Tolerate or to Intolerate: A Critical Constructivist Essay on [In]Tolerance

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Abstract

More than a century ago, African American sociologist and political activist W.E.B. Du Bois proclaimed that the problem of the 20th century was the problem of the colour bar. Had Du Bois lived today he would have broadened his perspective; he would probably have added [the] ethnic and religious intolerance bars. Today, the human race has developed powerful and far more effective means of communication through which mutual tolerance and respect, civilized and enlightened relationships between peoples of all races, cultures, religions, countries and continents could be cultivated. However, we appear only capable of recycling intolerance-driven stereotypes, and fear- and hatred-laced prejudices through the mass media and the "knowledge industry" as a whole, feeding our base instincts of fear, suspicion and consequently hatred for people who do not "belong to us."
.In this essay, I offer a critical constructivist explanation of intolerance. My focus is on the social, cultural, and economic sources of intolerance. I argue that intolerance is not the root cause of intergroup conflict; rather, intolerance is a symptom; a manifestation of deeper economic forces. I also argue that both intolerance and tolerance have a synergistic co-existence, each one feeding on the other. Thus, I explore the dialectical relationship between tolerance and intolerance and contend that the dialectical "tango" is skewed in favour of the power elite. I conclude with a suggestion that lessons in intolerance may provide pointers to the perennial human quest for tolerance.

Keywords: Tolerance, intolerance, prejudice, war, conflict, critical constructivism, ideology, peace-maker, ethnocentrism, Donald Trump.

Introduction

Tolerance has become a "buzz word" of our time. It is perceived as a panacea for all manner of social discrimination. Preachers to the faithful, parents to children, rulers to the ruled: all are heard singing the hymnal of tolerance. Tolerance is presented as a spiritual to the disenchanted soul, a

balm soothing the wounds of victims of racism, sexism, homophobia, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and war. And not surprisingly, both rulers and the ruled, priests and laypersons, parents and children embrace and recite the holy catechism of tolerance. This is understandable.

But since the beginning of recorded history, *intolerance* has been a bane to the human race. Recent epochs have witnessed the Crusades of the 11th and 13th centuries, the Inquisitions of the 13th century, the two World Wars, the European anti-Jewish pogroms, which culminated in the Holocaust of the 1940s. There has been the African Maafa (Holocaust)—with its trans-Atlantic slave trade (more appropriately the European Slave Trade in Africans), lynchings, Jim Crow segregation and genocide against First Nations Peoples in the Americas. In the recent past, we on the outside have been witnessing anti-Palestinian mayhem, death, and destruction—ironically perpetrated by Israelis, many of them descendants of those who survived or managed to escape the Holocaust.

The picture is no different today. The spectre of intolerance-inspired violence stalks the world. We live under the shadow of Al-Qaeda, now ISIS-inspired global terrorism and its anti-thesis, the so-called International War on Terrorism. From Africa to Australia, from the Middle East to the Far East, in India and Pakistan, in Sri Lanka, and from Chechnya to Columbia, ethnic strife rages (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In Africa, not only were Whites arrayed against Blacks in Apartheid South Africa, but also Indian minorities were expelled from Uganda in 1975, and African ethnic and religious disputes in Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Liberia, Nigeria, and elsewhere have erupted in bloody massacres.(Heisler, M.O. (1977)) More than 800 thousand Rwandese lost their lives in one of Africa's worst genocides. In the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a sizeable percentage of the population was caught up in a fit of inter-ethnic rebellions and massacres. The fall of communist Yugoslavia left in its trail ethnic massacres now euphemistically called "ethnic cleansing."

In Britain, demands for ethnic self-assertion and independence by Northern Ireland resulted in several thousand deaths and the destruction of property as the IRA, the Irish Republican Army, resorted to force to press home its demands. And in Canada, ethnic difficulties fuel the perennial threat that the province of Quebec would secede.

The price humanity has paid is enormous. Over 139 million Africans died in the European Slave Trade (aka Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade), and the scramble for power and the subsequent partition of Africa by the slave masters left the continent with a population of less than five million (Wilmot, 1989). About six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of Native American (First Nations) peoples were exterminated at the hands of European settlers. The costs in human lives of the US-led

invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the ongoing intervention in Syria are astronomical

What is tolerance? What is Intolerance?

In this paper, I argue that the conventional explanations of [in]tolerance tend to hinge on the "peace-maker" and "distributive blaming" or "equal opportunity blaming" approaches. Theoretical explanations have largely proffered either a reductive and deterministic or a macro and micro approaches that ignore or fail to adequately account for a complicated and nuanced explication of the root causes of]in]tolerance. To address this deficiencies, I deploy three theoretical approaches—dialectical, critical constructivist and intersubjectivity—to seek to demonstrate that [in]tolerance is a complex, evolving phenomenon, informed by temporal, cultural, power, transnational and global factors and powered by human agency in both macrocosmic and microcosmic contexts. Thus, I draw on Hegelian dialectics, the conflict perspective, critical constructivism to shed light on the fact]in]tolerance is not only a human and socio-cultural construct, but it is also deeply rooted in the power structures of society. I contend that to adequately address the problems that emanate from the twin notions of tolerance and intolerance, we must appreciate the fact conventional appeals to tolerance that focus on appealing to the sensibilities of the *intolerator* and pacifying *the intolerated* have yielded little results, largely because the policies and projects aimed at tackling [in]tolerance-induced problems lack the nuanced, a complex and holistic theoretical foundation. While providing a useful snapshot on the roots and consequences of tolerance and intolerance, each of the theoretical perspective fails in of itself to address the complex, dynamic, intersublective nature of the phenomena.

In its Declaration on the Principles of Tolerance, the United Nations Education and Scientific Council (UNESCO) offers a definition of tolerance as follows: "Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference." For the Project of Southern Poverty Law Center in Alabama, USA, tolerance is "a way of thinking and feeling — but most importantly, of acting — that gives us peace in our individuality, respect for those unlike us, the wisdom to discern humane values and the courage to act upon them." (Project of Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015) For his part, Andrew Cohen defines tolerance as: An act of toleration is an agent's intentional and principled refraining from interfering with an opposed other (or their behaviour, etc.) in situations of diversity, where the agent believes she has the power to interfere Cohen, A. J. (2004).

According to Corneo and Jeanne (2009: 2)," [t]olerance may promote peaceful coexistence between diverse groups and favor individual self-

actualization. Conversely, intolerance hinders the manifestation of proclivities and talents and demands a heavy toll on those who dare to be di¤erent. Minorities enjoy a substantial degree of protection only in tolerant societies, and that protection strengthens democratic political rights." Intolerance is defined by Webster Dictionary as "the refusal to accept differences: unwillingness or refusal to accept people who are different from you, or views, beliefs, or lifestyles that differ from your own."

