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Film Analysis: 13th

The Netflix original film, *13th*, is a documentary focused on the prison industrial complex in the United States. It critiques the U.S and it's government officials who have participated in the mass incarceration of communities of color. The U.S, making up about 5% of the world's population, is home to about 25% of the world's prisoners. These prisoners are then a part of a economic system run by not only the government but corporations who profit off the slavery of these incarcerated peoples. As many think, the 13th Amendment states that slavery should be abolished, though there is a clause excluding prisoners from said abolition. Since then, Black and brown people have been arrested and incarcerated at a disproportionate rate. The systematic oppression of people of color is evident in seeing that although Black individuals make up 6.6% of our society, they make up 40.2% of prison populations.

In the textbook, *Conflict and Order*, the idea of ethnocentrism is introduced. The word describes the belief that one's race, religion, or society is superior to any others. This goes hand in hand with the documentary since the prison industrial complex indirectly states that Black and brown bodies are less than white bodies. Throughout history Black people have been targeted and portrayed as animalistic. In 1915, *Birth of a Nation*, a racist film depicting Black men to be beasts and a threat to white women, accurately predicted how race would operate in the U.S. The film romanticized the Ku Klux Klan which negatively affected the way people of color were

treated as members of the KKK were portrayed as heroes. This relates back to present day time where white people, usually in corporate America, benefit off those incarcerated. According to the documentary, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) directly profited off their investment on the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which is the same organization who proposed SB 1070 that gave policemen the right to stop anyone who they thought looked like an immigrant. In addition to ethnocentrism, ethnomethodology is “the study of commonplace activities of daily life” according to the textbook. This essentially means that there is a set of roles that is most likely to play in people’s lives or that they are most likely to follow. This idea relates back to the documentary since $\frac{1}{3}$ Black males are expected to go to prison compared to white men who have a $\frac{1}{17}$ chance. It has almost become a “societal script” that restricts these individuals from going about life a different way. Not to mention the difference in how each character is depicted in the media. A white man is not going to be portrayed as a criminal in the media nearly as much as a Black man would be. The public is likely to internalize the messages they receive from media outlets, thus, it is important to note that films are not the only forms of media that did harm, it was also presidential campaign speeches broadcasted nationally that indirectly targeted communities of color and based their campaign on fixing the issue, which was thought to be these said communities. Lastly, the social hierarchy limits how much people can grow or “move up” in status. The social hierarchy negatively affects communities of color because of how individuals from these communities are imprisoned at disproportionate rates. Not only can these people be from low income areas affecting their ability to post bail, but they are also stripped of many rights after convicted of a felony. The documentary, *13th*, shines light on how the prison system favors the guilty and rich

over the poor and innocent by taking into account the amount of people in jail waiting to go to trial because they couldn't afford their bail. Going further, about 97% of prison populations do not go to trial and instead accept a plea deal. A plea deal gives one a chance to plead guilty and serve a sentence without going to trial, though if this person denies a plea deal and is found guilty after trial, their sentence will increase. This strips individuals from their rights especially if they are innocent. After convicted of a felony, a citizen is no longer eligible to vote. If it's mostly people of color who are no longer eligible to vote, there are less people to speak for the communities of color who lack representation.

Relating to me, I don't feel as though it's my place to share my experiences with immigration or racial profiling for this particular situation. For the most part, I have never felt isolated for my race or ethnicity. Although I have had negative experiences, they mostly had to do with my gender and societal norms rather than how I look. I acknowledge that although I am Latinx, I do not face the same discrimination that my family does because I am more fair skinned. Not only in American society but also in the Latinx community my appearance is praised because I do not look like an American "gringa" but I also am not "morena." Knowing this, I do my best to stand up for those around me who do not have the same privilege. I use my social media to talk more about these kinds of topics but there is still much to learn and unlearn.