

# THE EFFECTS OF WHITE DOMINATION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN IN THE UNITED STATE

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**Abstract :** This study is about white domination and its effects on African American life in the early twentieth century up to the decade of the 1940s. White domination is an effort done by the white people to maintain 'White-Superiority' and 'Black-Inferiority'. In this case many African Americans have problem or difficulties in the aspect of their life. This study uses American Studies approach, focusing on interdisciplinary approach that involves historical, literacy, sociological and cultural. The result of study shows that, under white domination, the African Americans are the oppressed people. Being the oppressed people, they are unjustly treated by the white ones through racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation. So, they have some problems in the aspects of their life; they are regarded as inferior creatures, and they do not have equalities in education, employment, law protection or law enforcement, and in the other aspects of socio-cultural life. As being unjustly treated, the African Americans protest toward the arbitration of the white ones of them.. The protest has its impact on both the African American and White Americans. In one hand it encourages the former to resurrect and develop their effort of obtaining their rights.

**Key words :** *White domination, superiority, inferiority, equality, protest.*

## INTRODUCTION

The history of the United States has recorded African American Experiences, especially grievances. The spirit of independence has been marred by the Americans enslaving the black people. Even after the civil War, when the slavery was abolished, the black people were regarded as inferior citizens; they have still been treated unfairly by the white people.

Equality for all men in the United States is guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence, " We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Right, that among these are life, liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form becomes destructive of thee ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish,.... "(Todd dan Curti,1972:737).

The word 'equal' in the above paragraph in declaration of Independence was a contentment. Equality among men (human being) was acknowledged but the pragmatic meaning of "men are created equal" was not equality as what we are supposed to understand it. It seemed, in 1776 'equal' meant 'unequal' because it did not include slaves, women and native American. As result, individual within the groups of slave, native Americans and also women were not considered as 'equals'. Equality was only for white-male-property-owner.

In the period of slavery, slaves were cruelly treated by the slaveholders or overseer. If they convicted any facilities, the overseer would punish them. In short slavery caused agony to slaves. The mistreatment of the slave can be seen in "Narrative of the life of an American Slave" by Frederick Douglass: " If a slave was convicted of any high misdemeanor, became unmanageable, or evinced a determination to run away, he was brought immediately here, severely whipped, put on board the sloop, carried to Baltimore, and sold to Austin Wool folk, or some other slaves remaining"(Douglass,63)

The condition of the slaves had not improved up to the Antebellum era. Abolition of slavery, as what Douglass said, had not been realized yet. During the Antebellum era in the south, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852). Slaves, as they were described in Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin', had poorer food and housing than the workers in Northern.

Although the slavery was abolished after the Civil War, and slaves were proclaimed free, they were still regarded as inferior who were discriminated, and segregated by the white people. Facing this fact the black people struggled for equality. Peeks says that the African American struggled for freedom, equality, emancipation and full participation in American life as citizens of this country. So what does actually the effect of white domination on African American? Does the effect of white domination bring negative effect or positive effect on black people in America? The struggle of black people took in a range of ways and strategies which were in reference to Declaration of Independence and the 13th, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution and any other rules that ratify their struggle.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research is done based on library research, and Internet exploration. The gathering data were taken from some books, journal, encyclopedia that related to the topic. In the Internet exploration the writer focused some web-site that related with the topic. Other sources are from non-print material such as television, film and Internet. In addition to book as resources have been extended the books, history, sociology, and culture. The collected data is done by selecting, displaying and redacting.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

White domination brings about negative effects on black people in American life. These negative effects can influence the cultural, educational, employment, and political aspects.

### **Cultural Effect**

The first effect of white domination on black Americans is Cultural. White domination can be traced back to black American history in America.

Thompson (1974) explains that initially black people were indentured servants (1619), but eventually they were forced into legal slavery (1661). They were emancipated for more than 200 years later (1863) and have lived ever since in a biracial society established on the doctrine of 'White Supremacy'.

