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How America's New Protocol Turns Blind Eye to Anti-Black Racism

Proposed shift from collecting demographic data leaves us in the dark.



Dr. Allison Wiltz Follow 5 min read · 4 days ago

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Close-up portrait focusing on two women | Photo by Polina via Pexels

In a 1962 book review, James Baldwin famously wrote, “not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” Anyone who’s skipped routine maintenance on their vehicle knows this is true. If you ignore a nail in your tire, you’re more likely to catch a flat. If you keep putting off an oil change, you could ruin a perfectly good engine, costing you thousands in repairs. Ignoring a problem doesn’t make it go

away and, in many cases, only makes it more difficult to address down the line. The same can be said of anti-Black racism in American society. While some have adopted a colorblind worldview, claiming not to "see race," failing to confront racism places our society at risk for degradation.

In recent years, Black unemployment has skyrocketed to more than twice the rate for White Americans following layoffs, a reduction in the federal workforce, and less support for minority-owned businesses. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs and, with them, their ability to provide for themselves and their families. Despite the negative impact Trump-era policies have had on the black community, he has personally denied having a "racist bone in his body," a phrase popularized during the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan served as president. According to a Washington Post editorial, this phrase also applied to government agencies, as a way to deny systemic racism despite racially disparate outcomes.

Endorsing colorblind ideology in a society inundated with racism is like shutting off the lights in a dirty room. You can't tell if you're stepping on shards of glass, ceramic plates, or something spilled on the floor, and best believe you can make matters worse that way. Nevertheless, this is the approach our government is currently taking. In Executive Order 14281, Trump ordered federal agencies to eliminate, and in some cases deprioritize, the use of disparate impact as evidence of discrimination. Despite

portraying this shift as a step toward meritocracy, this policy change overlooks the racism qualified Black candidates endure. Denying this problem may lock current disparities in place for the foreseeable future.

This week, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission voted 2–1 in support of a proposed change to end a 60-year precedent that required the department to collect racial demographic data. If approved, it will take effect later this year. Kalpana Kotagal, the only member of the EEOC who voted to maintain the protocol, described the decision as "untethered from reality." She noted, "Discrimination doesn't go away just because you erase the data. It just becomes harder to prove. Enforcement gets weaker. It takes more time. It's costlier. Accountability suffers, and workers get left behind." It's understandable that some Americans are at their wits' end, exhausted by conversations about race and racism. I've witnessed this type of fatigue first-hand when trying to raise the topic online and in person. Yet, it's hard to believe this federal department responsible for enforcing anti-discrimination laws in the workplace can perform its duties faithfully if it stops collecting demographic data. There's no way to ensure that citizens are treated fairly while disregarding the information needed to make that assessment.

Research studies frequently demonstrate that racism persists in the workforce. Applicants with black-sounding names are less likely to be hired,

and Black employees often make less than their White counterparts. They're also less likely to be given a raise or to be promoted to managerial positions. These studies suggest that the colorblind worldview, while popular among conservatives, is not reflective of the society we live in. Rather than adapt, incorporating this information into their understanding, some want to eliminate key evidence of racial and gender-based discrimination. Those who want agencies to stop recording demographic data want to hide the truth by sweeping it under the rug. But this is not the same as addressing the problem in earnest.

This latest decision by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is part of a broader movement to enforce a colorblind protocol and thus deny the effects of anti-Black racism. For example, the conservative majority on the Supreme Court ruled against the use of race-based affirmative action policies in 2022 under the veil of colorblindness, overlooking a longstanding pattern of discrimination in college admissions. Similar arguments were made when justices voted to eliminate some voting rights protections. For instance, in Shelby v. Holder (2013), justices voted to eliminate the requirement for states with a history of discrimination to seek preclearance prior to altering voting laws. And in Louisiana v. Callais (2026), the majority voted to limit protections against racial gerrymandering. In her dissenting opinion, Justice Kagan noted that this decision rendered the Voting Rights Act "all but a dead letter."

America's new protocol of colorblindness pivots from the civil rights era notion that the country has a responsibility to mitigate the harmful impact of racism in the lives of Black people. "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil," the westernized version of a Chinese proverb, may apply well in the case of an individual attempting to enforce a moral standard for themselves: abstaining from harmful behaviors. But societally, it amounts to nothing more than apathy. Even if every data scientist throughout the country heeded the call from conservatives and stopped recording demographic data, such as race and gender, it wouldn't change the fact that anti-Black racism persists. While the topic may trigger discomfort among those who are privileged either racially or economically, understanding how identity impacts people's lives is a key prerequisite for addressing modern-day racial discrimination. As Baldwin brilliantly pointed out, "nothing can be changed until it is faced." When America turns a blind eye to racism, it's failing to address the problem. While learning that your engine is on life support after you refused to get regular oil changes is difficult to hear, conditions will not improve until you accept the prognosis.

Why Black People Report Better Outcomes with Black Doctors

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New Jim Crow Achieved by Denying All Racist Intentions

Many see colorblind ideology as harmless until it's too late

allyfromnola.medium.com

🌹You can learn more about the author here and subscribe to the newsletter, *For Black Women*. Full reference list available here.

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Written by Dr. Allison Wiltz

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4 days ago

> Applicants with black-sounding names are less likely to be hired,

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7 1 reply Reply

Super Mrs. C.
4 days ago (edited)

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Pebbles
4 days ago

> When America turns a blind eye to racism, it's failing to address the problem.

👏👏👏 I can pretty much highlight **this whole read**.

54 Reply

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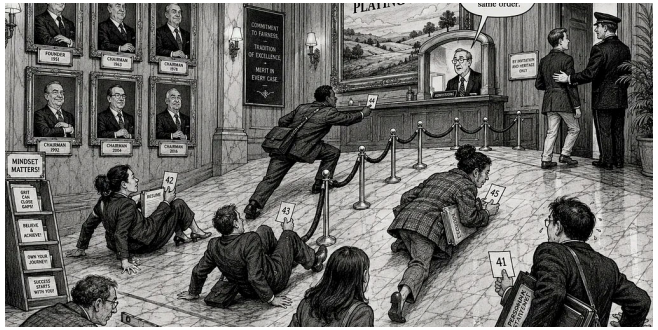


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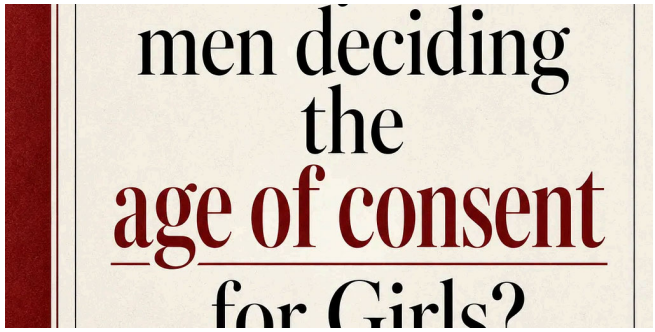


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