These definitions have fundamental problems. First, they all paint tolerance as a neutral concept. But, tolerance is a value-laden concept, which carries with it power, moral and socio-cultural baggage. There exists asymmetrical power relationship between the *tolerator* and the tolerated. What is more, the values of the one tolerating is mostly at odds with the object of the tolerance. Second, tolerance as construed from these definitions, do not only mask the conflictual nature of tolerances, they tend to focus on what Scheonfeld (2006) calls the peace-making approach. The peace-make approach is fundamentally flowed because, it treats both victims of social injustice on the same footing as their victimizers. I suggest that there can be no lasting solution to any problem when both the victims and victimized are subjected to what I call "the principle of distributive blame." It can be argued that like all micro, interpersonal interactional perspectives, the peace-making approach fails to account for the structural and systemic basis of social problems, thus skirting the root causes of social injustice. It assumes that the perpetrator of social injustice can be transformed by moral appeals and once that objective is achieved, the problem miraculously disappears. Third, these definitions tend to conceive tolerance as a form of privilege to be doled out to the victim of an injustice by the tolerator. The problem with this approach, which is also known as the *noblesse oblige* principle is that it robs the victim of any agency; they passively receive the largess of the privilege. The privilege is implicitly conditional: it is handed out to the victim as long as and as far as the recipient (the victim) is willing to give the victimizer. As will be shown, any hope of tackling the hydra-headed problem of intolerance must require a multi-perspectival approach that appreciates the multifactorial and deep-rooted nature of not only intolerance, but its antithesis, tolerance. Before I do so, I shall seek to answer the question as to the genesis of the two phenomena.

Whence Tolerance and its Dialectical Antithesis, Intolerance?

To answer this question, I will utilize two sociological theories—the social construction of reality and critical constructivism—to explore the roots of intolerance and also to shed light on the underlying tension between the twin notions. But before then let's briefly explore other explanations of

intolerance. The most frequently invoked explanation of intolerance is ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to view one's own culture as superior to other cultures. William Graham Summers (1906) defines ethnocentrism as *the* ***"view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it.*** (Summer, 1906). The term is based on the Greek word "ethnos," which means folk or people, and the Latin word "centrum" for centre. In Summers' definition, emphasis is placed on group centrality and superiority. Like the concept of egocentrism (Latin "ego" meaning "I"), all human groups have the tendency to be ethnocentric, i.e., to place their group at the centre of the universe. Most in-groups (groups we belong to) tend to elevate themselves while demoting out-groups. The canonical variants of ethnocentrism include parochialism (narrow-mindedness), jingoism or excessive nationalism, favoring of a warlike foreign policy, chauvinism, and blind/ludicrous/extreme patriotism.
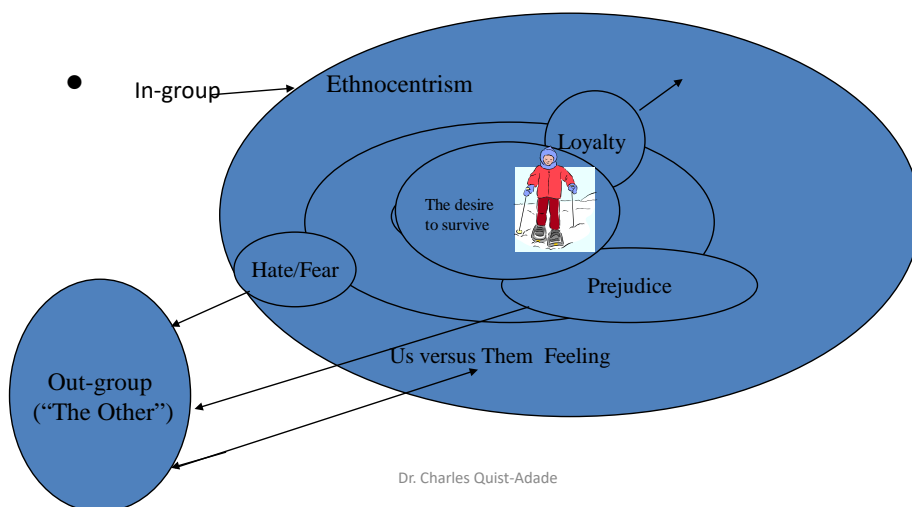
Ethnocentrism is the wellspring of all human sentiments and impulses both vile and noble. It is both the balm and the bane of human societies. The tendency for people to put their groups at the centre of the universe engenders collective self-assurance, collective solidarity, and a collective sense of worth. But ethnocentrism can have devastating consequences for both the in-group and the targeted out-group. The dark side of ethnocentrism, which leads in-groups to denigrate or marginalize and trivialize out-groups, has lain at the core of countless wars and strife since the dawn of history. For the in-group, ethnocentrism may breed collective ignorance and self-delusion, which may lead to a false sense of superiority and invincibility. Ethnocentrism can also hamper the in-group with a tunnel vision, blinkers, and short-sightedness, which may prevent the group from seeing "beyond its collective nose" (Quist-Adade, 2001).

Ethnocentrism has within it several subsets, including prejudice—both positive and negative—hate/fear, patriotism, ideology, in-group solidarity, out-group hostility, in-group favoritism, out-group discrimination, etc. (See diagram below). It is a double-edged sword, in that it engenders an "us-against-them" attitude that may spawn both good and bad deeds. Ethnocentrism is the cultural variant of egocentrism. While the latter is a self-preservation mechanism individuals adopt to survive in a hostile, competitive human environment, ethnocentrism is a survival mode social beings adopt in their socio-cultural and political environment. It is at the centre of practically all human interactions, both benign and hostile, and is larger than the individual. It emanates from the socio-cultural system and

serves as both cementing factor and a repellent, binding the individual to his or her group, while at the same time pulling him or her from the out-group. (See Van Den Berghe,1999; LeVine and Campbell, 1972) For example, American ethnocentrism was on full display in the wake of the 911 terrorist attacks on the New York World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, when American citizens submerged their differences to cheer on President George W. Bush to go after the perpetrators. In times of international crisis, such as the Al Qaeda terrorist attack on America, ethnocentrism informs the behaviour of most citizens, who may openly or tacitly abide by jingoistic, warlike policies of their government supporting the slogan, "My Country, Right or Wrong."

Just as individuals at least once in their lifetime have considered their mothers, for example, as the best of all mothers, ethnocentrism leads in-group members to see their groups as the best. The logical extension of this "my mother is the best" mentality is the "my motherland is the best" attitude, with the concomitant "my country, right or wrong" patriotic feelings typical of jingoistic citizens. The jingoistic citizen is the blind patriot who supports and indeed encourages his or her national leaders in their implementation of intolerance-induced belligerent foreign or domestic policies akin to Hitler's Germany, America's George W. Bush, or Radovan Karadžić's Bosnia Herzegovina, etc.

- Ethnocentrism: the mother of all sentiments/"isms" (Quist-Adade, p.68)

- Basic explanation:

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~~The term combines the Greek word 'ethnos,' which means 'people' or 'folk' and the Latin word 'centrum' or 'center.' Thus, when individuals account for an individualistic perspective, all external norms and values are judged in comparison to its internal ones.~~ Ethnocentrism forges in-group hegemony through internalization of collective identity and through out-group rejection and hostility. It also gives birth to several other attitudes, including prejudice, stereotyping, intolerance and, ironically, tolerance. Ethnocentrism is the tendency of people seeing their culture, ethnic group or race as superior and all others as inferior. It is the tendency to perceive events in terms of one's own interests, the tendency to prefer one's own way of life (culture) over all others (seeing it has involving the best and the right ways of acting), and a general suspicion of foreigners, their modes of thought, action and motives(Booth, 1979).

As the wellspring of all human sentiments both vile and noble, ethnocentrism is both the balm and the bane of human societies. It serves several useful purposes. It engenders collective self-assurance, collective solidarity, and a collective sense of worth. By elevating your ethnic group and your culture, you elevate yourself.

