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Thriving together: how to rebuild coalitions and counteract competition—a look at minority discourses

The 1960s and 70s saw a strong Black-Jewish alliance in the wake of the Civil Rights struggle and a shared commitment to social justice. However, in recent decades this relationship has become frayed. Whoopi Goldberg's statement on *The View* that the Holocaust was "not about race" since it involved "two white groups of people" problematically signifies a wide-spread social forgetting that, historically, Jewish people have been excluded and discriminated against on the basis of race. This paper interrogates the regrettable competition among different minority groups along lines of race, ethnicity and sexuality for who best represents the most cutting-edge concerns of social justice; it draws on case studies and proposes various approaches to a new coalition politics to strengthen alliances rather than pitting discourses involving race/ethnicity/sexuality against one another. The first case study will explore the ways in which the Black-Jewish alliance can be rekindled around current social justice issues taking into account its historically significant status. Much of these competing claims by ethnic/racial/sexual minority groups involve issues of vulnerability and visibility; they also raise the issue of perceived, yet misconstrued, membership in 'white ethnicity' or what it signifies. This significance, i.e. perceived educational/economic privilege, can be and often is also projected onto so-called model minority communities, such as certain Asian-American populations.

I will discuss how these competing claims can be deconstructed and reconfigured in terms of more productive alliances, especially as it affects teaching and research. I will also address how studying and teaching about genocide (including the Holocaust) at institutions of higher learning has been subjected to unsubstantiated attacks that conflate such academic endeavors with the promotion of 'Zionism.' I would like to propose that in the context of the attempted shut-down of important areas of academic inquiry the term 'Zionism' should be properly investigated in its historical context rather than used as an injurious label. When used as a label, this word should better be considered a part of a racialized discourse that requires critical treatment. I would argue that it is crucial to point out any false but ideologically easy connotations, such as that between studying the Holocaust and promoting Zionism, because they reveal a damaging lack of historical knowledge. It seems that this particular conflation has become reified not only in current debates on race and ethnicity but has also infiltrated sexuality studies. I therefore consider it urgent to start the rebuilding of alliance and coalition building now. In my conclusion, I will show various pathways towards charting reinvigorating new alliances that cut across categories of race, ethnicity and sexuality.