In the era of slavery, the white slave-owners created "Slave Codes" regulating the relationship between slaves their masters. Todd and Curtis state that white southerners feared that large numbers of black people threatened white supremacy. Slaves, concentrated in large numbers, might successfully revolt against their masters. To solve this problem, slave-owners passed "Slave Codes". These codes or laws were aimed at (1) preventing their slaves from escaping, (2) setting up strict rules for slaves from escaping, (3) setting up strict rules for slaves behavior in order not to revolt against their masters, (4) forbidding slaves to assemble, leave to the plantation or own weapons, (5) forbidding slaves to learn to read or write.

When slavery was abolished, laws or rules were created by white people such as 'Jim Crow laws', 'separate but equal', and some other means to restrict the civil rights of black people such as racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation. Thus, the black people were regarded as inferior creature and do not have the right to obtain 'equality', in the cases of protection of the law, economic opportunity, political participation, educational opportunity, access to health facilities and housing (Thompson, 1974. 4)

Inequality as well as inferiority has been formed from the early beginning of the existence of black people in America. As inferior, they were forced to be indentured servants; then enslaved; and when the slavery period ended they were renounced the rights of becoming full citizens with equal rights as the whites. In this relation, Koentjaraningrat argues that social group of black race are formed by a negative view or attitude of other whites. (1975. 152)

Black inferiority and inequality are consequences of cultural effect of white domination. This is because black inferiority and inequality are created by white people, and are then passed on from one generation to the other. One old generation of white people, for instance, regarded the blacks as

inferiors and this opinion is then passed on the next generation. Another example is, a child born to an African couple is made aware of his inferiority by his parents and social environment. This attitude is then maintained by the following generation. The feeling of inferiority and inequality are imposed on them.

Black people are alienated physically and socially from the mainstream of American life. Physical alienation can be seen from the fact that there is segregation, for instance, in education, housing, and business. Whereas, social alienation can be observed from the fact that the black people are restricted in their interaction with the whites. Black people suffer from their dependency on the whites. They are socially, educationally, and politically dependent on them. They are also considered as meaningless people. This is caused by in biracial society. Based on white Supremacy whose principle is what is 'good' for black people is not necessarily 'good' for the whites. Sometimes, the blacks are always wrong.

Thompson insists that the white people's evaluation of the black ones is biased because the former are motivated to maintain and perpetuate the illusion that they are superior and the latter inferior (1974. 55).

The blacks are also powerless. This is based on the fact that the white people possess many ways or means to maintain their supremacy or superiority, such as racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation, by oppressing the blacks through violence such beating and lynching.

### **Educational Effect**

The African-Americans have struggled to obtain equality in all aspects of life as that obtained by other Americans for example equality in education. This struggle was much influenced by booker T. Washington, a son of slave mother and a white father in the early 20 th century. By 1881 he was appointed principal of the Turkegee Institute in Alabama, which he raised, through a policy of strict discipline, self-help, and successful approaches to Northern philanthropic institutions, into the leading center of Negro industrial education in the country.

In obtaining equality, the African-Americans had to be educated because by means of a good education they would be able to improve their lives, to get a good job, and to improve in political organizations. Thompson states: "The blacks' struggle to acquire a "good" education has been long, frustrating, and dangerous. Motivating the struggle has been the conviction that education is the key to individual dignity, social status, and equal citizenship. Even during the slave period when the education of blacks was prohibited by law and when those who violated that law were severely punished, many slaves dared to attend "clandestine" schools and learned to read and write whenever and however they could manage to do so.

Initially whatever education black people 'had received was informal, unsystematic, and superficial. The movement to provide formal education for lack Americans or African-Americans began during the reconstruction period. All concerned observers-the President, certain congressmen, heads of religious bodies, and some influential educators agreed that it was urgent that schools for lack Americans be established if they were to retain their tenuous freedom or even survive in the prevailing anti-black atmosphere of the bitter, defeated post-Civil War South. Therefore, northern church bodies, with some important assistance from the Freedmen's Bureau, which was established by congress in 1865, and private philanthropy, began to established separate schools for black Americans because school for white ones would not accept them (Thompson, 1974. 169). Since their establishments, schools or education for African-Americans met strong opposition from the whites, especially the Southern whites. Some powerful whites objected Northern whites teachers of subversion, and there was a widespread fear that educated blacks become too independent and not make good workers and servants.