On the flipside, if you fail to defend your group, you perish with it (Quist-Adade, 2001). This ties in with logic of ethnoviolence: "Kill or be killed." Thus, ethnocentrism also breeds prejudice which in turn may generate intolerance, hatred and animosity against out-groups. In addition, it engenders collective ignorance and collective self-delusion, which may lead to a false sense of superiority and invincibility. Ethnocentrism can also impose on the group a collective tunnel vision and collective blinkers, which may prevent the group from seeing "beyond its nose."(Quist-Adade, p.68) Ethnocentrism breeds prejudice—pre-judgment, judging people before we even know who they are.

So then what causes ethnocentrism? Scholars from diverse fields have offered a plethora of theoretical explanations. In the social sciences, sociology and psychology, in particular, have offered both individual-focused and structural-focused theories, including authoritarian personality, self-identity, group conflict, symbolic interactionism, social exchange and functionalism. (See Skinner, 1974; Mills, 2000; Merton, 1949; Watson, 1930); Alport, 1954; Jackson, 1993) While most of these theories shed some light on the causes of ethnocentrism, the conflict perspective, which locates prejudice in socio-economic praxis (the struggle over scarce resources), offers a more nuanced and one may say pragmatic explanation. The conflict theory is rooted in the human tendency to seek to advance and protect self-interest. In our attempt to meet our basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, which are attained through social integration, individuals operate in competition with other groups for resources that are always relatively scarce.

Winners in this struggle must create social institutions to protect the resources they have gained, so they develop ideologies to justify why they won and the losers lost. The losers are depicted in negative terms as congenitally lazy, stupid and worthless. The losers' religion, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, biological or genetic predispositions are invoked as reasons for their alleged inferiority and low socio-economic status. The ideologies of the winning group manifest themselves as prejudice, stereotypes, and sometimes outright propaganda, which are disseminated via the various agents of socialization and the knowledge industry as a whole.

When prejudice is sufficiently widespread, it fosters a fertile soil for hatred, intolerance, and ultimately discrimination against identifiable groups. Stereotyping reflects and reinforces prejudice. Stereotypes, like prejudice, are socially learned. The stereotypes that people learn not only justify prejudice and discrimination; they also produce stereotypical behavior in those who are stereotyped, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy. In this way, a fertile ground is prepared for the seeds of intolerance to germinate and grow. In short, intolerance is a symptom; a manifestation of an ongoing tug-of-war between groups over economic, political and social resources. Intolerance persists because of real or imagined threats to dominants' material standing, through competition for jobs, housing, schools, etc. While the conflict theory, in my view offers a more complex explanation of the sources of prejudice and prejudice-induced intolerance, it fails to account for human agency and the small scale, interpersonal context of the causes of and reinforcement of prejudice, stereotypes and most important, intolerance. The conflict theory, like other structural theories tends to treat individuals as pawns bereft of any agency. It also does not place enough emphasis on the social processes through which prejudice-based and intolerance-informed social injustice occur. In the next section, I deploy Peter Berger and David Luckman's social construction of reality theory to inject a dose of social agency into our understanding of the causes of prejudice-induced intolerance. This will be followed by "squaring the circle" with a discussion of critical constructivism, which combines symbolic interactionism, a micro sociological perspective and the conflict theory.

The Social Construction of [In]tolerance

"If people can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."—**Nelson Mandela.**

Intolerance like its antithetical corollary, tolerance, is a social construct. The social construction view of [in]tolerance derives from the theory of the social construction of reality, which posits that there is nothing natural or normal about the world we inhabit. Rather, social reality is created

by individuals to reflect certain interests in a world not necessarily of their making (Berger and Luckmann. 1967). Tolerance and intolerance emerge together from the womb of the social construction of reality, as it were. They are both learned in the social context. While sociobiologists (See Wilson, 1975; Alcock, 2001; Barkow, Ed., 2006) and some behavioral psychologists (See Skinner, 1974; Mills, 2000; Watson, 1930) would want to persuade us that intolerance and its benign/beneficent corollary, tolerance, are genetic or biological traits, it is my contention that humans acquire the capacity to tolerate or "intolerate" through the process of socialization in a socio-cultural context, informed by political, ideological and historical forces. Humans may have incipient urges or natural proclivities toward tolerance or aversion, but these proclivities must first be nudged into action, nurtured and directed through the various agents of socialization. Thus, the central focus of this paper is to demonstrate that tolerance and intolerance are not only socially constructed and socially learned, they are also produced, reproduced, enforced and reinforced, legitimized or delegitimized, imposed and resisted through the crucible of the struggle over valued power resources. What follows is an exploration and explanation of how social reality is not only collectively created, but must be "blessed" and legitimized by the power that be.

From Social Reality Construction to Critical Constructionism

"It is not the world of the journalist that interests me as such; it is the deeper forces which appear in the crooked mirror of the press."-Leon Trotsky (paraphrased)

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."-Simone de Beauvior

Blessing [In]tolerance: The Legitimization of Tolerance and Intolerance

Human behaviour such as [in]tolerance is simply behaviour. However, whether a specific behaviour is perceived to be tolerable or intolerable depends on who is describing or defining the behaviour, and where the describer is in relation to the ideological fence. By ideological fence, I also mean religious, political, moral and ethical "divides." Almost invariably, the members of the group on the other side of the fence are categorized as having a propensity to act or behave intolerably by virtue of their membership of that group. From the critical constructivist perspective, [in]tolerance is not only a human creation—it is also created by the power elite in society. What is social constructionism?

Social constructionism

When the concept of "time," is mentioned in my village, Teawiah in eastern Ghana, depending on the time of the day, people will either look up in the sky or think about the crowing of the cockerel/rooster. This is because

people in Teawiah use the position of the sun in the sky to tell the time of the day. The crowing cockerel also tells them the time in the night. Besides, not many of the villagers own their own wrist watches. Thus, a timepiece will be the last thing on the villagers' mind when the concept of time is the topic of discussion. But when someone mentions 'time' in your classroom, for instance, you are likely to look at your wrist watch, cellphone or at the clock on the wall (if there is one). What this illustrates is that 'time', like many phenomena we take for granted as normal or natural, is indeed not so at all. The concept we have come to call time thus is a social and cultural construct. It is based on what Berger and Luckman (2011) called the **social construction of reality** or simply **social constructionism**. Human reality is social, meaning it is a social product—a collectively created human experience. "All that is humanly consequential—self, mind, society, culture—emerges from and is dependent on symbolic interactions for its existence." (Gecas & Tsushima, 2001, p.1) The socially constructed reality extends beyond human interactions to encompass the natural and physical world. As Gecas & Tsushima (2001, p.1) observe, even the physical environment is germane or relevant to human conduct as it is interpreted through symbolic systems. How? Because, we assign meaning to the natural world. For example, a tree is a tree because we call it so. Conversely, a tree will not be a tree until we call it so. By assigning a name to a natural object, such as a tree, we are socially constructing it.

