Prize for *From Slavery to Revolts*

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He wrote in several publications including in the medical field and for *The NY Times*

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www.racismreview.com

. One of his books was part of one of our top 20s:

<http://www.megadiversities.com/books/173.html>

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Being White: Stories of Race and Racism

, Middle Eastern Lives in America

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