

The *Otherness* and Structural Racism

Brij Mohan* and Nairruti Jani**

The political philosophy of “otherness” implies the dialectic of self and intersubjectivity, which refers to marginalization of the opposite of self, us, and the “same”. A failed society is a dysfunctional organization of broken institutions that breed extremist ideologies of racism, discrimination, carnage, and terror. This presentation unravels the structure of evil that thwarts freedom and justice. Structural barriers are embedded in conventional constitutionlism and “Poverty of Culture”,¹ inclusive of archaic beliefs and practices.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) applied “otherness” to the man-and-woman relationship. Jean Paul Sartre believed in *being-for-others*... [sic] maintaining “ontological separation” between “self” and “the other.” The *otherness* thus became the crucible of all freedom-loving intellectuals.

Existential anomie, a sense of alienation amid an institutional structure of hierarchized and exploitative social system, is the oxygen of pervasive injustice and inequality historically determined by colonial and imperial powers. Karl Marx's views of history and class conflict validate “alienation” of *the other* that leads to the rise of capitalist dystopia. The constitution of the United States is

* Brij Mohan is Dean Emeritus, School of Social Work, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA USA. He can be contacted at Brijmohan128@gmail.com

** Nairruti Jani is Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida, USA. She can be contacted at nairruti@gmail.com

¹ Central South University, China. Side Event of the 50th Session of the UN Human Rights Council. International HR Conference on ‘Old Patterns behind New Veils?: Structural Racism's Origins and Influences’, Changsha, China, June 22, 2022 (Wednesday), 15:00–18:00 China Beijing Time (2.00 am, CST). Hosted by China Society for Human Rights Studies, Diversity Human Rights Research Center. See Mohan (2011, 2022).

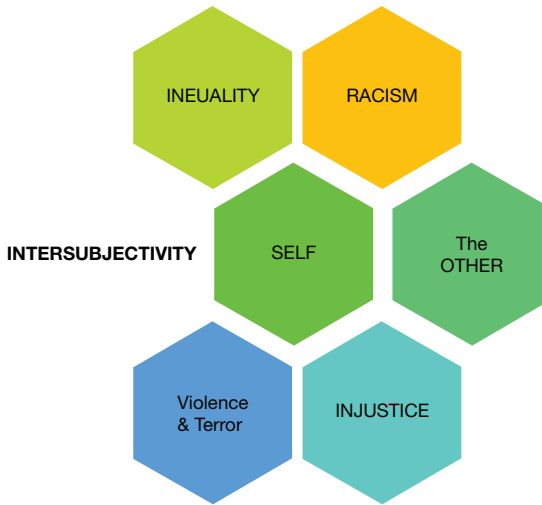


Figure 1 The structure of evil: a primordial view of *intersubjectivity* and *intersectionality*.

remarkably undemocratic if the function and structure of the Supreme Court is critically examined.²

Thomas Piketty's imagination and insight has radically transformed the primordial question: Unearned wealth—yields of property, inheritance, and elitist privileges—is the engine of rapacious structures which breed poverty and injustices.³ Speaking anthropologically, it may be argued that the evolution of the ancient *caste system*—still in practice in South Asia—appears to be a formidable incubator of modern *class*.⁴

² “[O]ur antiquated Constitution, written over two centuries ago by White men to govern a small, slave-dependent republic huddled along the Eastern Seaboard, does not meet the needs of the sprawling, multiethnic, and complicated country that we have become... American politics is saturated by reverence for an ancient and anachronistic document, written by people who in many cases owned other human beings, and never endorsed by [the] majority of inhabitants of our country” (Seidman, 2022, p. 20).

³ “In 2011, Joseph Stiglitz, and then Thomas Piketty and his colleague Emmanuel Saez, publicly identified the ‘1 per cent’ as the source of America’s economic and social problems. The study of financial elites, rentier power, global inequality, and wealth management took off. Where sociologists had spent much of the 20th century trying to understand poverty and shifting class stratifications across the spectrum, Piketty focused on a small group of super-rich individuals, and posed a deceptively simple empirical question: Where had they got all their money from? That so much of it turned out to be ‘unearned’ (either inherited or extracted from property as rent) undermines the modernist conceit that capitalism untethers us from the past.” London Review of Books. Retrieved from <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#imp/WhctKXXXJwhrL-WWSVbplKtNkqJBVJLhRQDL> (accessed June 6, 2022).

⁴ See Hannah-Jones (2021); Wilkerson (2020).

We live in a broken society, where our avowed institutions fail their people. Rituals of daily mayhem, mass killings, obscene inequalities, and ubiquitous divisiveness of a hopelessly divided “social structure” call for reconsideration and rediscovery of democracy, *intersubjectivity*, and *intersectionality*.

A few takeaways from this framework include our continued strides toward the following:

1. Emphasizing structural barriers as the source of social, economic, and cultural impediments (“problems,” such as inequality, poverty, violence, and inter-group hostility) that persist despite constitutional safeguards, organized plans, and social programs.
2. Signifying the foundational role of political culture that breeds social and economic injustice and institutional meltdown.
3. Exploring the roots of oppression and “the otherness” that dehumanize humanity.
4. Exploding the myth that capacity-building and empowerment will resolve social and economic problems (without radical transformation of institutional structures).
5. Reexamination of *intersubjectivity* and *intersectionality* to root out the genesis of colonial oppression, racialized public policies, and political marginalization.

References

- Hannah-Jones, N. (2021). *A new origin story: The 1619 project*. New York, NY: One World (Random House).
- Mohan, B. (2011). *Development, poverty of culture and social policy*. New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230117655>
- Mohan, B. (2022). *Rediscovery of society: A post-pandemic reality*. New York, NY: Nova. <https://doi.org/10.52305/IUVE953>
- Seidman, L.M. (2022). The problem of the Supreme Court. *The Nation*, June 27–July 4, 2022, pp. 20–27.
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontents*. New York, NY: Random House.