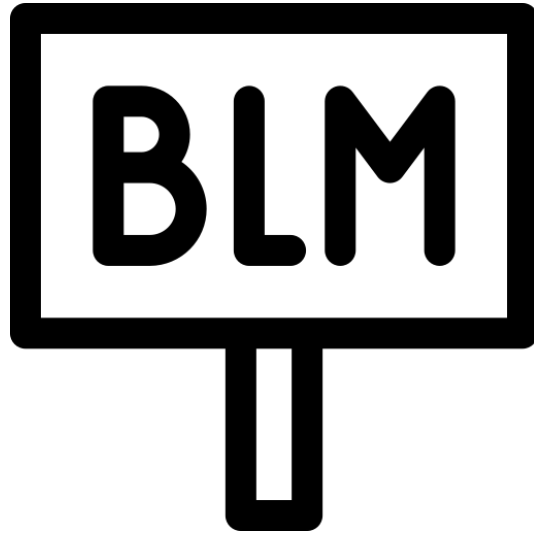


Asian Americans x Black Lives Matter



An Asian American Guide to Racism: Abridged Version

Educate and prepare yourself to have difficult but much needed conversations
about race

"Whites love us because we're not Black." -Frank Chin, 1974

Read the [unabridged version](#) here

Note to the Reader

How this came about

This document was created by two college students who felt frustrated about the recent ongoing events and desperately wanted to learn more about the Black Lives Matter movement.

Have you ever tried to talk to your family about race? We had unproductive conversations with our parents about the recent protests, angrily read about the [NYU Lambdas incident](#), and argued over several insensitive comments in the Subtle Asian Traits Facebook group. We realized that as a community, there is a lot of misunderstanding about racism against Black people.

Even we did not have a good understanding of racism in America. We knew comments like "Black people are criminals" and "we just worked harder than them" were wrong and racist, but we did not feel educated enough to come up with a foolproof, fact-based response we could thoroughly and eloquently deliver. Thus, the idea for this document was born.

Your one-stop guide to understanding racism in America

There is an overwhelming amount of information available on the Internet about racism. We have seen other resource documents shared before, but many of these are simply compiled lists of links to articles, books, and media, requiring readers to open countless tabs and do their own research. Instead, we wanted to create *one comprehensive, well-cited document* that we could refer to when having these conversations about race so that we would be adequately prepared to address anything that came up. In this document, we have compiled research on all stereotypes and misinformed beliefs we could think of for Asian Americans who want to educate themselves and be armed with the necessary facts and information to have productive conversations about race.

Disclaimer

We are not experts and are learning more every day, just like you.

This is a working document, so please [fill out this form](#) to let us know how we did and if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions about this document that you want to share with us. We will do our best to respond as necessary.

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Preface

Introduction

In 2013, following the February 2012 shooting death of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed Black teenager, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media catalyzed the international human rights movement, Black Lives Matter. While the movement has gained widespread traction, nearly 7 years after the official formation of Black Lives Matter, the Black community still faces disturbing amounts of racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the U.S. criminal justice system.

The recent events surrounding Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd provide a small glimpse of an upsetting reality: equality for Black individuals in the United States still has a long way to go. While there are many angles to consider when it comes to racism against Black people in the U.S., here we focus on how Asian Americans play a role in perpetuating this issue.

Why this matters

Racism is a systemic and deep-rooted issue that spans across centuries. Many Asian Americans are simply indifferent towards racism against Black people because it does not visibly affect us.

They helped us. Now we need to help them.

As a minority, we need to support other minorities. Asians were not always as accepted or respected as we currently are, as past generations of Asian Americans faced countless instances of discrimination in the U.S. While Asian Americans were fighting for racial, social, and political change in the U.S. during the 20th century, so were Black Americans. The Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s may have started as a fight for Black Americans to gain equal rights, however, it is important to understand that all minorities benefited in the end. Furthermore, many fundamental ideas that drove the Asian American Movement were drawn from the Black Power Movement.

Understanding our role in perpetuating racism

We must recognize that Asian Americans also play a role in perpetuating racism against Black individuals in the U.S. The term "model minority" was first used by sociologist William Peterson in the 1966 article, "Success Story: Japanese American style" in *The New York Times Magazine*. Peterson described how Japanese Americans were able to overcome discrimination and achieve a measure of

success due to their family structure and strong work ethics. Many press articles subsequently echoed Peterson's theory, allowing this misconception to spread to the point where many Asian Americans today believe in and preach it to their children.

