

# An Exploration of Ideological and Political Issues in English Teaching — A New Trend of Racism and Ethnic Discrimination in the United States: from "White Supremacy" to "Anti-Asian" Tide

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## Abstract

Racism is a chronic disease in American society. In the traditional sense, racism mostly refers to the phenomenon that white people discriminate against black people and the struggle of black people for human rights for equality in American society. In recent years, however, racism has taken on new characteristics: "white supremacy", anti-Chinese, "anti-Asian" seems to be the main theme of racism.

**Keywords:** Racism; Nationalism; Populism; White supremacy

## I. Introduction

When it comes to talking about American culture in English teaching, racism is an inevitable topic. In teaching the *New College English Reading Course 3 (Advanced)* (edited by Ke Yanfen 2016), the topic of racism has occurred many times, for example, three articles in Unit Two (4. The Middle-Class Black's Burden; 5. Complexion; 6. The Ways of Meeting Oppression), and the first article in Unit Three (7. When a Citizen Fights Back).

Under the background of the rising racism in American society in the past two years, students had a lively discussion based on the several incidents reported on the Internet (such as Hate Crime Against Asians Surged on Baidu.com; American Media: It Is Too Difficult for The United States to Move Towards Racial Justice! (Retrieved on Baidu, May 2021):

On May 25 last year, African American George Floyd was killed by a white policeman on his knees. The Black Lives Matter protest movement swept through 50 states in the United States and shocked the international community. The United Nations Human Rights Council also strongly criticized this event.

Statistics show that there are 5,125 cases of dissemination of racism, anti-Semitism, and other hate messages in the United States through physical leaflets, banners, and posters in 2020, which is the most active in at least 10 years, and is almost twice of 2019 (2,724 cases in 2019).

There have been repeated incidents of hate crimes against Asians:

In January of this year, a 91-year-old man was overthrown by a man in Chinatown in Oakland, California.

On March 16, a shooting occurred in a massage parlor in Atlanta, killing 8 people, 6 of whom were Asian women.

On April 23, a 61-year-old Asian man was attacked by a New York man in the East Hallam neighborhood of Manhattan.

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Obviously, racism has not been improved with the progress of the times; instead, it has been intensified, showing new tendencies and characteristics in the new era.

## II. Characteristics and Essence

The above news reports reflect that the development of racism in American society has shown some new characteristics and tendencies. It is because of economic reasons as well as political and ideological reasons. The above social factors are intertwined and present distinctive characteristics of the times. However, the essence has not changed. The following paragraphs will give brief analysis through several core concepts:

### **2.1 Racism**

The basic definition of racism usually refers to prejudice, violence, discrimination and persecution based on race. Racial discrimination refers to the behavior of dividing people into different social classes based on race to treat them differently. The specific manifestation is racial segregation, that is, in daily life, people are divided according to different races, and various races are unable to use public spaces or services simultaneously. The most famous apartheid in history occurred in South Africa and the United States. The core content of Nazism is racism.

### **2.2 Nationalism**

Nationalism includes two main aspects: one is to love one's own country and nation; the other is to oppose and exclude other countries and nations on the grounds of safeguarding the interests of one's own country and nation. Once nationalism is contaminated with populism and alienates the feelings of cherishing one's own nation into hating other nations, it is not only exclusive, but also is xenophobia. For such extreme nationalism, Einstein had once commented: "nationalism is an underdeveloped disease. It is the cysticercus of human beings." (Be Cautious of the Confluence of Populism and Extreme Nationalism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [Reference Date: 2017-05-10])

### **2.3 Populism**

The extreme populism emphasizes the values and ideals of the common people, and regards common people and popularization as the ultimate source of the legitimacy of all political movements and political systems; advocates relying on the power of common people to carry out radical reforms of society, and regards the common people as the only decisive strength in political reforms; determines major national affairs by emphasizing populist values such as the unity of the common people, referendums, and the people's right to create. Most populism is passionate, romantic, and irrational. It is radical on the surface, but at its core, it is a conservative force that fears competition, and therefore it has profound anti-market tendency and anti-modernization tendency. Due to its own characteristics, it is the easiest for populism to combine with nationalism and even racism. Once the two are combined and merged with both powers, they will form a mighty catastrophic power that will engulf everything and destroy everything. (Populism and Nationalism: Two Cancers in the Body of A Country|Individualism|Racism|Democracy, Retrieved on Mobile NetEase)

### **2.4 White Supremacy**

White supremacy is a kind of racial ideology, which advocates that white (specifically light-skinned) ethnicity is superior to other ethnic groups. Its idea is that white people are supreme, and all others are inferior. Modern white supremacy influenced by the Nazis has a distinctive feature, that is, they claim that white people (often referred to as the ancestors of the Nordic or Germanic peoples) are inherently superior to some or even all other ethnic groups. Therefore, the white people should rule others.

On August 12, 2017, white supremacists and neo-Nazis from many parts of the United States held a United Right demonstration rally in Charlottesville and clashed with the protesters. After the rally was dispersed by the police, a white supremacist drove into the crowd, causing one death and multiple injuries. Two other state policemen were killed in a helicopter crash while patrolling the air. The U.S. ruling and opposition parties generally believed that this was a riot caused by a white supremacy rally, and the occurrence of the great number of Nazi slogans, flags, and KKK logos had shocked many Americans. Trump claimed that the extreme

rightists and the crowds who protested them should be equally responsible, causing huge controversy and widespread criticism.

### III. Conclusion

Racism is a deep-rooted social issue in American culture. From the founding of the United States to the War of Independence, from the two world wars to the Cold War, from the Chinese Exclusion Act to the insult to China, from apartheid to hatred of Asians... the racism sweeping the United States and the entire Western world presents a trend of confluence of populism and extreme nationalism. For example, the United Kingdom voted for Brexit; the French Far-right Party National Front made use of the European refugee issue to make anti-Muslim immigration remarks; the number of violent cases created by German rightists was increasing; many economic and social problems cannot be properly solved in some Central and Eastern European countries. They all prove that the extreme right thought characterized by racism and xenophobia has receiving more and more supporting from common people, especially young people... They all have a distinctive feature: they appear in the face of nationalism, on the grounds of protecting the interests of their nation and country, and under the banner of loving the country and the people, they are easily recognized by the public; opponents often worry about being labeled as traitors and have to remain silent, and the government is also more cautious in controlling the irrational behavior of populists, and even dare not act. (Be Cautious of the Confluence of Populism and Extreme Nationalism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [Mobile NetEase; Reference Date: 2017-05-10]) This is the deep root of the madness of the KKK during Trump's administration. As an exploration of ideological and political education topics in English teaching, this article can only provide some superficial background knowledge and theoretical basis for students to understand the phenomenon, and the underlying reasons need to be further investigated.

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