Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Welcome, everyone, to podcast episode number two, for AFR320-C: Power and Place in Making Texas History. This one will get into racisms. We talked about race, so now we're getting into racisms. So what's the first question.

Questions: What is racism and how does it work?

Dr.Gordon: I have something written down here, I'll read it to you. It says, "The belief that there are different races and that these races possess distinct inherent characteristics, abilities, or qualities; can be the belief in genetic, cultural, or other inferiority or superiority of a group, as defined by specific physical characteristics."

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So there's an element of this older understanding of race as biological in there, but also this conversation that we had about it being a social construct.

Dr.Gordon: Yeah. That kind of connection between the older, biological notion of race and race as a social construct is made difficult by the fact that race and racism are intently focused on bodies. Again, we understand bodies to be biological. But on the other hand, race is about the ways in which bodies are, in some sense, arbitrarily assigned to different identities, and that's a social construct. But it's a social construct that has real impact on people's lives, as we said in relationship to the last question, and that's where the racism aspect of it comes in. So, are there different components of this notion of racism, or racism as a system of thought and action? What are those?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah, there's certainly an ideological component to it, and there's a power component.

Dr.Gordon: What do you mean by ideological?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So, ideological is the belief of racism, the use of racism, or the belief that other races that aren't yours being inferior, or your own being superior. There has to be a real belief in that, but that comes from an educational groundwork there; from what we see in our households, what we see in our communities, what we see in our media, for example, that really builds up that ideology of other races not being the same, or inferior, or not worthy of certain things.

Dr.Gordon: Well, that sounds like a pretty important part of it. I guess what you mean is that it's the ideas that people have about race, the first of which is that race is actually real, and the second of which is that race is a way of understanding how it is that people act, or what their intelligence is, or any number of other things that we believe about the inherent capabilities and behaviors of groups of people once we've accepted that races, as an idea, actually exist. So, what's this power component thing? That sounds pretty abstract also.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: As we talked about in the first episode, race is a tool for power, for the domination of one group over the other; racism is the action of that. So it goes from belief, believing that race is real and that there's an inherent difference in racial groups, that if you are part of the dominant group, then you have to have the power. So you keep reproducing these ideologies through actions in order to maintain your own power over these other groups that have been disenfranchised or all sorts of things.

Dr.Gordon: Yeah, I guess I understand the power thing. It goes back to what we said about the Omi and Winant definition of race. The belief in racial difference becomes racism when, on the one hand, you believe in racial difference and you believe that racial difference can tell you something about the qualities that differently racialized people have, and then the power aspect of it has to do with the way you treat people based on your understanding of what that racial difference means. All right, so a systematic exercise of unequal power against a racial group is racism?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr.Gordon: I notice we have these things down in our notes as "racisms" rather than "racism." Why would we be putting an "s" on that and calling them -- referring to something like "racisms"? What's -- What's that about?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: There's different types of racism, and there's different ways in which you can enact this ideology of racism, and we'll discuss that in a bit. But it is important to understand that these different racisms are based in these different histories and evolving histories throughout modernity, of interactions between differently racialized peoples and how they manifest across time and place. So, a Black person enslaved in Virginia in 1715, for example, might not have had the same type of treatment, first of all interpersonal treatment, for the way they look, or have been under this legal construction of enslaved, being property, being chattel, as they would have had, certainly, in maybe 1320 Spain, for example.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Through the process of modernity, this, not only understanding of race and these racial histories, but also the ways in which racisms and the ways in which to do racism, enact racism, enact this ideology, they look different, and they evolve. We'll talk about that a little bit more in this episode.

Dr.Gordon: Okay, makes some sense. In other words, what you're saying is that, for example, to take the Black case, the racism that exists against Black people as enslaved people and the racism that exists against Black people as people living in 21st-century United States are very, very different things, but that doesn't mean that one is racism and the other is not. They're both racism, but different types?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr.Gordon: Okay. Also, I guess what you're saying is that the racism that exists against, let's say, Asian Americans and the racism that exists against Black Americans is not necessarily the same thing. That doesn't mean that one is worse, or better, or anything else, but just that they're expressed in different kinds of ways, and that's why we have the plural.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Exactly.