In reality, the model minority myth falsely elevated while delegitimizing Black Americans. It has become second nature to think that White people are at the top and Black people are at the bottom of the societal hierarchy. White media created the model minority concept in an effort to use Asian Americans as the racial middle, and as Asian Americans bought into the myth, they not only cemented White people at the top but widened the gap between them and Blacks. The false portrayal of Asian American success stories by White media has spurred tension between minority communities. The notion pits Black Americans and Asian Americans against one another as non-model minorities have been faulted for falling short in level of achievement and assimilation.

So now what?

In the past few weeks, many individuals have taken to social media to raise awareness, conduct fundraisers, and donate to organizations such as the Minnesota Freedom Fund, Reclaim the Block, Black Visions Collective, etc. While posting on social media and donating are good first steps, it is important to continue our allyship even after things start to lose momentum.

One of the most important things you can do as an ally is to educate yourself on the subject. By educating yourself, you can also help educate those around you (i.e., your family, relatives, and peers) and call out those who don't understand, believe, or care about the injustices that Black people face in our society. It is important to remember that it is not just the older generation that holds these racial biases; some of your peers hold these views as well. This is not so easy. It can be hard to recognize your own racial biases, which are learned from previous generations and perpetuated by the Asian American community. Finally, it is even harder to engage in a productive conversation with a family member or peer to help them acknowledge these biases. However, these conversations are necessary .

How to navigate this document

We know this document is long, but racism in America is a complex issue that requires a thorough understanding in order to properly address it.

1. Learn about [Systemic Racism](#), [Debunking the Model Minority Myth](#), and [Asian-Black Tensions in the U.S.](#)
2. Read [Books](#) and watch [Movies](#) to hear Black perspectives.

3. [Understand methods to effectively engage in discussion.](#)
4. Look over [Black Stereotypes in the U.S.](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to properly understand any misinformed beliefs.
5. Have a conversation about race with another Asian American!

Debunking the Model Minority Myth

Between 1940 and 1970, Asians not only surpassed Black people in average household earnings in the U.S., but they also closed the wage gap with Whites. A lot of people credit this upward mobility to investments in education. However, research suggests that Asian Americans started to earn more not solely because they were more educated and worked harder but because the public became generally less racist toward them.

What is the model minority myth?

At the outset of the 20th century, Asian Americans had often been portrayed as the "yellow peril" - threatening, exotic, and degenerate. But by the 1950s and 1960s, the idea of the model minority had begun to take root. Newspapers often glorified Asian Americans as industrious, law-abiding citizens who kept their heads down and never complained. Asian Americans, with their "solid two-parent family structures," are a shining example of how to overcome discrimination.¹

The reference to Asian Americans as model minorities has to do with the work ethic, respect for elders, and high valuation of education, family, and elders present in their culture. Asian Americans may also be commonly stereotyped by the general public as being studious, intelligent, successful, elitist, brand name conscious, yet paradoxically passive.²

How the model minority myth came about

To combat racism, minorities in the United States have often attempted to portray themselves as upstanding citizens capable of assimilating into mainstream culture. Asian Americans were no different. Some, like the Chinese, sought respectability by promoting stories about their obedient children and their traditional family values. The Japanese pointed to their wartime service as proof of their shared Americanness.

Many scholars have argued that some Asians only started to be successful when the discrimination against them lessened--and only when it was politically convenient. Amid worries that the Chinese exclusion laws from the late 1800s would hurt an allyship with China in the war against imperial Japan, the Magnuson Act was signed in 1943, allowing 105 Chinese immigrants into the U.S. each

¹

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/29/the-real-reason-americans-stopped-spitting-on-asian-americans-and-started-praising-them/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Model_minority

year. This attempt to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act "strategically recast Chinese in its promotional materials as 'law-abiding, peace-loving, courteous people living quietly among us'" instead of the "'yellow peril' coolie hordes."³

The model minority narrative may have started with Asian Americans, but it was quickly co-opted by White politicians who saw it as a tool to win allies in the Cold War. Discrimination was not a good look on the international stage. Embracing Asian Americans provided a powerful means for the United States to proclaim itself a racial democracy and thereby credentialed to assume the leadership of the free world. Stories about Asian American success were turned into propaganda.