Social constructionism is based on the assumption that there is nothing natural or normal about the world we inhabit. Rather, social reality is created by individuals to reflect certain interests in a world not necessarily of their making (See Wright, 2005; Littlejohn and Foss, 2008). Language is the vehicle through which reality is constructed. Humans make meaning of messages they receive based on the reality of everyday existence. Thus, as there are different realities of everyday existence, it stands to reason that the same message, like a simple question: "what's the time?" will take on different meanings to people in different societies, as the example of my village above clearly shows. Even within the same society, different people will read different meanings into the same message. This is because people read and understand messages based on their racial/ethnic, gender, religious, and class backgrounds. Social reality is thus **multidimensional**, which means that reality has multiple meanings. As the hackneyed phrase goes, "beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder," a given social reality means different things to different people.

Another way to look at the social construction of reality is that there is nothing inherently good or bad. People assign moral meanings to social occurrences. For example, there is nothing inherently wrong with polygyny, the marital practice of a man marrying two or more wives. In two thirds of

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the world's societies, polygyny has co-existed with monogamy, the practice of one person having one spouse at a time. In the USA, however, polygyny is not only *intolerated*, it is prohibited by law in all states, except Utah. In Canada, the British Columbia provincial government has tried several times to have the Supreme Court proscribe the practice in Bountiful.

One way to test this theory might be to investigate the meanings that arise from messages transmitted by the mass media. On May 1, 2011 US President Barack Obama in an address to the nation announced the killing of Osama bin Laden by US Navy Seals. CNN and other news outlets carried the same message, which was received by millions of viewers around the world. Hardly had Obama finished his speech than the floodgates opened for multiple interpretations of the US action. Some described the Navy Seal action as murder, while others saw it as assassination. While large crowds of US citizens celebrated the death of "America's Enemy Number One," the reaction in the rest of the world was more muted and less celebratory. Supporters of Al Qaeda, of course, were furious, with pledges to avenge their leader's death at the hands of American troops. While the US described Osama Bin Laden as "Number One Enemy," his supporters and sympathizers hailed him as a hero and his death as martyrdom. From the social construction perspective, each one of the millions of viewers will read different meanings, or interpret the news about bin Laden's death differently. So what do you think?

What different meanings might this news take on?
- To a relative of a victim of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, which is believed to have been masterminded by Osama bin Laden?,
- To a supporter of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist group,
- To a member of Al Qaeda
- To relatives of Osama bin Laden
- To a peace activist,
- To a human rights lawyer or activist

And so on....

[In]tolerance, as we have seen is a socially constituted entity. A socially constructed phenomena, tolerance and intolerance socially constructed within the socio-cultural context, taking on the meaning and import of a given community, collective, society or country. It is informed by the interplay of temporal, normative and ethical imperatives of that society. Thus, what may be tolerated in one society may be an anathema in another. For example, during slavery, during and after civil war in America lynching of Blacks was considered a "normal act of social control. In fact, it was quite "normal" to see white folks gather around picnic tables to watch the lynching of African Americans. . Killing a Native American was praised

as a courageous act and killing at war time is seen in most societies today as a patriotic duty.

In the geopolitical realm, the West have tolerated, supported and bankrolled murderous dictators, from Augusto Pinochet in Chile and Mobutu Sese Seko of the former Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo to Baby Doc Duvalier in Haiti, while murdering leaders who refused to tow the American line, including Salvador Allende of Chile, Patrice Lumumba of Zaire, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and Muammar Gadhafi of Libya

But while social constructionism explains how social reality is created, it is silent on the deeper underlying political, and economic forces that shape and influence people's interactions. As cultural phenomena, they are also watered by the fountain spring of the cultural norms and ethos prevalent in a given society.

Critical constructionism (used interchangeably with critical constructivism) is a theoretical framework based on the assumption that the way social reality is constructed, perceived and presented usually reflects the interests of society's elite more than those of the mainstream, and often at the expense of those with the least power in society. (See Littlejohn and Foss, 2008) The critical constructivist perspective posits that while human reality is collectively constructed by all members of collectives, what becomes acceptable reality must first be sanctioned, sanctified, and legitimized by the power /ruling elite. Thus, the main focus of critical constructivism is on **the relationships between power and knowledge.**

It combines conflict theory (which focuses on the struggle for power resources between groups) and social constructionism (which treats reality as a human creation, rather than natural or divinely inspired). Before we proceed further, let's take a quick look at the conflict theory.

For the purpose of this essay, conflict will be defined as the existence of incompatible goals or the means to achieving these goals between individuals or identifiable groups. This incompatibility arises within a defined relationship and therefore any attempt to establish tolerance and peace must focus on transforming the existing relationship between the parties.(See Leven and Sidarius1999) The focal points of the conflict theory include inequality, domination, exploitation, oppression, conflict, social turmoil, and social change in human societies. The conflict perspective includes a variety of approaches; most of which share the view that society contains social forces that make conflict inevitable. According to the conflict perspective, society can best be understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups over scarce resources (Schaefer, 2003) Conflict theorists focus their attention on society as a whole, studying its institutions and structural arrangements. The theories are built on the premise that society is an arena of constant struggle between have and have-not groups,

powerful and powerless collectives. Conflict theorists contend that scarcity of socio-economic resources such as wealth, power and prestige are the significant sources of conflict in society. Power, as mentioned above is defined by the theorists as the ability to control the behavior of others against their will. Power determines who will lose and who will gain. Power also determines which group is capable of translating their preferences for behaviour into the operating rules for others to execute. The central thesis is that the differential distribution of legitimate power within the society is the major determining factor of systematic social conflicts. Conflict theory criticizes functionalism for ignoring power and conflict and also underestimated the problems brought about by economic and social inequalities as espoused by Marx (See Calhoun and Light,1994).

Critical constructionism differs from social constructionism only in that it emphasizes the role of *elite* interests in the process of reality construction. Several assumptions underpin the critical constructivist approach to reality, knowledge creation and dissemination. (a) There can be many versions of events and that these require questioning: Where are ideas coming from? Whose interests are being served? Whose interests are excluded? (b) Knowledge is situated, partial and provisional/temporary and open to many interpretations. (c) The purpose of critical constructivism is to foster a way of looking at events, experiences and assumptions so that the status quo is challenged. (4) Critical constructivists critique the power structures that produce, embed and render invisible knowledge in everyday practices.

Critical constructivism allows us to problematize, challenge, and disrupt embedded, naturalized and *invisibilized* oppressive social structures and practices such as patriarchy, sexism, racism, and heterosexism. Simply put, the critical constructivist perspective allows us to adopt a critical approach to reality, questioning taken-for- granted assumptions and conventional or received wisdoms/truths and notions. It places emphasis on power relations in society and the conflict that the struggle for power generates.

Adopting the critical constructionist perspective, this paper maintains that it is not enough to understand that social reality is socially constructed collectively by human beings as they engage in everyday interactions, we must go further to understand whose interest does that reality serve. Critical Constructionism's central argument, as we shall later is that since knowledge is constructed to serve people's interests, we should look at whose interests are being served and whose knowledge prevails in society. Why? This is because knowledge changes attitudes, which in turn can change behavior. The following premises inform the critical constructivist paradigm: (1) It is not enough to discover or interpret the world. (2) Knowledge has power

implications: it can be used to oppress or for resistance; maintaining the status quo or to challenge, subvert or overthrow the status quo. (3) Dominant groups in society use their advantage of, and control over, knowledge to entrench their interests and values.

