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DISCUSSION

Discussion on White Power and Privilege: Barriers to Culturally Responsive Teaching by Glimps, B.J. & Ford, N.F

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When I am reading an article published in IJEP, it set me think about the context of Turkey agenda linking with article issue: Article titled "White Power and Privilege: Barriers to Culturally Responsive Teaching" written by Blanche J. Glimps and Theron. N. Ford , Vol4.(2) : 35-36. The authors explain how and from where the white privilege emerges, how and in what forms it is being sustained in USA schools. They write the solution of the problem must be start from training the teacher candidates about this problem. So they discuss the theoretic aspect and also they suggest practical solutions to the problem. Thanks them about their valuable contributions to the issue.

I want to write something about White Turk notion that remind me after reading this article. Some can feel that there is a problem in transferring of the similar subjects placed in article to the Turkey's agenda.

The notion of White Turks that adopted to Turkey's literature from American society model has been used in Turkey as agenda topics. The first definition of the WASP was provided by political scientist Andrew Hacker in 1957 with the witty epithet undertone of "waspishness" (meaning of person who is easily irritated and easily take offense). He wrote:

"They are 'WASPs'—in the cocktail party jargon of the sociologists. That is, they are wealthy, they are Anglo-Saxon in origin, and they are Protestants (and disproportionately Episcopalian). To their Waspishness should be added the tendency to be located on the eastern seaboard or around San Francisco, to be prep school and Ivy League educated, and to be possessed of inherited wealth."(Hacker, 1957).

Term popularized with E. Digby Baltzel's book "The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America". He wrote the increasing caste like authority of new American upper classes of White, Anglo Saxon, Protestant (Baltzel, 1964).

In Turkey's literature, firstly journalist U. Güldemir used White Turk notion in his book "Teksas Malatya" to point out people who are sterilized, unique life style and distinctive values in1992 (Güldemir, 1992). The usage of notion spreaded speedly with

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the columnists definitions. It became popular and White Turk notion was in literature of Turkey after the half of 1990s: Defined as bourgeois who are Sunni (an Islamic sect), originated from Turkish ethnicity.

The columnists E. Özkök, S. Turgut, F. Kuru, O. Eğin² enhanced the notion by writing who are White Turks who are not, with defining them related to roots about culture, living style, political view etc. But they always referred to a prominent upper classes who are on power in country for long times after the establishment of Turkey Republic.

Also there is a discussion on the complement of this definition: Black Turks. In recent years media is trying to convince citizens that Black Turks grab political power with the political changes in Turkey, by the representation of people from different ethnicities and people have life style different from the White Turks life style. Journalist Deborah Sontag from New York Times made an interview with Prime Minister of Turkey and wrote his statement as "In this country, there is a segregation of Black Turks and White Turks, Your brother Tayyip belongs to the Black Turks." It was an explicit identity description, but there were doubts and dilemmas that it was true or not³.

The popularity of term increased so high after 2000s that all the political changes in Turkey started to explain by the White Turk notion. E. Özkök announced after Constitution Referendum on September 2010 that White Turks proportion is the same as the "No" Votes Proportion.⁴ S. Turgut wrote that with the political changes in Turkey, White Turks otherized.⁵ O.Eğin wrote White Turks are wounded up.⁶

The discourse that "White Turk notion expresses the bourgeoisie" is problematical, that it sees the bourgeoisie always in the same mode although it has different properties in the different times. Revolutionist bourgeoisie, collaborationist bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie that is becoming mafia in Turkey after 1980 cannot be evaluated as in the same category. The early capitalism, that's after savage capitalist period, can be seen as more progressive and is more equalitarian according to advanced capitalism with its social state phenomena that rises on citizen and citizenship rights. Certainly it is more obscurantists according to socialism and it is the domination form of one class on another class. So it must be asked "which capitalism" for a capitalism analysis or for any analysis it must be asked "in which historical conditions." Also it must be asked for a bourgeoisie description that "which bourgeoisie" or in "which historical conditions".

² They are columnists in Turkey's newspapers that are high circulation. They wrote a lot of times about White Turks in 20 years.

³ The Erdogan Experiment. 11 May 2003. New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/magazine/the-erdogan-experiment.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (It is taken on 14.12.2011)

⁴ It Can Not Be Reached To White Turk That You Look For. 27 October 2010. Hurriyet Newspaper <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/16142368.asp> (It is taken on 14.12.2011).

⁵ White Turks Are Otherized. 15 June 2011

<http://www.dipnot.tv/7614/Serdar-Turgut-Beyaz-Turkler-otekilesti.aspx> (It is taken on 14.12.2011)

⁶ Short History Of White Turkey. 30 Marc.2009. Aksam Newspaper. <http://aksam.medyator.com/2010/05/28/yazar/5124/aksam/yazi.html> (It is taken on 14.12.2011)

As well as it has common properties for every period, like exploitation of labor, bourgeoisie has varying aspects at different historical conditions. It must not be perceived as same as all across the capitalism, but it must be evaluated according to historical time. In these days the change in Turkey is not absolutely the giving of White Turks power to Black Turks. Power never has been taken by the Black Turks. The economical problems of ethnic groups and Islamic groups (as in the concept of relation of production, the feudal or semi feudal production processes and socio-economic structure) are been ignored and problems reduced to issues about culture, with the policies about these points, power is seen as in the side of disadvantaged groups.

Nowadays the change in Turkey is handing over the power to capital owners who have Islamic targets. The handing over the capital is not changing the character of exploitation on labor, even though it raises the dose, (oppression to TEKEL workers⁷ and all struggles about the labor and main rights), dismissing of workers that are syndicated, especially in a revolutionary union - DISK). There is no Black Turk in power. I agree with the proposal that there are White Turks and Black Turks in Turkey. But it cannot be asserted that they are people who were oppressed before and now in the power.

The biggest question in the transferring of White Turk notion to Turkey is that: Why the Black Turks are black? I.e. what is the definition of Black Turks? Can a prime minister be a Black Turk? It is expressed in the Article why people are named "black" in USA: by the color of their skin. Even though children in primary schools also can understand that their friends are black or white in USA as expressed in the Article. It is clear and explicit; it can be seen by eyes and it is agreed on. Race is a socially constructed phenomenon as the authors in article indicated. So the constructed things can be deconstructed. Such as socialism offers to equalize in being human, so it offers a world that the differences such as race will (be but) lose the meaning. There is always a possibility other than and also against to capitalism and also to a discriminative construction.

I think that, for Turkey, White Turk notion must be redefined autonomously from older understanding. For example can the children in primary schools in Turkey understand whether their friends are from White Turks or Black Turks, like in USA? It will be the best, if White Turk notion is redefined with the economical conditions. Especially since the constructivism as a filtered form of post modernism is stickled to science area, the white privilege attached the notions like "individual", "othering", "the nominative construction of knowledge", "difference", "peer pressure" etc. must be redefined with their economical roots.

Like Glimps and Ford addresses the beginning of solution of problem in USA in the education of teacher candidates, the beginning point may be in the teachers' education programs and critical educational scientists' studies. Especially it must be

⁷ TEKEL was a major public institution in Turkey which was privatized by government and workers forced to pass to contracted statue, i.e. a form of unemployment statue. Resistance of TEKEL workers that continued 78 days in Ankara were been ignored by government, and sometimes tried to be suppressed by violent police intervention.

redefined that “who White Turks are” and as a complement “who Black Turks are” and also “who they are not. Otherwise we, people who define themselves as critical scientists, will be in the same point with the ones side by side capital that are claiming that they are culturally oppressed.

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