Similarly, in the beginning of the Cold War, U.S. policymakers sought to put themselves under the best light possible to the world. In hopes of painting the best picture possible, especially among Asia, the U.S. took charge in aiding Japan's emerging democratic, capitalistic structure. Again, as the U.S. saw Japan as a crucial ally, the U.S. overturned previous Japanese exclusion laws in 1952.

The model minority myth as we see it today was mainly an unintended outcome of earlier attempts by Asians Americans to be accepted and recognized as human beings. They wanted to be seen as American people who were worthy of respect and dignity. So for Asian Americans, one survival strategy was to portray themselves as "good Americans" capable of assimilating into American life.

Asian Americans are not all the same

The model minority myth inaccurately and harmfully assumes that all Asian Americans are the same and equally successful, masking the socioeconomic underperformance of other Asian American subgroups, such as Southeast Asians. For example, Thai, Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, and Filipino-Americans have far higher rates of poverty than other Asian populations, like Japanese or Chinese-Americans.

Discrimination against Asian and Black Americans is not the same:

The model minority myth used as a racial wedge

Elevating Asian Americans as "deserving" and "hardworking" was a tactic to denigrate Black Americans. By the 1960s, anxieties about the civil right movement caused White Americans to further invest in positive portrayals of Asian Americans. The image of the hard-working Asian became an extremely convenient way to deny the demands of Black Americans. Both liberal and conservative

3

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-blacks>

politicians pumped up the image of Asian Americans as a way to shift the blame for Black poverty. The insinuation was that hard work along with unwavering faith in the government and liberal democracy as opposed to political protest were the keys to overcoming racial barriers as well as achieving full citizenship.

However, this strategy ignores the role that selective recruitment of highly educated Asian immigrants has played in Asian American success. It is also making a flawed comparison between Asian Americans and other groups, particularly Black Americans, to argue that racism, including more than two centuries of Black enslavement, can be overcome by hard work and strong family values. But as history shows, Asian Americans were afforded better jobs not simply because of educational attainment, but in part because they were treated better.

Racism that Asian Americans have experienced is not what Black people have experienced. Asians have faced various forms of discrimination but never the systematic dehumanization that Black people have faced during slavery and continue to face today. Asians have been barred from entering the U.S. and gaining citizenship and have been sent to incarceration camps, but all that is different than the segregation, police brutality and discrimination that Black Americans have endured.

Consequences of the model minority myth

A common misconception is that the affected communities typically take pride in being labeled as a model minority. However, the model minority stereotype is considered detrimental to relevant minority communities as it is used to justify the exclusion of such groups in the distribution of (public and private) assistance programs, as well as to understate or slight the achievements of individuals within that minority.

Furthermore, the notion of the model minority pits minority groups against one another through the implication that non-model groups are at fault for falling short of the model minority level of achievement and assimilation. The concept has been criticized for homogenizing the experiences of Asian Americans on one side and Hispanics and Black Americans on the other, despite the fact that individual groups experience racism in different ways. Critics also argue that the idea perpetuates the belief that any minority has the capability to rise economically without assistance and ignores the differences between the history of Asian Americans and Black Americans, as well as Hispanics, in the United States.

Since the end of World War II, many White people have used Asian Americans and their perceived collective success as a racial wedge with the effect of minimizing the role racism plays in the persistent struggles of other racial/ethnic minority groups--especially Black Americans. The idea that Black failure and Asian success cannot be explained by inequities and racism, and that they are one and the

same, allows a segment of White America to avoid any responsibility for addressing racism or the damage it continues to inflict.⁴

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/19/524571669/model-minority-myth-again-used-as-a-racial-wedge-between-asians-and-Blacks>

Black Stereotypes in the U.S.

These *do not reflect our own beliefs* but are unfortunately somewhat common beliefs among our relatives and the Asian American community. Some White people also perpetuate these misinformed stereotypes to not only undermine Asian Americans and their accomplishments, but to also unfairly delegitimize Black people in the U.S.

Lazy and don't work as hard

This is simply false. A 2017 study found that racial differences in effort at work are either not large enough to explain the Black-White wage gap in the labor market, or simply do not exist at all.⁵

The "Blacks are lazy" narrative was born during American slavery. Slave masters and overseers often described slaves as "slow," "lazy," "wants pushing," "an eye servant," and "trifling." Slave masters and slaves operated with different motives: slave masters desired to obtain the greatest labor from slaves, by any means, while slaves desired to do the least labor while avoiding punishment. Slaves registered their protest against slavery by running away, and, when that was not possible, by slowing work, doing shoddy work, destroying work tools, and faking illness. Slave masters attributed the slaves' poor work performance to their laziness.⁶ The myth of Black laziness came from observing slaves and expecting them to perform like paid employees--employees who are also citizens, who enjoy all the duties, rights, privileges, hopes and dreams that are enjoyed by everyone else who is a full-fledged member of society.

