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Black Lives Matter – Racial Inequality in the U.S.

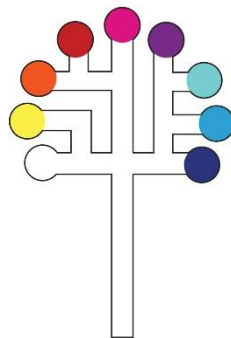
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Foreword

In a world where culture and race play a big part in who we are and how we are received into society, it seemed important to me to inform individuals about the drastic amount of day-to-day racism that exists. Growing up I have always been disgusted and shocked by the casual racist jokes thrown into a conversation. And, while I never understood the hate that was directed towards another race, I just accepted it as a child since I did not understand how the world worked and was constantly surrounded by racism. Now that I am older, I oppose this behaviour.

After all, this was the experience that made me educate more about racism and white privilege, especially, since I am a white person, grown up with privilege and in an industrial state.

This work is meant to report on crimes towards people of colour that were racially motivated and make readers more aware of their actions and words.

In the end, it should not matter what background someone is from or how much melanin their skin contains, we are all human beings with a heart. Let us learn to use it.

Laura Schuller

Weistrach, 14.04.2022

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1. Introduction

The following work is intended to give the reader a deeper insight into the Black Lives Matter movement and the systemic racism that Black people have to live with day by day. While most of the statistics focus on the United States of America, a great part can also be applied to other countries.

The first chapter will explain Black Lives Matter in depth, how and by whom it was founded. Furthermore, a closer look at the goals is provided. The second chapter is intended to inform about the injustice and oppression of Black people in the USA. Especially, about the racism in different sectors that influences their quality of life. The last chapter focuses on America's criminal justice system. It is supposed to present the inequality and subjectiveness of law enforcement.

2. The Black Lives Matter Movement

This chapter is meant to provide information that revolves around the topic of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The beginning of the movement and its goals as well as the internationally known #blacklivesmatter demonstrations will be further explained.

2.1 Founders and the emergence of the movement

The Black Lives Matter (short BLM) movement was created in 2013. Originally, it was an organisation spreading across the United States and the UK as well as Canada, but soon became internationally recognized. Its establishment was brought to life by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in regard to the murder of Trayvon Martin.¹ The 17-year-old teenager died after being shot by George Zimmerman on 26 February 2012.²

2.2 The movement's goals

The movement and its hashtag #blacklivesmatter were founded to call attention to the injustice towards Black people. It is centred around the discrimination that non-white people must endure day to day with the only reason being their skin colour.³

*"The Black Lives Matter movement is interested in both cultural change and policy change[.] [...] Without cultural change, policy changes are always vulnerable."*⁴

2.3 Black Lives Matter demonstrations

¹ cf. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. (o. J.).

² cf. Robert Baldwin III (2022).

³ cf. Adina Campbell (2021).

⁴ Robert Baldwin III (2022).

After the first #blacklivesmatter hashtag was twittered by Alicia Garza on 13 July 2013, BLM achieved a high level of support. The first protests took place after the murder of Michael Brown in 2014.⁵



2.3.1 George Floyd

Figure 1: George Floyd

BLM was everywhere in the media again due to the killing of George Floyd, see figure 1. The 46-year-old black man died on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis after being pressed to the ground by police officer Derek Chauvin. The whole scene was videotaped, which caused Floyd's infamous words "I can't breathe!" spreading across the world in a whirlwind. Millions of people were upset and shocked by the news. A protest took place the next day in the city. On 29. May 2020, Derek Chauvin was put on trial for third-degree murder and plead guilty in merely three days.⁶

2.3.2 Numbers and statistics concerning the demonstrations

*"Across the United States, there have been more than 4,700 demonstrations, or an average of 140 per day [...]. Turnout has ranged from dozens to tens of thousands in about 2,500 small towns and large cities."*⁷

⁵ cf. History.com Editors (2020).

⁶ cf. The New York Times (2021).

⁷ Buchanan, Bui und Patel (2020).

