

総合英語レベル8 第8回 人種差別について

予習課題：次の英文を読んで、内容を理解しなさい。

The United States is a white country. By that I don't just mean that the majority of its citizens are white, though they are (for now but not forever). What makes the United States white is not the fact that most Americans are white but the assumption—especially by people with power—that American equals white. Those people don't say it outright. It comes out in subtle ways. Or, sometimes, in ways not so subtle.

Here's an example: I'm in line at a store, unavoidably eavesdropping on two white men in front of me, as one tells the other about a construction job he was on. He says: "There was this guy and three Mexicans standing next to the truck." From other things he said, it was clear that "this guy" was Anglo, white, American. It also was clear from the conversation that this man had not spoken to the "three Mexicans" and had no way of knowing whether they were Mexicans or U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage. It didn't matter. The "guy" was default setting for American; Anglo, white. The "three Mexicans" were not Anglo, not white, and therefore not American. It wasn't "four guys standing by a truck." It was "a guy and three Mexicans." The race and/or ethnicity of the four men were irrelevant to the story he was telling. But the storyteller had to mark it. It was important that "this guy" not be confused with "the three Mexicans."

Here's another example, from the Rose Garden. At a 2004 news conference outside the White House, President George W. Bush explained that he believed democracy would come to Iraq over time:

There's a lot of people in the world who don't believe that people whose skin color may not be the same as ours can be free and self-govern. I reject that. I reject that strongly. I believe that people who practice the Muslim faith can self-govern. I believe that people whose skins aren't necessarily—are a different color than white can self-govern.

It appears the president intended the phrase "people whose skin color may not be the same as ours" to mean people who are not from the United States. He makes it clear that skin color he refers to "ours" is white. Those people not from the United States are "a different color than white." So, white is the skin color of the United States. That means those whose skin is not white but are citizens of the United States are...? What are they? Are they members in good standing in the nation, even if "their skin color may not be the same as ours"?

This is not simply making fun of a president who sometimes mangles the English language. This time he didn't misspeak, and there's nothing funny about it. He did seem to get confused when he moved from talking about skin color to religion (Does he think there are no white Muslims?), but it seems clear that he intended to say that brown people—Iraqis, Arabs, people from the Middle East, whatever the category in his mind—can govern themselves, even though they don't look like us. And "us" is clearly white. In making this magnanimous proclamation of faith in the capacities of people in other parts of the world, in proclaiming his belief in their ability to govern themselves, he made one thing clear: The United States is white. Or, more specifically, being a real "American" is being white. So, what do we do with citizens of the United States who aren't white?

That's the question for which this country has never quite found an answer: What do white "Americans" do with those who share the country but aren't white? What do (x)we do with peoples we once tried to exterminate? People we once enslaved? People we imported for labor and used like animals to build railroads? People we still systemically exploit as low-wage labor?

(注) outright : 公然と、eavesdrop : 立ち聞きする、default setting : コンピュータ用語の「標準設定」(ここでは「当然の前提」の意)、the Rose Garden: ローズガーデン (White House の庭園)、self-govern : 自治を行う、mangle : 台無しにする、magnanimous : 寛大な、proclamation : 宣言、exterminate : 皆殺しにする