

# Exploring Cases of Ethnic and Racial Disparities in the United States of America and Nigeria

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## Abstract

Ethnicity and race cannot be easily ignored whilst discussing issues that shape modern society. They are intimately linked that is impossible, to write one adequately without discussing the other. This paper reviews extant theories and perspectives of ethnicity and race. Consequences of ethnic and racial inequalities (most especially in the United States, and some cases ethnic inequalities in Nigeria) were addressed. The paper concludes by stating that in order to minimize ethnic and racial discrimination, it is important to encourage and educate the people to embrace diversity and multiculturalism, so that different ethnic and racial groups can have a unique opportunity for individuals to experience and discuss the aspects of racial/ethnic diversity in their lives. Affirmative action should also be taken to address different races and ethnic groups' access to powers and privileges.

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, Race, Discrimination, Organizations, Multiculturalism, Diversity

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity and race cannot be easily ignored whilst discussing issues that shape modern society. They are intimately linked that is impossible, to write one adequately without discussing the other. Of note is the fact that drawing a distinction between race and ethnicity is highly complex. Whilst ethnicity is often assumed to be the cultural identity of a group from a nation state, race is assumed to be biological and/or cultural essentialization of a group hierarchy of superiority/inferiority related to their biological constitution. It is assumed that, based on power relations, there exist racialized ethnicities and ethnicized races. Grosfoguel (2004) argues that racial/ethnic identity' is one concept cannot be used as separate and autonomous categories. Notwithstanding the argument of Grosfoguel, it is important to give a distinctive clarity of the two terms considering the fact that authors use them in different ways. Subsequent sections of this paper will review the literature on these background concepts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### What is Race?

From a biological perspective, a race can be defined as a group or population that shares a set of genetic characteristics and physical features. From the viewpoint of Marger (2002), the term race has been applied broadly to groups with similar physical features (the White race), religion (the Jewish race), or the entire human species (the human race). However, generations of migration, intermarriage, and adaptations to different physical environments have produced a mixture of races. Consequently, there is no such thing as a pure race. Social scientists reject the biological notions of race, instead favoring an approach that treats race as a social construct. To this effect, Omi and Winant (1994) explain how race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Instead of looking at race as something *objective*, they argued that we can imagine race as an *illusion*- a subjective social, political, and cultural construct. According to the authors, 'The meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed, and reformed' (Omi and Winant, 1994:21). They further stated that, 'The presence of a system of racial meaning and stereotypes, of racial ideology, seems to be a permanent feature of U.S. culture' (1994:63).

### Ethnicity: An Overview

Ethnicity is viewed as a sense of solidarity shared between people (usually related through real or fictive kinship) who see themselves as distinct and different from others. (Eller, 1997) The best overview of the history and meaning of the concept of *ethnicity* and *race* was noted in Cornell and Hartmann's book *Ethnicity and Race*. The term, ethnicity itself is relatively recent. Before World War II, the term, tribe was the term of choice for pre-modern societies and race for modern societies (Jenkins, 2001). Due to the close link between the term race and Nazi ideology, the term ethnicity gradually replaced race within both the Anglo-American tradition and the European tradition. (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006).

Thus, perspectives on ethnicity are complicated through the variety of related terms that is used to denote similar phenomena, such as race, tribe, and nation and minority group (Yinger, 1994). Some scholars use these terms interchangeably, while others treat them as unrelated concepts. Thus, the relationship between ethnicity and race is complex. Even though the concepts are used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts.

Pierre van den Berghe in Smolina (2003) describes race as a special marker of ethnicity that uses biological characteristics as an ethnic marker. While the relationship between the two concepts is more complex than that, his generalization points in the right direction. In this paper, both concepts will be treated as it applies.

