



## **The pseudo-science of race and ethnicity: some lessons and perspectives when talking about race, racism and racial justice**

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### **Introduction**

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Author: Winston Zhou

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Race and ethnicity: categories of human beings based upon physical, national, tribal, linguistic, cultural, and/or religious grounds. Like any system of categorization, there is the implication that each category has inherent differences from the rest. Throughout history, the concept of inherent differences has been used to justify atrocious acts. Examples of the past, including Social Darwinism and the Eugenics movement, played major roles in the disenfranchisement of African Americans, the expansion of imperialistic countries, and the ideals of Nazi Germany - the impacts of which reverberate through the modern world. The significance of these impacts is why there is such importance in the discussion and study of race and ethnicity. As appealing as it is to feel unaffected by prejudice, a delve into the human psyche reveals implicit bias: a subconscious force that enables prejudice to develop even with the conscious attempt to remain unprejudiced. It leads to ironies like the progressive era, wherein even individuals like Roosevelt subscribed to very non-progressive ideas such as a system of

master and inferior races. Albeit a disconcerting affair, it was simply a continuation of ideas already expressed during the transatlantic slave trade. This continuation extends to modern times as well, both psychologically and institutionally, and is a topic aptly dubbed systemic racism. From policy brutality and the privatized prison system to the formation of neighborhoods and educational disparities, the byproducts of past actions carry on. Of course, the ability of hindsight and the progressive nature of human society has led to successes, with the eugenics movement - once responsible for the sterilization of tens of thousands of mentally ill - now innovating life-saving treatments against genetic disease. Replicating the paradigm shift in eugenics with other problems concerning the grouping of people is, again, why there is value in pursuing the pseudo-science of race and ethnicity.

## **1. What do we understand through race - race as a social construct**

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Author: Emma Zhu

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Race is not something one inherits, but rather it has become an identity marker that others have pinned onto one another, and also at the individual level, received to be true, to be a valid categorization of humankind. Racism, then, is not only a form of discrimination against those of a certain race, but its effects can be able to direct the entirety of one's lived experience. Race is valued in that it has historically been able to assist those in power in effectively separating entire groups of people to fall under the same, one generalized category. Race groups are those with a shared ethnic origin and cultural background and are recognized by some shared physical and genetic traits such as skin color, skull size, eye shape, height, and other characteristics. Stereotypes have further allowed for character labels, making physical attributes (such as the ferocity of one's look, eye size, hair texture, and skin tone) become indicators of a person's supposed racial background and makeup. This has then forced individuals to submit to the standard and act and be alike to their own and different from everyone else. People do this involuntarily or voluntarily in order to fit a certain racial category or to be different from those of the same race and become accepted into certain racially-dominated social circles. It is important to note that one's race is not contingent on one's genetic makeup, there is no specific gene or scientific background for race, but rather race has been created to function as a complete social

construct and social label.

Characterizing racism further, when one views that a stereotype of their race (common stereotypes for Asians depicted in day-to-day media, pop culture, and other outlets as portrayed to be smart and quiet, hardworking, yet also foreign, while Black people are seen as threats, thieves, unprofessional, and thugs, as examples of common narratives) would not be advantageous for them to possess, this then encourages them to believe that they have to change this aspect of themselves in order to not be viewed negatively and to prevent losing the value their individual selves to their superiors. The formation of racial identities then has become integral to the perceived social understandings that people have formed of themselves and one another, and with this, the concept of race has ultimately positioned racial groups in a hierarchical order in the political, cultural, economic, and social settings of our world.

Race has been repeatedly used as a factor to separate individuals into ‘lesser’ and ‘more’ and has been utilized to justify appalling differences in the human experience. Especially familiar in the American context is the rationale of bringing African slaves across the Atlantic and subjecting the survivors, as well as generations of their black descendants, to degrading, inhumane treatment and conditions. Their white masters subjected them to forced labor bred them, traded them, sold them, separated their families, barred them from speaking their language and preserving their past lives, tortured them, and killed them. The dynamic between the then-oppressed and the oppressor today still exists between these very same two racial groups because the scars are still fresh. Even with most instances of slavery having been abolished by the 13th Amendment (the exception being for prisoners), new rules, legal or not, would only emerge to replace the system.

To offer a more complete explanation of how race originated, it is necessary to understand the reasoning of its founders for wanting to create such a system of categorization, especially during the Enlightenment era, when the idea turned legality of ‘equality’ between person to person was prided and popularized by European philosophers. For example, the Enlightenment saw findings by Petrus Camper and Samuel Morton, who claimed that the standard of ‘human aesthetic perfection’ were white Europeans, as they were the possessors of the perfect skull anatomy, lighter skin, and optimal brain size. Those with African ancestry and from the African region had the “least ideal skull structure” and were the farthest from the idealized perfection projected by these scientists.

Another scientific theory that popularized differences in human beings was social Darwinism, which gave the principal justification to separate people into groups and establish hierarchies. European scientists argued that while the rest of the animal kingdom saw the use of natural selection and “survival of the fittest” in evolution to eventually select the best genetic traits and abilities, this could also be applied to the likes of human societies and the human population. This, in turn, promoted the idea that certain groups, races, within the human species could somehow be superior to one another and that there existed a legitimate racial order. We see, thus, how early ideas of race science emerged. These ideas became employed by the rest of the European thinkers, politicians, and leaders during the Enlightenment era, who had simultaneously begun examining other relationships between humans and society.

Throughout history, we find that the foundations of racial concepts starting during the Enlightenment became important not just in Western Europe but that they also spread to other continents where colonies were established. Colonies established in Central and South America by the Spanish would see one of the first clear racial hierarchies emerge. After Spanish colonizers settled in the Americas and developed cash-crop plantations, natives, as well as the enslaved African and the Caribbean who had been brought over, would work these plantations through coercion and forced labor. High-ranking Spanish officials (conquistadors) leading the plantations were mostly men, and after settling, many would marry native and enslaved women, starting families there. Through these relationships and new families, the emergence of the first “mixed-race” group of peoples, the Mestizos (who were their children), would cause disruption in the previously well-divided understood hierarchy between Spanish and slave. To ensure there was still a system of power favoring the Spanish white Europeans/masters over the slaves and natives, the casta system was created. Each drop of White European Spanish blood would set one closer to the top (the “pure” Spanish or those with both parents being white Spanish were given the top designation, natives born to both native parents and the enslaved were cast to the bottom). The casta system lasted as long as the Spanish colonization effort, and traces of colorism still exist in the present.