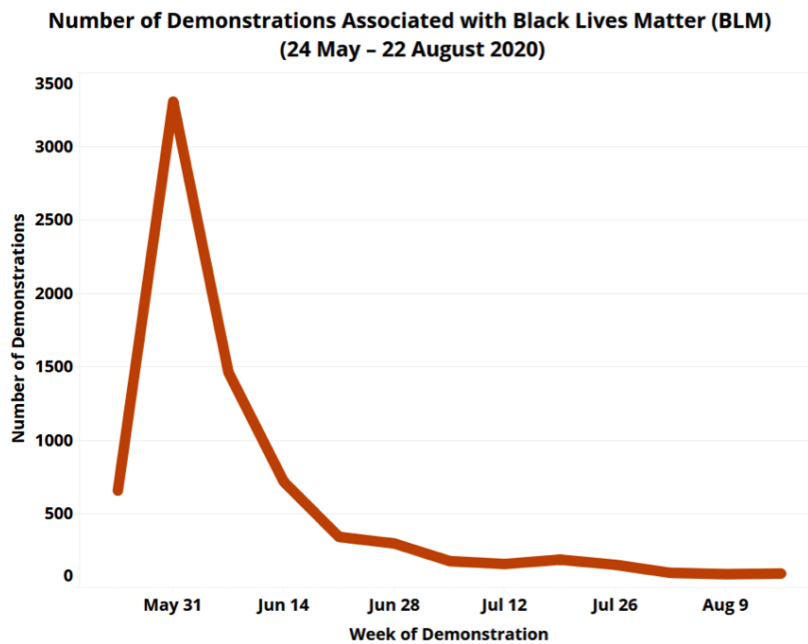


Figure 2: Evolution of the BLM demonstrations

Graph 2 goes to show that, shortly after the murder of George Floyd, the general number of demonstrations and protests rose drastically. Although, as seen, within the span of a month, the number went down. The highest point was reached at the end of May 2020.

3. Systemic Racism in the U.S.

This chapter focuses on various examples where black people were victims of structural racism. All of it will be underlined with statistics and quotes by Black people.

3.1 Definition

Systemic Racism is defined as the injustices experienced by non-white people in everyday life in society. It is noticeable in all kinds of areas, such as work, education and healthcare.⁸

⁸ cf. Gal, Kiersz, Mark, Su und Ward (2020).

This aspect is also highlighted in Patrice Khan-Cullors' book 'When They Call You a Terrorist', where she states:

„Being Black was normal in Africa. Being Black is poison in America.“⁹

3.2 Racism in the working environment

Figure 3 shows the income of Black and white Americans. The clear contrast between the races, which are presented, displays a 28.9K lower revenue for Black people in the year 2018. This fact also plays a big role concerning America's poverty, as the higher income of white people results in a lower poverty rate, which is more than two times fewer than the one of Black U.S. residents.¹⁰

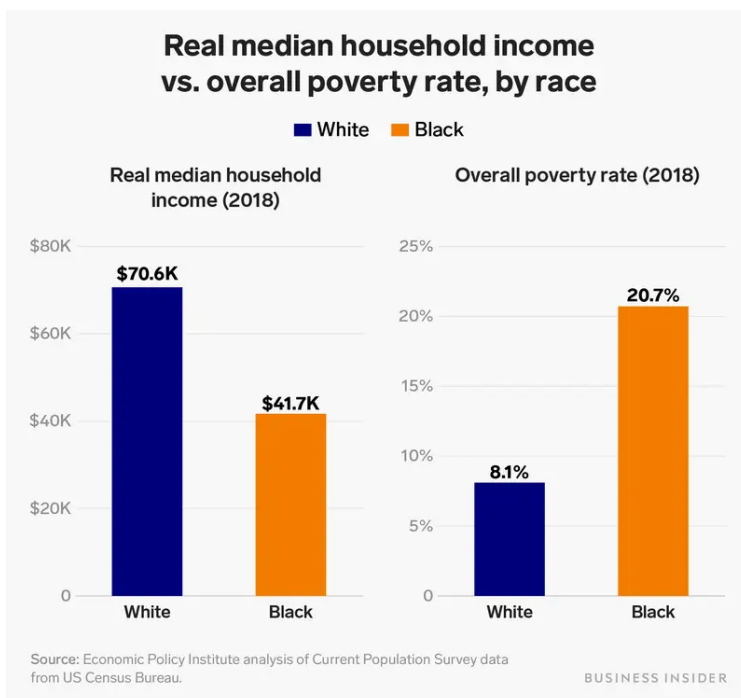


Figure 3: Differences of income between Black and white Americans compared to the poverty rate

⁹ Khan-Cullors und Bandele (2020).

¹⁰ cf. Gal et al. (2020).

3.3 Racism concerning education in the U.S.

Financial security and independence can only be achieved through a successful career and the according education beforehand. And it might not seem obvious at first, but statistics show that nearly 50% of all suspensions in preschool are towards black students, who, all in all, add up to merely 18% of all pre-schoolers.

In comparison: 43% of all preschool registrations are white people, yet their share of suspensions lies at 26%. Additionally, the US Department of Education revealed in 2014 that Black students are three times more likely to get expelled from school.¹¹

Being constantly discriminated against and excluded demotivates a human being, which led to the dropout rate of Black people in 2018 sitting at 6.4%, compared to the 4.2% rate of dropouts of white students.¹²

So, if they eventually are given a high school degree, financing college becomes a big factor in deciding whether they want to continue studying and specifying in one genre of work.