The Critical Constructivist approach emphasizes the need to get at the bottom of how socially constituted reality construct meaning for us, and how we, in turn construct meaning to suit our own needs. It directs our attention to the forces behind the collective creation of social reality and to shed light on whose ideologies and values are embedded in the received or conventional wisdom, or commonsense knowledge of society, as well as make transparent who profits from the current arrangement of society or the status quo. How does Critical Constructionism explain the genesis, the root causes, logic, and dynamics of tolerance and intolerance?

We Create and Learn [In]tolerance

Tolerance and intolerance are decidedly human inventions rather than natural or genetic conditions. Both entities are the products of social interactions and therefore are found not in the impulses or even in the psyche of individuals, but in the actions and inactions of collectives. One mad Hitler could not have enacted the Holocaust alone. He required his henchmen and the legions of the German masses and the presence of the German Jewry. So, to the question "Are humans prewired genetically for intolerance?" I reply with the assertion: "The problem is in our stars, not in ourselves," to paraphrase Shakespeare. Put in another way, intolerance and intolerance are social constructions. And hence the solution to intolerance is to be found here on earth, in the social, collective condition, not in our genes, not in the high heavens, nor in the bosoms of individuals, be they ordinary folks or monarchs or presidents. No one is born to hate or to love. We learn to hate, just as we learn to love; we learn to tolerate and to intolerate. Additionally, tolerance and intolerance are inter-subjective and tells us as much, if not more, about the person or group doing the tolerating or "intolerating" than the person or the group at the receiving end, i.e., being tolerated or *intolerated.* It is also useful to recognize that tolerance and intolerance are dialectical, rather than binary opposites or dichotomies of good and evil. The two cannot, as it were, be surgically separated.

The Dialectics and Intersubjectivity of [In]tolerance

The law of dialectics posits the unity and struggle of opposites in which one phenomenon not only negates another, but the two opposing ideas fuse together in a synergistic way to give birth to a brand new phenomenon. The chief proponent of the principle of dialectics, Georg Hegel (1970), asserted that the law of the unity and struggle of opposites forms the basis of

societal development and progress. Thus, tolerance and intolerance are dialectical; one is antithetical to and negates the other. Just as you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs, you cannot have tolerance in the absence of intolerance. By the same token, the seedling of tolerance germinates from the seed of intolerance. Toleration of an in-group's intolerance of an out-group negates the in-group's tolerance, in that it inevitably ignites the out-group's own intolerance. However, the potency and extent of intolerance and tolerance depends largely on what one may term a "power equation," which individual or group has more, little, or no power.

In a multiracial or polyethnic society, it is the dominant racial or ethnic group that has the power to tolerate or *intolerate*. Racialized and ethnic minority groups and individuals have less power and hence cannot tolerate or intelorate in any meaningful or systematic way. Minority groups and individuals who attempt to engage in acts of intolerance, especially, are crushed by the system. Just as Feagin and Vera (1995) rightly insist, racism is more than a matter of individual prejudice and scattered episodes of discrimination; intolerance is systemic, structural and determined by the "power equation." [In]tolerance is hegemonic. Arguing that there is no black racism in the United States, Feagin and Vera(1995: ix) contend that there is no centuries-old system of racialized subordination and discrimination designed by African Americans to exclude white Americans from full participation in the rights, privileges, and benefits of this society. Thus, for example, while Black Britons may harbor anti-White British prejudice and stereotype all Whites and even act out their race prejudice or exhibit race animus from time to time, it is White Britons who are in the position to discriminate systematically against their Black compatriots. While White British[ii] racists, generally speaking, have a panoply of supporting institutions and agencies (the state, judicial system, law enforcement agencies, media, educational system and the general culture) Black Britons do not have sufficient resources to act out their race prejudice on a systematic basis. The system simply crushes those who try. In the same way as racism transcends stereotypes and individual prejudice, intolerance is systemic, built into the culture, social institutions, and social structures.

And [in]tolerance is intersubjective. Intersubjectivity—the notion that, each individual's meanings relate to, and to some extent depend on, the meanings of other individuals'. What this means is that there is a dialectical relationship between a person's meaning and the meanings of others. Therefore, humans cannot escape the conclusion that their communication environment plays an active and important part in their lives. As Wilden (1987) puts it:

Many of our apparently unique personal opinions are, in fact, derived from social conditioning by dominant codes of values transmitted by others, beginning in the cradle and including the media of family, school, and popular entertainment, rather than from personal and informed decisions that we actually made for ourselves.(As cited in Berger and Lukman, 2011) We create that which creates us!

However, as Trentholm (1991) notes, it is not just that everyday reality affects our communication— it is that our communication also affects everyday reality. This is what we mean when we speak of the social construction of reality -- that when we communicate, we participate in the building of the reality that we inhabit. (As cited in Berger and Luckman, 2011)

I hope this rather brief exploration of the principle of dialectics and intersubjectivity provides at least a tentative explanation of why the world suffers from an acute tolerance deficit, despite the oversupply of tolerance promotion. It should also explain why in a world where practically every religious, moral, and secular teaching, emphasizes tolerance, there appears to be no end to the violence and carnage sparked by intolerance-driven stereotypes and fear-laced prejudices.

To establish tolerance as a desirable human condition, we must study the root causes of intolerance. But tracing the causes of intolerance is as difficult as finding the beginning of a circle. I agree with Eugene Scheonfeld (2006) that "while tolerance is a desirable virtue and it may even affect some people's relationship with members of other races and religions, it will not, on its own merit eliminate the social conditions that are the root causes of inter-ethnic, religious, and racial hostilities." The teaching of tolerance will not necessarily eradicate inter-group aggression. While organizations such as Tolerance.org, which have painstakingly developed projects, curricula, and tool kits for teaching tolerance, must be commended for their effort, I am not convinced that such efforts alone will be enough to eliminate intolerance-driven social discrimination.

Much of the literature on tolerance and intolerance tends to speak of collective responsibilities. In other words, both the victimized and the victimizer equally share the blame for acts of intolerance, or both the victim and the oppressor must learn the art of forgiveness and compassion. This is what Scheonfeld (2006) described as the "peace-maker" approach, and what I will term "the equal opportunity approach." The peace-maker approach assigns equal responsibility to the oppressor and the oppressed equally. Such an approach is rooted in what one would term "the principle of distributive blame" or "equal opportunity shaming." Both the oppressor and oppressed share responsibility for the problem and hence bear equal duty to set it right. Put mildly, this is a flawed approach, for it assumes a level playing field in

the case of oppression. Oppression is coercive power-grabbing and yields no grounds to the oppressed. The oppressor almost invariably controls the lion's share of society's valued resources and power structures. The oppressor does not easily lend himself to learning from the oppressed, nor does he call for compassion or charity from the oppressed. This "peace-making" approach is a one-way street. The injustice and inequity in the peacemaker approach is captured in this African proverb:"*Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story." (African Proverbs, 2017:1)*

Tolerance is akin to literally holding your nose while dealing with a person you dislike. A typical dictionary defines tolerance as the capacity to endure. Most people use the word tolerance to indicate that in certain conditions we must endure certain unavoidable and undesirable events or conditions. For instance, we must learn to tolerate pain, or to tolerate certain unfavorable environmental factors. Similarly, we are told that we must learn to tolerate and accept diverse human beings, even when we may consider them undesirable. We are asked to tolerate them not only because they are a part of life and quite often perform a necessary and important function for society, but, more importantly, because doing so is an exercise of Christian love. We are asked therefore, in the name of Christian love to endure these "others" (Scheonfeld, Ibid.)

