

Book Review Symposium: Mike Cole *Racism and The Tory Party: From Disraeli to Johnson* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 490 pages, paperback. ISBN: 9781032056753

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Racism and The Tory Party: From Disraeli to Johnson, by Mike Cole, explores the endemic nature of racism within politics, while examining the role that race plays within the historical, political terrain of The United Kingdom of Great Britain (UK). Here, the idea of racism and its complexity evolves over time, this book giving an in-depth analysis of its role in relation to politics, geography, and the evolution of the Tory party.

In four separate sections Cole discusses in detail the historic and current development of racist ideology in the Tory party, from 1804 through 2022. Each section provides a historical context, while examining insight into the political climate, institutions, and leadership of the times. Cole focuses on and examines leaders within the Tory Party and events as they unfold, related to race and racism. His analysis provides a seamless picture which illustrates the ways that

racialization emerged within UK politics and infects insidiously, the larger society with the ideological disease of normalized racism.

Cole explores the racialized tensions, and xenoracism, which have expanded within the Tory party since 1804. He writes, “Racism is directed at people because of a number of perceived ‘identities’ including ‘race,’ ethnicity, nationality, religion, or a combination of these.” (Cole, 2023, p.1). For Cole, racism is also directed at people through a complex politics of cultural and political categories such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, or intertwined combinations of all those. The ideas explored in this book relate racism to the social pain of unimaginable exploitation, fear, and violence. Cole indicts the Tory Party, as both a cause and effect of cultural values developed within the UK.

Cole urges us to understand the key role played by Benjamin Disraeli during the early years of the party, and how his leadership impacted the overall development of the British empire. Cole mentions that at the early age of eighteen Disraeli became involved with the idea and development of nationalism. He authored several books that encouraged the young working class to take back England, whom he identified with as the most English to the core. A slogan that was created by him was, “All is race; there is no other truth” (Cole, 2023, p.41), thus signifying the relationship of the working class, the white “race” and the conservative party. Disraeli grew up during a time when the slave trade was seen as normal and treating slaves and colonial subjects as less than human. Later, in his parliamentary role we see this reflected in how he managed the so-called Mutiny in India during his term in parliament.

Within section three Cole discusses the utilization of eugenics and how scientific racism was used to justify colonization, imperialism, and the cruel treatment

experienced by colonized people by those in power within the Tory Party. Hence, the idea that one specific type of race was more important or better than another provided justification for the treatment endured by those that were enslaved through imperialism. “*Like Disraeli, Winston Churchill believed in the supremacy of the white ‘race’*” (Cole, 2023, p.97). Winston Churchill, another leader within the Tory party, which can be described as an imperialist racist for the time he was a prime minister was a staunch supporter of eugenics. He provides examples to illustrate Churchill’s blatant racism, and his contempt of Arabs, in referring to them as “hordes of Islam” who ruined Palestine, and how he would boast about “killing savages.” Churchill opposed the idea of self-rule in the colonized areas, believing that the primitive and “savage” people were better off due to imperial rule. He despised Mahatma Gandhi, and hated Indians in general. “I hate Indians. They are beastly people with a beastly religion. The famine was their own fault for breeding like rabbits” (Cole, 2023, p.101). Cole notes the imperial project of Christian missionaries in general, writing, “Missionary work was seen as ‘civilizing the natives. Racism in all its manifestations had become collective ‘common sense’ (Cole, 2023, p.75).

The Tory party has continued the practice of colonization, for penalization of Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) communities has not ceased. Cole discusses how the history of these atrocities was re-fashioned in history books, working to justify the blatant mistreatment and racist ideologies that have taken place. For example, Winston Churchill is often discussed as a war-time hero of the 1940s, while his imperialist and racist backstory is left in the shadows. This has worked to protect the image of Tory party members, and justify the actions taken by the Anglo-Saxon savior class. Tory Party leaders rewrote history to glorify the British explorers, leaders, and members of the elite as educational institutions sought to

eliminate any question of racism, colonialism, imperialism, and xenophobia still festering in UK society. If historians were to tell the truth about colonizers, imperialists, and racists, then these “saviour” Anglo-Saxons would then be held accountable for the cruel and horrific actions taken by them. This would be detrimental to the power that whites have in creating history, shaping politics, race, and in how they are seen within their own culture.

