

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

5-3-2021

May 3, 2021: The "America is racist" Controversy

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2021). May 3, 2021: The "America is racist" Controversy. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/1364>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: The "America is racist" Controversy

Date: 2021-05-03T07:32:00.001-04:00

5/3/2021--Some years ago, the legal thinker Ronald Dworkin asked whether America was a religious country that tolerated non-believers or a secular country that tolerated religious believers. Every year I tell my students it was the worst question in the history of American public life. All such a question can do is divide people. It really means I'm an American and you're not. The insistence that America is a racist country reminds me of the Dworkin question. It is equally divisive and useless. And its uselessness in undoing structural racism is related to its divisiveness. Charles Blow's column in the New York Times today is a perfect example. He doesn't deny America's progress in fighting racism. He just wants everybody to acknowledge historic crimes and current conditions. But why does it follow from, "much American wealth was gained from slavery" and "America was stolen from the native peoples who lived here before Europeans came" and "racism still prevents people of color from fair treatment" that "America is racist." And if I feel loyalty to my country and believe that it may be the least racist county in the world--well, maybe after Canada--why can't I affirm that? The old song "Whose Side Are You On?" is stirring, but it is not fair.