

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACK AMERICANS

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### ABSTRACT

Human rights can be described as amours to protect and also they can also be described as rules that people are supposed to apply to achieve equality and social justice. Human rights have existed way since BBC and they cannot be destroyed by anyone<sup>1</sup>. Human rights give equal rights to everyone the rich, the poor, old and young, black or white, tall and short and they require that one is respected with respect and treat others with respect. Moreover, human rights do not rely on promises or guarantees of other human beings. It only depends on being human enough to know that everyone has equal rights to do something no matter what someone's else think or say. In light of this, fundamental rights have always been found to promise much such as a stop to discrimination and equal right to decent education among others.

**Keywords:** US, Human Rights, Black Americans, Racism, Black Lives Matter, Activism.

### INTRODUCTION

In America, the human rights issue has over the recent decades become viral among the political arena and different facets of the public. However, there is a very huge difference between the ideal and the real situation regarding human rights in America because of many reasons including Americans not discussing their problems as matters of human rights<sup>2</sup>. Racism has largely been embedded in Americans' minds for centuries and Americans are desperate about achieving equal rights for blacks especially with recent cases that saw innocent blacks being murdered for simply looking suspicious. Besides, the Trump administration that violated human rights has also contributed to backwardness towards ending racism despite initiatives such as black lives matter going viral on addressing discrimination. The paper will discuss an argument that Americans fail to speak about their problems and a counterargument that Americans do talk about their problems and it could be that other inhibitors have led to the delay in achieving universal equal rights for all races.

#### Lack of Addressing Stereotypes

Racial discrimination against black people in America has been ongoing for decades now. For many years, black people in America have been identified with certain stereotypes. The main one being that they are low class and they engage in jobs that pay extremely low compared to

<sup>1</sup> Marie-Bénédicte Dembour, "What Are Human Rights? Four Schools of Thought," *Human Rights Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2010): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0130>

<sup>2</sup> David Bilchitz, "Fundamental Rights as Bridging Concepts: Straddling the Boundary between Ideal Justice and an Imperfect Reality," *Human Rights Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (2018): 119–43, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2018.0004>

the period that they work. Before 1940, sixty per cent of black people in America used to work as domestic workers for a very small wage compared to the amount of time they worked<sup>3</sup>. Recently, the number has changed and only about two per cent of black people work as domestic workers. Furthermore, sixty per cent of the race works in white-collar jobs today. The lives of black people have changed. Black people are no longer the typical poor people who lived in ghettos a long time ago and who were believed to even survive mostly on crimes. The notion has to change but few people have come out to speak the truth. As a result, black people continue to be discriminated against being seen as low-class people, which is not the case. Substantially, research has shown that more black people exaggerate their impoverishment than even the way whites see them be. In a 1991 Gallup poll, only one-fifth of whites said that African Americans were impoverished while half of the black Americans claimed so<sup>4</sup>. Maybe as far as the step in addressing problems about racial discrimination is concerned, blacks and all Americans should let everyone know that they are a strong group of people who are not poor but capable of doing everything everyone else can do to earn a decent living. Moreover, this is where discrimination begins when someone undermines a person's capability to live decently just because of his or her color. However, if the topic of social class discrimination among blacks is not addressed then America cannot achieve equality among its races.

### Physical and Mental Health

When racial discrimination is being addressed, often people lack to address the pain and unhappiness that discrimination can cause which deteriorates their physical and mental health. Speaking about racial discrimination as an aspect of human rights is one thing and speaking to address mental health and physical health issues associated with it is another issue<sup>5</sup>. Anyone practicing racial discrimination or any policymaker must be aware of the health implications that discrimination can cause. Failure in black Americans to address often how discrimination affects them is a poor strategy towards fighting racial discrimination. Blacks should vividly speak about their pains and mental issues they face which are detrimental to the whole wellbeing. To live well means to live happily knowing that a black person can walk across the streets without having anyone stare at their kinky hair or throw rude remarks about them just being black. One of the major aspects often not spoken about is stress. A large number of black people become stressed because of racial discrimination. Stress as a result causes depression and high blood pressure. However, less of the effects are talked about for fear of the stigmatization that revolves around mental illnesses. If people talked about mental illnesses, it would be easier to convince racist citizens and leaders how destructive it is to discriminate against someone just because they are not natives. Many racists do not know the effects that are there whenever they throw ill compliments about someone's color but the truth is that many Americans are suffering mentally and emotionally for not being given the respect and dignity they deserve just because of their origins. So many times the government in the early centuries and during Trump's era has stopped demonstrations or press that is geared