Sadly, race has been important in many, if not in all aspects of our world, and we should note that race has informed the opportunities available to certain racial groups while limiting those of others. We should recognize that the origin of race itself which started by differentiating people based on genetic traits or biological characteristics, evolved into a rather

malevolent concept used to justify the existence of “superior” and “inferior” traits in certain groups of people and thus. Based on these fabricated traits, groups would be given privileges and preferential treatments.

From the inception of this form of social categorization, race has become both divisive and celebrated. It has led to mass suffering but also to the development of communities and a sense of social diversity. Yet overwhelmingly, race has become ever so important to individuals and scholars in understanding the value and differences of the human experience, given recent events and the rise in political movements for equality and equity. To assume race has had no place in society would be incorrect, but to accept that race has a scientific and justified background would be ignorant of the past inequalities and sufferings in which race was needed for and built around.

## **2. What are some key ideas of “race science,” and what do we think about them?**

### *2.1. History and definition*

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Author: Riley Thai

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The word race is often misinterpreted. By textbook definition, it is the categorization of humans based on shared physical characteristics or ancestry. The word racism, simply put, is prejudice, or discrimination, towards a person on the basis of their being part of a particular ethnic or racial group. However, the term “race science” was created based on the pseudoscientific beliefs that justify and support the unequal separation of humans based on their race, tying both topics of race and racism into the idea.

In many ways, racism is a measure of power. By being racist, you are proving yourself to be on a higher level than others and therefore handing yourself authority over that person or group of people. This slightly contradicts the existing ideas of race science because the entirety of the study is to justify and excuse actions performed due to the color of someone’s skin; the intention of eugenics and early scientific racism was to be able to be racist without being punished for it. If you are gaining something from behaving this way, then it is no longer

necessary for race science to exist.

Samuel Morton, an American physician, believed that cranial capacity determined one's intellectual ability, and because his studies showed that those who were white had larger skull sizes, all others were deemed unintelligent and inferior. This study was later included to prove that all non-white races lack important characteristics, and eugenics would then come in to root out these so-called "social ills" from society. Nazi Germany was created on the belief that the Aryan race was superior and all others (Jews, Blacks, Gypsies, Poles) were unworthy and should not be a part of the German country. These beliefs and studies helped prove and power the eugenics movement, as well as race science, by allowing people to believe that being racist was acceptable.

Nowadays, racism is frowned upon, but many choose to believe that race does not matter because it is merely the color of your skin. However, no matter how hard we try to erase the effects of "race" as a whole, it will never truly be accomplished. Many genetic-based studies explain how the entire idea of race is unnecessary and that we should all be able to live in somewhat of a "colorblind world." Yet racist acts are not caused by genetics, and they are ultimately a product of the way a person looks. The reality is that race science is just as present in society as race is. We justify our own actions so as not to seem morally "bad," but by excusing ourselves from degrading others, we are agreeing with the old norms of anti-immigration and deportation laws. The definition of race varies from country to country because it is a socially constructed idea and that makes us believe that we are fundamentally different. Many race scientists simply play on your sense of belonging in the world. They affect the way you feel about your or others' ethnicity. They have, over time, created this idea that biology is the most important factor, but believing that you are a biologically essential person, ties you to an identity.

In the 19th century, race science was seen as a scientific and rational way of creating a utopian society, but after World War II, views on the topic changed significantly, as it did not make any sense scientifically because we cannot be divided into distinct genetic subgroups. So when people say that race is a social construct, it means that where we draw boundaries is arbitrary. However, race science as a whole has been surrounding us in the sense that it has been built into the way we think and act and serves as a safety net for any mistake we might make regarding the sensitive topic of racism.

2.2. *Why might the ideas of “race science” have been appealing to so many Europeans and Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?*

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Author: Ashley Chun

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During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ideas of race science were fueled by preconceived notions of racial superiority and inferiority. Stemming as a product of Western expansion and colonialism, race science reinforced the ideology that humankind is divided into separate and unequal races. The social construct of race institutionalized and ingrained racial distinctions into a society that ultimately worked to ostracize non-whites and uphold principles of white supremacy. This race-centered worldview led to the justification of racial differences through biased scientific findings that provided legitimacy and credence to racist ideals and dogmas.

Since the inception of America, the concept of race was evident. The historical foundations of race have been cemented within the roots of European colonization efforts that directly devastated the Native and African American populations. The exploitation and enslavement of these groups reinforced notions of racial and class differences by systematically tailoring such doctrines into the functioning of American society. The stratification of individuals within a racial hierarchy reinforced the biased worldview that certain racial groups are superior to others.

This pattern of racist sentiment persisted with the advancement of new scientific breakthroughs and principles. With the publication of Charles Darwin's, *The Origin of Species*, philosopher Herbert Spencer introduced the theory of Social Darwinism, which applied the evolutionary concept of “survival of the fittest” to human societies. This perspective gave rise to ideologies of European superiority as it established the claim that white people were biologically and intellectually “more fit.” As a result, many white Anglo-Saxons used this to verify their superiority by attributing the failures of non-whites to their innate inferiority and lack of natural ability. The distorted scientific theories of Social Darwinism were used to rationalize their successes from European imperialism and colonialism as inevitable rather than because of their desire for subjugation.

Additionally, the work of other European thinkers and philosophers added to the belligerent and dogmatic racism of the late nineteenth century. American anthropologist Samuel Morton studied the relationship between brain size and intelligence. He concluded that because whites have larger skulls than other races, they are deemed as “superior.” Ultimately, his theory was disproved and deeply flawed, as he failed to account for his own bigotry and racial bias throughout the study. Francis Galton, the father of the eugenic movement, utilized IQ testing in attempts to validate the ideologies of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. The racist nature of the tests worked to confirm the racial standing and supremacy of whites. These faulty scientific methods were used as evidence and justification to prove the dominance of the European race.

The ideas of race science were appealing to Americans and Europeans simply because they worked to uphold the hierarchical divisions of society and promote principles of racial superiority. Due to the subjective generalizations and racialized science brought about by philosophers and thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, American society established fields of science that provoked racial animosity and hatred toward minority groups.

### *2.3. Why is it important, and how does it justify racism?*

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Author: Natalie Burkley

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Understanding the science of race is important to understanding how we can attempt to unlearn racial bias and fix systemic racism in our society. The idea behind race science has been circulating in society ever since we have had systems that are organized by race, such as the Spanish *casta* system. This placed African/native slaves at the bottom of the social hierarchy and enforced the idea that the Spanish or European whites were superior. This theme was used to fuel later “scientific discoveries” (for example, Charles Darwin’s, *The Origin of Species*) and, most importantly, justify racism. The disadvantages minority groups received (specifically African Americans) have caused white counterparts to continue looking down on them for positions they forced them into. Comprehending the influence of race science is a key part of seeing how these beliefs fuel racism.

