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Race is a legal, social, and cultural invention rather than given in nature, and the knowledge of race and its deployment are *exercises of power* expressed in the encounter among groups for control over resources. The social construction of race trains our focus on the practices of race, including the terms of its creation, deployment, and enforcement as a mode of group subordination and regulation. Race as a technique of power identifies arbitrary differences such as skin color, hair texture, nose and eye shapes, and thinness of lips as sites of knowledge (classification, hierarchy, and value) about variations in human intelligence, capacity, creativity, development, indeed what it means to be human (Goldberg 2009; Wynter 2003). Constructionism provides an indispensable critical beginning (rather than endpoint) for thinking about the nature of racial knowledge taking shape today.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century racial projects depended on social and cultural inventions as well as moral rationalizations that made racial difference the basis of classification, value, knowledge, and political practices that enforced racial distinctions by intimidation, violence, and terror. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century decolonial wars, movements for national liberation, and global struggles for civil and legal recognition by people of color around the world *ended* some of the most brutal, exploitative, and violent racial projects designed to exploit land and labor in order to shore up racial capitalism. By the mid- to late twentieth century,

these critical movements produced new subjects of history and knowledge about those subjects produced by those subjects.

Twenty-first-century racial knowledge has taken refuge in the science of the human genome, in the proliferation of cultural diversity and digital technology, and in legal disputes over race-based public policies. Ascendant twenty-first-century truths of race align with different technologies of power, modes of authority, and cultural logics. Knowledge of race ranges across several fronts simultaneously. For example, in the media the truth of race works through the proliferation and hypervisibility of racial difference as multiculturalism while genomic science uses powerful statistical procedures to identify and group populations who share genetic information. Based on statistically identified genetic variations among different populations, genomic scientists of race draw conclusions about racial classification, geographic concentration, and shared ancestry. The changing nature of racial knowledge also includes the recognition of cultural diversity and the incorporation of ethnic studies, queer studies, and feminist studies into university curricula that have become essential components of twenty-first-century knowledge of race (Ferguson 2012). These shifts in racial knowledge invite media, race, and cultural studies scholars to develop new critical analytics to identify, document, and assess the workings of race in the academy, science, law, and media.

I offer aspects of my research on racial projects as a modest illustration. This research traces the mutually constitutive role of media, racial science, and academic knowledge in the assembly of race in the twenty-first-century Global North. Arranged through various racializing practices like racial slavery, colonialism, Jim Crow segregation, and racial neoliberalism, the approach emphasizes the mutual role of representation, meaning, identity, and subjection in such projects. This mutuality

stresses differential access by race to resources, forms of state-sanctioned domination (including violence and more benign forms of social terror), and attendant cultural forms and psychological stress for different populations. Racial projects are dynamic exercises of power that produce, organize, and distribute racial and ethnic groupings of populations according to socially valued attributes arranged hierarchically. One might say that race is an outcome, a production of a set of relations and material conditions that take charge of resources necessary for living. Racial projects produce, authorize, circulate, and enforce racial knowledge based on distinction, classification, value, and hierarchy that constitute the discursive truth of race within a given set of living arrangements.

In different historical periods and regions of the globe, racial knowledge designated and denigrated certain populations, targeting them for displacement, land seizure, and captivity for labor exploitation based on purportedly inferior racial attributes. The cultural assignment of value and significance and the social use of classification based on arbitrary racial differences together with scientific explanation and judicial legitimization make such arrangements into racial projects.

Racial projects arrange racial meaning discursively and social practices materially and work by circulating such meanings throughout our commonsense understandings and experiences of everyday life (Perry 2011). Racial projects operate through feelings, emotions, and the body, where we live and feel the truth of race at the most quotidian and commonplace levels. These affective practices focus attention not just on the representational but on the truth of race as intuition and sensation. Meanings and feelings are the locus of legible representation, authoritative knowledge, commonsense understandings, and affective investments in the truth of race.

Indeed, with Dorothy Roberts (2011), we might say that race is the expression of the mutually constitutive effects of media, science, the state, and economic markets. The media—the press, commercial broadcast systems, digital platforms, and digital social networks—are scenes where social relations, representations, understandings, and feelings about racial differences among us circulate.