Dr.Gordon: That makes sense to me. I see down here, it says something about racial formations. Did you want to talk about racial formations as they apply to racial identities, or is that already taken up in what we just said?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I think it's taken up in what we just said. When I say racial formations, I mean these categories of race, and how they evolve, and are enacted, and are understood by the people that, maybe, apply to a certain label, a certain racial label, but also others that don't. We can talk about things like interpolation versus self-identification when it comes to these when we talk about culture, especially, but the process of being a race, and being seen as a race, and how that evolves.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: It's not a static thing either. Just like sometimes the names of these labels might change. We don't say colored anymore, for example, for African Americans, we say African Americans or Black. Labels change. The definitions or the expected look of that label can change across time and space.

Dr.Gordon: All right. Well, that sounds like a reasonable explanation of that concept. Let's go on to the next question.

Question: What is anti-Black racism?

Dr.Gordon: Yeah. Right. Now we're getting down to the nitty gritty. This is, after all, a Black Studies course that we're preparing this for. So, what is anti-Black racism? It sounds like what we're trying to say here, or explore more deeply, relates to what we were saying before, that there are different kinds of racisms, that racism is not a unitary or a homogeneous process, that it differs. So, what's different? What's unique about anti-Black racism? Why would we have to call it anti-Black racism?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: With the historical lineage of modernity and what it looked like through this very violent process of colonization, which I think we haven't really pinpointed just yet, that it is a violent process, you have race becoming a very salient and important category for the continuation of capital and settlement in the other part of the world that is not Europe, Asia, Africa; the New World, so to speak. Within this process, anti-Black racism becomes foundational to that, or a very important part of that.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: It originates in the transformation of color prejudice and/or ethnocentrism through the socioeconomic exercise of power against a racial group defined as inferior, to phenotypical difference. What I mean by that is, you have a, for example, Portuguese merchant going to the west coast of Africa and becoming a merchant of people that -- They are people in Africa, but through this very violent process of colonization, these people that are originating in Africa are now seen as commodities, as products. They're no longer human; they're something to be sold for labor, and that labor will then reward capitalist endeavors in the New World.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So, because of their phenotypical difference, but also even sometimes their cultural difference and the way that they do life differently from Europe, that is then used as a justification to have this exercise of power against these people. That is the root of anti-Black racism within this concept of modernity, and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and colonialism at large.

Dr.Gordon: Yeah, that's pretty good. I'd add to that a couple of things. One is the notion anti-Black racism signifies that there's something different about the racism as directed at Black people than existed in relationship to the racism directed to other kinds of folks; it's important to understand.

Dr.Gordon: To me, one of those aspects is that we talk about white people, or most of the time we don't, but we do talk about Black people. Many of the other races, we don't talk about it in terms of color or only color, but Blackness has come to be used as a way of understanding us, whether we're in Africa or elsewhere, in some sense, because it is so instrumental in constructing whiteness.

Dr.Gordon: Modernity, in some sense, is about the construction of Europe and Africa, or Europe and the rest of the world. It's also about the construction of whiteness in relation to Blackness, and then other races. But there's something elemental about that white-Black or anti-Black aspect of things.

Dr.Gordon: That also gets played out in, what you were talking about, chattel slavery. Chattel slavery means, chattel is a commodity. Chattel slavery is the ways in which certain kinds of people, Black people, people from Africa, were made into things, domestic animals of one sort or another. There comes a relationship between Blackness and chattel, and through that direct relationship of Blackness, if you're Black at a certain point, then you are chattel, and if you're chattel, you're subhuman. Therefore, Blackness is associated with sub-humanity.

Dr.Gordon: One of the things about anti-Black racism is the notion that Black people are subhuman, and therefore need to be treated that way. Part of what is so key to anti-Blackness is it's a key aspect of how it is that the modern world gets created economically, but also in terms of identities, and it's a key way in which certain peoples are understood to be human on the one hand and non-human on the other.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I think it's also important to understand that this transforms post-emancipation, especially here in the United States, as Black people being denied full citizenship and other privileges as a continuation of that subhuman status that was established through chattel slavery that made them into accumulable and interchangeable commodities. Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: That sounds good to me. Let's go to the next question. It's related to this.

Question: What are the different systemic types of racism?

Dr.Gordon: We already talked about -- sort of about one, and one is by biological racism. In other words, the notion that Black, Black and other racially different people, people who are racially different, mostly from whites, are biologically different and biologically inferior, usually in terms of intelligence, but in terms of other capacities and capabilities as well.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So, this is to be understood as like social Darwinism?

