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October 18, 2020: Anti-Racism

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Title: Anti-Racism

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10/18/2020--I was just reading the April, 2020 review of *The Shadow King* in the *New York Review*. Colin Grant quotes the raw racism of the Italian writer Ferdinando Martini about the 1935 invasion of Ethiopia by Italy. It was shocking to read. "One race must replace the other; it's that or nothing...whether we like it or not, we will have to hunt [the native] down and encourage him to disappear, just as had been done with the Redskins, using all the methods civilization—which the native instinctively hates—can provide: gunfire and a daily dose of firewater." I quote this language because nothing but his own words would communicate that racism in its power. This is a lesson in anti-racism. Two faculty members have left Pittsburgh Universities in recent weeks over the use in class of the word N*. I have no need to write the word out here because I am not trying to show the power the word had. But these educators were trying to do that. I now want to repeat that raw racism has to be shown--it cannot be described. It must be quoted. Who was let off the hook in these incidents? In my view, white students who will never understand what people of color confront every day even now--see the recent incident involving Gisele Fetterman (here). Details matter and I not defending the actual conduct of the professors in question. But I am defending two principles. First, racism must be permitted to speak its awful message if it is to be understood and confronted. Second, while the classroom should never be hostile to students, it must often make students extremely uncomfortable.