Tolerance and forgiveness are two virtues that the West pontificates constantly to non-Westerners. To non-Westerners, they preach: forgive and forget – most of all forget – the past, what happened between Africa and Europe, between Africa and North America, for example. They want Africans to forget the African holocaust—the European slave trade—the colonization, the balkanization, and the pillage of the continent's human and natural resources. They want Africans to turn the other cheek but they demand their pound of flesh when it comes to them. In Western eyes the history of non-Europeans is irrelevant, a tabular rasa—a blank slate, especially where the West's ignominious deeds are concerned. Just think of the West's reaction to the call for reparations. Africans are instructed to maintain very short memories for their own good (meaning: "if Africans want the West's money").

The lives of non-Westerners are less precious than those of Westerners. They trivialize and marginalize the memories of hundreds of thousands of citizens of Afghanistan, Angola, Grenada, Lebanon, Libya, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Vietnam, etc. who were killed in direct or US-sponsored attacks. Are three 3,000 lives (the number of people killed in the dastardly terrorist bombing of New Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2011) in a country of 288 million less than 100,000 deaths in the atomic blasts that leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 or the millions of

Vietnamese lives lost in 10 years of US war from 1965 to 1975? What about the hundreds of thousands of lives lost in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Somalia when the US in its frenzied anti-communist campaigns financed, trained and armed rebel movements in these countries to unleash terror, death and destruction on their own people?

The same point is made more succinctly by the African Holocaust News (2017):

> "Africans and other non-white people, know about White Supremacy, and Western fundamentalist extremism. These things are not interested in peace and tolerance, beyond requesting that everyone peacefully tolerate their domination. But despite their ubiquitous presence in the lives of 80% of the planet, where in the news do you see them mentioned? So per Western news obviously they don't exist."
>
> (http://www.africanholocaust.net/news_ah/war_myth_religion.html)

As Scheonfeld (2006:4) notes, we do not describe those whom we are to tolerate as being equal to us, because intolerance necessitates undesirability. So, if , for instance, I and other African-Canadians, and for that matter all racialized minorities, are to be tolerated by the majority who hold power in society then, by the very definition of "tolerance", I must consider myself, as an African-Canadian, an undesirable, although inevitable part in the lives of the majority. At the same time, those who are being tolerated are also asked to be tolerant of those who seek to harm them. This is, for instance, inherent in the religious teaching of turning the other cheek. The sufferers, the mistreated, and the abused are taught to be tolerant of their tormentors, because they are told that such suffering is a virtue and it will lead to rewards in the afterlife, in the world to come. The admonition from Jesus to his followers while he hung on the cross at Golgotha to tolerate and forgive his tormentors "for they know not what they do" is invoked by Christians as a veritable lesson in tolerance. This is an example of the need, at least in Christianity, for the sufferers to tolerate their tormentors. In this sense, note that it is consequently the minorities who are asking the majority for tolerance, not vice versa." (Scheonfeld (2006:4) Much of the "Sermon on the Mount" is devoted to a call to the "persecuted," "meek," "the poor in spirit," i.e., the subservient, the marginalized "wretched of the earth" to tolerate their oppressors and their abject poverty and horrible living conditions. It is a zero-sum game; no accounting on the part of the oppressor, until perhaps Judgment Day, at best.

Scheonfeld (2006) has observed that the inequitable relationship between lower and higher classes, between the tolerating and those being tolerated, was described over two thousand years ago by Aristotle. Scheonfeld (Ibid.) maintained that "living in the highly stratified society of

ancient Athens, Aristotle proposed that only the gentlemen of high social status could possess virtues." Only the power elite "had the capacity for magnanimity and munificence." (Scheonfeld, 2006:5) Scheonfeld equated this notion to "the medieval notion inherent in the virtue of *noblesse oblige*, which stipulated that those with wealth and power should as a matter of Christian charity and because of their greater moral sensitivity, exercise tolerance toward those in the lower rungs of society." Privilege, then, carries with it the burden of tolerating the lower classes. In turn, those on the lower rungs of the social stratum are to ask those in the upper stratum to be tolerant and merciful. The subordinate class' relationship with the super-ordinate "was modeled on how religion instructs us to relate to our God." (Scheonfeld 2006: 5) In the Bible, Jesus Christ preached the message of tolerance. He admonished his disciples to turn the other cheek. He advised them to love their neighbours as themselves and encouraged them to endure the persecution of their enemies and exploitation of the power elite of their time. He proclaimed in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." (The Bible King James Version. Matthew:5:5)

Ideology, False Consciousness and Tolerance

Ideology constitutes people's view of the world: how they see it and how they want the world to be. It is a set of shared ideas and beliefs that help individuals interpret events and that provides rationale for particular forms of actions**.** Ideologies typically rationalize vested interests of particular people. A group of people who share an ideology share a common set of ideas as to what the world is like. As Berger and Luckman argue, "all human groups evolve patterns of behavior - institutions and roles - that become real to them," (Berger and Luckman, 1967) hence "a group of people who share an ideology might construct a social reality that fits their beliefs." (Ibid)

An ideology is a prescription for a way of life. Every society displays a general or dominant ideology: a code of general values most of its people share, consciously and unconsciously, and within which various group and individual ideologies arise. (Berger and Luckman, 1967) Here some examples of ideologies: capitalism, communism, classism, consumerism, rugged individualism, patriotism, religion. No one can live above the ideology of the society he or she lives in. Consequently, ideologies act as constraints on both individual and group behaviour, by encouraging certain expressions and discouraging others, and because they act at the level of concepts, ideologies put constraints on communication. Ideology manifests itself at both individual and institutional levels. At the individual level, ideology is acted out in face-to-face and interpersonal interactions. For example, a capitalist is likely to couch his conversation with expressions

such as "you reap what you sow," "Each for himself and God for us all," "what is good for General Motors in good," etc. At the institutional level, ideologies manifest themselves often as the dominant ideologies.

False Consciousness

When we fail to recognize the effects of these larger social forces on us, we develop what has been referred to as false-consciousness, a Marxist terminology referring to the condition and characteristic of work in the capitalist societies in Western Europe during the nineteenth century False consciousness stems from the inability of people to understand how the larger social forces cause their personal troubles. False-consciousness is the outcome of thinking about and approaching life through the lenses of the dominant social classes in society. High unemployment and the lack of high-paying jobs are reflections of the changes in and failures of the larger economic and political structures that cause impossible troubles for the citizens of many societies. This fact is often ignored, trivialized or marginalized by the establishment/mainstream media and politicians. Rather, many of our politicians in Canada, Europe, and the United Sates promote the discourse of scapegoating, blaming immigrants and illegal aliens for our social problems during harsh economic times. They fault them for depleting our resources and stealing social services and educational opportunities from the rest of the citizens; yet, such an intolerant and xenophobic views glosses over the fact that these unwanted "guests" are often exploited by profit-hungry capitalist classes who pay the lowest possible wages for their labor. (Mirfakhraie and Quist-Adade, 2014) As the average Joe and Jane incorporate the views of the capitalist class into his/her worldview, she/he unwittingly proffer solutions that promote the interests of the neo-liberal capitalist society. Thus, when Trump supporters chanted "build that wall!" at his rallies or when they cheered loudly when he threatened to send all "undocumented immigrants" packing they, in fact, were scapegoating the most vulnerable in American society for problems caused largely by the policies of the neoliberal capitalist class. In other words, the average citizen inculcates a false consciousness that makes him to pitch camp with their class enemies, while denigrating their own class members, which are the so-called undocumented immigrant workers. Simply put, false consciousness breeds in the ordinary citizen tolerance for the policies of the elite class and intolerance for vulnerable class members whom they perceive as real or imagined competitors.

