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USA

## Protonism: A Theory Against Racism

Dr. Mimi Susi Johnson



**I**t was the 2012 All-star Basketball Game. Excitement, enthusiasm and anticipation about the game saturated the air. Alas, halftime; the time attendees and viewers take bathroom breaks, get snacks, and make predictions about the final points of the game. It was about 7:12 p.m. Eastern-standard Time, when a seventeen-year-old African-American male made his way back to his father's house from a near-by convenience store getting his favorite snacks; a pack of Skittles and an Arizona Iced Tea. Little did this young boy know that not only would he never learn the outcome of the game but he would never see his family and friends again.

Wearing a black hoodie and while speaking on his cell phone to his girlfriend, he noticed a male individual in an SUV following him. Concerned and unsure of who the man was, the young boy's girlfriend told him to run. He refused. He told her, "I'll walk fast. I think I lost him." Moments later, the young boy noticed the man had exited his vehicle and began chasing him. It was at that time he ran for his life. Within minutes, neighbors heard the yells and pleas for help. Mere moments later, the

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*Dr. Mimi Susi Johnson* is the pen name of a very powerful writer. Born 1943, in Houston, Texas, she studied Literature at the University of Houston; after studying and working in Madrid, Spain for 20 years she acquired her BA in Literature at the University of Texas at Dallas in 1994, and her MA in Spanish Literature and Teaching of Castilian Spanish in 1999. While studying and teaching in the Dallas College System from 1987 to 2012 she also did freelance translating for poets and edited a Dallas newspaper.

young boy lay dead with a single gunshot wound to the chest. This young boy was Travon Martin. It was only later that the neighbors of this close-knit community learned that young Martin was dead. As the facts of the case unfolded, it sparked one of the worst outrages of racism and racial profiling to hit the county since 1998.

**The impact of ostentatious racist views** were further perpetuated on June 7, 1998 when three white men — John William King, Lawrence Russell Brewer and Shawn Allen Berry — offered to give 49-year-old James Byrd Jr., a disabled man, a ride home in a pickup truck. The unsuspecting Byrd accepted what he thought was a simple act of kindness from the three men who were devoted white supremacist. The three men took Byrd to a remote area of Jasper, Texas, beating him severely and later, while he was still alive, chained his legs to the back of the truck and dragged him for several miles along an asphalt road to his death. Byrd was still conscious during the horrifying ordeal until the truck and his body hit a culvert, detaching one of Byrd's arms and severing his head. Byrd never stood a chance and never saw it coming.

The three white men then took what remained of Byrd's marred body and dumped it on the grounds of a small African-American church; clearly a shock-value move to make a bold statement. Byrd's body was found at the church by a six-year-old boy and his father. Just hours after the discovery of Byrd's body, this violent act would be inextricably likened in the minds of Americans as a modern-day lynching. That of Travon Martin would be thought of as confirmation that racism through racial profiling still runs rampant in this country. Acts such as those against Byrd, Travon Martin and that of Rodney King who was severely beaten by Los Angeles police officers are classic examples of the importance of protonism against racism.

But, who better to understand these promulgated views than Dr. Gjekë Marinaj, renowned author, poet and theorist? Marinaj's literary theory, Protonism, was birthed out of similar circumstances in 1990 communist Albania as a result of his literary work, specifically the precedence-setting poetry

piece, **HORSES**. His literary works revolutionized Albania and ultimately led to the freedom of the Albanian people from communism. Marinaj's theory and perspective on critical literary reviews not only threatened his freedom and could get him arrested or killed, but was viewed as rebellion, anti-communist and anti-government.

Protonism, taken from the root word "Proton;" is the positive-charged element of the nuclei. This simple, yet profound theory changed the perceptions of a communist country and can be the counterattack against racism everywhere.

Racism, by definition, is the obstructive belief that one race of people are superior to any other race that exists. As with Germany's slaughter of the 1940s and the pre-Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 when blacks were enslaved these groups of people were deemed as inferior. This has long been a thorn in the side of these countries ever since. But how does a global community apply such a literary theory to a community of behaviors that seems to grow as fast as a cancer? As with literary Protonism, one must see the positive attribution of an author's work, likewise the positive contributions of humankind. "*All human beings add value to someone.*"<sup>1</sup> When one chooses to believe a racial group is inferior to another is to refuse to see the value the group or individual adds to others.

