

Nicole Reksopuro

Adrienne C. Nelson HS

Racism in AI

Robert Williams was simply enjoying a relaxing weekend with his wife and kids. Carrying on the continuous ritual of watching the glorious sun vanish into the night sky. When suddenly two police officers aggressively pinned him down and accused him of stealing thousands of dollars. When asked about where this information came from, the source? Facial Recognition. Unfortunately, Robert Williams was just one of the many people of color who fell victim to the flaws in artificial intelligence. When facial recognition programs boast about having a 90% accuracy rate, they completely ignore the fact that those results aren't universal. According to an assessment conducted by the **National Institute of Standards and Technology**, darker-skinned individuals, specifically Black women, were more than 10 times less accurately recognized compared to their white counterparts (National Institute of Standards and Technology).

With things like Artificial Intelligence(AI) becoming heavily prevalent in society, we find ourselves astonished by what it can do, never addressing what it can't. And on Hawk News today, reporting to you live, my name is Nicole Reksopuro, and today I will be bringing light to how racism makes its way into AI, and how we can make artificial intelligence more inclusive to everyone, regardless of their skin color. Unfortunately, due to the flawed world we live in, human decisions and biases have made their way to the capabilities of AI. When digital artist Stephanie Dinkins experimented with multiple AI image generators, she was stunned at the results. As she inputted terms like "African

American”, or “Black woman”, what resulted were dark images of cursed eyes, enlarged lips, deranged body parts, and many more terrifying images. Computer distortion appeared at extreme rates.

Racism appears everywhere, it's unfortunate that it exists in algorithms that are supposedly our future. From distorting images of women of color or being extremely white users keen- it's not something we should take lightly. As the usage of AI facial recognition has started to be implemented in surveillance technology, it led to thousands of arrests of civilians of color. When Microsoft conducted an investigation researching different facial recognition programs, they found that most algorithms were barely 70% accurate when it came to someone with darker complexions (Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences). Although some corporations have preached about taking immediate action to fix these racist programs, they have further extended the problem by (1) not taking official accountability; (2) blaming problems on other committees involved, or (3) even blaming the consumers themselves.

“It's demoralizing...The algorithm skews toward a cultural image of Africa that the West has created. It defaults to the worst stereotypes that already exist on the internet”, said Linda Dounia Rebeiz, an artist based on AI creativity, discussing the horrifying representation of Black women produced by Artificial Intelligence (New York Times). As the rise of AI starts to take over, it should be usable for everyone, without needing physical characteristics as a factor.

However, although AI itself is not racist, it is being developed and launched into institutions that have historically discriminated against marginalized groups. Jason Bloomberg, President of the digital innovation program Intellyx expressed that, “as

human behavior makes up a large part of AI research, bias is a significant problem,” implying that it is quite difficult to avoid racial bias if the same people are the ones creating AI. If we want to improve artificial intelligence, we must first improve the workers and systems that are actively creating it.

But here’s the thing, racism in AI is not something new, we can see issues resurfacing from 2014, when Google researchers took a deep dive into their image recognition algorithms and found that they labeled black people as “gorillas and monkeys”. Now this issue was not primarily about human bias but stemmed from both ignorance and greed. Their lack of funding for diverse input is reflected in their systems. Insensitivity like this can and will further perpetuate systemic discrimination.

To address this pressing issue, corporations and institutions must take genuine accountability; it could be something as simple as funding and implementing proper involvement of diverse perspectives within AI research and development. If we want a future where AI benefits everyone, irrespective of their physical characteristics, we must first address the root causes and biases within the systems themselves.

Thank you for joining Hawk News today, I’m Nicole Reksopuro, **urging you to be** aware and advocate for more responsible AI development that respects the diversity of our society. Together we can shape the future, and **change starts today.**

Works Cited

- Murray, John. "Racist Data? Human Bias is Infecting AI Development." *Towards Data Science*,
<https://towardsdatascience.com/racist-data-human-bias-is-infecting-ai-development-8110c1ec50c>. Accessed 16 March 2024.
- Najibi, Alex. "Racial Discrimination in Face Recognition Technology." *Science in the News*, 24 October 2020,
<https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/racial-discrimination-in-face-recognition-technology/>. Accessed 16 March 2024.
- National Institute of Standards and Technology. "Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) | NIST." *National Institute of Standards and Technology*, 6 February 2020,
<https://www.nist.gov/speech-testimony/facial-recognition-technology-frt-0>.
Accessed 16 March 2024.
- Raynham, Helen. "Gender Shades." *Gender Shades*,
<http://gendershades.org/overview.html>. Accessed 16 March 2024.
- Small, Zachary. "Black Artists Say A.I. Shows Bias, With Algorithms Erasing Their History." *The New York Times*, 4 July 2023,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/04/arts/design/black-artists-bias-ai.html>.
Accessed 16 March 2024.

Vincent, James, and Vjeran Pavic. "Google 'fixed' its racist algorithm by removing gorillas from its image-labeling tech." *The Verge*, 12 January 2018, <https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/12/16882408/google-racist-gorillas-photo-recognition-algorithm-ai>. Accessed 16 March 2024.