The graph in figure 4 shows the difference between the white and Black population concerning the attainment of college of Americans. Due high student loans and under average salaries of Black people, the rate of graduation from university is low. If you look at the data, you can see a clear improvement over the course of the years but also an obvious gap between dark-skinned and light-skinned Americans.

¹¹ cf. Ben&Jerry's (o. J.).

¹² cf. Cai (2020).

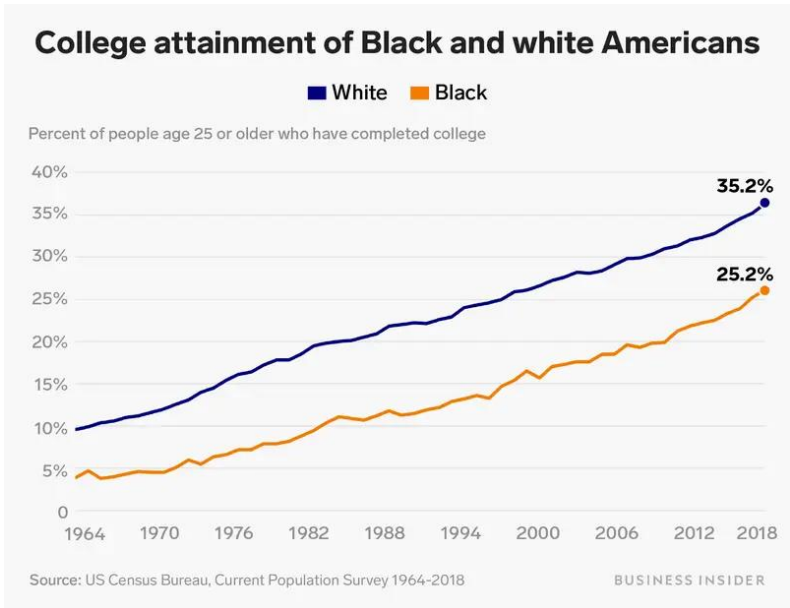


Figure 4: Comparison of college attainment between races

Student loans have always been a highly criticised topic in the U.S. The most popular way of paying for college is going into debt. That is, as well, what a recent report revealed: On average, a college student owed 40,904\$ in 2021.¹³

3.4 Racism in America’s health care system

While its health care system has always been a sore spot for America as a whole, people of colour have to face an even bigger mistreatment compared to white inhabitants.

A significant difference was seen in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic where Black people were 3.57 times more likely to die from the disease than the white population. A reason of what it depends on is not being able to afford proper health insurance and with that good medical treatment.¹⁴

3.4.1 Emergency care

Also, in the department of emergency care show some statistics that racism often decides upon life and death:

¹³ cf. Kurt (2021).

¹⁴ cf. Rees (2020).

“Between 2005 and 2016, medical professionals were 10% less likely to admit Black patients to the hospital than white patients. It also suggests Black people were 1.26 times more likely to die in the ED or hospital.”¹⁵

3.4.2 Infant-Mortality-Rate

Additionally, due to the lack of health care and bad treatment, Black women have reportedly had more infant mortalities than any other race. Table 1 goes to show the contrast between races and their infant-mortality-rate.¹⁶

RACIAL GROUP	INFANT-MORTALITY-RATE
BLACK	11 in 1000
INDIGENOUS	8 in 1000
WHITE AND LATIN AMERICANS	5 in 1000
ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDERS	4 in 1000

Table 1: Comparison of racial groups and their Infant-Mortality-Rate

3.4.3 Mental Health

In the compartment of mental health racism has also left its footprints. Due to the day-to-day oppression, people of colour are more frequent to experience mental problems. Depression, stress, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the most common of them all. Sometimes their surroundings even let them develop suicidal thoughts.¹⁷

¹⁵ Rees (2020).

¹⁶ cf. Rees (2020).

¹⁷ cf. Rees (2020).

4. Injustice in America’s Criminal Justice System

This chapter is supposed to highlight the biased criminal justice system that the United States call its own.

A direct example would be the following statement of John Ehrlichman, the National Domestic Policy Chief of Richard M. Nixon:

“We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be...black, but by getting the public to associate the...blacks with heroin...and then criminalizing [them] heavily, we could disrupt [their] communities... Did we know we were lying? Of course we did.”¹⁸

4.1 Statistics

Figure 5 portrays the differences between Black and white people in connection to their overall share of the American population.