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Moyn, "Human Rights Are Not Enough, We Must Also Embrace the Fight against Economic-Inequality," *Inequality Human Rights Feature*, March 16, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> H Taylor, "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Aging Alone Among African Americans, Black Caribbeans, And Non-Hispanic Whites," *Innovation in Aging* 2, no. suppl\_1 (November 1, 2018): 769–69, <https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igy023.2848>

<sup>5</sup> Valerie A. Canady, "APA Annual Stress Report Finds Discrimination a Major Cause," *Mental Health Weekly* 26, no. 11 (March 14, 2016): 7–8, <https://doi.org/10.1002/mhw.30541>

towards ending racism. There should be freedom to talk about racial discrimination especially the effects it has on the mental wellness of Americans. While black people prevalence of depression is similar to that of white people, studies show that most of them do not talk about it or seek treatment. The problem is especially linked to them struggling to find a racially sensitive treatment that is important for them. Black people also struggle with racial trauma and discrimination. Besides, unemployment among black people also has been seen to cause depression, which is a subject that not many people want to talk about. Even if today many of them have chances in the white-collar job there are still some struggling to keep jobs out of racial discrimination they receive at work. If people are open about racial discrimination even at the workplace and have regulations set to not tolerate racism in the work area, the situation would be different.

### Trump Violations

The reign of Donald Trump saw the United States move backwards on human rights. The Trump administration and his party Republicans enacted laws and implemented actions based on the laws to silence racism conversations and undermine human rights in all manner of ways. In light of this, the administration policies violated human rights by implementing anti-immigration policies that were seen as a way to force blacks and other indigenous races out of America. The administration also undermined a national insurance program that was aimed at enabling Americans to acquire affordable health care<sup>6</sup>. The administration also was known to fund countries that supported the violation of human rights to make human rights activism be silenced across the entire world. According to the department of justice, the juvenile arrest rate had been reducing, however, for black children researchers report that incarceration was higher<sup>7</sup>. No one has come out to speak out about these issues because if anyone has done so, the enactment of new laws should be there already being implemented. Besides, the media in the US makes substantial efforts to advocate for equal treatment for all people. However, in 2018, the media received threats from the Trump administration including shooting in a bid to silence them. Such threats, public attacks and killings related to human rights activism has led to many people keep quiet amid receiving unfair treatment because of the color<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, in 2018, reports indicate police efforts leaned towards silencing protesters especially people of color who reported being litigated that year. Many companies also report having received harsh conditions from lawmakers to restrict freedom of speech on their platforms. As a result, many people claim that if not for trump's administration the United States would be a step further especially in embracing the freedom of speech from people of color to ensure that nobody is violating their rights.

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<sup>6</sup>Barbara Stark, "Introduction: The Trump Administration and Children's Human Rights," *Family Court Review* 56, no. 2 (April 2018): 283–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12342>

<sup>7</sup>Jeffrey R. Baker and Allyson McKinney Timm, "Zero-Tolerance: The Trump Administration's Human Rights Violations against Migrants on the Southern Border," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3559908>

<sup>8</sup>Gali Perry, "Promoting Protesters' Compliance: The Effect of General Perceptions of the Police versus Police Actions," *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, August 23, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paaa041>

## **Incarcerations**

Speaking of incarcerations, Americans have failed to address the issues about the unfair justice system in America where black people are found to be incarcerated at a higher rate than their white counterparts do. If people can fearlessly apply enough effort to discuss issues about such racial discriminations things would have been different. Thirteen per cent of Americans are blacks and forty per cent of the population are in prison. Most of them end up in prison because of drug use. However, research finds drug use among blacks as equal to whites yet very few white people end up in prison for use of illicit drugs. Black people suffer at a higher rate yet they seem to fear speaking about these issues. When it comes to police killings, in October 2019, for instance, police are said to have killed eight hundred and seventy-six people in the US, and about twenty-two per cent of the people killed were blacks and thirty-nine per cent of the people killed unarmed were also black.

In regards to this, the Media has further been of important use when it comes to airing views about human rights especially those that concern black Americans. However, the people who have come to social media to speak about issues that are usually faced by black Americans are few. Influencers and popular figures who are not racist have tried their bit to speak about the issues but the fight requires the victims to come and speak more for themselves. It is probably because of fear that was especially instilled in people during Trump's administration where trump issued threats to poor black Americans who tried to protest for equal rights. Journalist and media house were also threatened and trump's administration continued to launch a public attack against the media portraying the media as an enemy of the people. Also, the same fear was instilled in activists in the early centuries when they tried to run away from the enslavement that still lingers even today.