After slavery was abolished, Black Americans won election to southern state governments and even to the U.S. Congress. Their growing influence greatly dismayed many White southerners, who felt control slipping ever further away from them. Thus, Jim Crow laws were created to disenfranchise Black voters through poll taxes and literacy tests, and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) hate group arose to intimidate and terrorize Black people. As a result, Black Americans had seen dishearteningly little improvement in their economic and social status, and what political gains they had made had been wiped away by the vigorous efforts of White supremacist forces throughout the region.⁷ However, Americans like to pride themselves on the American Dream: the idea that equality of opportunity is available to any American. Obviously, the aforementioned efforts greatly limited the opportunity and social mobility of Black Americans. In order to keep the idea of the American Dream alive, White

⁵ <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2018/preliminary/paper/A2EQbrKe>

⁶ <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/coon/>

⁷ <https://www.history.com/topics/Black-history/Black-history-milestones>

people continue to perpetuate the "Black people are lazy" stereotype to explain the relative underachievement of Black Americans in the workplace compared to other racial groups.⁸ In reality, Black Americans must overcome racism and face systemic obstacles to obtain jobs.⁹ Black Americans are not offered the same opportunities as White Americans and must work twice as hard to get as far.¹⁰

Reliant on welfare

The public dramatically overestimates the number of Black Americans who live below the poverty line (in fact less than a quarter; compared with the national average around 15%), with the cause of this attributed to media trends and its portrayal of poverty.¹¹ In fact, the vast majority of welfare beneficiaries are not Black; there are more White than Black food stamp recipients.¹²

Some people believe that Black people who fail in the modern economy have brought it upon themselves and are responsible for their poverty status. Rather, it is increasingly clear that they have instead been locked out of skilled labor jobs that make the difference between poverty and working-class for many families. Even when accounting for failed personal responsibility, more and more research suggests that White people with similar backgrounds--without a college degree, and even with a criminal record--find far more opportunity than their Black peers. One pre-recession study in 2003 even found that White job applicants with criminal records are more likely to get called back than Black applicants with identical resumes and no record.¹³

Lower cognitive abilities and lack of intelligence

Black innate intelligence and IQ test scores

While there is the argument that Black people are lazy, another common related argument is that Black people on average have lower cognitive abilities. In the U.S., Asians tend to test higher on IQ tests than all other racial groups, with Blacks scoring the lowest. Some may argue that this result is because they innately are not as intelligent or capable of becoming intelligent. However, another thing to consider is the "Flynn effect," which reasons that raw IQ test scores were continuously increasing approximately linearly during the 20th century, showing that IQ tests do not simply measure innate ability but also

⁸ <https://www.quora.com/How-did-the-myth-of-Black-people-being-lazy-come-about>

⁹

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/12/05/478150/african-americans-face-systematic-obstacles-getting-good-jobs/>

¹⁰

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/10/why-Black-workers-really-do-need-to-be-twice-as-good/409276/>

¹¹ <https://www.asu.edu/mpa/Bartels.pdf>

¹² <https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-welfare-Black-White-780252>

¹³ <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/why-young-Black-men-cant-work>

the extent to which the innate ability has been developed and further used.¹⁴ For example, in 1995, the average IQ test scores of Black people were around the same as those of White people in 1945, indicating the unlikelihood that the gap in intelligence be due to genetic factors but more so by environmental factors.¹⁵ Even though the average Black American scores below 75% of White Americans on most standardized tests, Blacks have been narrowing the gap since 1970.¹⁶ What must not be overlooked are the reasons that explain the existence of the gap, which include racial segregation in the American education system, disparities in school resources, socioeconomic environment, test bias, stereotype threat and minority status, and even health and nutrition.¹⁷

Africa is underdeveloped but not because they lack intelligence

Africa is considered to be the continent that is most abundant in natural resources in the world, yet it also happens to be the least developed. The reasoning behind this does not have to do with Africans and their level of intelligence but with Europeans' exploitation of African countries. The combination of slave trade and colonialism has a lasting impact not only on the Europe's history and success, as it was African slaves were the engine of industrialization, African resources and fold that Europeans took that made Amsterdam Europe's financial capital at the time, and colonial capitalism that was a vehicle for the rise of monopoly giants such as Unilevel, Proctor & Gamble, Barclays, etc. Africa has so many lucrative natural resources but is still underdeveloped because it has long been deprived of being able to shape its own cultural and political ideologies due to suppressive ruling and structural dependency.¹⁸

Criminals

Believing that Black people were inherently criminal and needed to be locked up was a way for White Americans to justify enslaving them. Unfortunately, the criminal stereotype is still pervasive today and is a large reason why Blacks are disproportionately more likely than Whites to be targeted by the police as suspects.