The science of race is considered by some to be a pseudoscience as race is mainly a social construct, and the process of how people became to be different races is not usually



explained in this sense, but rather when mentioned, is usually to justify an already existing institution or events. In “Social Darwinism, Scientific Racism, and the Metaphysics of Race,” a paper by Dennis M. Rutledge, he looks at race and its history of ideology from different lenses. He writes, “Before the suppositions of Social Darwinism enshrined the idea of European superiority as a key feature of natural evolution and selection, the association between color (race) and intellectual predisposition had long been a topic for discussion among many European thinkers... the racist logic of these thinkers, though mostly declarative and deeply rooted in the idea of European supremacy and “colored” inferiority, lacked a grand and global philosophical and political framework which it could logically operate.” (Rutledge, 2). This excerpt emphasizes how these themes were already believed and used by individuals and groups in power (lighter-skinned/White people) based on proving how Europeans were superior and keeping it that way. The logic of these associations made it easier for them to continue keeping slaves under their control, and they believed they were destined to live a life of servitude and ensured that many would not have the courage to attempt escape. The emergence of “scientific” discoveries allowed this ideology to expand and be embraced throughout the modern world (America) and was followed in a sense by many slave owners until the abolition of slavery cut through.

During the end of the 19th century, the IQ test was created by a man named Francis Galton, who also was the main leader of the eugenics movement, the idea that people should arrange to breed and limit reproductive abilities in people with certain features in order to improve the human race. This idea completely disregarded differences in humanity, essentially saying that people with disabilities or minorities were inferior and that something should be done about it. The IQ test, however, was more centrally rooted in proving that there were differences between social classes and “is evident in the ongoing search for measures to validate Galton’s thesis of Anglo-Saxon superiority.” (4) Although he initially began by wanting to figure out the differences between social classes, combined with emerging beliefs in natural selection, it also became used as a justification for the treatment of minorities.

Even in the present day, the biases created by these ideas still affect African Americans as they gained popularity, and many still believe in them. As presented in the media, these biases translate into racism which continues to put black Americans at a disadvantage. Realizing the impact of race science and the impact it has on racism today is a step towards eliminating it.

### 3. Eugenics

#### *3.1. Shifting through time— different perspectives, connotations*

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Authors: Rita Xiang. Jiya Patel

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Eugenics is a pseudoscience that uses selective breeding to alter and improve the genetic makeup of the human race. Although the Eugenics movement began in the early 19th century, the idea of eugenics was supported at the time by early theories like Social Darwinism and the notion of the "intelligence quotient (IQ)." The intellectual foundations of scientific racism and eugenics, which are frequently employed as arguments to propose, project, and enforce racist social policies, will be discussed in this section of our essay.

Although Herbert Spencer (Spencer, 1874) addressed the idea that natural evolution could be equally applicable to the human species, Charles Darwin's seminal work *The Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859) concentrated mostly on the biological evolution of animals and species. Based on that, the phrases "survival of the fittest" and "Social Darwinism" were first coined, stating that the human species, like animals, must compete to survive to filter out those who are unwilling or unable to do so. While Spencer was a noninterventionist and anti-imperialist, a somewhat benevolent pacifist, as others commended, later theorists like Greene (Greene, 1963) tied Spencer's idea more directly to equated with racist thinking. He argued that "racial conflict was the key to social progress" because it entailed "a continuous over-running of the less powerful or less adapted by, the more powerful or more adapted, a driving of inferior varieties into undesirable habitats, and occasionally, an extermination of inferior varieties."

Since then, Social Darwinism has been used numerous times to justify inhumane actions. During the antebellum period in the United States, William Graham Sumner (Sumner, 1963), the leading Social Darwinism at that time, adopted Social Darwinism to American slavery. He reasoned that "slavery permitted superior groups the leisure to construct and develop more refined cultured, and this advanced the cause of humanity." English Social Darwinists Karl Pearson (Pearson, 1901) and Benjamin Kidd (Kidd, 1902) argued that Europeans, especially English, were politically, economically, and culturally superior to "inferior" races in English

colonies. And the action of colonization, in fact, “civilized and enlightened “those colonized people.

Social Darwinism was accepted in England and the United States because it supported policies and practices that both countries justified as congruent with their national interests. And during 1880-1990, Social Darwinism was even “developed” to a higher level--- eugenics. Francis Galton (Galton, 1892) believed that “society must dispense with the erroneous idea of natural equality among humans.” With such a hereditarian ethos, Galton stated that his program encouraged childbearing among the “fittest stock,” the Anglo-Saxon upper classes. This is the first time that eugenics was theoretically put forward. Moreover, to prove Eugenics was scientifically correct, Alfred Binet and Theophile Simon (Binet, A.; Simon, Th. 1905) constructed the first practical intelligence test, “intelligence quotient” or IQ. The idea of IQ prevailed immediately after its invention because social scientists embraced those standard tests, eager to prove that social sciences could be as objective as studies of, for example, chemistry.

Moreover, there were two other reasons why people were fascinated with intelligence testing, especially in the United States: Those tests were used in filtering the numerous immigrants because the Anglo-Saxons with better educational resources could easily “beat” those Asian, Latin Americans, and southern Europeans. And the test results were further cited to validate the rightness of the ideology of racial superiority or white supremacy. Later in the 1960s, much apprehension was generated by the heightened African Americans “by their attempts to translate their population influx into political, economic, educational and cultural power.” Therefore, IQ testing was used again to exclude Blacks from the core culture of American society.

Throughout history, eugenics, a pseudoscience aimed at producing more “superior” races at the expense of “inferior” races, has adopted a negative connotation. Some primary examples that illustrate this idea include the Holocaust, immigration laws, and sterilizations of the 20th century. Although history has tainted society’s perspective of eugenics, the science of *new eugenics* is on the rise, creating controversial opinions.

The most devastating implementation of eugenics was in Nazi Germany, the point at which race-oriented eugenics reached its peak. Adolf Hitler’s book, *Mein Kampf*, served as a widespread influence on the masses, detailing his plan to preserve the “master race.” Those of the Aryan race were seen as the superior race, and leaders of the Holocaust sought to exterminate all inferior groups of people. Through the use of concentration camps, Nazis worked towards

their goal by performing mass sterilizations, killings by gas chambers, and starving the inmates. Eugenics functioned alongside racial hygiene in Germany. The goal of racial hygiene was to identify races or ethnicities that would “taint” Aryan blood, and eugenics-influenced laws like the Nuremberg laws directly harmed Jews and others who were deemed inferior. The Nuremberg laws divided up German citizenship based on those who had Aryan blood and those who did not (Stojanović, 2018). Those without Aryan blood possessed no rights, and they could face the death penalty for disobeying the strictly imposed laws.