In struggling to obtain equality in education, the African-Americans faced many challenges or obstacles. These can be seen from the fact that there was what is called a concept of 'separate but

'equal' facilities for the African-Americans and the whites. This condemned the African-Americans not only to inferior, money-starved school system but also top wide-ranging 'Jim Crow Law (any law requiring the segregation of the white and colored races, that was ever implemented in the Southern states of the United States) segregating buses railroads, schools, hotels, hospitals, restaurants, lavatories, theatres, trade unions, and many other institutions and facilities (Bradbury, 1970. 190).

The educational system striving to complete itself, according to Dubois, saw new obstacles and a field of broader and deeper work. The Negro colleges, hurriedly founded, were inadequately equipped, illogically distributed, and of varying efficiency and grade; the normal and high schools were training but third of the often poorly. And at the same time the White South seemed to show its racial prejudice and hatred toward the African-Americans .

The struggle for educations was then launched, by W.E.B. Dubois. He urged liberal arts to strengthen the leadership of African-American protest organizations. He was also well-known as one of the founding fathers of the National Associations for the Advancement of Colored people (NAACP). As a figure in the educational world and a leader of NAACP, Dubois was active in Journalism. He edited the NAACP Journal, Crisis, and directed research, publishing the injustices and discrimination suffered by the African-Americans (Bradbury, 1970. 191).

The meeting in 1905 was used by its members to congratulate the African-Americans' advancement in some aspects of life including education. The members also had many expectations in relation to the African-Americans' struggle, for instance, they hoped that public school education should be free and compulsory to all American children; high school training should be adequately provided for all, and college training should be the monopoly of no class or race in section of their common country (Seaberg, 1969. 31).

Although the doctrine of 'separate but equal' exist, it was not implemented. The existence of separate educational facilities were inherently unequal. The separation was based on the whites' conviction that ' the Black race generated a feeling of inferiority. The NAACP ignored the doctrine of 'separate but equal' because it showed discrimination.

Discrimination and segregation, as a result of the doctrine: ' separate but equal' , have a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is grater when, especially, segregation has the sanction of the law; for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the Negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of the law, therefore, has a tendency to retard the educational and metal development of black children and to deprive them of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system ( Seaberg, 1969. 84).

## **Employment Effect**

Another effect faced by the African-Americans was the employment problem which Dubois pictures as follow: " He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or saving, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbors. To be poor is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships. He felt the weight of his ignorance, -not simply of letters, but of life, of business, of the humanities ..".

Although the black population was numerically strong, they were powerless. The black could not organize and fight to sustain their rights. There were dependent on the owners of land. In a position of economic dependency, they were politically powerless or impotent. If they dared to try to vote, they could be starved into submission (Termstrom ,1997. 29).

It was very difficult for African-Americans, to get a good job with a good salary is very hard. Thompson (1974: 92) explains that they had generally been allowed to hold only the lowest paying of lower status job. Any significany move within the African-Americans' community or by the Federal Government to elevate the economic status of the African-Americans had always caused anxiety among the Whites discriminate the African-Americans was that the white always implement their

doctrine: “ white people, in all situation, must be socially superior to all black people (African-Americans)”.

The black people were concentrated In the lowest-skilled and lowest-paying occupation. These jobs often offered sub-standard wages, great instability and uncertainty and employee, little or no chance for meaningful advancement, and unpleasant or exhausting duties (Thompson, 1974:194).

The industrial system in the North relied on white European immigrants, first the Irish and later Southern and Eastern Europeans. White workers, as well as capitalists, benefited from the subordination of blacks. By the 1840s free black workers in cities were being replaced by new white immigrants. For example, Irish workers took over certain killed manual jobs, such as teamsters jobs, from freed black men. Hostility led to the exclusion of blacks from various job categories in the North. White workers forced blacks, by violence if necessary , into menial jobs. Indeed, fear of large numbers of freed black slaves competing for their jobs led many white workers to hate the black ones. While this worker sentiment was sometimes manipulated by capitalist employers, white workers in the North independently worked to keep black subordinate (Feagin, 1995: 118).

The black people have always had a low purchasing power as result of their low wages caused by their inferior and restricted position in the labor market. Even in the past there has been a greater exploitation of the blacks labors than of any other section of the working class, manifesting itself particularly in lower wages, longer hours, excessive use of child labor and a higher proportion of women at work (Meier, 1971: 155-156).