Dr.Gordon: Well, social Darwinism was the taking of anti-Black racism and the racism against other people of colors that already exists, often based in religion and all that, and give it a scientific backing based on evolutionary theory. The idea becomes that the differences that are assumed to exist amongst the races of mankind or humankind are differences that have evolved over time. Using Darwin's concept of evolution, there is a constant evolution from more primitive to less primitive and that the non-white races exist at a stage of evolution that's earlier than the white races do, and so therefore they're scientifically inferior, which leads to -- You have down here for us to talk about eugenics. How does eugenics relate? What is it, and how does it relate to Darwinism?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini I would say eugenics is a, quote-unquote, "science," as it was understood back then. A lot of scientists and doctors were involved in these types of experiments and medical practices that were concerned with this idea of the evolution of the human race and how certain, in their case, non-white racial categories or racial groups were not allowing the human race to make further progress to become much more, very much different from the prehistoric. They were stopping the next step of evolution.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: So we had these very interesting figures in history that were eugenicists and were supporters of eugenic medicine. These practices were then supported through legal measures, and educational policies, and economic policies as well to try to further the human race, in order to not have any going back in terms of evolution, because they were so afraid of that. Because Black people had already been considered chattel, they were very much affected by these types of experimentation, and medical beliefs, and scientific beliefs of that era.

Dr.Gordon: Unfortunately eugenics was practiced on this campus for much of the 20th century. There were a number of scientists here who believed in a social Darwinistic notion of race and the inferiority of some races to others and who were actively involved in trying to think through how it is that you could perfect the white race, but also in various ways eliminate the biologically-inferior groups of folks, many of whom were understood to be racially inferior. Of course, they were also looking to explain things like criminality and various forms of disability on genetics and were looking to exclude those folks from society as well.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: Let's just briefly talk about de jure racism as another kind of racism that comes out of biological old understandings of race. When we're talking about de jure racism, we're talking about the kind of racism that existed here in Texas and here at the University of Texas up until the 1960s and 1970s; that's the legal exclusion of peoples.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: Of racially different people based on their race, and the legal mistreatment of certain groups of people based on their race, particularly Blacks, but also to a certain extent here in the state of Texas, Mexican Americans, and to a certain extent, Asian Americans and all that. Does de jure racism still exist in this country, in the state of Texas?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Some people would like to debate that it doesn't, but there are ways in which racial exclusion still does show up in certain terms or is allowed through some of the laws that we have in the state and in the United States in general.

Dr.Gordon: For the most part, the segregation laws, the Jim Crow segregation laws that used to exist have been eliminated, particularly in the '60s with the Johnson administration, the Voting Rights Act, the Civil Rights Act and all that, but I agree there are certain aspects of law which still tolerate discriminatory practices on the basis of race.

Dr.Gordon: We said that de jure racism was mostly based on biological racism, but today, I would like to say, there's not a lot of people who believe in the biological difference, at least in ability, of racially different people or they still certainly don't want to talk about it publicly.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: In those terms.

Dr.Gordon: Right, in those terms, publicly. Is there another kind of racism that people might use to justify the fact that, if you look around society, you can see that there does seem to be, continuing, a racial hierarchy and that some people are treated differently, racially?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah, cultural racism.

Dr.Gordon: What's that?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Within culture, we can consider something mainstream or something that is belonging to a certain group, and we'll talk a little bit more about culture in the fourth episode. Cultural racism is the dominant notions of Black culture, in particular, being pathologically broken and criminal, with an emphasis on sexual promiscuity, a broken family model, rampant poverty, and inherently criminal behavior. There is an understanding that Black culture, you could say here in the States, but it applies to the rest of the African diaspora, is not the same as the dominant culture, or mainstream, or white culture, and that that makes it wrong, inherently.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: It's a sort of evolution from this biological understanding of race, and thus biological racism becoming cultural racism, and this different model of looking at Black people or understanding Black people that still essentializes Black people in a very similar way that biological racism used to. We'll certainly talk a little bit more about it later, but in the States, the former U.S. Secretary of Labor, Daniel P. Moynihan, and his 1965 report was very integral to shifting this basis of anti-Black racism in particular from something biological to cultural, though, as I said, the latter fed from the former.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: The pathologizing of Black culture, specifically, and the stereotypes that it imposes on Black people and their actual cultures through this process of government backing and even legal backing through the de jure racism in the '60s, as it became undone through the Civil Rights Act and other legal measures, it still became common sense, this understanding of Black culture as inherently wrong or not the same as what white culture is.

