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Color Determines Fate

The role of race in the history of the American West during the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries determined the course your life would take. The hue they were designated at birth put a stamp on who they were going to be in this society and how they were going to live. Race during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries predestined you for a certain type of life. It did not matter what dreams or aspirations the colored society of this era held, the color of their skin told them who they were going to be and how they were going to act once they came into this world. It seems there will always be a race that claims superiority over all. This idea then creates inferior races. The idea gives life to how one will be perceived, not based on things like their personality, but solely on the pigment of their skin. The idea led to the treatment which led to a racial hierarchy which determined who a certain person would be in this life.

The idea of having a superior race which automatically leads to having inferior ones below it was well and living during this era. The hierarchy had begun, or at least recycled through. This structure creates someone at the top leaving someone or a group on the bottom. In both of the readings the superior race took it upon themselves to make decisions in the best interest of the surrounding society whether it was desired or not. The superior race also took it upon themselves to categorize inferior races based strictly on the color of their skin. The people of the white skinned society claimed the superior race, prominently, during this time. As was proven in Gordon's book, white society did not get to know the Mexicans that agreed to adopt these children. They simply saw brown skinned people with white skinned children and in what

they claimed would be the best interest of the child, decided that was child abuse. They did not care if these people that were willing to take in an extra person to take care of when some of them had just enough for their families, was a nice kind human being. It was just wrong because their skin tone was not of superior quality.

Another example of this would be the white society of this time taking the Native American lands. Many white people saw the Native Americans as one large group even though there were many different tribes and bands of Native Americans, who differed in their customs and culture. In the Gwynne book this fact was mentioned throughout the book. There were a few people in this society that were able to tell the difference between the different Native American tribes because they had spent time with them or around them. Others simply saw the Native American clothing, physical characteristics, or ways they were living and grouped them all into one category which automatically put them below the superior white man. If white people saw a Native American it meant they were below them, but it also meant other things as well. In the white persons mind they already knew how this person was going to act and what they desired as well. They knew Native Americans were savages. They knew their customs and cultures were different in who they worshipped and how they chose to live, which automatically made them wrong and therefore inferior. The view the racial hierarchy created of others also gave life to the idea of best interest.

This idea of best interest created tension among everyone and anyone who was involved. The superior race claimed to be superior due to this idea. In both books the white men laid stake to this claim. In doing so, they used the idea of having the inferior races best interest at heart when attempting to justify the course of their actions. The white women claimed to know what was best for the orphan children in Arizona. That is why they stated they needed to abduct those

children for the sake of their safety. The Native Americans were thought to have not known how to use the land and the resources they lived amongst, so the white men had to claim that land for it to be used correctly. In both very different cases the racial hierarchy gave way to a claimed best interest at heart at the top and a justification for taking something away from the people at the bottom. This in turn left the bottom, often colored society with little, and the top white society with everything. Once again, the racial hierarchy created a dominance but not only that, it also led to the loss of something valuable for the less dominant.

In the Native Americans case race took away their land. Being that this group of people lived off the land and many of their life practices were based upon or had something to do with their land took away their livelihood. In their case this catastrophic event laid the course for the rest of their history. Race predetermined back then where they would end up today, shoved onto reservations in difficult environments with very little. The Native American history was laid out and took the path it did solely based upon the simple fact that they were the inferior lumped together non-white society. In all examples given the question that seems to arise would be was it really best interest at heart or was there a different idea that arose in the background of many minds?

Was the real objective of the claimed superior race to help and give aid to those they felt needed it below them or was there something else. In both readings the root of all actions taken upon all parties was not that of best interest but more so of power. All races seemed to recognize the different ways they could control or at least hold power for a little while. In the case of the orphaned children, the Mexican society may have really wanted to help or have children present in their homes, but there was also a hint of holding power based upon the simple fact that they would have a white member of society dependent on them. They were providing aid to a white

person which may raise them up in the racial hierarchy. The adopting of the superior race, and their willingness to do so would give them power over their peers who chose not to adopt.