The black farmers, especially in the new south, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, also faced many problems in life. The central fact of life for most black people was the day-to-day struggle to make a living and to get ahead in the world, or at least to keep from falling farther behind (McPherson, 1971:167). As a subordinate caste in a society dedicated to white supremacy, blacks were treated as a lesser breed suitable only for. Certain kinds of work: toiling in the fields, doing the cooking and laundry, collecting garbage, and the like. The masses of African-Americans were destitute. They owned Little property; even their hose hold goods were mostly inadequate and dilapidated. Their incomes were not only lode but irregular. They thus lived from day to day and had scant security for the future (Thernstrom, 1997: 33).

In the 1930s, discrimination and limited opportunities had always been part of the lives of African-Americans. A black man did not blame himself for his misfortunes. The best he could be was a janitor or a porter or shoeshine boy (Henretta, 1993 : 77).

As late as 1940s more than 75 percent of all African-Americans were living in the south. Nearly all of the farmers who were black stated in the south, their condition scarcely better than it was at the and of Reconstruction.

Only 20 percent of black farmers owned their own land; the rest toiled on the bottom rung of the exploitative southern agricultural system, working as tenant farmers, farmhands, and sharecroppers. African-Americans rarely earned more than an average of \$ 200 a year (Henretta,1993: 770).

The former slave owners and many of the poorer whites who looked to them for leadership attempted to maintain the south’s caste system. The southern legislatures enacted sets of laws (Black codes) that were designed to keep African-Americans in a condition close to slavery. The codes usually restricted black employment opportunities outside agriculture by requiring licenses for those who wished to pursue skilled work or even irregular jobs. The activities if black people were controlled by those codes. The black agricultural workers had to obtain passes from their employers; or they had to obtain white sponsors when they wished to live on town. In an effort to prevent political gatherings, the withes regulated the meeting of blacks (Henretta, 1993: 488)

In relation to employment, the black leaders launched a movement. This movement was directed to its immediate attention to the organizing of the great mass of workers boot skilled and unskilled, white and black. Its activities had to be political as we all economic for the purpose of affecting such social legislation as old age pensions, unemployment insurance, the regulation of child and female

labor etc. there were many attempts in the economic world, especially in employment, at creating equal condition between the whites and black these were, among other things, to foster the building of a labor movement, industrial in character, which would unite all labors, white and black, skilled and unskilled agricultural and industrial, and to lay the intellectual basis for united action between white and black workers in local, state and national politics for securing passage of adequate legislation on immediate problems such as old age pensions, public discrimination and Jim crowism, etc (Meier, 1971:180-181). The history of the white-dominated American labor movement is also a history of institutionalized discrimination against nonwhite workers. For example, after the Civil War the number of blacks in skilled trades declined sharply as a result of discrimination by white trade unions. Most unions still excluded black workers in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Informal exclusion took over where formal exclusion ended (Feagin, 1995: 23).

### **Political Effect**

Equality in the political life for the African-Americans was also difficult to attain. This is based on the fact that there were segregation and color discrimination in all aspects of life in which the African-Americans were still regarded as inferiors by the whites. Dubois, therefore. Warned of and ignored segregation and color discrimination .

It is a fact that the liberty and dignity of the African-Americans could never be secure as long as it depended on the benevolence of the white men rather than on the power of the African-Americans themselves (Killian, 1975:16).

Indeed, the problem of equality and particularly political right have been very in American political development, the history that was colored by the denial of political right for Americans with non-white European background. Thus equality has become a problem for Americans since the country declared its independence.

Although slavery was abolished in America, African-Americans were subject to the worst forms of political, social, and educational segregation, as well as grinding poverty, police and mob brutality, and all other evils of American caste system. African-American letters were surfeited with pleas for the recognition of their own humanity and with protest against their subjugation.

The struggle of the African-Americans had to face many obstacles. In the effort to solve racial problems, in fact, the Constitution of United States was amended. Through the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1865), slavery was abolished; through the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870), all persons born or naturalized in the United States are citizens and no state shall make or enforce any law abridging their privileges or immunities, or deny them equal protection of the law; and through the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the right of citizens to vote cannot be abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race or color (Henretta, 1993: 489).