Portrayal of Black Americans as violent and dangerous in the media

Media, particularly the news media, has portrayed Afrian American men as threatening, dangerous, and aggressive, causing many police to mistakenly identify Black men to be suspicious of criminal activity. Studies have shown that Black people are generally perceived as more of a danger than White

¹⁴ <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-people-keep-misunderstanding-connection-between-race-iq>

¹⁵ <https://archive.org/details/iqhumanintelligence00mack/page/n7/mode/2up>

¹⁶

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2019/08/14/statistics-show-iq-disparities-between-races-heres-what-that-really-means/#75fe9faa4490>

¹⁷ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-Black-White-test-score-gap-why-it-persists-and-what-can-be-done/>

¹⁸ Rodney, Walter (2018). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Verso. p. xxii. ISBN 9781788731188.

people. This biased mistrust and fear is a persistent occurrence which has resulted in a disproportionate number of police shootings revolving innocent Black men. When examining the portrayals of crimes and race in news and entertainment, studies have concluded that the media that produces work aligned more with "realistic" representations (e.g., "reality"-based police shows, news) tend to be the most problematic, producing racially biased portrayals toward Black men. Black men not only tend to be shown more often as criminal suspects but also are portrayed to be particularly aggressive, violent, or threatening. As news outlets overrepresent Blacks as criminal perpetrators, the misrepresented portrayals tend to heighten stereotypes that Black people are violent and dangerous.¹⁹

Consequences of the stereotype

There is evidence that the American society today has internalized the criminal stereotype of Black people. For example, in experiments where Black and White Americans perform the same act, respondents have reported that the Black figure is more threatening than the White figure. Likewise, in surveys asking about fear of strangers in hypothetical situations, respondents are more fearful of being victimized by Black strangers than by White strangers. Moreover, in mock trials, Whites have assigned more guilt to Black criminal suspects than White suspects accused of the same crimes. They also gave more severe punishments to the Black suspects. Furthermore, the systematic ways that the media portrays Blacks and crimes has even affected viewers' memories when recalling crimes. Viewers may incorrectly recall race and crime information, increasing the probability that any given Black man could be mistakenly criminalized.

See [*Systemic racism in the U.S. criminal justice system*](#)

Play the victim and race card

There are two types of people: those who remain profoundly ignorant about racism and its history, and those who have either a lived experience of it or have made an effort to self-educate with the gargantuan task of communicating how racism works, and the language in which it manifests. The former has the privilege of remaining silent on issues of racial injustices, while the latter has no choice but to confront these issues face-to-face. They must speak up and bring attention to these racial injustices, or else more members of their community will continue to suffer and even die. Accusing a Black person of "playing the race card" when they speak about racism is intended to silence, threaten or "shame someone into not mentioning the obvious racism they are being subjected to".²⁰ Just stop and listen and acknowledge Black voices. Start listening to Black people when they tell you their experiences, and stop policing their feelings about those experiences.

¹⁹ www.jstor.org/stable/41819017

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/16/playing-the-race-card-racism-Black-experience>

You cannot enslave a group of people for 300 years, systematically and legally oppress them for another 100, and think that everything is fine a mere 50 years later. I know that many non-Black people want to "move on," to leave that ugly history in the past, to start with a clean slate. But there's no such thing. We cannot just wish away the far-reaching effects of oppression. We cannot pretend that a mere two generations after the Civil Rights Movement--which was opposed by a good portion of our population--we have successfully weeded out the deep-seated racism that fueled centuries of mistreatment both inside and outside our justice system.²¹

See [*Don't Black people already have equal rights?*](#)

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<https://www.motherhoodandmore.com/we-White-americans-need-to-stop-telling-Black-americans-to-take-responsibility/>

Frequently Asked Questions

We have a responsibility to educate our friends and family and call out racism. Here are some answers to some common questions they might ask.