It should be noted that most Americans, likened the term ethnic to minority groups, like African-Americans. They refer to ethnic groups as a people outside of, alien to, and different from the core population. Moreover, British scholars, like their American colleagues, typically see ethnicity as minority groups in a society. To them, ethnic groups are defined as *a distinct collective group* of the population within the larger society, whose culture is different from the mainstream culture. The larger European tradition, on the contrary sees, ethnicity as a synonym for *nationhood* or *people hood*. In this tradition, everyone, not just minorities, belong to an ethnic group. Of note is the fact that the European usage of the term *ethnicity* is similar to what obtains in the Nigerian context of ethnic group. (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2010)

### Theories of ethnicity and Race

A review of literature shows that the definitions of ethnicity and race evolved from anthropological and sociological theories. According to Malesevic (2004), anthropological theories of ethnicity and race as shown in (Table 1) can be grouped into three basic categories: Primordialist theories, instrumentalist theories, and constructivist theories .

**Table 1 - Three Basic Approaches to Understanding Ethnicity and Race**

Theoretical perspectives	Meaning
<b>Primordialist Theories</b>	Ethnicity and race is determined at birth. Ethnic identification is based on deep, 'primordial' attachments to a group or culture.
<b>Instrumental Theories</b>	Ethnicity and race is based on people's <i>historical</i> and <i>symbolic</i> memory. It is created, used and exploited by leaders and others in the pragmatic pursuit of their own interests.
<b>Constructivist Theories</b>	Ethnic and racial identity is not something people <i>possess</i> but something they <i>construct</i> in specific social and historical contexts to further their own interests. It is therefore fluid and subjective.

Source: Malesevic, S. (2004). *The sociology of ethnicity*.

The tabulated perspectives are further discussed below

### Primordialist theories

Primordialist school of thought argues that ultimately there is some real, tangible, foundation for ethnic identification. The two crucial factors in a primordialist perspective as noted in Isajiw (1992) include: (1) one's ethnicity is ascribed at birth and (2) one's ethnicity is more or less fixed and permanent. This implies, at birth, a person becomes a member of a particular group. Consequently, one's ethnicity is therefore fixed and the identity cannot be changed.

Anthony D. Smith, cited in Frodlin (2003) argues that ethnosymbolism is a soft form of primordialism. He views the defining elements of ethnic identification as psychological and emotional, emerging from a person's historical and cultural background, Smith argues that the extraordinary persistence and resilience of ethnic ties and sentiments, once formed are essentially primordial since they are received through ethnic socialization into one's ethnic group and are more or less fixed. (Kreitzer, 2004)

### Instrumentalist theories of ethnicity

This theory was advanced by Abner Cohen, Paul Brass and Ted Gurr. They all see ethnicity as something that can be changed, constructed or even manipulated to gain specific political and/or economic ends. It is an Elite theory, which argues that the leaders in a modern state ( i.e. elites) use and manipulate perceptions of ethnic identity to further their own ends and stay in power. (Eriksen, 2001). A good example of a person who used this elite theory to achieve his economic ends in Nigeria is Late Chief Olusola Saraki. Quoting from Nigerian Tribune (2012)

"Saraki served as a bridge between the South and the North, with the effect that he was considered by a large section of the northern power brokers as being too pro-South or not sufficiently northern as to earn a presidential ticket. Instructively, his name Olusola, which he picked up to facilitate his education at a time the Christian Missionaries controlled education in the country, was a constant threat to his political ambitions, to the extent that, as late as 2010, the presidential ambition of his son Bukola was threatened in the North by claims

that he (Bukola) was an “Obasanjo agent, being a Yoruba.” But Saraki insisted that even though his mother was a Yoruba, his father was a Fulani, tracing his ancestry to Mali.” (Nigerian Tribune, 2012).