The three Amendments suggest equality according to which people have the same rights disregarding race, color, or origin. However, the implementation of the three Amendments that were also supported by Executive Orders was far from the African-Americans' expectation, by which they hope they have the same civil rights, especially political rights, as the whites do. In other words, their expectation was that the rights and responsibilities of two races should be in the same level.

Booker T. Washington did not expect the colored people to struggle for equality in political and social lives. His messages for the African-Americans was that they should give up their demands for political and social equality and concentrate on economic advancement through the learning of trades and vocational skills (Seaberg, 1969:10). W.E.B Dubois attacked Booker T. Washintong's idea, because it resulted in the disfranchisement of the African-Americans, and the steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the African-Americans (Seaberg, 1969: 23-24).

John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. state that: "After the Democrats returned to power in the South, they confronted the problem of finding ways either to nullify the political strength of black people or to disfranchise them altogether. Complete disfranchisement by state legislation was

viewed with some misgivings, as long as the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments remained as a part of the fundamental law. The democrats attempted various means such as intimidation and violence to prevent the blacks' participation in politics .

Once the black was disfranchised, everything else necessary for the white supremacy could be accomplished. With democratic primaries, from which all black were excluded by rules of the party, the whites planned their strategy in caucuses, and the party itself became the government in the South. The Whites solemnly resolved to keep the races completely separate, for there could be no normal relationships between them. Peace had not yet come to the South. The 20<sup>th</sup> century began tragically with 214 lynching in the first to years. Clashes between blacks and whites occurred almost daily, and the atmosphere of tension in which people of both races lived was conducive to little more than a struggle for more survival, with a feeble groping in the direction of progress. The law, the courts , the school and almost every institutions in the South favored white supremacy (Franklin and Moss, 1988: 238).

In 1940 only 240 of the nation's 100.000 aircraft workers were blacks, and most of them were janitors. The black of African-American leaders demanded that the government require defense contractors to integrate their work forces. Because the government did not support the civil rights, they planned to protest. In June 1941, president Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an executive order declaring it to be the policy of the United States " that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense, industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin (Henretta, 1993 : 832).

Civil rights became a national political issue in the 1940s. African-Americans' expectations had been raised by war-time opportunities as well as symbolic of the Brooklyn Dodgers breaking the color barrier in major league baseball in 1947. African-American voters played an increasingly large role in the democratic party as they migrated from the South to Northern cities. The government seemed to be careful in the treatment of the African-Americans (Seaberg, 1969: 869).

The movement to obtain equality in political on political, civil rights and education had been launched for many years. But, up to the half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, equality in all aspects of life has not been obtained completely.

### **African American Protest**

The word 'protest' refers to a statement of disapproval or abjection (Hornby, 1974). African-American's protests against the white can be perceived as their effort to oppose the whites' injustice toward them.

African-Americans' protests, seen from the historical protective, might be launched in the form of organized protests which consisted of diverse groups of African-Americans launching resolutions of protests or protest thought such as the NAACP, and the urban league. They might also be launched in the form of action such as boycott against Jim Crow streetcars in the deep South in the 1990s, revolts, insurrections, runaways and race riots in the 1950s. protests might also be expressed in the form of indirect aggression such as through fine arts, literature, ethnic humor, passive resistance, job slowdowns, turnover, inefficiency, and tardiness.

Protest thought evolved against the background of the changing status of the African-Americans in the twentieth century society. The century opened amid mounting oppression and discrimination, after the closing of Reconstruction. The central thrust of African-Americans' protests had always been for equal treatment with the other citizens (Meier, 1971: XIX)

### **CONCLUSION**

When slavery was abolished, the freed blacks did not automatically obtained equal rights as the white. In every aspect of life, they were predominated by the whites. White domination can destroy all aspect of life such as cultural, social, educational, employment, political and law protection or law enforcement between black and white people. As result, white domination brings about injustice in all

aspect of life. Thus, if there is still injustice toward the black people, democracy in America has not been completely developed. Democracy is based on equal right in all aspect of life.

The African American protest toward social injustice caused by white domination is related to their difficulties in achieving their right in education, employment, and political participation, and other aspect of social life. The history of the United States of America also shows that the whites commit violence against the black such as beating, whipping, lynching. Violence committed by the black is a response to that done by the whites upon them in the past.

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