Eugenics also made an impact in the United States. In 1914, President Theodore Roosevelt said, “I wish very much that the wrong people could be prevented entirely from breeding; and when the evil nature of these people is sufficiently flagrant, this should be done. Criminals should be sterilized, and feeble-minded persons should be forbidden to leave offspring behind them... The emphasis should be laid on getting desirable people to breed.” (Stojanović, 2018) The laws began in 1907 when the United States began restricting immigration for select races. By the end of the 1930s, most states had legislation for sterilization of “*mentally-ill, drunkards, epileptics, and degenerates.*” A study by the University of Michigan found that the majority of the sterilization recipients were either queer or were children of Mexican, Japanese, and Italian immigrants, and this is credited to the eugenics-influenced ideologies of the United States in the 20th century (Stojanović, 2018).

Human genetic engineering is at the forefront of “new eugenics,” offering potential solutions but also drawbacks to the idea of gene manipulation. This gene manipulation ranges from fetal gene manipulation to treating adults with hereditary disorders. The issue arises when determining if this practice of eliminating unwanted, inferior genes is ethical or if it is merely prolonging the effects of 20th-century eugenics. With the rise of a new era of eugenics, individuals should remain cognizant of the degree of discrimination against the “genetically inferior” and must not repeat the treacherous past of eugenics.

### *3.2 Eugenics and Modern Science*

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Author: Owen Phillips

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Humanity has struggled to agree upon the correct order of our society for millennia. Up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant theories were those best informed by human intuition, rooted in the disciplines of natural philosophy and alchemy. Conveniently, the tenets of natural philosophy frequently changed and aligned with the views of whichever governing body or religious figure held power. When data could not be produced, it was fabricated to support a specific agenda. Problems inevitably arose as theories – rooted in falsehoods – lacked practical application. Nevertheless, any attempt to correct the accepted scientific doctrine of the time was met with accusations of blasphemy or treason. This frustrated the efforts of intellectuals and prevented any real progress from being made. It wasn't until the secular, rational movements of the Enlightenment that our current body of scientific knowledge would no longer be dictated by the motivations of the church or the aristocracy.

The enlightenment of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century marks a turning point for scientific thought, which is still regarded as an uncontestable beacon of reason and empiricism. While this may have some partial truth to it, science is not built upon fixed principles; most pieces of evidence can have multiple interpretations that satisfy multiple viewpoints. A scientific fact can be inaccurate if falsely interpreted or misused, and there is simply not enough known about the world to create one single unified theory of nature. This is why it's important not to accept certain opinions simply because they are supported by concrete yet inadequate or statistically flawed evidence. Nevertheless, the majority of people still cling to the idea that any glimmer of scientific evidence can elevate a belief into an empirical fact. This is particularly true in evolving debates on gender and sexuality studies. Proponents of certain ideologies, in opposition to these new findings, are voicing their opinions in heated reactions based on ignorance and cherry-picked evidence; they begin to carve out their own niche solely devoted to supporting unsound arguments. This is a strategy that many conservative politicians throughout history have made

use of in order to justify the status quo as an integral part of the social order (Hansen, 2008). What better way exists in the age of science to rationalize a political agenda than to misuse empirical data?

This is the exact predicament that spurred the Eugenics movement. By the turn of the 20th century, the concept of Social Darwinism had already allowed conservatives to resist the implementation of welfare policies. The ideology lent itself to the belief that the country's system of meritocracy had evolved so that "unfit" individuals were appropriately relegated to the lower classes. It was, therefore, vital to the health of the country that this system remains undisrupted by government intervention (Epstein, 2003). In this way, the most able people were incentivized, and the less able were punished. Initially, there was a high proportion of "fit" individuals and a more balanced concentration of wealth at the top, but innovations and economic growth eventually brought on the Second Industrial Revolution of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. As urban centers grew, a massive spike in immigration contributed to significant growth of the lower classes, and America was becoming increasingly polarized. There were growing concerns that foreigners and the less abled would outnumber the capable majority and cause degeneracy and unlawfulness to run rampant in our society. Policy needed to be put in place that would directly limit these undesirable populations, however, this type of legislation warranted some scientific evidence to prove that restrictions wouldn't be infringing on their natural rights. It was at this point that Eugenics achieved its greatest success.

Eugenics gained its credibility by using intelligence to determine fitness rather than race or class. This way, the studies appeared far less biased and more legitimate. (Epstein, 2003) These studies were convincing enough to justify sterilization initiatives across the country, which persisted well into the civil rights era. Eugenics was particularly popular among conservatives and racists, who found that these studies reported disproportionately negative results among the lower classes and minorities – likely a result of limited access to educational resources and job opportunities. (Epstein, 2003) These results also famously resonated with the German Nazi Party, which cited the US application of eugenics as an important source of inspiration. It was eugenics that formed the basic ideology behind the holocaust, from which countless atrocities were carried out. (Hansen, 2008) In post-WWII America, Nazi ideology was denounced as a

misapplication of valid principles, which had regained public interest against the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s. (Hansen, 2008) In the present day, legislation has been passed rendering any faithful application of eugenics impossible; however, the topic has re-emerged in public debate as advancements in genetics have made it easier to identify certain diseases than ever before. (Epstein, 2003) It is critical to note that there is no ethical application of eugenics because it is an inherently flawed concept that ignores the fact that genetic variation is a defining aspect of nature. Eugenics is a pseudoscience that has been paraded around as a hard science for over a century, but in reality, it amounts to little more than a political tool rooted in anything but fact.