The glorification of the Tory party developed further when Margret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979. Cole provides insight into how she was able to secure her position, which was largely due to her campaigning and support of Powellism (Smith, 2009). Systemic racism, like Powellism, through the utilization of race-based immigration policies Thatcher was able to further develop immigration acts that are terribly ruthless. While Thatcher’s exclusionary political beliefs in relation to immigrants were foundational, the mid-2000s welcomed Theresa May. While in office she organized and worked to further implement the hostile environment that affected EU workers, immigration, higher educational institutions, refugees, and asylum seekers. Cole’s discussion of Boris Johnson, as Prime Minister, further solidifies the unchanging nature of the Tory Party politics as it is steeped in both color-coded and non-color-coded racism. His overt denial of institutional racism, fascist support, Islamophobia, and racist ideologies while in office, illustrate this continuation of racialization.

Thus, the Tory Party has continued the practice of colonization and the penalization of BIPOC communities in contemporary times. Mayes et al., (2022) affirms that white supremacy in the U.S. as a norm within various institutions continues to show up regularly in the form of dress code policies that penalize Black and brown students, discipline procedures that target specific behaviors, and

also through AP (Advance Placement) exams that prevent BIPOC students from gaining enrollment opportunities to educational institutions. For example, the similarities between social emotional learning program censorship and the racialization of the Tory Party are valuable for the similarities regarding the way their beliefs and practices have been incorporated by society, justifying new form of exclusion, and validating festering existing racism.

In relation to the book that Cole wrote on racism and the Tory Party, a focus on how social emotional learning can be examined critically in relation to racism and how it is being implemented without considering BIPOC students experiences in K-12 schools runs parallel. Current SEL practices apply a colorblindness approach which leads to SEL competencies based upon white culture. BIPOC students' cultural values and norms are often excluded from SEL competencies, practices, policies, systems, and structures. Hoffman (2009) states that SEL is often used as an umbrella term that describes the many different programs that are based within schools that are focused on mental health, school behavior, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and juvenile justice perspectives.

Cole's book provides insight and critically analyzes the different forms of oppression, politics, education, historical contexts, and discusses racism that challenges readers to explore underneath the surface of what is considered normal or accepted within society. This is relatable to social emotional learning that is rooted in education; however, his work applies to many other areas of society too. Within the book Cole examines the ways in which racism is embedded in not only the politics of the Tory Party, but every facet of the systems that are normalized and widely accepted without question. Reading this book encourages the reader to

step back, and thoughtfully examine their own relationship between racism that has been implemented and blindly accepted.

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Mike Cole’s book *Racism and The Tory Party: From Disraeli to Johnson*, provides a descriptive overview of two centuries of persistent racism in the Political Tory Party of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (UK). Cole provides an historical chronology of how racism took a multitude of different forms aimed at diverse peoples and intersecting identities. Hill (2009) supports such efforts through empirical research in concluding there being a continued need for understanding the intersections of class and race in relation to social inequality in the UK. The reader is urged to adopt a broad concept of racism instead of a “narrow skin colour” or “imagined biological inferiority alone” (Cole, 2017a). Cole asserts racism being both unintentional and intentional, with the former causing the same as the latter. The book focuses on individual Tory Party politicians during their premiership, and contextualizes events that occurred within their economic,

political, and social parameters. The book is organized with an introduction, ten chapters in four parts, and a conclusion.

Cole's introduction defines racialization as being how distinct groups of people are categorized within geo-political contexts attributed to capitalism. Cole is clear to explain institutional racism as collective acts by institutions either intentionally or unintentionally to racialize certain groups or populations. He states that 'race is a child of racism,' thus, socially constructed rather than a biological reality (Cole, 2023, p.5), Key terms are provided such as colour coded racism in relation to imperialism, and how the slave trade for profit fomented race. In addition, race was used as a justification for colonization and anti-immigrant nativist sentiment. Cole asserts that English nationalism has been dependent on the idea of race. According to Walton (2020) White supremacy justifies the exploitation of an underclass and should be recognized as playing a fundamental role in the social disadvantage of People of Colour under capitalism. Cole concludes by providing further concepts and terms for various forms of racism as a map for guiding the reader in understanding and engaging the book.

