

# Black in the usa

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



The duration of this paper will be spent explaining some of the intricate ins and outs of the systemic oppression, racism, and poverty that plagues black people in the United States of America. Many of the things that I will explain also apply to other black people and people of color around the world, however I feel that I am only qualified to speak on the struggles, circumstances, and injustices of this specific group because it is the group to which I belong. I want to bring some of these things to the attention of those who are unaware and remind those who are aware that the fight for freedom, justice, and equality is not over.

I have organized my paper into two main sections, each of which have various sub-sections. The first section is going to be about the history of black people in the United States of America. It will give an idea of what the social climate was like in different eras as it pertained to blacks in this country. It will also explain how and what things from the past affect the climate of today as it pertains to black people in this country. The second section is going to be about the present-day trials and tribulations that black people face in this country. I will be covering the social climate of the United States of America from 2005-2018. I will also provide some insight as to what things affect the social climate as we know it today. As mentioned in my introductory paragraph, these sections will cover three categories as the focal points of the paper, oppression, racism, and poverty within the black communities in the United States of America. I will end the paper with a conclusion and poems by Claude McKay and William Ernest Henley. I want to end with these poems because I feel like they speak to the times then, as

well as to the times now for black people and they have gotten me through some dark times in my life.

## PAST

The United States of America, is it friend or foe to the non-europeans who share this country? Many have different views on the matter, the true witness bearer lies in America's own turbulent history. It does not a pretty picture paint, nor is it for the faint of heart. It is, however, a history full of murder, rape, lies and forced subjugation of peoples who were unlike and considered no people at all. The atrocities committed against black people permeates the very foundation upon which this nation stands. Racism and discrimination has infiltrated every part of our society. Whether subtly or with blatant indifference, the racial divide caused by its widespread use is bringing this country to its knees.

The European whites had a natural disdain towards the darker races, yes, but beyond that their motivation for forcing blacks to build their nation was a matter of simple economics. While that may seem inconsequential to some—especially blacks, the simple truth is black people are here to stay. In this melting pot of a nation what affects one, affects us all. Therefore, America's shaky economic footing should be of the utmost importance to everyone. The question we must now ask is can the damage inflicted on the economy by institutionalized racism be repaired, and if so, how? Fortunately for all of us, the damage can absolutely be amended. However, the road to repairing that damage will no doubt prove to be an arduous one indeed. Nonetheless,

the following areas of focus will need to be addressed, restructured, or both if a long term goal of economic recovery is to be attained.

### Chattel Slavery & Jim Crow

Not a preferred topic of focus for most, certainly, but its practice and subsequent long term effect on black society has a direct bearing on America's economic standing today. How so? Arguably, Africa is the cradle of civilization. In it can be found the very origin of the laws of mathematics, engineering, astrology, farming, art and music, just to name a few. To take the people responsible for enriching the world's civilizations and reduce them to mere fractions of their former selves is bound to have long-term and dire consequences. Three hundred and ten years of chattel slavery, seventy-seven years of Jim Crow Laws and 460 years of racially motivated human injustices have definitely left its mark.

The first trans-Atlantic slave ship was captained by a British man named Sir John Hawkins in 1555 (some sources say 1562) on a ship called "Jesus of Lubek", also referred to as "The Good Ship Jesus", though the history books cleverly site 1619 as the year the first slaves arrived to America.

Understanding what happened during those missing sixty-four years is essential. It was during those all-but-forgotten years that the black man and woman were stripped of their names, culture, language, and religion. They were completely and utterly broken. Used

as nothing more than beasts of burden, over time they were made to be unlearned, uncultured and uncivilized.

The Final Call newspaper sites a letter written by a British slave owner in the West Indies named Willie Lynch. Lynch was invited to the colony of Virginia in 1712 to teach the slave owners there his methodology of breaking a slave. Most telling was Lynch's guarantee that if his methods were "installed correctly", the effect on the black psyche would last at least 300 years, up to 1000. Therefore, so much more than physical cruelty was in play. The black man and woman were subjected to emotional and psychological engineering, the effects of which are still very much present and prevalent today, 303 years later. During slavery times the black family unit was often broken, the black woman was raped and bred, the black man was made to showcase violence for sport and relegated to nothing more than a stud to the black woman, taking no responsibility for his offspring. Sound familiar? It is evident that creating this dependent psyche was beneficial at the time, however, in today's society it is a gross hinderance and it directly contributes to the lower social and economic standing pervasive among black people in America today.

Even though the time of slavery has passed, there are steps that can be taken today to help repair the damage. Predominantly black schools are still plagued with underfunding and a gross lack of resources. Additionally, the true history of black people is nowhere to be found in the history books. This needs to be rectified if for no other reason than to improve the way black children are perceived and, more importantly, how they perceive themselves. An article titled How Does High Self Esteem Increase Productivity? written by Murray Newlands makes the

correlation between high self esteem and productivity, which culminates into higher income potential. He states, “ Studies have shown that the majority of the world’s issues may be traced to a single core cause: low self-esteem.” He goes on to say, “ Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to succeed in both their personal and professional lives because they add value.” Therefore, black people’s general negative perception of themselves and each other has a direct bearing on their ability to generate and/or sustain income. Increasing their income potential, increases the amount of taxes that they pay and also enables them to recirculate more money back into the economy.