## **Discussion about Antiracism Approaches**

People have not been talking about how antiracism can be instilled in people's minds. Instead, people focus so much on practices of racism. The topic is of much important because children who are raised in racism grow to be racists mostly but their mentality can be changed by speaking much about how to practice antiracism measures from a young age. People have also failed to speak about how the new generation can be facilitated to stop racism to prevent history from repeating itself because older people who are racist today got the practices from their parents or grandparents who lived in the 17th and 18th centuries<sup>9</sup>. Concerning this, more talks should be heard about embedding antiracism measures even in school activities and more campaigns should be run in embracing inclusivity in workplaces. Today black people still face racism in the workplaces just like in the early centuries where black people were forbidden to engage in other jobs other than domestic and agricultural jobs. Instead, there should be a voice heard everywhere to address racism in workplaces but blacks seem to sometimes find ways to cope while they can talk about their problems to their bosses. However, imagining that racists head the organization is simply saying that the black workers will often feel intimidated to raise their concerns about cases of racism they experience in the work environment.

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<sup>9</sup> Anthony J. Langlois, "Human Rights and Modern Liberalism: A Critique," *Political Studies* 51 (2003): 509–23.

Last but not least, reporters who have reported news in America for years say that they still report the same things regarding police brutality and racial discrimination in occupation and housing just like they used to in the 1990s<sup>10</sup>. It would be true to say that if Americans have been speaking about their problems enough to be hard no matter how much racism is embedded in American's minds; reporters would be speaking about success stories of human rights because universal human rights are not unattainable as many views to be. It can be attained by protesting and conducting conversations that promote equal rights without a stop.

### **Counter Argument- Black Lives Matter**

On the other hand, I don't think it is true to say that Americans are their hindrance to acquiring human rights because they do not speak about their problems. Recently black lives matter is recorded in history as one of the largest movement that has ever happened in America<sup>11</sup>. It began in 2013 and its mission was to fight against racism and police brutality. Black lives matter signifies the unfair killing of the race by the police. Recent events showed that a black person was more likely to be killed by a policeman than a white person. The issue called for people to hold protests to demand that black people are treated with humanity and dignity like their white counterparts. The activists are affiliated with the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation based in Canada, the US and UK. Through the support of the organization, the activists have been able to hold campaigns and programs to end racism and police brutality. The campaigns have been undertaken across states in the US and even outside America. It is important to note that black lives matter which went viral on social media with a hashtag black lives matter began after Zimmerman who saw Martin in his neighborhood became suspicious of him and shot him even after police told him not to do anything about it. Zimmerman stayed free for weeks but after that, he was charged with second-degree murder, and was arrested in April. After the killing of Martin, the movement went on expanding its campaigns especially when Brown, a teenager was shot in Ferguson, Missouri<sup>12</sup>. People came out to the streets in the name of black lives matter in large numbers and the protests captured the attention of people at both national and international level. Seeing how black lives matter has exposed the problems regarding human rights that black people endure, shows that it is not that Americans lack to speak about their problems but the intensity of the voice has not been enough. To capture the attention of everyone nationally and across the globe, Americans need more voice and presence online addressing issues such as those addressed by the movement black lives matter in the way that the organization has done it. It is not just enough to mention an act of discrimination witnessed in a neighborhood, but well-strategized campaigns and protest are needed to get the attention of everyone especially those who would want to join the same movement. Consistent discussions should go on until equal human rights are achieved.

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<sup>10</sup> Jerry Anthony, "Economic Prosperity and Housing Affordability in the United States: Lessons from the Booming 1990s," *Housing Policy Debate* 28, no. 3 (January 12, 2018): 325–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2017.1393689>

<sup>11</sup> Maneesh Arora and Christopher T. Stout, "Letters for Black Lives: Co-Ethnic Mobilization and Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Political Research Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (August 13, 2018): 389–402, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912918793222>

<sup>12</sup> Andrew J. Pierce, "Whose Lives Matter? The Black Lives Matter Movement and the Contested Legacy of Philosophical Humanism," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 51, no. 2 (October 25, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12305>

Also, when George Floyd, an unarmed black man, was killed by police in Minneapolis who knelt on his neck for several minutes, the video showing the brutal incidence circulated all around social media. As a result, a demonstration was triggered and people came out of the streets to demonstrate against the ruthless unfair attack of a black man. The demonstration was done in many states in the US and the public came out to support black lives matter to draw wide attention to the problem faced by Americans due to human rights violations. Substantially, black lives matter is one of the ways that prove that Americans have been speaking about their problems only that sometimes the laws enacted by racist administrators shun the protest which can go ahead to discourage and instill fear among Americans fighting for equal rights. BLM does not promote violent protest but peaceful ones to have Americans' voices heard.