Dr.Gordon: So, once you get rid of, at least, the acceptability of saying that Black and other people who are different, are biologically different and therefore inferior, you're able to say, "I don't believe in the biological differences, but nevertheless, I understand there to be cultural differences," and those cultural differences between groups can then can be used to understand different outcomes in society and why some folks seem to not be doing as well as others. We can blame it on their cultural difference, particularly in terms of Black culture.

Dr.Gordon: That makes sense. It seems like there's other kinds of racism or different levels at which racism operates. Are there still people who, I don't think you'd find many at this university but maybe you would, but people who say that they don't like, or refuse to interact, or would treat people differently based on their cultural difference?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah, there's certainly still interpersonal racism. Maybe within an institution, or within a group, or community, the inferiority of another group might not be the ideology that rules over that group or motivates that group, but you might still see people that individually hold these racist ideologies and beliefs and act on them.

Dr.Gordon: You seem to be saying that this interpersonal racism has died down or become a little bit less important in terms of understanding how race and racism operate in this society? That means that you're making an argument that racism no longer exists?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Oh, no, not at all.

Dr.Gordon: How else can we ... For example, I've been wondering about this myself. So, here I am at the University of Texas at Austin. I know the president, President Hartzell. I don't know him well, but I've met him many times, and he's always treated me decently. I've never heard him say that he doesn't want more Black or Brown students at the University of Texas. In fact, he celebrates that. And I've never had anybody tell me, at any level, that they didn't think that it was a problem to have Black students here or even Black faculty members here, so that probably indicates an absence of interpersonal racism, at least in terms of what I've seen. So racism no longer occurs in a place like this, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: It does.

Dr.Gordon: How does that work?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: You, for example, have an administrative role.

Dr.Gordon: I do.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: At the moment.

Dr.Gordon: Yes.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: You are a stalwart on campus; you've had a long career here.

Dr.Gordon: Stalwart. Too long. Yes.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: At the University of Texas at Austin. You're a very respected scholar. I wouldn't necessarily think that a university president would come to you and say the very opposite of what you just said, but there are ways in which individual members of the administration of an institution like this university can enact policies or make decisions that are racist.

Dr.Gordon: But do you think that that's because they're racist themselves?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: They might not understand themselves as that.

Dr.Gordon: Maybe, but it seems kind of weird that most of them, some of their best friends are Black people. How could they be? How does this work? For example, we struggle to have 5% of the undergraduate population in the University of Texas be Black. The population of Texas is something around 12% Black, so how do you explain the discrepancy? Are you saying it's because most people at the University of Texas are racist, interpersonally racist, and so therefore they're conspiring in one way or another to keep us out?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I don't know them.

Dr.Gordon: Yeah. You're not discounted.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I don't know them personally, but there are ways in which certain beliefs within a racist system, a person cannot hold them fully; for example, like they might not identify as, for example, a white supremacist, but they have, especially in positions of power, the choice of making the institution that they work in or the community that they're serving much more inclusive and much more diverse, so to speak, to serve, in the case of UT Austin, more Black undergrads and have more Black faculty and all that.

Dr.Gordon: Yeah, okay. You're making an argument for the continuing salience of interpersonal racism of one sort or another. Sometimes it's not as overt as others. But I've heard this concept of white privilege, and it doesn't seem to me that white privilege is necessarily saying that the people who enjoy white privilege, which then means that they're in an advantaged position in relationship to people who are not white, has anything to do with what they personally feel about people of color. How does that work?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Just like what we've been talking about in terms of race and racism, it's very complex. But in terms of white privilege, there are people who are white, and move through the world as white, and have the privileges of whiteness because of this historical process that we've been talking about in terms of modernity, and these racial formations, and power and the inequality of power that might not know or be cognizant of the fact that they have white privilege.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: There's others in places that, because of the transformation and the importance, that something like equity, and diversity, and inclusivity, especially here in a college campus, for example, are trying to be more cognizant of. But within that process, there's an unlearning, and a learning, and a relearning. It's a transformation.

Dr.Gordon: But how does this work? I know we're going to get into gender and sexuality in just a second on our next podcast here, but let's think about this. I'm a heterosexual man, and I'm sure that someone like you would say that I have male privilege?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr.Gordon: Okay. So I have male privilege, although I'm doing my best to do the right thing, and be a different kind of man, and shed my toxic masculinities and all that, and yet I have male privilege? How does that work?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: There's a very unfortunate side effect of how this global society, but in the case of the United States, our national society, and in the case of Texas, our state-wide society, that even though people recognize their privileges and enact this recognition by including people that have been marginalized or acknowledging people that have been marginalized, or trying to even the playing field, so to speak, that they carry with them, no matter what, because of these systems.

