

# How racially biased the system in usa

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



“ Land of the free”, this is in fact part of the American national anthem; however it has become more and more apparent that this only applies if you are white and have a certain level of financial freedom. Considering they continue to make such a bold claim, America is acknowledged as being the world leader for the incarceration of its people. With only 5 percent of the world’s population, they proudly boast 25 percent of its inmates. In the 1980’s and 1990’s their “ tough on crime” politics fuelled an influx in the country’s rates of incarceration. At the end of 2010, there were 1, 267, 000 people in state prisons, 744, 500 in local jails, and 216, 900 in federal facilities—more than 2. 2 million prisoners. 60 percent of those locked in cages are people of colour.

Realistically, black males in their twenties risk a 1 in 3 chance of being locked up. Currently, three quarters of the prison population who have been convicted of a drug related offence are people of colour. “ Nationally, approximately 5. 3 million Americans are denied the right to vote because of laws that prohibit voting by people with felony convictions. Felony disenfranchisement has resulted in an estimated 13 percent of black men being unable to vote”.

Mass incarceration adversely affects the black community and the black family. It reinforces societal stereotypes of black men and further fuels the single mother pandemic. It also continues the cycle of oppression of the black community because our children are left without male role models, effective rehabilitation does not exist within the American justice system and therefore re-offending is constantly increasing at a negative rate, add to this a lack of voting rights for felons, and the black community is held in a

perpetual and consistent state of modern day slavery, “ The power of the ballot we need in sheer defense, else what shall save us from a second slavery?”

Mass incarceration is an extremely profitable business, the idea that prisons are a means of keeping society safe has long been forgotten and has now been replaced with the need to earn offensively large amounts of money for the individuals and corporations who were assigned the task of running these privatised systems of caging human beings “ The Bureau of Prisons paid \$639 million to private prisons in fiscal year 2014, averaging \$22, 159 per prisoner. For perspective, that’s about the same amount it would cost to send three people to a state college”.

Private prison industry is a booming business and it makes financial sense for everyone involved to keep an ever increasing prison population on the rise. 19% of federal prisoners are incarcerated in private prisons, and 6. 8% of state prisoners. This presents a captive market in terms of profits for companies that are offering services within the private prisons. For example, telephone companies who are often unregulated and can set their own level of charges, which can result in phone calls costing as much as \$15 and then you have the companies who provide commissary and they are able to sell their goods at a cost five times the normal retail price, enabling both companies to make an estimated profit of 1. 2 billion US dollars and 1. 6 billion US dollars respectively. This system is set up in such a way as to promote profit for the companies and individuals who have a financially vested interest and yet promote institutionalisation for the prisoners, where

a person is left little to no choice but to conform wholeheartedly to the restraints of captivity and inevitably this leads to the dehumanisation of prisoners, a lack of autonomy and eventually the inability to cope with the demands of real life upon release and thus struggle to make autonomous choices with regards to daily living and become embroiled in the continuous cycle of re-offending and stuck in the cycle of the criminal justice system.

The ridiculous and lengthy sentences that are given to people who commit crime are also questionable, not to mention the criminal justice systems' institutionalised racism. I had heard, recently, that a federal prisoner, (Black male), was returning to court to fight his life sentence, after the court case, the life sentence was withdrawn but the presiding judge handed down a sentence of 101 years; the mind boggles at the thought that any sane person can see this as reasonable. It is unimaginable that such a lengthy sentence can be seen as justice. This undoubtedly feeds into the annihilation of the black family, subjugation of the black man, and all this devastation; before we even attempt to explore the monetary cost to society, " The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression". Yet somehow, the American people habitually endure and accept this ongoing oppression.

To understand how racially biased the system is we just have to compare the cases of Nicholas Giampa and Cyntoia Brown, they are of similar age and committed similar crimes, murder. Nicholas Giampa, is a white 17 year old neo-Nazi who shot and killed his girlfriend's parents and then turned the weapon on himself. If he is lucky enough to survive, he will then have the pleasure of being tried as a MINOR, on the other hand Cyntoia Brown, a 16

year old black female sex trafficking victim who shot and killed a sex predator, when she feared for her life, was tried as an ADULT, and sentenced to a life of imprisonment. This is the perfect example of how a system that was never designed to protect us or work for us operates within a society ruled by white privilege.

Ira Berlin, historian, made the distinction between “ slave societies” and “ societies with slaves”. The north of America was made up of cities that had slaves which defined it as a “ society with slaves”, whereas the south was a “ slave society” because it’s political and economical infrastructure was solely dependent on slavery.