For the power elite to maintain their positions of dominance, they must inculcate in the masses an ideology of tolerance, which legitimizes the continual existence of power and privilege differences. Tolerance thrives on ignorance and powerlessness, which often manifests themselves in the path of least resistance—the easiest way among alternatives. Most ordinary folks

choose the path of least resistance partly because the system (the government and the corporate world) is too powerful to confront, hence they look for scapegoats who they know are powerless and lack the resources and ability to strike back to blame for their woes. This behavior is explained by social psychologists with the aggression-frustration-scapegoating theory also known as the frustration-aggression-displacement hypothesis. The theory posits that when problems occur, people do not like to blame themselves. They, instead, actively look for scapegoats onto whom we can displace their aggression. To put it slightly differently, the theory suggests that there is a tendency for individuals, when they fail to attain their goal(s) because the source of their failure is perceived to be too powerful to confront or to too nebulous to strike out to become frustrated and to displace aggression onto out-groups that are disliked, visible, and relatively powerless. (See *Dollard, John; Doob, Leonard W; Miller, Neal E; Mowrer, Orval Hobart; Sears, Robert R, 1939) While the aggression-frustration-displacement theory has several limitations, (e.g., Berkowitz (1969) has argued that f*rustration alone is not sufficient to produce aggression; whether aggression will occur depends on stimulus cues), *it could partly explain the behaviour of some of Trump's followers, particularly those who have bought into white supremacist and racist ideologies in the Alt-Right movement*115 *and the Ku-Klux-Klan (KKK).*

In short, tolerance does not alter the social conditions that made tolerance necessary in the first place. In the notion of [in]tolerance, one sees the manipulations of the power elite, be they political, ethnic or religious leaders who in their thirst for power cynically exploit social and biological differences to further their selfish interests. The elites fan the flames of intolerance against the "other" in order to cultivate tolerance in the masses for their exploitative deeds, and to divert attention from the power asymmetries and social inequalities in society. For example, during the 2016 presidential and congressional elections in the United States, Trump exploited the frustrations and fear of ordinary Americans to win both the primaries and the presidential elections. Stoking the fear of "illegal immigrants" taking away the jobs of American citizens, the billionaire Trump and his campaign promised to build a wall on the US-Mexican border to prevent new immigrants to enter the country and to deport the millions of "undocumented immigrants." He called Mexicans rapists and murderers. Trump's message of fear, intolerance, and racist bigotry worked. He won the election. While other factors—the alleged Russian government's influencing

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115 a loose group of people with far-right ideologies who reject mainstream conservatism in the United States. During the 2016 Presidential Elections, the Alt-Right supported the Republican candidate Donald Trump.

the elections by hacking into the Democratic National Convention's computers and leaking damaging information to the media, for example— might have won the Trump the Presidential election— the sheers numbers of voters who said they voted for him because of his anti-immigrant and "America First" rhetoric is a testament that the billionaire's nativist and xenophobia-laced campaign message had a huge impact in swaying the election in his favour. Of course, they are other possible factors that might propelled Trump to victory, but this will be the topic of another paper.

The 2016 U. S. Presidential Election: A Lesson in Intolerance and False Consciousness

In a recent conversation with my family about the 2016 Democratic Party and Republican Party primaries in the United States, my 15-year old son asked me: Why is it that many Americans are supporting Donald Trump when he is saying all these bad things about women, Mexicans and Muslims. Are they as bad as Trump is? My answer was that the overwhelming majority of Trump's supporters are good people and Trump himself may be a good person. My son was confused. I tried to explain: Both Trump and his followers are slaves to a system that is built on a cultural ethos that values competition, material wealth and personal aggrandizement and advancement. This cultural ethos is the ethos of neo-liberal capitalism and is built on the principle of "Each for himself or herself and the devil for the hindermost." Many of Trump's followers genuinely feel threatened by what they perceive to be competition for jobs and state resources, but they wrongly blame new immigrants and other minorities for every single problem in American society. Which brings me to the question: Why does racist intolerance persist when most people know it's bad?

Many people know that racist-tinged intolerance is bad, yet they do nothing to end it. In fact, their inaction contributes to and reinforces intolerance. Racist-inspired intolerance persists not just because people are powerless to challenge and end it, but because it is seen as legitimate in the eyes of many. As Myers (2006) notes, in spite of its oppressive nature, oppressive structures, including racism are considered to be legitimate because people see them as unchangeable, a fact of reality that just *is*. Arguing that racism is **hegemonic**, Myers (2006) states that many people adopt a colorblind attitude toward racism because they have no viable alternatives, and they do not recognize that American society as inherently unfair. When a system is hegemonic, it is so pervasive and taken for granted that people are unable to step back, see it for what it is, and challenge it (Ibid).

The theory of positionality (Giddens, 1984) sheds further light on how racism persists notwithstanding the fact that most people acknowledge

its pernicious effects. The central premise of positionality is that people's positions affect their identities, access to resources, and a range of possible actions. Giddens posits that people carefully negotiate power and privilege in their everyday interactions via reflexivity. Thus, people benefit from acting in ways that insulate rather than threaten their privilege. Myers (2006) points out that, privileges are made possible by one's position in the structure. So, people act rationally when they reinforce structural power differentials, even though such actions help not only to reify but also support and reinforce racism. Racism persists because of real or imagined threats to dominants' material standing, through competition for jobs, housing, schools, etc.

Myers (2006) argues that White Americans have historically fought to insulate and protect themselves from outsiders. The outcome, she points out, was racist oppression. Racism persists because the sense of threat persists. She argues that racism is dialectical, existing at three levels: *structural* (hierarchical), *interactional* and *ideological*. Structural racism allocates differential opportunities on the basis of race. For a hierarchical structure to persist and affect people, they must buy into and subscribe to its procedures. People act; hence racism operates on the interactional level at which they engage in racist practices, both knowingly and unknowingly. People may not view their racist behavior as problematic even if they recognize it. This lack of antiracist-consciousness is explained by *ideological racism, which is a belief system that legitimizes racist structures and practices.* People are born into or migrate to this society in which racism has existed and mutated over centuries. Over time, differential treatment of "people of color" becomes normalized, expected, and *de rigueur*.

Thus, racism, Myers (2006) explains, is hegemonic, in that it is so much part of the fabric of people's past and present lives that it is often invisible or appears to be inevitable. The hegemony of racism makes it difficult to recognize, discuss, and challenge. The socio-economic and political system works to sustain, service, support, and promote the inequitable race relations. Racism and racist-induced intolerance exist in America not because it is run by mean-spirited, evil-minded White bigots. It is not the nature of Whites, but the logic of the system, the rules of the game, if you will, that produce racism and intolerance borne out racial animus. In other words, "it goes with the territory"; if the tables were turned and African Americans were the dominant ethnic/racial group in the USA, for example, they would probably act in the same way Whites are acting now.