### **Postmodern and constructionist theories of ethnicity**

This approach lies somewhere between Michel Foucault's emphasis on construction of the metaphor and Pierre Bourdieu's notions of practice and habitus as the basic factors shaping the structure of all social phenomena. (Isaijw,1993) The basic notion in this approach is that ethnicity is something that is being negotiated and constructed in everyday living. Postmodern theories are concerned with the issue of group boundaries and identity. Scholars operating in this paradigm felt that terms like: *group*, *category* and *boundary* connotes a fixed identity, something they wanted to avoid. This has resulted in much confusion as various interest groups are now exploiting the elastic nature of the term ethnicity,

When is a group an ethnic group? There are no hard-and-fast rules or standards by which to judge. The answer, as unsatisfying as it is, is that social collectivity, of any nature and antiquity, can don the mantle of ethnicity—one of the most elastic of social concepts—and stake a successful claim to identity and rights as a group. The point is this: it does not matter if any particular group is "really" an ethnic group, or what a "real" ethnic group is; instead, ethnicity has become so central to social discourse—and social competition—that its salience and effectiveness have become attractive to all sorts of collectivities. (Eller,1997).

## **SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INEQUALITIES BASED ON ETHNICITY AND RACE**

### **Functionalist Perspective**

Theorists from this perspective believe that the differences between racial and ethnic groups are largely cultural. The solution to this case as advanced by Gordon (1964) is assimilation, a process where minority group members become part of the dominant group, losing their original distinct group identity. Milton Gordon (1964) presents a seven-stage assimilation model that begins first with cultural assimilation (change of cultural patterns, e.g., learning the English language), followed by structural assimilation (interaction with members of the dominant group), marital assimilation (intermarriage), identification assimilation (developing a sense of national identity, e.g., identifying as a Nigerian, rather than as Chinese), attitude receptional assimilation (absence of prejudiced thoughts among dominant and minority group members), behavioral receptional assimilation (absence of discrimination, e.g., lower wages for minorities would not exist), and finally civic assimilation (absence of value and power conflicts). The argument of this school of thought is that assimilation will allow a society to maintain its balance if all members of society, regardless of their racial or ethnic identity, adopt one dominant culture.

Critics argue that this perspective only assumes that social integration is a shared goal and that members of the minority group are willing to assume the dominant group's identity and culture, assuming that the dominant culture is the one and only preferred culture (Myers, 2005). The perspective also assumes that assimilation is the same experience for all ethnic groups, ignoring the historical legacy of slavery and racial discrimination in our society.

It should however be noted that assimilation is not the only means to achieve racial-ethnic stability. Other means, according to Leon-Guerrero (2010) is pluralism, where each ethnic or racial group maintains its own culture (cultural pluralism) or a separate set of social structures and institutions (structural pluralism). Cultural pluralism is also referred to as multiculturalism. For example, Nigeria, which has a number of different ethnic groups, political and religions, is an example of a pluralistic society. The same also applies to the United States of America,

From the viewpoint of Zhou, Min (2004:153). ‘As America becomes increasingly multiethnic, and as ethnic Americans become integral in our society, it becomes more and more evident that there is no contradiction between an ethnic identity and an American identity.’

### **Conflict Perspective**

In his book titled: ‘Conserve Races? In Defense of WEB Du Bois’. Out law (1996), states that, it is wrong to speak of race at all as a concept, rather than as a group of contradictory forces, facts and tendencies. The Conflict school of thought focus on how the dynamics of racial and ethnic relations divide groups while maintaining a dominant group. The dominant group may be defined according to racial or ethnic categories, but it can also be defined according to social class. Instead of relationships based on consensus (or assimilation), relationships are based on power, force, and coercion. Ethnocentrism and racism maintain the status quo by dividing individuals along racial and ethnic lines (Myers, 2005). Du Bois observed the connection between racism and capitalist-class oppression in the United States and in other parts of the world. He noted the link between racist ideas and actions to maintain a Eurocentric system of domination (Feagin and Batur 2004). The quotation from the works of WEB Du Bois is stated below:

‘Throughout the world today organized groups of men by monopoly of economic and physical power, legal enactment and intellectual training are limiting with great determination and unflagging zeal the

development of other groups; and that the concentration particularly on economic power today puts the majority of mankind into a slavery to the rest. (1996:532)'

The argument of Du Bois conforms with Marx's class analysis. The Marxist theorists argue that immigrants constitute a reserve army of workers, members of the working class performing jobs that native workers no longer perform. Michael Samers (2003:557) further expounded on this by arguing that immigrants are a 'quantitatively and qualitatively flexible labour force for capitalists which divides and weakens working class organization and drives down the value of labour power.' Thus, there is no doubt that capitalist businesses profit from migrant workers because they are cheaper and flexible.

Exploitation of workers is also common with Multinational corporations. It should be noted that most of the merchandise produced by U.S. companies and sold to U.S. consumers and also as export into other countries, is manufactured by workers in developing countries who earn as little as 12 cents per hour drudging away in harsh and even dangerous work environments; such workplaces are referred to as 'sweatshops' (Meyers, 2004). This practice is discriminatory, inhuman and violates basic human rights. The sweatshop label also apply to jobs that do not involve in any of the moral atrocities being perpetrated by the westerners. For instance, A difficult job with long hours that pays very little (like in some Multinational companies in Nigeria and other developing countries), may still be referred to as a sweatshop job. Some defenders of capitalism and supporters of free-market economics have defended sweatshops on the grounds that they benefit the desperately poor workers of these impoverished countries who are very glad to get the work. For instance, Maitland (2001) argues that the appropriate test for 'fair wages' is not whether the wage reaches some predetermined standard but whether it is freely accepted by reasonably informed workers.

This paper does not align with the defense above, as well as the practice, of (excessively low) sweatshop wages. In particular it challenge the claim that one cannot wrong someone by benefiting him/her, especially if he/she consents to (and prefers to receive) such treatment. Although, it is not morally wrong to hire poor workers in third world countries, and it is not also necessary that workers in poor countries should get paid the same as workers in wealthy industrialized countries, as paying workers in faraway places the same as workers make at home would generally cost more money and so such a requirement would result in fewer if any jobs for poor countries, and thus would actually harm those workers who would be denied a paying job. Nonetheless, there is *some* limit to how low wages can be and still be morally acceptable. Multinationals (or capitalists) should endeavor to make the hourly wage encourage, rather than exploiting foreign workers on the basis of racial/ethnic disparities

Bonacich (1972) , states that as businesses attempt to maintain a cheap workforce -(without minding who does the work as long as it gets done), higher paid workers attempt to maintain their prime labor position - (resisting the threat of lower wage laborers), and cheaper laborers attempt to advance their position (threatening higher paid workers). Higher paid workers may use exclusionary practices- (attempting to prevent the importation of cheaper nonnative labor) or caste arrangements (excluding some groups from certain types of work) to maintain their advantage in the labor market. According to Bonacich the presence of a cheaper labor group threatens the jobs of higher paid workers and the standard for wages in all jobs. Under these conditions, laborers remain in conflict with each other, and the interests of capitalist business owners are maintained.

Though most theorists from this perspective see conflict as emanating from one dominant group, conflict may also be mutual. Edna Bonacich (1972) offers a theory of ethnic antagonism, encompassing all levels of mutual intergroup conflict. She argues that this ethnic antagonism emerges from a labor market split along ethnic and class lines. To be split, the labor market must include at least two groups of workers whose price of labor differs for the same work. Conflict develops between three classes: businesses or employers, higher paid labor, and cheaper labor. Bonacich explains that as businesses attempt to maintain a cheap workforce (not caring about who does the work as long as it gets done), higher paid workers attempt to maintain their prime labor position (resisting the threat of lower wage laborers),

### **Feminist Perspective**

Feminist theory dwells on the experiences of women and other marginalized groups in society. According to Leon-Guerrero, (2010). Black feminists theory as expounded by Collins (1986) cuts across multiple systems of oppression, - (not restricted to the womenfolk) which include; categories of race, class, sexual orientation, nation of origin, language, culture, and ethnicity. Whilst buttressing Collins views Carby (1985:390) argues that because Black women are subject to simultaneous oppression based on class, race, and patriarchy, the application of traditional (White) feminist perspectives is not appropriate and is actually misleading in attempts to comprehend the true experience of Black women. She argued that White feminist theory has to recognize that 'White women stand in a power relation as oppressors of Black women' (1985:390).

