

Good essay on race and ethnicity: african americans

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



African Americans are the oldest immigrant group in the United States and are of African descent. They are however not purely of African descent, but are mostly a mixture of different groups comprising of black, white, and Native Americans in some cases. They are the only minority group that came to the US involuntarily and are also the only minority group that lived as slaves in the US for two centuries (Marger, 178). The slavery they underwent and their race has in a large way influenced their experiences as an ethnic minority group and this reflects in several ways the state of race and ethnicity in the US.

One experience of African Americans which shows the situation of race and ethnicity in the US is that of a lower economic situation. Even after slavery was abolished, African Americans were not allowed to compete equally with white people for jobs (182). They were denied skilled and highly paying jobs even after moving to northern cities (182). They were only given the lowest kinds of jobs and it was only during the 1950s and 1960s that they began to be given better jobs (182). Currently, a majority of African Americans are in the middle class categories but pleasant side of this obscured when one learns that the median income of black household is to a relatively great extent lower than that of a white household (182). The median household income of a black household was 62% that of a white household in 2006 (182). In terms of wealth, the typical white household has about 10 times more assets compared to a typical black household (185). This indicates ethnic hierarchy whereby black people still rank lower in the aspect of social class.

Another experience of African Americans that may reflect the situation of

race/ethnicity in the US is that of the employment situation. It has been pointed out that black people are more likely to experience unemployment compared to white people of the same education level (190). This has been described as evidence of racial discrimination in its institutional structures rather than from individuals (190). Thomas R. Dye, a political scientist, stated that very few black people occupy positions of power in the US (192). This is highly evident in the corporate sector where few black people in the US are employed in senior executive positions or in boards of directors of top level corporations (192). Those few employed are in fact rarely considered to be bona fide in decision making processes. Evidence is pointed out in the auto mobile industry where African Americans constitute more than 14% of the workforce, yet only a meager less than 4% are corporate officers (192). This further shows racial discrimination in the workplace.

An additional experience of African Americans showing the race situation in the US is that of residential discrimination. Black and white people mostly live in different neighborhoods whereby with segregation of residential places, interaction between the different races is minimized perpetuating the racial prejudices that have always been held. In almost all US cities, there has been a segregation of white and black people's houses, and little has changed since the 1960s (194). Black people live in less affluent residential environments compared to white people of the same socioeconomic status, and this may point more to racism even though it may also be associated with social class (195).

On the aspect of assimilation, African American experiences also point to the ethnic situation in the US. In structural assimilation, the personal interactions

between whites and blacks may have improved but they are still brief and casual (204). This may even be shown by interracial marriages which are still uncommon between African Americans and White people. In 2005, there were only about 422, 000 interracial marriages between whites and African Americans out of 59 million marriages that year (206). This clearly shows that African Americans and white people may interact during school, shopping, and voting but personal relations leading to friendship or even marriage are still uncommon (206). This clearly shows racism even though mainly in the aversive rather than the dominative form.

In summary, the experiences of African Americans clearly show the racial situation of African Americans living in the US. The situation includes unequal employment situations, lower economic status, residential segregation, and minimal interaction between white and black people. This may leave a challenge to all to try and improve the situation in efforts to achieve social equality, integration, and cohesion.

Work Cited

Marger, Martin. Race And Ethnic Relations. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 2009. Print.