Race Immigration and American Identity in A Different Mirror

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Q#1: Why does Takaki use the term “a Different Mirror”?

Racism and ethnicity adorned with multi-dimensional discrimination are deep-rooted problems of the modern world. The said issue has struck enormous chunks of the United States population and raised question marks about their identity based on colour and facial complexions. Undoubtedly, America has become more diverse day by day since the very beginning of immigrant slots on Virginia’s shore. Remarkably, this trench of diversity, having deep-rooted historical discrimination, is increasing day by day in the country. However, Takaki had gone through a similar personal experience when he had to explain his origin and migration of ancestors and prove himself an American before a white taxi driver. The whole conversation between a forty-year-old white taxi driver and Takaki took place through a rearview mirror of the taxi. In connection to this rearview mirror, the author named his philosophical and historical work a different mirror. A Different Mirror is basically a metaphor that has the motive to persuade the common masses to think differently. The general public should understand the fact that not only the white or European immigrants are Americans, but all other races and strata of the population are also Americans by blood and flesh. They are equally playing a pivotal role in the development and progress of the country. So it is time now to think and accept things differently, with a somewhat radical and modern flash of mental power. In crux, we can say that Takaki used the term a Different Mirror to show the masses a new thinking of humanity and American nationalism instead of racism and ethnic discrimination (Takaki, 2008).

Q#2: How do the experiences of African Americans in the United States compare with those of other races or ethnic groups?

According to A Different Mirror by Takaki, African Americans have remained the most tragic and disgraceful group compared to other races and ethnic groups in the country. Since the origin of this group, they have been severely humiliated. The masses of all other races and ethnicities had come as immigrants to the United States, while African Americans had been brought as slaves. A new department or institution was introduced by the European immigrants for African Americans, i.e., slavery. Undoubtedly, this group is the largest one in terms of population in the country, and they had

to fight a massive war for their freedom. All the other races had to face racial discrimination, but African Americans had to face slavery in addition. Meanwhile, White immigrants from Europe instituted the new diverse Department of black labour, which was basically the tale of the “hidden beginning” of slavery in the country. The Civil Rights Movement and Civil War were not only for freedom but also for avenging and captivating the right to be human-like others. Additionally, the struggle for freedom on the part of African Americans has become a reminder of the national moral vision of multiple values, among which liberty is top ranking. Further, this group has paved the way for securing fundamental rights in the country, which ultimately benefitted the other races. So, the comparison of African Americans with other races and ethnicities makes them distinct in various aspects (Takaki, 2008).

Q#3: Takaki claims that racial minorities’ experiences differ from those of European immigrants. Why does he make this claim?

The claim of Takaki that racial minorities’ experiences differ from those of European immigrants lies in specific causes. All the other minorities in the United States have to face and bear abrupt circumstances due to European immigrants. For example, Asian immigrants were earlier settlers than many European immigrant groups but were in the situation of strangers later. They did not try to occupy the country’s resources. On the contrary, European immigrants captured and monopolized the economy of the country. The considerable number of European immigrant groups gave them the courage to pave the road of cruelty. Such cruelty and inhumane behaviour sprouted in the form of African American slavery units. It is noteworthy that African Americans had to snatch freedom and equality status from the White majority. Moreover, the European immigrants firmly believe that other minorities are non-American and only European immigrants are American, which fueled the author’s claim. Even in modern times, native-born Americans from other minorities and ethnicities have to explain their ancestral history to the whites for national consideration. In other words, European immigrant groups have treated other races and minorities as second-class citizens. Hence, the claim that Takaki has a deep-rooted historical background proves the fact that other racial minorities have a different experience than that of European immigrants (Takaki, 2008).

Q#4: Takaki contends that racial minorities have a special interconnectedness owing to their experiences.

Takaki contends that racial minorities have a particular interconnectedness while the other minorities do not, based upon particular pieces of evidence. For example, the multicultural perspectives analyze

the experiences of these racial minorities compared to other minorities. The social construction paradigm defined the fact that racial minorities have been set apart from European immigrant groups. Moreover, the market revolution made the Irish a labour and maid class for other minorities. Similarly, the Mexican and Japanese labour strikes in the farmlands clearly show that the superior strata of the population had controlled racial minorities and oppressed units. Such ethnic diversity spread out throughout the country, and racial minorities have to undergo different experiences compared to other minorities (Takaki, 2008).

Q#5: Which two groups have had the most similar experiences? Which two have had the most disparate experiences?

Keenly looking upon the reviews given by Takaki regarding multiple groups in the country, some of them look similar to each other, while some had to undergo disparate experiences. As far as the similarity between the two groups is concerned, Asians and Chicanos look quite similar based on social circumstances. Asians were reported as earlier immigrants before many European immigrant groups, but they were treated just like strangers in the land. They posed a lower position compared to new immigrant groups. Similarly, Chicanos were a Hispanic population who came to America in huge numbers. After the war against Mexico and as a result of the treaty signed, Chicanos became foreigners in their land. They were just like Asians, even in huge numbers. Contrary to these groups, various other groups have disparities, like African Americans and Jews. African Americans were brought here to this land as slaves in the curtain of black labourers. They had to face the inhuman conduct of European immigrant groups. However, Jews thought it a promising land for their progress and development. In this context, they came here, were lesser in number, and worked hard for the progress of the Jewish community as well as for other ethnic and oppressed groups. Eventually, they became the decisive group based on socio-economic development in the county (Takaki, 2008).

Q#6: To what degree would his argument regarding the interconnectedness among racial minorities apply to contemporary race relations?

Undoubtedly, Takaki is a fabulous historian, having demonstrated the historical pleading of oppressed groups in an attractive way. His arguments regarding interconnectedness among racial minorities do apply to a great extent in contemporary race relations. Even in modern times, the oppression and discrimination in society are deep, while the bias on the part of respective authorities, especially in law enforcement agencies, is aggravated. So, his arguments apply to the country's contemporary affairs (Takaki, 2008).

References

Takaki, R. T. (2008). *A different mirror: A history of multicultural America* (Rev. ed.). Back Bay Books.