It is also important for this paper to document gender discriminatory practices in most Nigerian organisations. For example, the poor representation and status of women in the Nigerian politics, Nigerian Police Force and the Nigerian Army derive from layers of discrimination and exclusion suffered by female members of the Nigerian society (Alemika & Agugua, 2001). They further presented the extent of women underrepresentation below:



*'Until recently, women were treated as second class citizens in most countries, consequently they were underrepresented in vital sectors and organizational decision making, For example, women were not granted equal voting rights until the twentieth century in many countries, including the United States. In traditional Nigeria, the heroic roles of Queen Amina (Zazzau/Zaria) Ida and Emotan (Edo/Benin), Inikpi (Idah/ Kogi State), and Moremi (Ife) was documented. But since the colonial rule, Nigerian women have been denied opportunity to play such roles'* (Alemika and & Agugua, 2001: 11)

### **Interactionist Perspective**

This perspective argues that race is a social construct, and that we learn about racial and ethnic categories of White, Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and immigrant through our social interaction (Leon-Guerrero, 2010)

Social scientists have noted how people are raced, how race itself is not a category but a practice. In this way, racial categories and identities serve as intersections of social beliefs, perceptions, and activities that are reinforced by enduring systems of rewards and penalties (Shuford, 2001). In this context, the practice of being raced includes with it the bestowing of power and privilege, and what is granted to one group may be denied to another. An example was when, Madonna and Angelina Jolie were praised (in some circles) for their adoption of children from Cambodia, Ethiopia, and Malawi, Yet as Matthew Jacobson (1998) asks, why can White women have Black children but Black women cannot adopt White children? The interactionist perspective reminds us that racial designations may be fictitious, but their consequences are real.

### **The Consequences of Racial and Ethnic Inequalities**

#### **Income and Wealth**

"Race is so associated with class in the United States that it might not be direct discrimination, but it still matters indirectly," (Ohlemacher 2006:A6). Data reported by the U.S. Census reveal that Black households that works in US organisations had the lowest median income in 2008 (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith 2009). This shows the extent to which racial discrimination abounds in most western organizations. As a result of this continuous discrimination, low educational attainment, high unemployment, or underemployment, African -Americans have not been able to achieve the same earnings or level of wealth as White Americans have. Studies reveal that for every dollar earned by White households, Black households earned 62 cents (Keister, 2010). Blacks have between \$8 and \$19 of wealth for every \$100 possessed by Whites. Whites have nearly 12 times as much median net worth as Blacks, \$43,000 compared with \$3,700 (Keister, 2010).

#### **Education**

An instance of discrimination in educational establishment was when Orval Faubus, the Arkansas state Governor in 1957 used the state's National Guard to block the admission of nine Black students into Little Rock Central High School (Boyd, 2007). This incident is an example of collusion of race and class. It is evident that schools have become economically segregated, with children of middle- or upper-class families attending predominantly White suburban schools and the children of poorer parents attending racially mixed urban schools (Gagné and Tewksbury, 2003). The class system is also evident in Nigeria, where poor Nigerian kid can only afford to go to public schools (primary and secondary) and poor-quality private schools, whilst the rich Nigerian kid can better quality private schools. This paper classifies the latter category in this context to include the middle class as well as the upper class.