### **Activism in the Early Centuries**

Moreover, for centuries black people have always tried to voice out their problems. For centuries, the black race was enslaved and forced to do hard labor in very tough conditions such as agricultural and domestic. Black people worked in fields, harvested, milked, butchered and packaged crops among other jobs. The people of color were enslaved and the slaveholders got more than fourteen million dollars' worth of labor, in today's dollars. The slaves also did domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, mending clothes, taking care of children and weaving among other duties<sup>13</sup>. By then, there was no much freedom of speech because federal laws did not recognize freedom of speech. The black people would have wanted to speak but they did not have a chance to hence arguing that they have not been able to acquire human rights because not speaking out about their problems is not correct. There was simply no one to tell and those that were supposed to listen could not. Subsequently, the enslaved black people would try to flee as a way of trying to escape from the problems and also as a way to try and speak but the federal laws such as the 1793 and 1850 Fugitive slave Acts would facilitate their recapture by charging administrators who did not arrest them<sup>14</sup>. The federal laws also required that the slaves who were caught were imprisoned. When caught they would also be tortured and even murdered. Therefore, it is true to argue that black people for centuries have not been keeping quiet about their problems rather they have been silenced and intimidated not to do so.

### **Racism is embedded in American's Minds**

Research shows that racism is largely embedded in American's minds such that airing complains cannot be enough to enable black Americans to acquire their rights. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that speaking about problems is the only way to finish racial discrimination in America. Initiatives such as black lives matter have been upholding all measures to fight for human rights for blacks but still much has not been achieved. This is because of the barriers that exist that require to be addressed even if the black group is

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<sup>13</sup> Sharita Jacobs Thompson, "Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II (Review)," *Alabama Review* 62, no. 3 (2009): 212–13, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ala.2009.0020>

<sup>14</sup> Scott Hancock, "Review of 'the Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery,'" *Reviews in History*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.14296/rih/2014/2304>

required to talk about the problems they are facing. For instance, racism is very much embedded in American's minds. Fetched from the early centuries, people of America treat people according to the in-group they belong to. Studies show that white children and adults treat their fellow white counterparts more positively<sup>15</sup>. The in-groups of white Americans do not include black Americans. Secondly, while people of color try to air their views on social media and other online platforms, hierarchy often will shut down or intimidate their voices. In social media or elsewhere in America, there seems to be an underrepresentation of blacks as compared to white Americans. Whites are more represented in many facets, which render them more power than black Americans. People have been crying for centuries. As long as people who are advantaged by the hierarchy remain passive, people at the bottom, in this case, the black will cry for a lifetime.

### CONCLUSION

Discrimination among black people in America is a subject that has been in existence since the early centuries where black people were enslaved especially in the south. The protest began then and often the slaves would try to escape but whenever caught they would be tortured and even murdered. Close to the same is still being witnessed in today's scenario especially where police brutally kill innocent black people or black people getting arrested for drug use at a higher rate than their white counterparts. Research shows that the problems of racism are not being voiced out and it could be the reason why racism has not stopped yet. Issues such as the physical and mental problems brought by racism among blacks are not being aired out enough. Other issues that have not been addressed but often are just mentioned are stereotypes that exist among black people among other issues. On the other hand, it is also not true to say that Americans have not been airing out their problems because they have done so through initiatives such as black lives matter. Besides, black Americans have always wanted to speak about their issues for centuries now but often intimidated and silenced by federal laws and administrations led by racists. Finally, yet importantly, speaking about problems is not enough because other factors stand in the way of human rights such as the underrepresentation of black people in political and public arenas.

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<sup>15</sup> Yifrah Kaminer, "Traumatizing Young Minds: 'White Privilege' a Faux Pas Reverse Racism," *Mental Health and Addiction Research* 5, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.15761/mhar.1000195>

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