Most people choose the path of least resistance (Johnson, 2005). This path of resistance, born out of false consciousness and a general paralysis of will persists for a number of reasons. First, the system (the government and the corporate world) is too powerful to confront, hence they look for scapegoats whom they know are powerless and lack the resources and ability

to strike back to blame for their woes. For example, for years, Western governments in pursuit of their neoliberal agenda, have given away billions of tax dollars to corporations as incentive to create jobs for the domestic economy, only for these corporations to transplant their companies to the so-called Third World countries, in order to exploit cheap labour in these countries to maximize their profits. Year in year out, the corporations keep feeding fat on government corporate welfare to the detriment of workers, who not only lose their jobs, but also see cuts in government social assistance programmes. Governments justify corporate welfare by invoking the "trickledown economics" doctrine by contending that giving tax breaks to corporations is a way to grow the economy, as corporations will plough back that money in creating more jobs. But instead of creating more jobs, a good chunk of that money goes into offshore accounts and or line the pockets of corporate fat cats such as Donald Trump.(See the Bahamas Papers: ICIJ publishes leaked Bahamas info to offshore database)

In some instances, workers are aware of these facts, but find the government and corporate America too powerful to confront, so they look for vulnerable targets—powerless, defenseless "undocumented" immigrants and other minority "aliens" to vent their anger on. Second, governments and corporations are headed mostly by the kith and kin of Euro-American workers. In other words, the commanding heights of the government and corporations are controlled by their parents, uncles, and other relatives. Combine this with the power of the power/ruling elite to use the media and other channels of communication to buy workers' acquiescence or exact compliance through the process of hegemony. Hegemony, as Antonio Gramsci (1971) explained, is an ongoing struggle for dominance by the superordinate and subordinate classes in society, with superordinate classes always winning, thanks to their abiding and pervasive power, bolstered by their control of the forces of coercion—the enforcement, ideological, political and economic apparatuses

Simply put, hegemony is a "style of state politics that preserves control by a leading group on the one hand while instituting economic, social, political and ideological changes on the other" (Muchie and Xing, 2006: 1). The concept hinges on the premise that the ruling elite "maintain a certain degree of consensual hegemony by neutralizing the pressures of various contending forces that might otherwise trigger profound structural transformations" (Ibid.). Hegemony is therefore an expression of broadly based consent, manifested in the acceptance of ideas, and supported by material resources and institutions. The aim and consequence of the hegemonic process is to defuse or neutralize existing and potential threats to the system without inducing a political revolution that could threaten the dominance of the power elite and the *modus operandi* of the system (Ibid.).

Hegemony presupposes counter-hegemony, a nexus of enlightened coercion by the ruling elite and passive consent from the ruled. This give-and-take strategy is made possible via an intricate system of socialization, subtle manipulation and indoctrination of the ruled. For hegemony to be successful, it must be subtle, flexible and adaptable. In other words, the ruling elite must be dynamically responsive to the 'voices' of the ruled in order to have the popular support and legitimacy to maintain stability and power. This also means that the ruling elite must continuously negotiate its legitimacy, must be receptive to the voices of dissent and grievance of the disaffected "masses", and must remove or neutralize points of contention.

The hegemony/counter-hegemony nexus involves resistance and incorporation, coercion and consent; enlightened coercion by the ruling elite and consent from the ruled. Put in another way, the power elite do not simply force their ideas onto the people, but shape and win consent so that the power of the dominant classes appears both legitimate and natural (Dyson, 2003). However, at the same time some individuals and groups oppose these dominant ideas, refusing to conform to the norm. In the end, though, the ruling elite win out and dictate the ideological and political direction of society. They do so very successfully by being flexible, adaptable and responsive to the moods of the changing times and sometimes to the temperament of the ruled. For it is through such flexibility and adaptability that the ruling elite acquire the impetus and "oxygen" needed to maintain its legitimacy (Quist-Adade, 2001).

Thus, hegemony, according to Boggs (1976: 39) is an "organizing principle" that is diffused by the process of socialization into every sphere of daily life. "To the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the population it becomes part of what is generally called 'common sense' that the philosophy, culture, and morality of the ruling elite comes to appear as the natural order of things."

In the Gramscian scheme of things, the struggle for supremacy is not a zero-sum game. The subordinate classes (ordinary citizens) do have and often do exercise their agency, by resisting the power elite. However, in the end, the power elite wins, precisely because of the asymmetrical power between the two. Remember what happened to the Occupy Movement? The power elite unleashed a whole range of arsenals, including the media and law enforcements agencies to nip the movement in the bud, as it were. The overwhelming majority of the leaders and implementers of their orders are the kith and kin of the Euro-American workers. Third, it is a human tendency to seek to advance and protect self-interest. In our attempts to meet our basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, we inevitably find ourselves locked in competition with others for the resources these needs demand, which are always relatively scarce. Winners in this struggle must create

social institutions, such as banks or the economy as a whole to protect their resources. They also develop ideologies to justify why they won, and the losers lost. Of course, the winners portray the losers in dismissive, demeaning, and degrading terms. They are written off as genetically inferior, lazy, deficiently endowed, "rapists and criminals" *a la* Trump. Whenever a crisis threatens the status quo, the winners must look for scapegoats, and the more powerful groups in a competitive environment resort to prejudice and outright discrimination for preserving their privilege. (Blumer, 1965) "People whom we cannot tolerate we try to make suspect' (Nietzsche, 1984: 243, as cited in Sica, 2016)[116] Fourth, it is a universal human impulse to use stereotypes to rationalize primitive fears and suspicions. (Berger and Luckman, 1966) People, irrespective of race or ethnicity, use stereotypes as rules of thumb or mental templates as they try to navigate the complex world.

Conclusion

What history teaches is that men do not learn from history, the German philosopher and dialectician, Georg Hegel (1953) wrote. What history also teaches us is that the lessons of tolerance can only be found in the womb of intolerance. It took the worst form of intolerance—the Holocaust and the horrors of WWII for Europe and the rest of the world to appreciate the value of tolerance with all its deficiencies. And its dialectical essence, tolerance, paradoxically emerges from the ashes of intolerance. Both—tolerance and intolerance thrive on and are nurtured by power or lack thereof. Coercive power hastens and pushes intolerance in times of national crises, when vulnerable groups are scapegoated, vilified, criminalized, dehumanized in many cases killed and disappeared. So, learning how the power elite sow the seeds of intolerance will provide valuable lessons on tolerance and social justice, and intolerance for all forms of social discrimination. And finally, anti-intolerance education must be creatively and dialectically praxis-oriented, transcending the classrooms, and lecture halls to communities and the lifeworlds of all constituent "ethno-racial" groups and "constituencies of colour" and transforming social and political structures that distribute valued social goods and resources.

To properly tackle the problems that stem from the twin notions of tolerance and intolerance, there is a need to critically evaluate the conventional approaches to tolerance building that relies exclusively on appealing to the sensibilities of the *intolerator* and pacifying *the intolerated* .Rather than treating victims of social injustice as passive recipients of doses

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116 Nietzsche F (1984) *Human, All Too Human*, trans M Faber with S Lehmann. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

of mercy and remorse from their victimizers, a more nuanced, a complex and holistic approach that accounts for the socio-economic praxis of intolerance, i.e., the economic and political causes of intolerance.

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Endnote

[ii] It is important to stress that not all Whites share the ability, structural power and authority to discriminate against racialized and ethnic minorities.