#### **Health**

An review of access to healthcare amongst different races in the United states shows that the system significantly discriminates against racial and ethnic minorities (Rosenbaum & Teitelbaum, 2005 ).It was discovered that that even after minority patients have access to a particular facility, they are less likely to receive the level of care provided to non-minority patients for the same condition regardless of their insurance status. African American children use less primary care and experience higher rate of hospitalization, and die at significantly higher rates than do White children, they are are also less likely to receive treatment for early stage lung cancer and as a result have a lower 5-year survival rate (Leon-Guerrero, 2010)

Byrd & Clayton (2002) state that the health crisis among African Americans and poor populations is triggered by a medical-social culture laden with ideological, intellectual and scientific, and discriminatory race and class problems. They believe that America's health system is predicated on the belief that the poor and 'unworthy' of our society do not deserve decent health. As a result, health practitioners , as well as research and educational systems, engage in what they describe as "self serving and elite behavior" that marginalizes and ignores the problems of health care for minority and disadvantaged groups.

#### **The Immigrant Experience**

Most immigrants-(as observed in the case of Nigerians) travel to Western nations to pursue the promise of the freedom of choice, education, economic opportunity, and a better quality of life, their lives are often filled with challenges and problems. For instance, immigrants are majorly engaged in construction, cleaning and maintenance, production, and farming occupations. Illegal immigrants are employed in similar areas: construction, building cleaning and maintenance, food preparation and service, transportation and moving, and

agriculture. There are an estimated 8.3 million illegal immigrants in the labor force (Passel 2009, and Cohn 2010). Of note is the fact that foreign-born (i.e. immigrants) workers are especially susceptible to abuse, stress, and unsafe working conditions due to their overrepresentation in dangerous industries, combined with their undocumented worker status, lack of training, and lack of English literacy (Migrant Clinicians Network, 2009). As reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2009, a total of 795 foreign-born workers died of fatal working injuries, moreover, since stricter deportation laws were passed in 1996, most immigrants have been deported for minor offenses - Among legal immigrants who were deported, over 70% had been convicted for nonviolent crimes (Leon-Guerrero, 2010).

### **ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW**

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation state with socio-cultural differences between its component ethnic groups all of which have resulted into cultural dissimilarity. Against this diverse background, many ethnic problems abound in Nigerian communities and organizations, which arise majorly from the hostility that emanated from competition between ethnically different peoples for wealth and power, and privileges.

Salawu and Hassan (2011) argues that the diversity nature of the Nigeria society has also made identification with the 'nation' a difficult task. Today, identification is easier at both family and ethnic levels. A consequence of this is that many of the citizens may never develop a proper concept of nation. This kind of ethnic group relations signifies a negative dimension and which may mean much for the Nigerian communities and organizations. In all political activities in Nigeria, the factor of ethnicity is evident. It is particularly obvious in areas like voting, distribution of political offices, employment and government general patronage of the citizens. For instance, the Northern Nigeria has since the end of the Nigerian civil war enjoyed power and privileges in Nigeria more than the South. All core strategic positions in the armed forces, the police, federal parastatals, including the presidency, have been largely reserved for the North. States and local governments in the North have been created in superior numbers by Northern military rulers to ensure perpetual dominance. (Nwobu, 2008). From the viewpoint of Obiyan and Akindele (2002). the government of Nigeria has established the federal character commission (FCC) to address problems of discrimination and under-representation in Nigeria through affirmative action. Despite the establishment of the FCC, Adamolekun, Erero, and Oshionebo (1991) argued that the federal character principle is clearly a symbol of some of the tensions and conflicts in Nigeria's federal system. To the extent that it is no more than a symbol, its importance can be exaggerated. For one, there is a real sense in which the controversy over the federal character principle is an expression of various ethnic groups northern and southern ethnic competition over appointments, especially those of patronage or elective character, and the material advantages associated with them.