The social relations and the knowledge of race on which they depend vary widely across geographies, histories, and populations in different parts of the world (Goldberg 2009). For instance, South Africa and Brazil, England and the United States culturally recognize racial and ethnic distinction, but differ by state formations, colonial histories, and population removal and displacement; the exploitation and exposure to vulnerability of different segments of the population depend on the assignment by states, elites, and scholars of human capacity based on race. On the basis of such purported capacities, different populations are confined to low-skill, low-wage work, targeted as high credit risks, naturalized as criminal, rendered unemployable, and disproportionately imprisoned.

To claim that we are on the terrain of digital genomic multicultural racial projects is to suggest that because of transformations in digital media, public policy, and diversity discourse as well as genomics, race and media have undergone conceptual and practical shifts that make this terrain somewhat distinct from its twentieth-century precursors. With the knowledge of new racial science and digital media capacities, access to gaining cultural representation, visibility, and meaning, in some social arenas, is less open to dispute in the politics of representation today than in the twentieth century, when access relied on the primacy of skin color, hair texture, or nose width as a site of knowledge and truth. Culturally, racial differences are actually celebrated in

certain countries in the Global North while in others racial (and ethnic) groups are the targets of intense contestation, regulation, violence, and abjection. In the United States, to take one example, cultural practices in public and private institutions celebrate multiculturalism, while court rulings outlaw race as a basis for allocation of resources or claims to grievance in public life. In this new condition of race making, racial projects produce visibility *and* regulation, celebration *and* exploitation.

The post-civil rights conjuncture in the United States that produced the first black American president is not one where there is a paucity of images of racial difference or the cultural grammar to decipher the significance of race. In the Internet age, social media, streaming media services, broadcast, and cable are robust sites of racial engagement, representation, and belonging for all forms of racial and ethnic identifications, thanks in part to the digital technologies that make new media ecologies possible, the political struggles that make the conception of multiculturalism and diversity available, and the genomics research that makes the new science of race possible. Ironically, with the discourse of color blindness and multiculturalism, the United States may be described as one of racial excess (Fleetwood 2011).

As the truth of race moves to the level of the genomic, our cultural celebrations and social suspicions based on race are as visible as ever. In its deployment, circulation, and effect, race organizes, sorts, and informs social life even as claims in science, media, politics, and popular culture insist on the flagging salience of race. So racial projects produce racial knowledge and racial subjects within a condition of abundance and excess where, for example, in the search for one's racial and ethnic ancestry, the production of race and search for evidence of its scientific truth have gone digital and genomic, where genomic accounts of population variations based on

race (among other factors) confirm the importance of racial differences in the authentication of indigenous origins. The market logic of difference based on race (gender, age, and disposable income) arranges popular knowledge as the footing for identification and belonging and consumption on the basis of race as a lifestyle choice.

Over its resilient history in the United States, various iterations of racial science including eugenics, craniology, IQ testing, and genomics helped to install and authorize the intellectual, cultural, and social firmament necessary to produce race as a *purported* social fact. With appeals variously to religion, science, philology, and the state, racial science endeavored to show that like the world of nature, the social world of history and culture could be described and apprehended by classifying, ordering, assigning value, and searching for variation (Robinson 2007).

Considering the relationship among race, science, and media as dynamic and a technique of power (each part or component of the alignment moving independent and with different temporalities and logic) is a productive way to think about the connection among genomic racial science, digital media, and postracial discourses of diversity, multiculturalism, and color blindness. While similar relationships organized accounts of race from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emphasis on the constitutive elements of new racial projects permits researchers to track race and the projects that produce them into new zones of knowledge, authority, and expression such as genomics, ancestry, new media technologies, and admixtures of racial diversity.