## **4. Implicit Bias**

### *4.1. What is Implicit Bias*

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Author: Allie Maloney

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Implicit bias affects our lives in ways both big and small, from systemic racism to personal interactions between individuals. Humans inevitably develop biases based on their personal experiences, but it's when their actions are a result of their unconscious thoughts that we see a problem. This is implicit bias. Our implicit biases often predict how we'll behave more accurately than our conscious beliefs. People make quick generalizations about those of a different race and categorize them as such. For example, when Kathleen, a white woman, was out for a run, she “saw a woman who appeared to be Latina walking out of her home. The immediate thought that popped into [Kathleen’s] head was ‘housekeeper.’ [She] had to stop and consider how did that happen? Regardless of [her] stated and lived commitment to fairness and justice, [her] close relationships with Latinx friends and colleagues, and [her] knowledge of implicit bias, my brain made a potentially harmful snap judgment about who someone was” (Osta,2019). This shows how implicit bias affects one’s judgment, decisions, and behavior even though it is unintentional and may go against said person’s personal beliefs. Quick generalizations like these are also what make people associate black men with violence, even if they do not mean to. This has been seen through law enforcement interactions with minorities

and how they treat them (Peeples, 2020). Two situations like these represent how implicit bias is everywhere, from systemic racism to personal interactions between individuals.

Implicit bias affects society in many ways. Three really important areas that are impacted by our implicit biases include the unavoidable psychological consequences, seeing people through generalizations and not their individual attributes, and how bias impacts the moral landscape of the world. Implicit bias can cause people's actions to be laced with prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism against certain races, even if it goes against their personal values. For example, white people with high levels of implicit racial bias show less warmth and welcoming behavior toward black people; they will sit further away, and their facial expressions will be cold and withdrawn, regardless of their values (Roberts, 2011). Racism, even though it is not a conscious thought, is an unavoidable psychological consequence of implicit bias. Another way implicit bias affects society is through systemic generalizations or racism. People categorize others based on race, gender, age, etc., as seen through everyday interactions such as Kathleen's case, but also through law enforcement interactions with minorities. We see innocent people being treated unfairly every day because of implicit bias. This demonstrates seeing people through generalizations and not their individual attributes. Implicit bias impacts the moral landscape of the world as it contorts how we think about other cultures and societies and affects how we treat them. Implicit bias impacts all parts of our world but can be very hard to overcome and bring change when people do not realize their unconscious actions. Identifying and being open to the idea of change are good places to start.

#### *4.2. - Unavoidable psychological consequences*

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Author: Kavin Gulati

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When discussing implicit bias, many frown upon the idea that people have preconceived notions about specific topics, people, or anything in general. What these people fail to realize is that implicit bias is entirely unavoidable. According to the National Institutes of Health, "Implicit bias is a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, that nevertheless affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors" (National Institutes of Health). In simpler terms, implicit bias is an unconscious bias that we simply cannot control. As a result, these biases can



alter our tendencies to perform certain “actions and decisions such as whom we hire or promote, how we interact with persons of a particular group, what advice we consider, and how we conduct performance evaluations” (Insight Into Diversity).

In an effort to find the truth behind implicit bias, William Cunningham conducted a study in 2004 that “found that when Caucasian participants watched Black and White faces that were presented very briefly... they showed increased activation in the amygdala in response to the Black faces” (National Library of Medicine). This study essentially found that the group of Caucasian participants, who were presented with Black and White faces, were triggered with a more emotional response to a perceived emotional threat of the Black faces.

As a society, there are countless biases that are formed about a variety of topics, such as gender bias, racial bias, weight bias, LGBTQ bias, and numerous more. As individuals move throughout their daily lives, they are handed experiences that develop this implicit bias that can lead to unavoidable consequences in the way they interact with one another. Becoming aware of this idea can reduce implicit bias, but nothing can truly stop it, as implicit bias is formed through one’s experiences and not the awareness of the conscious mind. Intentionally or not, implicit bias can lead to a more emotional response due to prior experiences, even if the person is kind-hearted without ill intent. Ultimately, this idea shows the unavoidable psychological consequences of implicit bias, as it is present in all humans, even the considered “role models” of society.

#### *4.3 Generalizations and how they are systemically perpetuated*

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Authors: Meriam Chebil, Uma Miskinyar

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Generalizations that are spread around the world are spread easily due to how many of them are ingrained into our minds as children. Generalizations can come in both indirect and direct forms, and many generalizations can be masked as both positive and negative stereotypes. In recent centuries, many of these stereotypes are spread over time through television and other forms of media. With the help of social media and the internet, the spread of these biases and generalizations has grown faster than ever before.

Generalizations can be spread easily through the media. With movies, generalizations can be implied in scripts or by how certain characters act. Indirectly, these biases can be spread

throughout the public, and this can be made easier if the majority of people watching a certain form of media are children. Since children are still developing their minds and their beliefs, they are easier to manipulate and instill an idea in. Regardless of the stereotype, them being portrayed in the media poses many problems due to how the spread of stereotypes has now become much easier due to the internet.

In addition, generalizations are held in many of the systems that we have currently. Since implicit bias is classified as an unconscious act, this leads to peoples' minds being wired to connect certain adjectives with certain races due to biases that are taught to us as children. In many instances, people have been proven to be wired into connecting negative or positive adjectives with certain minority groups and have even shown to have preferences based on these adjectives and stereotypes.

These biases in our governmental systems pose more issues that are in need of being fixed. The justice system has been in the spotlight for the unfair treatment they give to African Americans. These stereotypes that many people are unaware they have bled into the justice system and the laws that are meant to protect the public. During the War on Drugs, the legislation passed set mandatory sentences for those caught with narcotics like crack cocaine. Although many have argued that the value of these laws has helped protect the public, these laws have been known to notoriously put African Americans behind bars at an unprecedented rate. Also, the fact that Richard Nixon's former advisor was leaked saying that these laws were meant to target African Americans and their activism groups proves the point that these laws were a form of conscious bias against African Americans that was masked by the public as something unconscious in order to maximize the number of votes Nixon received.

A properly functioning brain recognizes certain patterns and even makes generalizations about what it observes. But these same brain processes also can lead to overgeneralization and discrimination via "implicit bias," which describes a prejudice, stereotype, or presumption made about certain groups or populations pre-reflexively or without conscious knowledge of that bias. Importance in recognition of implicit bias includes ensuring ethnic diversity in the workplace and naturally minimizing the development of biases from an ethnic or gender-based standpoint and how they are perpetuated systemically. Loan bias in the 1930s barred the development of diversified communities, leaving African American communities permanently disadvantaged: the 3:1 mortgage denial rate still exists even today. Even with race no longer an included factor,

similar patterns exist because of the positive feedback loop, hence a systemic issue.

Generalizations have increased negative perceptions of certain minorities in the media.

Heavy themes of eugenics include Calvin Candie, who explains the differences between black and white people on the basis of science. When we talk today about "structural inequities and "privilege, we can see that slavery was a direct result of implicit bias, not to mention the scientific categorization that race is defined as merely ostracizing a race and depriving them of their inalienable rights.

