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EXAMEN COMMUN D'ENTREE EN PREMIERE ANNEE

EPREUVE D'ANGLAIS

SAMEDI 26 MAI 2018

13h30 à 18h00

(durée conseillée : 1h30)

coeff. 2

Ce sujet est composé de 4 pages

Il est demandé aux candidats de répondre directement sur leur copie en indiquant clairement les numéros des exercices.

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The Heartbeat of Racism Is Denial

The New York Times (adapted) | Ibram X. Kendi | 13 January 2018

When our reality is too ugly, we deny reality. It is too painful to look at. Reality is too hard to accept.

5 Mental health experts routinely say that denial is among the most common defense mechanisms. Denial is how the person defends his superior sense of self, her racially unequal society.

10 Denial is how America defends itself as superior to “shithole countries” in Africa and elsewhere, as President Trump once reportedly described them in a White House meeting [...] It’s also how America defends itself as superior to those “developing countries” in Africa, to quote how liberal opponents of Mr. Trump might often describe them.

Mr. Trump appears to be unifying America - unifying Americans in their denial. The more racist Mr. Trump sounds, the more Trump country denies his racism, and the more his opponents look away from their own racism to brand Trump country as racist. Through it all, America remains a unified country of denial.

15 The reckoning of Mr. Trump’s racism must become the reckoning of American racism. Because the American creed of denial - “I’m not a racist” - knows no political parties, no ideologies, no colors, no regions.

20 [A few weeks ago], Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois [...] rightfully described Mr. Trump’s words as “hate-filled, vile and racist,” and added, “I cannot believe that in the history of the White House in that Oval Office, any president has ever spoken the words that I personally heard our president speak yesterday.”

But Mr. Trump is no exception. In framing Mr. Trump’s racism as exceptional, in seeking to highlight the depth of the president’s cruelty, Mr. Durbin, a reliably liberal senator, showed the depth of denial of American racism.

25 Begin with the eight presidents who held slaves while in the Oval Office. Then consider how Abraham Lincoln urged black people to leave the United States. “Even when you cease to be slaves, you are yet far removed from being placed on an equality with the white race,” Lincoln told five black guests at the White House in 1862. So “it is better for us both, therefore, to be separated.” [...]

30 Presidential history also includes the social Darwinism of Theodore Roosevelt, the federal-government-segregating, “Birth of a Nation”-praising Woodrow Wilson - and the bigotry that came from the mouths of presidents who are generally seen as essential to racial progress. President Lyndon B. Johnson said “nigger” nearly as often as Ku Klux Klansmen did.

35 This denial of racism is the heartbeat of racism. Where there is suffering from racist policies, there are denials that those policies are racist. The beat of denial sounds the same across time and space. [...]

40 Fifty years ago, Richard Nixon transformed this historic heartbeat of denial into an intoxicating political philosophy. His presidential candidacy appealed to George Wallace-type segregationists while also attracting Americans who refused to live near “dangerous” black residents, obstructed the desegregation of schools, resisted affirmative action policies, framed black mothers on welfare as undeserving, called the black family pathological and denigrated black culture - all those racists who refused to believe they were racist [...]

45 Mr. Trump opened his candidacy with racism, calling Mexicans criminals and rapists. Since taking office, he has looked away from the disaster zone in Puerto Rico, he has called some violent white supremacists “very fine people,” and he has described Nigerians as living in “huts.”

50 When someone identifies the obvious, Mr. Trump resounds the beat of denial as he did before he was president: “I’m the least racist person that you’ve ever met,” that “you’ve ever seen,” that “you’ve ever encountered.”

55 These are ugly denials. But it’s the denials from those who stand in strong opposition to this president that are more frustrating to me: denials that their attacks on identity politics are racist. Denials that the paltry number of people of color in elite spaces marks racism [...]

Because we naturally want to look away from our ugliness [...], we paint over racist reality to make a beautiful delusion of self, of society. We defend this beautiful self and society from our racist reality with the weapons of denial.

60 Denial is fueled by the stigma associated with being a racist. Feeding the stigma is how “racist” is considered almost like an identity, a brand.

But a racist is not who a person is. A racist is what a person is, what a person is saying, what a person is doing.

Racist is not a fixed category like “not racist,” which is steeped denial. Only racists say they are not racist. Only the racist lives by the heartbeat of denial.

65 The antiracist lives by the opposite heartbeat, one that rarely and irregularly sounds in America - the heartbeat of confession.

Questions

I. Reading Comprehension (8 points)

Answer the following questions in full sentence form using your own words. You should answer in 40 to 60 words:

- a) What does the author mean when he states that Trump “*is unifying Americans in their denial*” ? (l. 14) [3 points]
- b) The author argues that Trump is not an “*exception*” (l.22): what is implied by this and how is this claim justified? [2 points]
- c) Whose denials are most upsetting to the author? Explain why. [3 points]

II. Synonyms (4 points)

Find ONE synonym in the text for the following words:

(**NB** The words are given in the order of the text, but not necessarily in the same verbal form or using the same syntax)

1. to label or to stigmatize
2. assessment
3. to put into words or to present in a certain way
4. intolerance
5. not worthy
6. to echo
7. small or insignificant
8. to feed

III. Essay (8 points)

Write an essay of 300 words (+ or - 10%) on the following subject:

To what extent can we say that racism remains a major challenge to be overcome?

(*nb* You are not obliged to deal exclusively with the United States, but are free to widen your discussion to include the situation in Europe or other regions of the world)