There is also ethnic hostilities among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the various forms of ethnic confrontations in recent times and which indicate vividly the lack of cordiality, existence of mutual suspicion and fear of domination among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria include: the communal violence between the Hausa and Igbo in Kano in May 1995; violent clash between the Ijaw and Itsekiri in 1999; violent clash between the Yorubas and the Hausa/Fulani residents in 1999, the clash between Hausa/Fulani and the Odua's Peoples Congress (OPC) and a retaliatory clash between the Hausa/Fulani youths and the Yoruba to avenge the killing of the Hausa at Sagamu in 1999. Others are: the clash between the Ijaw and Ilaje communities of in Ondo State in 1999; ethnic clashes are between the Hausa resident community and the Yoruba in Idi-Araba in Lagos in 2002; an ethnic fracas between the native people and the Hausa settlers in Yelwa-Shendam, Plateau State in 2003; and ethnic clashes between the Ijaw and Itsekiri over the former's agitation for political autonomy in 2003 (Salawu and Hassan, 2011), amongst others. All these have implications for national development.

From the foregoing, it is evident that major fall-out of ethnicism in Nigeria is social conflict, which has characterized the Nigerian nation. All the ethnic conflicts mentioned above are either Struggle over values or claims to status, power, privileges and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain some desirable values but also to neutralize, injure and/or eliminate their rivals.

### **HOW TO MINIMISE RACIAL AND ETHNIC INEQUALITIES**

#### **Encouraging Diversity and Multiculturalism**

Kathleen Korgen, J. Mahon, and Gabe Wang (2003) believe that educational establishments (colleges and universities) have the potential to counter the effects of segregated neighborhoods and socialization that occurred in primary and secondary schools. They argue that interaction among races thrust together on a college campus provides a unique opportunity for individuals to experience and discuss the aspects of racial/ethnic diversity in their lives, some for the first time. The case of disparity in access to education as observed in Nigeria - (is more of class disparities and not racial or ethnic disparities which is common in the Western world).

Apart from educational organizations, diversity training programs should also be promoted in public and private workplaces, considering the fact that it will make managers aware of how their biases affect their

actions in the workplace (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006). These programs familiarize employees with antidiscrimination laws, to suggest behavioral changes that could address bias, and to increase cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication among employees (Bendick, Egan, and Lofhjelm 1998). Business leaders are motivated to address diversity on principle and because they recognize how their company's productivity and success depend on it (Galagan and Allerton, 1993). Example of companies where diversity and management programs have been introduced include: Ernst and Young, Hewlett Packard amongst others. (Leon-Guerrero, 2010).

### **Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action is a policy that has attempted to improve minority access to occupational and educational opportunities (Woodhouse, 2002). This paper advance that in order to forestall ethnic and racial discrimination -or powers and privileges imbalances, as the case may be), concerted efforts should be made by the government to take necessary affirmative actions in order to ensure in discriminatory employment practices, unrestricted access to education in various ethnic groups.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This paper has been able to review extant literature on the perspective of ethnicity and race. It has also made efforts to review the theories and perspectives on ethnicity and race. Consequences of ethnic and racial inequalities (most especially in the United States, and some cases ethnic inequalities in Nigeria) were addressed. The Nigerian case seems pathetic, considering the fact that the multi-ethnic and socio-cultural differences in Nigeria, which one expected would have created benefits, as a result of its diversity, has rather generated strife, and competition for power, wealth and privileges. There are also ethnic hostilities among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

The paper concludes by stating that in order to minimize ethnic and racial discrimination, it is important to encourage and educate the people that constitute different ethnic groups, races, and class to embrace diversity and multiculturalism, (so that different ethnic and racial; groups can have a unique opportunity to experience and discuss the aspects of racial/ethnic diversity in their lives and how they can maximize the benefits that comes from such). Affirmative action should also be taken to address imbalances in different races and ethnic group's access to powers and privileges imbalances, as the case may be.

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