Dr.Gordon: Sort of like an invisible knapsack?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yes, yes.

Dr.Gordon: To quote, what's her name?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Peggy McIntosh.

Dr.Gordon: Peggy McIntosh, and all that. So I have male privilege, not necessarily because I want male privilege, but it is a characteristic of my positionality in society, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: That seems, if we take it to racism, to say that there's something beyond or different than, although it may include, interpersonal racism involved here? So maybe white privilege is an indication that people have privilege, or certain categories of people have privilege and standing in a society, not necessarily because of their own actions, much less their own beliefs, but also because of their particular position in society and the historic advantages that have accrued to that positionality?

Dr.Gordon: That's institutional racism, and it's a key aspect of racism. I think it's probably more important in terms of understanding what's going on, for example, at an institution like the University of Texas than interpersonal racism. So I agree with you, interpersonal racism continues to exist, but the ways in which the institutions of society have historically operated, and continue to operate today in an inter-articulated kind of way produce outcomes which keep our society and our institutions racially stratified, right?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Exactly, yeah.

Dr.Gordon: So there's a close relationship between, for example, the way race and racism plays itself out in elementary schools and high schools and all that in the state of Texas and how it is that the population of the flagship institution of the state of Texas is demographically organized. So Jay Hartzell doesn't have to say he doesn't want any more Black students. In fact, he could want more Black students, but the way these institutions work together.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: They work together to provide white privilege, and they work against people who are racially different.

Question: Are we in a post-racial society?

Dr.Gordon: Are we in a post-racial society?

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: I would say, as we just talked about, in delineating these different types of racisms that are imbued within systems and are then systemic themselves, while there has been a lot of progress in the U.S. and other countries where the African diaspora resides, the short answer to the question, I think, would be no. We talked about white privilege, and white privilege is tied to other privileges, as we'll talk a little bit about when we talk about intersectionality in the next podcast.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: But whiteness comes with class and heteronormativity even. So, with white privilege, there is a very, still, staunch class stratification across racialized lines. As capitalism strengthens the certain classes within this structure, there's a lot more disparity in terms of economic, and educational, and all kinds of disparities. This comes, also, and produces even more resource hoarding, and that resource hoarding through class and race is still very present, and arguably growing.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: If we look at the news and all of the studies that are done in terms of the economy, and now with the pandemic and the results, the economic results in terms of labor and wages in the pandemic and the post-pandemic world that we still hope to one day see, this become much more stark.

Dr.Gordon: Well, I guess we can't claim to be post-racial. I guess, in addition to what you're saying, there's still interpersonal racism that pops up in the medical field and education, like we were saying before. Denial of people of housing, and paying lower wages to certain kind of folks, and things like that. I guess we'll just have to reconcile ourselves to the notion that racism is far different than what it used to be.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: Even 20 years ago. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist anymore, and it doesn't mean that we're in a post-racial situation.

Dr. Colón-Pizzini: Yeah.

Dr.Gordon: All right. So, what we've done here is, we've gone through a series of maneuvers here to talk about racism and the different types of racism. We talked about biological racism and how biological racism, in relationship to the notion of evolution, really posed as science, that some people are inherently inferior to others because they're less evolutionarily evolved. And to a certain extent, de jure racism, legal racism, Jim Crow in this country, is based on those notions of the biological difference between the races and the biological inferiority of some races in relationship to others.

Dr.Gordon: Then we got into more contemporary stuff in which we said now that biological racism is less -- it's almost taboo to talk about the inherent inferiority of racially different people in public, but people certainly talk about the inferiority of communities in relation to one another or at least try to explain why it is that some communities are not doing as well as others based on whether or not they have a culture, some call it a culture of achievement, or whether they have the kind of values necessary to be as individuals or as groups of people, in order to be able to take advantage of what's understood to be the equal opportunities in this country.

Dr.Gordon: For folks who are engaged in cultural racism, the way in which racism then plays itself out is often institutional. They themselves may see themselves as not being racist because they're not biologically racist and they also may not even engage in interpersonal, or what they understand to be interpersonal racism, but the way the institutions themselves operate, because of white privilege, because of the ways in which resources have been hoarded across families intergenerationally, et cetera, et cetera, the racial stratification of society is maintained. We've named that institutional racism, and when you have institutional racism sprinkled in with remaining interpersonal racism, it's very difficult to make the claim that we're in a post-racial society.