Efren Perez, associate professor of political science and sociology at Vanderbilt, calls on the fact that "One of the best examples in the United States concerns its racial hierarchy: the idea that racial and ethnic groups are arrayed in descending order of social status and dominance, with whites top and minorities to varying degrees below. Even if someone explicitly disavows this state of affairs... a part of one's mind recognizes that in the U.S., whites are more socially esteemed than non-whites." Similar to racism, implicit bias leads to discrimination as it has the tendency to cause a person to draw conclusions or generalizations about a group. However, implicit bias is different from racism, as it is generated without one's awareness, while racism is explicit discrimination that our brain isn't wired to do.

Research on "implicit bias" suggests that people can act on the basis of prejudice and stereotypes without intending to do so. While psychologists in the field of "implicit social cognition" study consumer products, self-esteem, food, alcohol, political values, and more, the most striking and well-known research has focused on implicit biases toward members of socially stigmatized groups, such as African Americans, women, and the LGBTQ community. Despite many people's explicit egalitarian beliefs, they might nevertheless behave in any number of biased ways, from distrusting feedback from female co-workers to hiring equally qualified men over women. Part of the reason for discriminatory behavior might be an implicit gender bias. Psychological research on implicit bias has grown steadily, raising metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical questions. Systemic racism acts in a manner very much attuned to its name. As systems that have served to disadvantage large bodies of people to the African American community since the start of America, these systems never ameliorate their intensity, thus they continue to do so in any different shape/form known to man.

### *4.3. Impact on the moral landscape of the world*

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Authors: David Kim, Jordan Wei

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Implicit bias is defined as the attitudes and stereotypes that we have toward others that are outside our conscious knowledge (Implicit Bias). Implicit bias has become a topic of great interest to many, as recent societal issues like racial injustices and stigma against sexuality and gender bring this topic into the spotlight.

Implicit bias is one of the answers as to why people act the way they do toward a specific demographic. Opinions about others based on their race, sexuality, and outward appearance develop from implicit bias (Roberts, 2011) and slowly influence our actions. Actions like sitting further away from certain people or feeling unsafe near others are a result of the stereotypes that we have formed or obtained without our knowledge. Implicit bias has impacted many areas of society in the form of gender bias, ageism, and racial bias. Education and the criminal justice system are just some of the impacted fields that we will be discussing in this paper. Education is just one of the many aspects of society that have been affected by implicit biases. Education scholars have postulated that implicit biases may be the leading contributor to the racial disparities that individuals face (Dhaliwal, Chin, Lovison, Quinn, 2020). These racial disparities, the scholars presume, can explain the differences in student achievement and school discipline between African American and white students. Teachers' implicit racial biases, they say, could be the cause of biased evaluations of students' academic performances. In response to these theories, a study was conducted that produced surprising results. Their first key finding displayed that educators hold a "slight" pro-white/anti-Black implicit bias, yet this bias was more strongly related to individual factors than contextual factors. In addition, teachers of color showed a lower average bias against colored students compared to white teachers. However, it is worth noting that teachers of color are few and far between; they are a much smaller share of the teaching workforce than white teachers, so this data is not entirely conclusive. More results returned, with one showing that female teachers, who continue to substantially outnumber male teachers, show lower average bias.

This study has its flaws. A small sample size would inevitably show a more skewed average, yet this small sample size does contribute to showing us the lack of diversity within the educational sector. This study, in its essence, showed that individuals who were surrounded by lots of diversity or were themselves a minority had a much less average bias. This only goes to show that a potential solution to the implicit biases that society and individuals place on one another could slowly fade with the introduction of more diversity. Although this topic is a topic of much contention, especially regarding affirmative action, it is generally accepted that a more diverse crowd yields more accepting and socially aware individuals. Being introduced to people that differ from us in many areas in friendly surrounding allows us to bond, empathize, and understand one another in our differences. In this way, we as a society can learn not to ignore and remove the differences between one another but instead celebrate them as individual achievements. This, however, can only be a reality in a diverse and accepting world.

The criminal justice system is one of, if not the most heavily impacted by implicit bias. Many people are familiar with the police brutality against members of the African American community. From books like “The Hate U Give” to the brutal murder of George Floyd, police brutality is a deadly issue that has taken hold of America. According to The National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, implicit bias contributes to a phenomenon known as “shooter bias,”—the tendency for police to shoot unarmed black suspects more often than white ones. They also state that implicit bias is the cause of the frequency of police stops for members of minority groups. But implicit bias does not just lie in the police force of our country. Even within the courtrooms, where there is presumably “equal justice under law,” implicit bias still influences the day-to-day happenings within a court. The NIBCTJ states that public defenders prioritize cases involving white defendants over their minority counterparts. These actions, from both police and public defenders, stem from their implicit biases against minority communities. We’ve all seen the devastating footage of a police officer with his knee on the neck of George Floyd as he continuously begged for air. We’ve all seen innocent African Americans being shot by police officers. These skirmishes between minority communities, especially African American communities, and police officers have become so commonplace that we as a country have become indifferent to the matter. Some people even go as far as to say that the police were doing what they were taught to do and that the police, too, were in fear for their own lives. And this may be true. Police officers who are convicted of killing unarmed African Americans may

have killed them out of spite or prejudices, but others may be overcome with fear and could have done so impulsively. Although this does not justify in any way the actions that follow, we must realize that implicit bias plays a role in these scenarios as well. If we want our police officers and our leaders to throw away their implicit biases and prejudices, we, too, must let go of our prejudices against them. Painting all cops as racist killers does not solve the issue; in fact, it only deepens the impact that implicit bias has on society. It goes both ways.

All in all, implicit bias has left deep scars within society. From racial injustices to stereotypes against sexual orientation and sexuality, we as a society have allowed our implicit biases to precede our rationale. We throw caution to the wind and make sweeping generalizations about all that we see and do. But we must realize that these ideas and prejudices don't just affect us. It gets passed on to society. It gets passed down to our descendants. We are poisoning the innocent minds of the next generation with our stereotypes and prejudices, which only fuel the vicious cycle of discrimination. We have to be willing to be open-minded and see each other as human beings first. We have to be willing to throw away our preconceived notions when meeting new people who may be different from us. We have to be willing to acknowledge and celebrate differences, not ignore them completely. Only then can true equality and acceptance take hold of society. And it all starts with one person. One person to stand against the established norms and stigmas of society. One person to knock down the barriers that we have set up against one another. One person to change the world.