In the United States, the cultural visibility of race and the legal rejection of race-based policies by twenty-first-century practices of science, media, and postracial diversity provide powerful alibis to disavow race (certainly

of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sense) in the organization, distribution, and access to safety and security, and to recognize, even celebrate, multicultural identities and histories. Similarly, in the case of media platforms that include social media networks, gaming, entertainment, and streaming content, race is avowed in the form of multicultural lifestyle markets and disavowed based on consumer sovereignty and market neutrality, the cornerstone of which is economic capacity and resources, market variation, and consumer needs. Marketable distinctions, and most especially those organized around racial and ethnic differences (but marketed as cultural distinctions), drive access and representation in media. In the case of social media platforms, participation by racial groups is not precluded on racial grounds but operates on the basis of revised twentieth-century racial models of separate but equal media content, platforms, and representation (e.g., black social media networks or ethnic language media).

In genomic racial science, racial difference operates in the search for scientifically neutral and statistically significant genomic variation and genealogical clustering by populations. In other words, scientists attempt to identify and rigorously measure human variations according to (socially generated) group classification on the basis of statistical estimates of gene frequencies that differ among geographic populations. This form of racial knowledge allows for the proliferation of population variation and geographical distribution, the search for original and authentic bloodlines, and genealogical recuperation underwritten by scientific authority staked in rigorous quantitative techniques and complex computational methods and by a liberal humanism that recognizes and in some cases collaborates with members of diverse population groups. Despite this concern with rigor, scientific neutrality, and recognition of difference,

racial science of genomics operates through the social and cultural optic of racial distinction. In the commitment to social diversity in social and economic affairs and recognition of multiculturalism, both of which disavow the salience of race, ironically race is produced on the basis of racial knowledge and social meaning tempered by science, media, and culture.

Making race by disavowing racial difference, I read as a bid to parse the truth of race as still a fundamental feature of the social order and not just seeing race as a matter of targeting a specific group, identity, or location. In this sense we could say that, with intensification of race making in genomics and digital technologies, race is an effect of projects that produce racial understandings and racial truths that are no less pernicious in their social, cultural, and political effects than their nineteenth- and twentieth-century predecessors.

Two main challenges therefore confront the next generation of media studies of race. The first challenge is to track down and connect the new racial projects, the social basis of knowledge and truth of race they produce and their role in organizing the social order they help to secure. In other words, what exactly is the “truth of race” that is being claimed and secured by genomic science and deployed in the new media ecology of difference that organizes access to vulnerability, risk, and insecurity based on the truth of race proffered by racial science? Moreover, where (and exactly how) are forms of race making produced?

The second challenge is to raise critical questions and search for alternate imaginations with which to build different accounts of human variation and their role in social worlds. These might include decolonized (including indigenous) epistemologies as well as residual possibilities that lie dormant and the creative inventions that come with living in the ruins of capitalism

(Weheylie 2014; Wynter 2003). Examples include social initiatives by people of color displaced by the 2008 housing and financial crisis in places like Detroit seeking to reinhabit and sustainably develop urban living space long abandoned by capitalist elites, and the emerging global alliances and identification among black and Palestinian youth subjected to surveillance, violence, and containment by state authorities like the police and occupying armies. Of course, as they have in social movements like the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and Occupy, new media and related social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram play roles in social projects challenging and building different conceptions of belonging and practices of sociality.

In the end, the story that I have been telling is about the changing nature of race, the truth of which is a product of the alliance of racial science, mediated technologies, cultural recognition of multiculturalism, and political disavowal of racial differences. The deployment of race takes on different forms, mobilizes different discursive and material resources, and produces different effects across time and space. Race continues to work through multiple and dispersed forms of subjection to the effects of its truth as freedom from and subjection to regulation, vulnerability, risk, and security.

With every new instantiation of this very old story, we have yet another opportunity to make race and the social worlds that it aims to build matter less to manage, regulate, and exploit populations. While we may elect to make race matter more or less in other ways, we need not proceed on this terrain uncritically and without the critical insights learned from fictions of nineteenth-, twentieth-, and now twenty-first-century racial knowledge that claim for themselves racial truth. We are once again in the position to decide how to make race matter

less in shaping human history, what the truth of race is, and how it is deployed in the service of human sociality. That is to say, with the questions we ask and the truths we seek from our science and our politics, we are once again in the position to decide what difference race makes for our understanding of human potential and social relations.