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Title: Behind the Mask of Morality: (e)urochristian Bioethics and the Colonial-Racial Discourse

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Abstract

The discipline of bioethics is insufficient and ineffective in addressing the persistent issues of racism and racial inequalities in healthcare. A minority of bioethicists are indeed attentive to issues such as implicit bias, structural racism, power inequalities, and the social determinants of health. Yet, these efforts do not consider the colonial-racial discourse -- that racism is an instrument of eurochristian colonialism, and bioethics is a product of that same colonial worldview. Exposing mainstream bioethicists to the work of anti-colonial scholars and activists would provide bioethicists a framework through which they would be better equipped to address issues of race through: 1) a deeper understanding of their complicity with colonialism, and 2) the importance of anti-colonial methods and approaches to ethical decision-making in healthcare.

Three contemporary bioethics cases involving issues of race are examined including Jahi McMath and the diagnosis of brain death, the Havasupai diabetes research protocol, and the treatment of Latinx undocumented immigrants with end-stage renal disease. These cases serve as the focal point for 1) the extrication of eurochristian colonial themes within three foundational bioethics texts, and 2) the application of the knowledge and praxis of three anti-colonial scholars toward racially responsive case analyses and outcomes. I conclude that the combination of a robust self-examination of the discipline's eurochristian worldview and the prioritization of a range of anti-colonial perspectives would serve bioethics more fully in the imagining of a racially conscious bioethics practice, scholarship, and policy that aims to reject colonial constructs and normalize difference.