In Part 1 'Race', nation, and Empire, Cole introduces Part 1 by providing a detailed historical overview of how racism saturated the UK before the lifetime of Benjamin Disraeli. Colour-coded racism is critiqued for how racism was aimed at African and Asian peoples within the nation-state. The first chapter, *One 'race,' one nation, one Empire: 19th century racism in the life and times of Benjamin Disraeli*, highlights how racist discourse was justified through scientific racism to dehumanize difference. Cole suggests Disraeli developed racist perceptions during his travels, which influenced Disraeli's politics, harnessing a union between the conservative party and the radical masses to preserve the empire. Cole explains

how colour-coded and non-colour racism permeated Disraeli's political frame of thought, which were cemented into the principles of the Tory Party.

Chapter 2, *Championing imperialism and ramping up antisemitism: the Tories at the turn of the century (1880-1914)*, suggests how Social Darwinism and Eugenics were viewed as scientific methods for improving Western European societies, and also justified imperialism and the vast acquisition of wealth through exploitation. Cole states the Long Depression of 1873-1896 exacerbated imperialism in the UK through competition with other European powers. Disraeli's posthumous legacy, shaping imperialism is highlighted, arguing that the ruling class relied on a supportive mass base for defense of the nation/empire. Next, Cole analyzes antisemitism and the exile of Jews in response to the Russian Pogroms. The influx of Jewish immigrants resulted in the first modern immigration law enacted, The Aliens Act of 1905, which demeaned immigrants as people being a 'public charge'. Leonardo (2004) maintains that class is lived in multiple ways with one being racial categorization. Race is utilised to demean and dehumanize people of colour by way of their racial nature.

Part 2. *From Empire and Colonies to Powellism*

In Chapter 3, *The imperial and racial politics of Winston Churchill (1898-1955)*, Cole takes aim at the politics of Winston Churchill suggesting his ideology was clouded in White supremacy and Islamophobia. Cole contends that Churchill upheld imperialism, although his love of empire transcended it admiring fascists Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco, while noting that Churchill later became an anti-Nazi. Cole next examines Churchill's actions in relation to the ill-fated battle at the Gallipoli beachhead during World War I. Cole writes that much of the carnage was the result of Churchill's views of the Irish as a racialized inferior and

was “utilising them as shock troops.” The chapter further discusses colour-coded racism as the result of imperial ambitions resulting in immigration to the UK.

‘Last fling of the imperial dice’ to ‘rivers of blood’: Tory politics from Anthony Eden to Enoch Powell (1955-1969), This chapter foregrounds the premierships of Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan, with the former serving from 1955-1957 and the latter, from 1957-1963. Cole notes the continued non- colour racism aimed at Irish people. Cole describes that Premier Macmillan lost the colonies of Ghana and Malaya, explaining that non-colour-coded racism resulted in changing demographics. The chapter ends with Powell rising as a populist leader and spokesperson for the anti-non-White immigration lobby. His famous *Rivers of Blood* speech on April 20, 1968, is referenced with immigration depicted as a preventable evil.

Part 3. *Oppression in Northern Ireland Immigration Control and the birth and consolidation of Thatcher’s ‘racecraft’*

Chapter 5. *Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher (1970-1990)*, provides descriptive events that occurred during the premiership of Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher, and the conflict(s) that occurred in Northern Ireland. Cole focuses on the atrocities committed by the Heath government against the Irish population on Bloody Sunday. Cole then pivots to describe Heath and the UK joining the European communities (EC), later to be the European Union (EU). Cole puts forth that while internal conflict occurred, the 1971 Immigration Act was designed to curtail the immigration which was racialized. During her tenure Thatcher further normalized racist discourse through her “racecraft” (defined as strategies and policies in the areas of immigration and race relations in UK society).