Why should this matter to us?

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly ... Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds."

-Martin Luther King Jr.

Another human being, someone who bleeds just like you, breathes air just like you, has a family just like you, is an American just like you, was killed by individuals who have allowed their blue suits, guns, and bias to get the best of them. Countless more people were murdered this way. Regardless of race, as a human being, we must support all human beings and fight against injustices that harm any of us.

There's also an element of collective victory in supporting other minorities. Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders face high rates of incarceration, and there are cases in which police have targeted South Asians because of their darker skin tone. Some activists point out a parallel to the civil rights movement, when Asian American benefited from Black American victories on immigration, voting rights and even affirmative action policies.²²

Black people lack personal responsibility, so they deserve it

"Blacks are lazy" stereotype

A study in 2017 showed that differences in worth ethic between Black individuals and their White peers was not significant enough to account for the Black-White wage gap.²³ The stereotype of Black people being lazy emerged during American slavery and lived on through their inability to successfully climb up the economic and social ladder. However, when taking a deeper examination into the post-Civil War history, one will see the rise of the Jim Crow laws and White supremacists, such as the KKK, that prevented the societal advancement of Black people.

²² <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/08/milwaukee-protests-asian-american-black-lives-matter-214184>

²³ <https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2018/preliminary/paper/A2EQbrKe>

See [Lazy and don't work as hard](#)

Systemic racism and why we simply cannot compare Blacks to Asians

First, one needs to realize not only that most Asians came to the U.S. under different circumstances that have affected success rates, which has led to a disproportionate percentage of success amongst Asians due to selective immigration, but also that Asians are successful partly because Americans became less racist toward them.

See [If Asian people can be successful in the U.S. despite discrimination, why can't Black people?](#)

Some Asians argue that Black people do not work hard like Asian Americans and immigrants, who have toiled long and hard to earn enough money to afford tutors and provide their children the best education possible to socially advance.

However, Black individuals in the U.S. are largely denied equal education because of segregation in the public schooling system. They could try to send their children to private schools or hire tutors but may live in a formerly redlined neighborhood where they are not only at a disadvantage in the labor market due to their race but also have fewer job opportunities within their area. Since they do not have the basic wealth to improve their education they can neither elevate their socioeconomic status nor move out of their segregated neighborhood.

The Jim Crow laws may have been abolished many decades ago, but segregation still lingers on in education, housing, and the labor market, affecting Black people's socioeconomic status, causing many Black Americans to be caught in a vicious cycle not because they don't work hard but because of systemic racism.

See [Segregation](#)

Black people don't care about improving their relationship with us

"Black people never did anything for us--they've stepped on us and made our lives harder due to jealousy of our model minority status"

This is not true, as Black people have not stepped on us. They helped us just like they helped other minorities through the civil rights movement and the laws that were passed during that era.²⁴

²⁴ <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/epilogue.html>

Furthermore, many of the foundational ideas that drove the Asian American. Prior to the mid-1960's the, Asians had participated in political organizations in divergent forms rather than as a coalition. However, following the Free Speech Movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Asian American movement finally emerged with an emphasis of collectivity, drawing influence from these prior movements as well as the Black Power Movement.²⁵

While racial tension exists between the Black and Asian communities, it is unfair to stay that Black people have hindered Asians. As the scholar, Mari Matsuda, has expressed, we have become adapted to think that White people are at the top and Black people are at the bottom of the hierarchy in our society. With that thought in mind, Asians do not fit into either of those categories, as they are neither White nor Black. Thus, Whites placed them as the racial middle, using Asian Americans as the vehicle to enforce the notion of White supremacy. As Asian Americans bought into the model minority myth, thinking that through hard work they could also achieve the same as a White person, they not only put White people at the top of the pedestal but also ensured the widening of the gap between them and Blacks. Black people did not step on us; we inadvertently stepped on them by believing in the media's portrayal as the "model minority."

Don't Black people already have equal rights? Systemic racism isn't real.

Slavery ended a hundred and fifty years ago--isn't it time for Black people to get over it? At this point, they're just using it as an excuse for higher crime and poverty rates. We all have equal rights now. They need to stop playing the victim and take responsibility. That's not racism; that's reality.

Once upon a time there were a handful of blue houses in the same neighborhood of yellow ones. Each day, the yellow house owners would dump all of their trash into the blue house yards. Blue house owners hated it, of course, but if they complained, the yellow house owners would beat them senseless. If they went to the authorities, they'd beat them senseless, too.

