

A Critical Race Approach to Systemic Inequity

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This book is dedicated to Professor Stephen A. Plass. He understood human nature and the magnitude of systemic inequity better than anyone else I have ever met. And he went above and beyond what he needed to do to support and ensure the success of people like me who were blissfully unaware of the reality of racism. Without his help I would never have become a law professor. I can never thank him enough for believing in me and telling me what I needed to hear to navigate this world, even when it wasn't what I wanted to hear.

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Preface

The initial purpose of this book was to identify and discuss examples of systemic racism and suggest a formulation for dismantling race-based systemic inequity in America. On the one hand, this book exposes and explores the cruelty and dehumanizing examples of race-based systemic inequity in America. On the other hand, after examining the well-developed research about human cognitive realities, this book explains that systemic inequity is probably an essential reality of all human civilizations. The dilemma in this regard is that achieving more equitable societies than we have thus far been able to achieve as a species requires a complete reformulation of the norms, assumptions, and myths we depend on for the very existence of human societies. Not only is this reality sobering, but the larger obstacle to eradicating systemic inequity is that we have no control over the unconscious and involuntary, double-edged sword of mental processes simultaneously responsible for both societal stability and societal inequity.

Using contemporary examples from American society and research from the cognitive sciences, this book demonstrates both the source and power of American race-based systemic inequity and suggests that current and genuine, well-intentioned efforts to mitigate race-based inequity are doomed to fail because they focus on individual behavior and belief modifications rather than systemic reform. Unfortunately, individual conduct, belief sets, and behavior have no effect on systemic inequity. For example, morality, civility, and religion, while powerful and relevant to individual behavior and well-being, are all mechanisms which reinforce systemic inequity.

Unless we stop underestimating the magnitude of the disruption to norms and belief sets necessary to mitigate race-based inequity, systemic inequity will remain the norm exactly as it has been throughout human history. But, more importantly, even if we acknowledge the magnitude of the task, the question remains whether humans are capable of living in societies without systemic inequity because the solution to systemic inequity requires a fundamental restructuring of humanity.

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