Chapter 6, *Thatcher, immigration control, uprisings; imperialism resurrected; apartheid; and promoting British culture (1981-1990)*, focuses on continued efforts by the Thatcher administration as it managed immigration control, internal uprisings, urged South Atlantic imperialism, and shaped support of the British government for apartheid in South Africa. Immigration was further curtailed by the 1981 British Nationality Act, which made significant changes to British citizenship in an attempt to purify British blood and identity. The chapter wraps up by providing examples of how Thatcher's biological and cultural racism worked to justify imperialism and state repression.

In *John Major, multiculturalism and monoculturalism; grassroots Tory backlash to ethnic diversity in the party (1990-2010)*, Cole critiques the two-prong strategic attack against multicultural education and anti-immigrant sentiment during John Major's premiership. Cole asks the reader to analyze whether Major was multicultural or monocultural as he espoused a dual interventionist approach. The chapter also highlights how the Tory Party relied upon resurfaced scientific racism such as the Bell Curve in attempting to normalize biological inferiority, while simultaneously further exacerbating continued dehumanizing anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Part 4. *The hostile environment: genesis, incorporation, and the end of the free movement*

In Chapter 8, *Theresa May and the 'really hostile environment': origins, official launch, and enactment (2010-2016)*, focuses on nativist backlash for creating an extraordinarily hostile environment against immigrants and used whatever means necessary to dissuade their presence. The discourse prevalent during May's tenure as home secretary is examined which where immigrants were blamed for putting

pressure on public services. Cole (2012) suggests racialization be articulated within the modes of production. The chapter also focuses on racialized class uprisings and anti-immigrant legislation that enabled police with stop and search, financial and property seizure powers under ‘reasonable grounds.’

The May Premiership: hostile environment-consolidation and impact (2016-2019), examines the end of the free movement in the UK as it paralleled with Brexit. Cole forwards how Theresa May utilised racism in introducing the 2018 White Paper on immigration. The approach welcomed immigrants into the UK with large sums of capital, and tightened the noose on those who could work and study in the UK. Cole explains that this hostile back lash resulted in curtailing public services for immigrants and their children. Cole (2017b) avows that social class is universally racialized and is the maintenance system that capitalism depends on for modes of production.

Chapter 10. IN *Boris Johnson and racism and the ongoing march of the hostile environment (1999-2022)*, Cole continues with the hostile and racist environment in the UK furthered by Boris Johnson and the extension of colour coded racism. Cole states that Johnson denied centuries of institutionalized racism in the UK both in and outside of the Tory Party. Cole further describes how Johnson sided with Trumpism in the United States by suppressing lawful protest through the *Police, Crime, Sentencing Courts Act (2022)*. Cole (2020) discusses the need for a geopolitical focus on racism and capitalism that has blanketed both UK and US societies with fascistic noxiousness.

In his Conclusion, Cole meticulously demonstrates how racism has been a pillar of the Tory Party from the nineteenth century to the second decade of the twenty-first

century, with racism being deeply rooted to imperialism and colonialism for justifying the subordination of the conquered. Furthermore, within the UK racism has been used by Tory Party politicians to normalize the preservation of a White Anglo-Saxon British identity from the so-called threat of immigrants. The consequences have been dire for those scapegoated and oppressed by racist ideology.

Postscript: The rise and fall of Boris Johnson

In this following section Cole describes how it was not endemic racism that brought Johnson down, but that his ethics and contradictions as a leader were questioned. He resigned on July 7, 2022, and Mary (Liz) Elizabeth Truss filled in the void for the Tory Party. She is the third woman to serve as prime minister.

The book is extremely beneficial to an international audience of educators, sociologists, historians, and philosophers for connecting patterns of racism throughout the world. By utilizing a Marxian dialogical lens, Cole shows how the history of the Tory Party so deeply entrenched white supremacy and racialized capitalist exploitation. Its foundationsl colonialist racism is set against those who have worked to strengthen principles of justice and human emancipation during those years (Cole, 2017c; Walton, 2021).

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