#### *4.4. How could we minimize implicit bias impact?*

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Author: Anabel Howery

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Implicit bias is a phenomenon that most experience in their daily lives. Although it is a natural occurrence that takes place in the unconscious state of mind, it is crucial for one to limit its impact on their behaviors as well as their actions. It is first important to understand one's own implicit bias. One should analyze themselves and consider their own subconscious thoughts when seeing or addressing certain social groups. Identifying a flaw in thinking can aid one's process in limiting the effects of implicit bias as they are better able to address the issue at hand.

Then, they can work on altering their thought processes and changing the way they think about specific groups they may hold stereotypes about.

When interacting with a person who identifies as part of a social group, one should focus on seeing that person as an individual. Social groups do not exist for the convenience of one to classify a human being. Groups consist of numerous individuals, all holding their own unique characteristics and lifestyles. No human is an object that can be categorized or labeled with a quick glance, and that holds true for people around the world. One should consider whether they would appreciate being treated differently based on stereotypes held about the social group they identify with; this will help them understand the perspectives of those around them.

It is also important to take note of behavior or actions that the individual shows that contradict the beliefs held about their group. This will help one see that the individual does not fit into the stereotype and that, therefore, the stereotype is inaccurate and should not be used as a guideline in the future.

One should not be ashamed to admit that one experiences implicit bias. It is natural for this phenomenon to occur, especially through images of certain cultures pictured in media and news outlets. However, it is crucial for one to take the initiative to stop the bias from negatively impacting their actions and behaviors.

## **5. Systemic racism**

### *5.1. What is systemic racism?*

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Authors: Jillian Schlechter, Jaden Kim, Angela Liu

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While racism is defined as discrimination or antagonism against an individual due to their race, systemic racism adds another layer to that. Systemic racism describes the results of the effects when institutions and systems reflect individual racism. It is important to note that racism in a system or society is not an isolated incident; it is woven into the structure and core of all major institutions. The effects of systemic racism are still felt greatly in the community, despite

it being noted in the book *Black Power: The Politics of Libertarian* that systemic racism is often less criticized and scrutinized by the public.

Racial inequities continue to endure due to the current way society operates in regard to race, policies, laws, and beliefs. It is important to note that some institutions are not aware of systemic racism existing in their laws and regulations, but the result of racial discrimination still is present. Additionally, systemic racism puts minorities at a disadvantage in society while perpetuating racial injustice.

Some examples of systemic racism that can be seen are through political disenfranchisement, segregation, financial practices, environmental justice, and through the criminal justice system (Braveman). Systemic racism is displayed through political disenfranchisement because of the voter suppression that people of color often face and gerrymandering (the manipulation of electoral constituency boundaries in order to favor a certain party or class), which deprives them of full voter representation. Additionally, segregation is a historical and current form of systemic racism due to the economic disadvantage it accompanies and the way it restricts opportunities for people of color to obtain good employment or education. Because of environmental injustice, many neighborhoods that are homes to people of color have faced damaging health conditions, and the citizen's concerns were dismissed by health officials because of the citizens' race.

An example of this was an activity called "redlining," which started in the 1930s when the government-sponsored Home Owners' Loan Corporation and the Federal Home Loan Bank Board denied housing loans to minorities, especially the African American community. Areas or neighborhoods that were predominantly Black were labeled as "hazardous" to purposefully segregate, discriminate, and prevent economic growth for these people. As a result, when the



FHA (Federal Housing Administration) began to stimulate the economy after the Great Depression by encouraging homeownership with the federal backing of loans, all of the mortgages were granted to white families while the African American communities were denied such opportunities. Additionally, the FHA planned to only insure white neighborhoods, further povertizing the black community. Although redlining was banned in 1968 (NCRC, 2022), the effects of this example of systemic racism are still immediate.

Finally, the criminal justice system can be seen facing systemic racism because of discriminatory sentencing and policing. People of color make up 60% of incarcerated people (despite them only making up 39% of the US population), and stigmatization follows ex-prisoners and makes it almost impossible to obtain employment opportunities. Along with this, Black people make up approximately 13.5% of the population in the United States, but out of all wrong convictions' exonerations, they make up 47%. That is nearly half, which makes it clear how stereotypes and racist beliefs are present in the criminal justice system.

Systemic racism also has a hugely damaging impact on health. In the form of voter suppression, systemic racism can lead to people of color having a lack of political power since they are not able to elect representatives to act in their place. As a result, people of color are left with a lack of access to necessary resources that directly affect one's health. These resources can include but are not limited to clean water, good education, decent housing and neighborhoods, and access to proper medical assistance. Additionally, systemic racism affects one's health by putting them at a disadvantage economically. As it has been shown that wealth goes hand-in-hand with health, people of color are harmed by the discriminatory obstacles they face in regard to good economic opportunities, such as difficult-to-obtain high education and the lack of

facilitation of practices such as redlining, which makes it extremely difficult for them to acquire home ownership and wealth from property.

Systemic racism is a form of racism that runs through the laws and regulations of a population. It discriminates in numerous aspects of people's lives, and the effects of systemic racism are still very much a troubling issue in our society today.

### *5.2. The legacy of slavery and its connection with systemic racism*

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Author: Winston Zhou

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Ratified on December 6, 1865, the abolishment of slavery should have signified the end of a century of African American disenfranchisement, and yet William Du Bois, a prominent sociologist of the 20th century, believed the color line would continue to be a defining issue (Loury 1998). The reasoning stemmed from the failures of reconstruction to provide tangible changes. William T. Sherman had presented the idea of "forty acres and a mule," which, as the name implies, would have provided freed families forty acres of land and a mule. Unfortunately, the Southern reaction made any redistribution of land a temporary change. "Black codes" were implemented to keep the existing racial hierarchy in the postbellum south, and it led to a system of sharecropping that was not far off from slavery (Kilburn 2010). Following the death of king cotton, African Americans urbanized, which only led to the escalation of racial biases in the southern cities. A combination of Jim Crow laws, violent race riots, and lynchings ensured the racial hierarchy was maintained (Pilgrim 2000). In modern times, the prison industrial complex has a rate of incarceration nearly five times higher for African Americans when compared to their white counterparts, and an astounding eight in ten thousand are currently serving in prisons. (Carrega 2021). It is clear that privatized prisons disproportionately benefit from African American labor, as a system of plea deals is more economically viable for accused and impoverished individuals (a predominant number of whom are African American).