When slaves won their freedom the economic stability of the south crumbled. It was then imperative to rebuild their economic infrastructure and as is stated in Ava DuVernay’s documentary “ 13th”, the 13th Amendment inadvertently assisted in this rebuilding of the economy by vilifying and criminalising black people. The 13th Amendment made it unlawful to enslave another human, except if they had committed a crime, thus the beginning of mass incarceration and the denigration of black people in general, but more specifically black males, thus producing a new slave labour that was adhering to the confines and restrictions of a constitutional law. Being released from slavery with absolutely nothing, to then be forced into an era of segregation which relished in the continued existence of oppression and socio-economic deprivation of black communities only resulted in an increase in poor housing, poor educational opportunities, poor employment

prospects, lack of health care, and deprived living conditions. "Poverty is the worst form of violence," (Mahatma Gandhi).

It was no surprise then that when drugs exploded on the scene these communities resorted to either selling drugs as a way of improving their financial situation or using drugs as a means of escape. The violence and drugs worked hand in hand and if you degrade, oppress, denigrate and destroy a people for long enough, eventually they become the very thing society has portrayed them to be. With the 1990's "War on drugs" and the 1994 bill that introduced mandatory sentences, 3 strikes rule and no parole, this without a doubt worked towards the utter destruction of the black family, continued cycle of poverty, violence and oppression of black people but specifically the black male. When you consider that 1 in 17 white men will face incarceration during their lifetime as opposed to 1 in 3 black men, it becomes apparent that the system is racially biased towards black people. If you commit a crime, your punishment is to serve your time within the confines of prison, then re-enter society and begin to re-build your life.

However, in America once you are convicted of a felony you no longer have the right to vote; which currently is an estimated 6.1 million Americans, you will inevitably struggle to find employment and face a myriad of other such suffocating restrictions that reduce or in some cases diminish all opportunities for progression to a brighter future. For those 1 in 3 black men it is reminiscent of the segregation era when black people were refused the right to vote or gain adequate employment. Currently, black men account for 6.5% of the U. S. population, but a staggering 40.2% of the prison

population. There are more men incarcerated now in 2018 than there were during slavery in the 1800's.

97% of people behind bars have never been to trial, the poor are, more often than not, unable to afford bail and with the use of coercion and scare tactics, which appear to have become the norm in America, it is understandable that most prefer to accept a plea deal than face court and a possible minimum mandatory sentence and this can be a ridiculous amount of years in prison, for some this also means accepting a plea deal despite extensive evidence to prove their innocence or at the very least cast doubt as to their guilt.

As was the case in Kalief Browder's case, he was adamant that he had not stolen a backpack; therefore he refused a plea deal, his family were unable to afford the bail money (\$10, 000), and was then held for three years in Rikers Island where he suffered torment and abuse at the hands of both prisoners and guards. Two years after the charges were dropped and he was released he took his own life as a direct result of abuse he endured and his subsequent solitary confinement, which combined induced mental health issues. So many innocent people are incarcerated despite evidence to prove their innocence because it would seem the American justice system lacks justice. Prison reform will never occur as prison is too lucrative a business for all involved. For reform to ensue it would mean that the constant stream of prisoners would dwindle, it would also equate to an admission of wrong doing on the part of the past and present governments, judges, prosecutors and anyone else responsible for mass incarceration " You must be the change you want to see in the world" ( Mahatma Ghandi) and sadly white

history and white privilege cannot allow that admission of guilty to ever be verbalised. So we continue to incarcerate those we believe we can oppress with little or no recourse; black people and poor people within our society. “ You can judge a society by how well it treats its prisoners”. (Fyodor Dostoevsky).

With the invention of for-profit prisons there are two major companies that run these establishments, GEO and Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), both of which have channeled more than \$10 million to political candidates since 1989 and have spent a astounding \$25 million on lobbying. A prime example of someone who has used his political prowess to profit from private prisons is Marco Rubio, who used his influence to secure a \$110 million contract for GEO and has also accepted large financial donations for his political campaigns. This of course has an adverse effect on the disenfranchised people within the country. For example, this privatization enabled the “ kids for cash” scandal where two judges in the state of Pennsylvania received payouts from for-profit juvenile facilities to increase the number of adolescents to these centres for extended periods of time and it breeds an environment similar to slavery in that humans are traded openly for in return for monetary gain, at the expense of the most vulnerable amongst us, children, immigrants and the poor.

In the UK, as previously mentioned, black people are disproportionately represented in prison too, however it would seem that our only saving grace is that we have only 14 privately run prisons and a National Audit Office report from 2003 stated that, there were concerns as to the safety within



private prisons primarily because of a high turnover of staff and the inexperience of prison staff. Overall the report had identified positives as a result of the privatisation of some prisons within the country. It is also, noteworthy to mention that according to a chief inspector of prisons report stated that the private prisons were among the best run prisons in the UK.