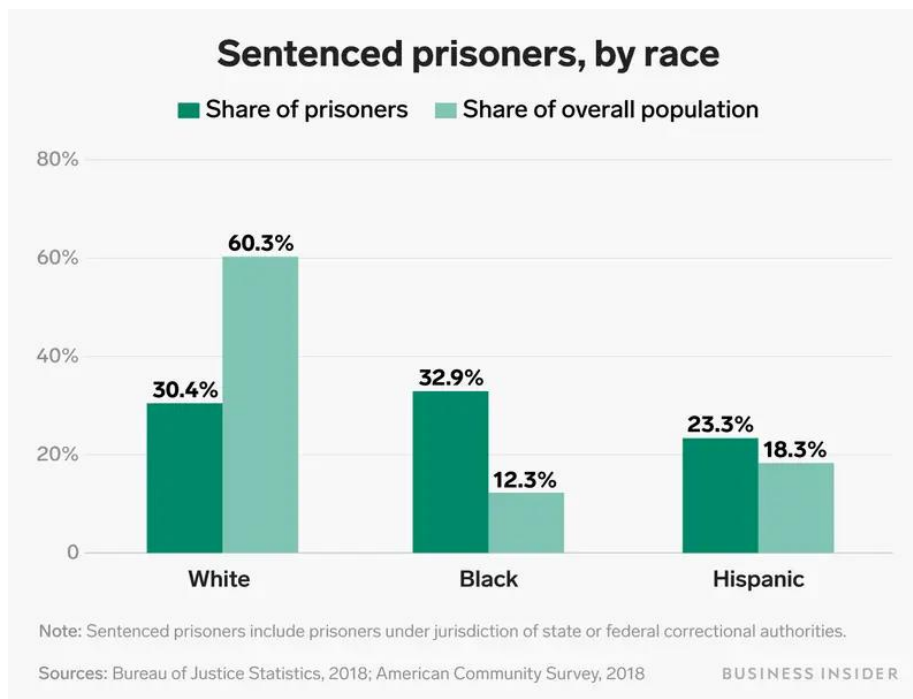


Figure 5: Comparison of imprisonment rate

As shown in image 5, you can see that black people make up the biggest percentage of sentenced prisoners and yet they are one of smallest racial groups in the U.S. In fact, light-

¹⁸ Khan-Cullors und Bandele (2020).

and dark-skinned prisoners hold nearly the same share, but the white population makes up nearly two thirds of America compared to the 12.3% of black people.¹⁹

The Bureau of Justice study has also shown that black males are about five times more likely to get arrested. Even more inequality experience men aged 18 to 19, as there is a 12-time-higher chance of them getting imprisoned in contrast to their white counterparts.²⁰

Another example would be the statistic that the US Department of Health and Human Services has released on how black Americans are 3.64 times more likely to be arrested and charged for marijuana possession even though both races use it at the same rate.

4.2 Police brutality

This part circles back to chapter 2, where some details were already explained about violence and brutality coming from police and state officers.

To state and highlight the unlike treatment of races a statistic is cited:

“As of June 12 [2020], 2,469 white people had been fatally shot since 2015 at rate of 13 per million, whereas 1,293 Black people were fatally shot at a rate of 31 per million.”²¹

It's important to mention that these numbers only include police shootings, which means police encounters that ended in death are not taken into account.

Another example of police brutality: According to researchers, the number of gun use was dependent on the share of black people in a neighbourhood. In addition to this, white police officers are 0.02% more likely to draw their weapons in an area inhabited mainly by black residents compared to black officers.²²

While this seems to be quite a low percentage, it still highlights the difference between white and black officers.

¹⁹ cf. Gal et al. (2020).

²⁰ cf. Gal et al. (2020).

²¹ Gal et al. (2020).

²² cf. Peeples (2020).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that society has always been treating people of colour unfairly. Every aspect of their life is frowned upon, both directly and indirectly.

As shown in this paper, racism exists in every corner and affects people's everyday life. From unjust treatment in the working sector to education and health care, exclusion and racist behaviour is a real thing and influences them as well as their lives. Another aspect would be America's Criminal Justice System as it has always been biased and subjective in deciding over life and death.

All of the above is the reason why there are different organisations trying to start fighting against this particular injustice and inequality. Black Lives Matter was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in 2013. Its goal is to eventually change society to a rather less corrupt and biased construct. The cause of the introduction of this movement was the killing of a young boy called Trayvon Martin by a white man. Over the course of the years there had been a few demonstrations, yet attention has only been called to this subject again when George Floyd, a black man, was murdered by a police officer in the year 2020. His infamous words "I can't breathe" have spread all over the world and caused another wave of BLM demonstrations.

Experiencing life from the view of a black person goes to show that white privilege exists in all areas.

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