Day after day, so much garbage filled the blue house yards that it was impossible to clear it all. So the blue house people did their best to live their lives around it.

²⁵

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hist32/History/S18%20-%20The%20Black%20Power%20Movement%20and%20the%20Asian%20American%20Movement.htm>

After years and years of this, the blue house folks said enough was enough. They banded together and blocked the road so nobody could get home. The yellow house owners tried to beat them up like they always had, but the blue house owners refused to move until the trash dumpers would listen.

The blue house people explained the obvious fact that it was unfair to dump garbage in their yards and vowed to continue to block the road until it stopped. It took a while, but finally, the yellow house people conceded.

It was a new day for the blue house people as they cleaned the yellow house owners' garbage out of their yards once and for all. Hallelujah!

But the blue house owners' woes were not over. Their lawn was dead from years without sunlight. Their shrubs were withered from the toxic sludge that seeped in year after year. Some of the poison even penetrated the foundation of the house, causing structural issues. The blue house people tried many things to remedy all of this, but there was so much damage, it proved difficult.

Meanwhile, the yellow house owners' yards thrived as they always had. And soon, they started complaining about how the blue houses looked.

"What's the matter?" they asked the blue house owners. "We don't put garbage in your yard anymore. Why aren't you fixing up your yard?" The blue house people explained that they're trying, but were running into some problems. Their tools were rusty from years in storage. They needed new plants, some good soil to restart their grass, and maybe some fertilizer.

Since the yellow house owners had caused this damage with their garbage, perhaps they could be a little understanding? Maybe even help with some of what it would take to fix it?

"Nonsense!" said the yellow house people. "You're just looking for a handout. You just need to work harder. Look at your yard! What a mess! We don't dump our garbage on you anymore. We're

equal now. There's nothing wrong with your soil or your tools--you just don't want to work at it like we do. I bust my butt to get my lawn looking this way. It's your own fault that yours isn't thriving and your house needs work."

This is what it sounds like when people refuse to acknowledge the generational, societal effects of America's racial history. This is what it sounds like when people place the blame for crime, poverty, and other socioeconomic issues in mostly Black communities solely onto Black people themselves. It is patently unfair to deny that so many challenges those communities face are a direct result of centuries of White supremacy. And it is blatant arrogance for White people to expect Black people to take responsibility for the racial disparities in our economic and justice systems when White people are the ones who caused them in the first place.²⁶

See [*A History of Discrimination in the U.S.*](#) and [*Systemic Racism*](#)

If Asian people can be successful in the U.S. despite discrimination, why can't Black people?

The model minority myth used as a racial wedge

Often overlooked is the direct contrast of model minorities with Black Americans. Model minorities are used as a tool to discriminate against Black people with the mantra "If they can do it, why can't you?." This argument is often viewed as logical, because, at the surface, there doesn't seem to be a clearcut explanation as to why Jewish, Asian, and Irish Americans are able to thrive after experiencing racism, while Blacks still seem to be disenfranchised. What this argument often ignores is the unique experience of Black people in America, namely that they are the only minority who had been enslaved on U.S. soil for centuries. Some scholars also explain the differing successes of Asian immigrants and Blacks on the specific types of racism they experience. Essentially, racism in itself is not monolithic, it is perpetrated in different ways and different arenas of life; some arenas where anti-Black rhetoric exist prove to be more harmful to Black personhood than situations in which anti-Asian discrimination exists.

²⁶

<https://www.motherhoodandmore.com/we-White-americans-need-to-stop-telling-Black-americans-to-take-responsibility/>

Asians are successful partly because Americans became less racist toward us

Many scholars have argued that some Asians only started to be successful when the discrimination against them lessened--and only when it was politically convenient. Amid worries that the Chinese exclusion laws from the late 1800s would hurt an allyship with China in the war against imperial Japan, the Magnuson Act was signed in 1943, allowing 105 Chinese immigrants into the U.S. each year. As Wu wrote in 2014 in the Los Angeles Times, the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion "strategically recast Chinese in its promotional materials as 'law-abiding, peace-loving, courteous people living quietly among us'" instead of the "'yellow peril' coolie hordes." Asian Americans were afforded better jobs not simply because of educational attainment, but because they were treated better.