Reparations is also essential. Historically, reparations have been made to whole groups of people who have suffered gross humanitarian injustices, even in America. According to the Journal of Historical Review, in 1988 President Reagan signed the Civil Liberties Act to compensate more than 100, 000 people of Japanese descent who were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II. The legislation offered a formal apology and paid out \$20, 000 in compensation to each surviving victim. The law won congressional approval only after a decade-long campaign by the Japanese-American community. Reparations for slavery is a another necessary step in boosting the economic standing of blacks in America.

Equal salary and loan opportunities need to be implemented as well. An article in USA Today titled High-tech pay gap: Minorities earn less in skilled jobs, written by Jessica Guynn says, “ In the same high-skilled positions such as computer programmers and software developers,...blacks make \$3, 656

less than whites, according to the report from the American Institute for Economic Research.” “ What this tells us is that race and ethnicity matter, and they

matter a lot,” said Nicole Kreisberg, the senior research analyst who conducted the research. “ Simply increasing diversity is not enough. We also have to talk about money.” The simplest fix to this problem is to pass laws requiring equal pay for equal work and enforcing them.

## PRESENT

### Systemic Racism

As aforementioned, racism and discrimination has become institutionalized in American society. One of the biggest contributors to the problem is the prison industrial complex and the disparity between the percentage of black offenders vs white offender who get sentenced to prison the the same or similar crimes. An article in the Wall Street Journal written by Joe Palazzolo sheds some light on the situation. It states that the prison sentences of black men were nearly 20% longer than those of white men for similar crimes in recent years, according to an analysis by the U. S. Sentencing Commission. It further states that the racial gap has widened since the Supreme Court restored judicial discretion in sentencing in 2005. Blacks being unjustly thrown in prison on a large scale (thereby limiting their income potential for certain offenses) has a clear and distinctly negative impact on the economy. There are presently laws on the books that deal with this issue, however, enforcing them has become something of a joke. Stiff penalties must be

given to judges who refuse to sentence offenders fairly and without racial bias.

For-profit prisons must also be addressed, or more aptly, abolished. The concept of a person or corporation who can make a profit off of another human being is very reminiscent of slavery. An article written in the Washington Post by Michael Cohen states that The two largest for-profit prison companies in the United States – GEO and Corrections Corporation of America – and their associates have funneled more than \$10 million to candidates since 1989 and have

spent nearly \$25 million on lobbying efforts. Meanwhile, these private companies have seen their revenue and market share soar. They now rake in a combined \$3.3 billion in annual revenue and the private federal prison population more than doubled between 2000 and 2010, according to a report by the Justice Policy Institute. Private companies house nearly half of the nation's immigrant detainees, compared to about 25 percent a decade ago. In total, there are now about 130 private prisons in the country. Since we have already established who is being sentenced more harshly, we do not need to guess at whose expense these billions of dollars are being made. This practice simply must not be allowed to continue.

An unassuming issue to be addressed is the ceiling on blacks right to vote. The very existence of such a limitation sends the message to blacks that they are not truly citizens of this country. That on some level they are still regarded as unworthy and unequal. This most definitely has a negative psychological impact on blacks, garnering a negative attitude towards



contributing to society. Blacks right to vote must be guaranteed and protected the same as their white countryman.

### Poverty

Blacks are one of the most poverty stricken people in this country. As we learned in week 4, poverty creates a multitude of problems within impoverished communities because the people in those communities often don't have the basic human necessities for survival. One issue that is seen in impoverished communities is hunger. According to Bread.org, blacks are more prone to be food-insecure and is a direct result of poverty. They state that even though the U. S. has a high poverty rate of 14.8% the U. S. census shows that black people have a poverty rate higher than 24% and is even higher in solely female homes at 45.7%. Just that alone is sure to cause even bigger problems. It is no secret that it is very difficult for blacks to obtain decent jobs that are able to sustain their households, which often leaves people working two or three dead end jobs just to make ends meet. This is where illegal activity comes into play within the black community. A lot of people would much rather risk their freedom to obtain money the illegal way because it is ultimately more lucrative than the jobs that many of them would be able to obtain due to lack of education and or criminal records. It is just a vicious, never ending cycle of madness and oppression.

### Police Brutality

All of these things mixed together has helped create the current atmosphere in this country pertaining to black people. The constant inhumanization of

black people by the government, law enforcement, and the media paints us to be unworthy of basic human rights. We are constantly being killed in the streets and, to add insult to injury, justice for the wrongfully committed murders of blacks in the United States is hardly ever served. One thing is certain though. This type of blatant disrespect for black life is nothing new. The only difference is that , now, we have the technology to eternally capture these incidents, and even still we rarely receive the justice that we deserve. No one is safe Women (Ex: Sandra Bland, Shelly Frey, Tanisha Anderson) have been murdered, children (Ex: Tamir Rice, Trayvon Martin, Darnisha Harris) have been murdered and men have been murdered (Ex: Eric Garner, Micheal Brown, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile,)

This whole situation is mind boggling and very disheartening. Those of us who are in position to get a education and make it out of this cycle without becoming a statistic to the system are few and far in between compared to the whole. We have a duty to fight for those who can't fight for themselves and speak for those with no voice. We may never know if or when the horrendous wrongs that befall us will be righted, but no matter what we will continue to fight against all adversaries and make strives for a better tomorrow. In closing, I will leave you with two poems that should serve as a reminder to all those who may wish or inflict harm, of any kind, on us that we will not go silently into the night and we will continue to push for change until it arrives.