The failure to settle economic disparity during reconstruction was only escalated by loan biases in the 1930s. The Home Owner's Loan Corporation marked communities of ethnic minorities as "red," drastically decreasing the appeal for lenders. It would take all the way until

1968 for the Fair Housing Act to illegalize mortgage or loan discrimination (Folger 2022). The result meant poorer neighborhoods generally consisted of minority groups. And the problem has been left unaddressed since, to the point where machine algorithms that provide mortgages and loans in modern times still exhibit loan bias because they're trained on data that has always been unfair. Researchers had to artificially remove the bias in their data sets in order to get non-biased machines (Zewe 2022). In summary, even as society has become more progressive, systemic racism persists because when these issues are not directly addressed, rather than fading in significance, they simply show up in a different context.

### *5.3. How is systemic racism perpetuated in the criminal justice and in the prison system today*

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Authors: Eleanor Ludwig, Annika Patel

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Racial profiling in the police system is a recurring issue and has birthed the Black Lives Matter movement. However, what is racial profiling? Racial profiling uses race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of having committed an offense. However, defining racial profiling only based on ethnicity is not correct and can be problematic. Some definitions of racial profiling are wrong because they don't involve actions based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religion in combination with an alleged violation of all laws. Under a dictionary definition, an officer who targeted a Latino driver for speed could claim they pulled him over because they were speeding and not because of their race, this would invalidate several accusations of racial profiling. Due to this, racial profiling is very common in the US but also in places like the Middle East and South Asia. Racial profiling is also widespread in poorer neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with a more significant amount of Black people and poor people are ten times more likely to experience racial profiling than those in predominantly white neighborhoods. However, Black people are not the only people being racially profiled, following the September 11th attacks, Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians were being constantly stopped for "random" searches by security. Racial profiling is a very large problem in our society, with officers allowing their personal opinions and feelings to get in the way, convincing themselves that a particular individual is dangerous while having done nothing wrong. As well as convince themselves that some people should require more intense justice than others. For example, black

people are five times more likely to get arrested than white people. This is absolutely unacceptable because police officers should be trusted by all races; however, two-thirds of black people state that they do not trust the justice system to treat them equally. However, almost all white Americans believe that the police will treat them fairly.

Historically minority groups have been known to receive harsher sentencing compared to their white counterparts. The mistreatment of black people and other minority groups in the criminal justice system is exemplified by black offenders, on average receiving 19 percent longer sentences than white offenders for the same crimes. Disproportionate sentencing of black people is a driving factor in systemic racism within the justice system. One factor is that in juries, minority groups are underrepresented. A total of 95 percent of elected prosecutors are white, these statistics follow similarly in jurors. In a study done, when there were no minority groups present in a jury, 81 percent of black defendants were convicted, while only 66 percent of white defendants were found guilty and prosecuted. When there was even one black person present on the jury, the conviction rates for black and white defendants were practically identical in conviction rates. The United States has the highest prison, jail, and incarceration populations in the world. As of 2019, the United States had a total of 1.38 million people in federal and state prisons and 745,200 in jail. 25 percent of the world's prisoner population resides in the United States alone. White people and black people often are given differing sentencing for the same crime. An example would be the two cases of Chase Legleitner and Lamar Lloyd. Both Chase Legleitner and Lamar Lloyd were convicted of armed robbery and were sentenced by the same judge in Florida. They both had one prior misdemeanor, the same number of sentencing points, and both had a no-contest plea. Lamar Lloyd was sentenced to 26 years in prison and Chase Legleitner was sentenced to 2 years in county jail. The only difference between these two cases was that Lamar Lloyd was a black man, and Chase Legleitner was white. The judge argued that Legleitner cooperated with prosecutors to convict co-defendants, and this is why he was charged to a lesser degree. This excuse and many others are common in justifying the unjust treatment of minorities in the criminal justice system. Systemic racism is driven by the disproportionate sentencing of black people and other minority groups.

## Conclusion

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Author: Emma Zhu

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To be able to focus on change and on prospects of progress requires a heavy prior background understanding of how a country like the United States has arrived at such a confrontational point. This is what we have graciously learned and tried to understand in this class. Starting with the understanding of the formation of race and its function as a social construct, to implicit bias and racial profiling, to the history and evolution of the eugenics movement, and to more recent appearances of racialized political campaigns and conversations surrounding race in current social settings, we have learned and discussed how race permeates each aspect of life.

The process of learning race and racial constructs in this module was conducted through a series of class lectures, small and whole group discussions, and the use of other mediums such as documentaries (*The 13th*) and movies (*Sorry to Bother You*, *42*, *the Jackie Robinson Story*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and *The Visitor*). This module intensely examined the lived experiences of Black Americans in regard to institutional racism, the prison system and America's mass incarceration rates, and systemic racism for racial minorities with past discriminatory immigration policies.

At present, we do not go unaffected by the legacies of the past. Acknowledging it, especially now when a picture of a racialized America becomes more evident, is one of the first steps.

For example, slavery was outlawed, then replaced by Jim Crow Laws. Since then, systemic racism was constantly perpetuated, and one of the many proofs is the growing number of incarcerated Black individuals in the U.S. prison system. We take note that the present-day prison environment is still described to be a place where you have a sea of black and brown faces behind those jail cells, some with sentences that are unjust or that are harsher than their white counterparts.

It is also impossible to not acknowledge and go unaffected by the hateful language and campaigns of former politicians who hoped to this day to still get the “Southern vote.”

The stereotypes that dangerously mark individuals of a specific race or race-presenting gave way and allowed for the targeting of Brown and Black communities. Systemic racism has taken lives; the justice system has failed many more. Continuing to allow race and racism to dictate the future of individuals and groups leads to a dangerous perpetuation of injustice in any society.

Making amends, and correcting the racial biases is more than necessary. Confronting racial disparities, confronting the continued oppression of Black, indigenous people of color (BIPOC) in America has only just begun. Sadly, this has been met with intense opposition from certain political figures and resistance from deniers of racism itself.

With social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, beginning in 2013, and Stop Asian Hate in the pandemic era (2021), our young generation cannot be the sole bearers of the responsibility of our pasts, but we can set precedent with change.

Education may be one focus of where activists should direct their attention, as the concept of both race and racism is something taught and learned. Race has been founded through pseudoscientific theories presented by White European thinkers. We are now aware not only of how it formed and permeated our social systems, but also of the dangers of its use in making others stronger and richer than others, and of dividing and oppressing societies.

Political action and voting are important as well. Voters should take to the voting booths each discriminatory law to be rewritten.

At the same time, individuals should try to recognize implicit biases in their daily lives, as amongst our generation there is reconciliation to be made, yet not yet enough being done. We do not want to accept the comparative, and we see all people as invaluable, and equal.

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