Use present to improve the future

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Germany and Russia have inflicted unspeakable atrocities in the past few centuries both on their own people as well as on their neighbors. Racism is alive and well in both countries today. And yet, they don’t go around regurgitating those unpleasant memories and bashing themselves on a daily basis. In their own minds, they are forward-looking (progressive), not backward-looking.

In contrast, in our country, there are those who keep reminding us of our history of slavery. They constantly hold the guillotine of “America’s Original Sin” over our collective heads.

Are there Americans who feel and behave in racist ways? Definitely.

So should we not try to systematically identify the channels through which prejudicial behaviors show their ugly faces, and formulate policies to address them?

Should we also not try to address the non-personal, structural elements that have kept certain classes down for decades?

All this talk about removing the outward symbols of past racism, while perhaps therapeutic in some way, serves as a decoy by distracting us from real solutions.

Being a progressive should mean using the present to improve the future in concrete, measurable ways, rather than keep fanning the fires of a bygone, unchangeable past.

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