Protonism applied encourages thought, consideration, and respect. Much like critical reviews of literary content in response to natural law theories, the protonism approach against racism incites the positive and when dealing with races; it requires one focus on what can be gleaned from any differences. If a critic focuses only on the negative as natural law theory dictates, then negative is the only thing a person will find based on their personal understanding, background, and the experiences that define negative for them.

Obviously, a rocket scientist is not required to point out that everyone has faults, even those with superiority complexes. Likewise, there are things to be learned from those who are

<sup>1</sup>Sgt. Michael Bradshaw; Mesquite County, Texas Retired Hate Crime Investigator.

different racially. Protonism prefers the focus not lie on one's differences and weaknesses or to designate a race as inferior. Instead, to focus on the values an individual brings to the learning and growth process of another. Protonism is an expansion of ideas and expertise of others through literature and through cultural differences. Protonism exposes one to creativity and deeper understandings. The simple practice of protonism helps the human race frame their concepts and ideas into words, which promotes enlightenment, squanders biases and opens dialog. Protonism, as proven through literary criticism, extracts positive aspects and allows the critic to develop a new level of understanding of other writers.

### **Application of protonism**

For some, applying protonism will take practice and conscience effort. For others, applying the protonism philosophy is simply a matter of redirecting one's focus. The root of racism is hatred, disrespect, devaluing or focusing on the weaknesses of another race or human beings in general. To apply the protonism theory the focus must shift criticizing or fault-finding while identifying the value of an individual or people as a whole.

Unlike protonism in literature, superior views sees a rock mined out of a large mountain that contains rough edges through obscured lenses and fails to see what lies beneath the surface. Overcoming racism requires seeing the precious stone in the middle or interaction with the subject as an opportunity to learn and grow. Protonism then, requires that a person seek the hidden jewel inside and focus on those shining features and the value a subject adds.

Protonist seeks only the *positively charged* characteristics of the subject under study. This does not mean that Protonists are in any way blind or unrealistic to any negative that may exist in others such as with racism. Instead, protonism addresses the negative attitudes of racists firmly and directly in order to refute their cancerous beliefs. It is the protonistic theory in practice against racism that will reverse racist attitudes and agendas and allow those less familiar with racism to learn and grow.

There are Five Principles of study to successfully apply protonism against racism. They are:<sup>2</sup>

**TRUTH:** This means asserting that there is no truth independent of the human mind. All that is truth is met by an individual conscious mind. That which is considered a common truth constantly evolves out of a collective or individual need. Not only is this principle subjective but each person applying this principle stands to learn something different and unique from any other person.

**INQUIRY:** The amount of knowledge a racist has about racial differences is directly impacted in their thoughts, feelings and acceptance overall. This means consistent exploration and understanding of the protonism philosophy inculcates positive change and freedom from racist views.

**RESTITUTION:** With restitution, protonism means that literary critics should find ways to reflect the positive intentions of the authors in their respective works while maintaining a standard of professionalism. One with racist perspectives must identify ways to see the positive intentions of another race without hate or reprisal and seek the learning potential for better understanding and appreciation.

**PROTONISM:** "...elevates the reader to the level of the critic and provides linguistic tools to enable him or her to critique other non-protonist critics."<sup>3</sup> This requires that those with superior attitudes first be equipped with the tools that foster change. They must assess the values of others consistently and successfully to understand and appreciate.

**ETHICS:** In order to change superior views, protonism dictates that a person first defend and emphasize non-racist views, understanding the value of others helps superior views respect differences and take advantage of the learning experience.

It is where racism is concerned that the protonism philosophy works to determine how racists systematize, defend, and recommend the hypothesis of right and wrong behaviors concerning different races.

<sup>2</sup>Gjekë Marinaj's Five Central Principals

<sup>3</sup>5 Principles of Protonism by Gjekë Marinaj