

Kitano, Harry H.L. *Race Relations*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1980, 319 pp., \$16.95 cloth.

Harry Kitano has written a textbook everyone should want to read. However, a high probability exists that it will never enjoy the popularity it deserves because of its many unsettling truths about racism in America. Yet for those who seek a less racially troubled atmosphere in these United States, and whose curiosity is compelling enough to take a good look at racism in our present society, Kitano's book could be as exhilarating as a breath of crisp, clean air. Many of the facts that emerge from this book will seem patently simple if one but takes the opportunity to really look at them. One also becomes aware of the true scope and depth of *racisms*, the many faces it wears, and of the often innocent ways it is given impetus on the American scene.

Failure to recognize many of these aspects can be overcome by what Kitano (p. 8) calls "the Rashomon Perspective in race relations." This calls for analysis from different viewpoints, suggesting the principle of triangulation, or different 'sightings' to obtain a fixed position as is done in navigation. He maintains that the social perspectives of most people remain one-dimensional, which may account for a lack of awareness on the part of those who might otherwise be genuinely concerned. He reminds us too, that one's position in the social structure influences the nature of his or her response to racism. Although he entertains a strong opinion that much of the solution will have to be the result of scientific and objective research, he recognizes the weaknesses in such an approach. In "Why the problem?" (p. 9), in which he refers to the data gathered by various research organizations and individuals, he maintains that some of the problems arise from the social scientists, politicians, and others who write, interpret and act upon the materials that are gathered. Thus, much of this information turns out to be 'misinformation' yet is often treated as factual by those who are responsible for its dissemination.

The first surprise of this book was to discover that it was not a product of the "dominant white power structure" (p. xi) nor did it emanate from the other end of the continuum, the personal axe grinders. Usually manuscripts from either end are more

often than not drenched in self-serving emotions, anger, guilt or combinations of all three. However, Kitano turns out to be honest, concise, and above all, convincingly neutral. His presentation is a fresh, unbiased perspective in a language so free of pedantry and stilted phraseology, it reads almost like prose. The subtle ease of Kitano's presentation makes it immediately evident that he has a thorough knowledge of the racial picture in the United States.

This is a painstaking study into racism, with facts so absorbable, it should be read by every social and political science student in America! In spite of the fact that Kitano offers no comprehensive solution to the problems of racism in America, he does present the problems in such a provokingly clear manner that ignorance of the facts can no longer be an excuse for remaining unformed.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part gives a complete, overall view of the racial turmoil, including a brief, convincing autobiography which leaves the reader with little doubt as to why Kitano feels qualified to take on such a momentous task. It is here that Kitano concisely outlines where he intends to take the reader. This "Background to Race Relations" informs the reader of his intention to treat racism as a 'middle of the road observer,' which Kitano accomplishes throughout the book. This alone is a remarkable feat for a writer who must undoubtedly harbor *some* bias and resentment stemming from the treatment of Japanese Nationals during World War II. Part of his childhood was spent in an internment camp, but none of this seeps into his writing. He clarifies his position with the one statement, that "Most textbooks . . . have been written from the point of view of the dominant white majority. However, there is no one *white* point of view, just as there is no one *minority* perspective" (p. 2).

He begins Part I by touching upon the high costs and subsequent loss of valuable human resources to biases, indirect racisms, and to the supporting roles played, consciously and unconsciously, by both professionals and lay people alike. An interesting point here, unlike other books I have read on race relations, is that Kitano goes to some length to present two sides to each argument, allowing the reader to do much of the

judging for him or herself. In so doing, he occasionally sprinkles a bit of humor onto a particularly unpalatable fact for easier digestion. For instance, he mentions Swedish Naturalist, Carolus Linnaeus who in 1758 published his *Systema* in which he "recognized four varieties of the human species with associated characteristics" (p. 50).

1. Americanus Rufus: Tenacious, free, easily contented. (The American Indian)
2. Afer Niger: Slow, negligent, cunning capricious. (African)
3. Asiatic Luridus: Haughty, stern, and opinionated fellow. (Asian)
4. Europaeus Albus: Lively creatures, creative, considered "superior." (The European)

Kitano then, in something of an aside, quips: "It would be interesting to discover the classification and description from scholars representing groups other than the European. They would, no doubt, reflect their own brand of ethnocentrism; the early Chinese and Japanese felt the Europeans were 'hairy barbarians'" (p. 51).

It is inconceivable that one man alone could garner all the facts presented in this work, and Kitano calls freely upon others to expand or substantiate his findings. For example, in discussing direct and indirect racism, he quotes Pettigrew's theory (1973) that "restrictions in one area are shaped by discrimination in another" (p. 7). But he does not allow this to stand alone, nor does he rob it of whatever validity it might have with a contradiction. He does say however, that if racism is viewed as indirect and linked with other concerns, then the attempt to bring other groups into confrontation situations (discussion, education, counseling, etc.) as Pettigrew suggests, may not be the most appropriate approach. Here again Kitano leaves the reader free to draw his or her own conclusion.

In this same chapter, he goes on to speak of the "whys" of the problems in terms with which we are all more or less familiar, yet in a terminology that either side can immediately sense as 'neutral.' In speaking of the many experiments conducted

among ethnic minorities, he points out that, "Many ethnics felt that they were used and exploited by the researchers, first as subjects, then as objects of the findings" (p. 9). Later in the chapter he offers the warning that, "There . . . are serious questions about the interpretations and applications of these findings. . . . As history shows, it is not a long step from a belief in genetic inferiority to the advocacy of the elimination of the 'inferior' group" (p. 10). "Patterns of Racial Integration" (p. 15), and "Goals and Equalities of Minority Groups" (p. 35) should be carefully read in order to appreciate the many instances in which one can unwittingly become involved in discriminatory behavior, totally unaware of the supporting roles in which he or she has been cast.

The second part of the book gives a complete portrayal of the seven specific groups making up the race dilemma of American History. He names the American Indian, the Afro American, the Mexican American, the Asian, Chinese and Japanese Americans, and the Puerto Rican. In devoting a full chapter to each, he provides a number of interesting insights rarely available to the average member outside these groups. However, the members within these ethnic circles who for one reason or another have remained ignorant of the patterns and subtleties of racisms affecting their particular group, will readily recognize them here, whether they be labeled institutional, individual, or social.

All in all, this book is well worth reading, if only in the sections of individual interest. It is set up so that even this is possible with not less an impression of a work well done. One may gather from this book that Kitano is telling us there needs to be a fresh start, and that it would behoove us to begin with students who are the coming generation of new leaders. Since this is the most illuminating history and explanation of race relations I have ever read, it may be as good a place to begin as any. The only question is, do we yet have enough time?

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