We enjoy privileges due to our "model minority" status

As Asian Americans, our "model minority" status has come with residual benefits of White privilege that Black people lack. As Americans became less racist towards Asians through the decades, Asian Americans were able to rise through the ranks and obtain high salaried positions that Blacks could not due to discrimination in the labor market.

Asians may claim that it was their education and diligence through tutoring and SAT preparation that elevated us to success. However, that is what the model minority myth wants us to believe. What must be recognized is that it was actually the newfound respect and, as a result, financial stability, that allowed us to live in better-off neighborhoods and provide subsequent generations with opportunities of educational, artistic, and extracurricular experiences for a brighter future.²⁷

While Black people suffer from a system built on racism

We don't get stopped or killed because of our race, but Black people in the U.S. must fight an uphill battle against systemic racism. There are countless, unique obstacles they must overcome that we will never experience.

See [*Systemic Racism*](#)

²⁷

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2020/june/standing-between-White-privilege-and-Black-disprivilege-asi.html>

The different histories between how African and Asian Americans came to the U.S. has influenced success rates

Unlike many of us, they were brought here because they were not given an option

The lingering effects of slavery on Black Americans²⁸

Black people were largely brought to the U.S. by means of slavery. For 250 years, slavery was an institution that dominated American race dynamics and relations. 100 years following the abolishment of slavery, various forces of segregation and racism persisted in varying forms and intensities. While the former and latter are widely discussed, there is little discussion about how these combined 350 years of discrimination against Black people have served as a foundation for modern socioeconomic conditions amongst Black Americans.

It has been difficult for Black Americans to achieve the same status of equality as White Americans. From the very beginning, Whites were more established and had a head start as slaveholders. Whites built a society through the wealth that enslaved Black people produced. Although slavery was abolished by law, Whites were ultimately still the ones who decided how Black people would enter and be accepted into society.

See [*But don't Black people already have equal opportunities in the U.S.?*](#)

Selective immigration

One possible cause of the higher performance of Asian Americans as a group despite their relatively small population in America is because those who are chosen to move to America often come from a selective group of Asians. The relative difficulty of emigrating and immigrating into the United States has created a selective nature of the process with the U.S. often choosing the wealthier and more highly educated out of those with less resources, motivation or ability to immigrate. Also, in 1965, when the National Immigration Act replaced the national-origins quota system, policymakers decided that the nation should select its immigrants based on how they could contribute to the economy and to reunite U.S. families.

Not all Asians are successful after immigrating to America²⁹

There is often the narrative that all Asian American families achieve success after they come to the U.S., but this does not apply to all groups. Asian Americans are more diverse than publicly portrayed, and

²⁸ https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5323/jafriamerhist.97.1-2.0110?seq=3#metadata_info_tab_contents, page 111

²⁹ <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1082&context=famconfacpub>, p 707

there are varying levels of success among different groups of Asian Americans. Many immigrants from China, Japan, and India prospered compared to their Southeast Asian (i.e. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia) counterparts. However, one must also look at the different circumstances under which these different groups immigrated to the U.S. Many Southeast Asians came to the U.S. as refugees. In comparison, those from China, Japan, and India came to further their education in hopes of pursuing promising careers, may have already had other relatives in the U.S., possessed certain desirable skills, and overall were better prepared for success.

What about the American Dream? Everyone has equal opportunity if they work hard.

The myth of meritocracy

Meritocracy is an individual's ability to improve their social standing through their own merit, not due to their social position. However, meritocracy is argued to be a myth in America because wealth disparity and limited class mobility remain widespread, regardless of individual work ethic.³⁰ The level of education required in order to become competitive in a meritocracy may also be costly, effectively limiting candidacy for a position of power to those with the means necessary to become educated.

Even if free education were provided, the resources that the parents of a student are able to provide outside of the curriculum, such as tutoring, exam preparation, and financial support for living costs during higher education will influence the education the student attains and the student's social position in a meritocratic society. This limits the fairness and justness of any meritocratic system. Similarly, critics have noted that many hierarchical organisations actually favour individuals who have received disproportionate support of an informal kind (e.g. mentorship, word-of-mouth opportunities, and so on), such that only those who benefit from such support are likely to understand these organizations as meritocratic.³¹

Nearly all parents are going to try to gain unfair advantages for their offspring. And when you have inequalities of income, one thing people can do with extra money is to pursue that goal. If the financial status of your parents helped determine your economic rewards, you would no longer be living by the formula that "IQ + effort = merit".³²

The myth of meritocracy is used to maintain the belief that class mobility is widely attainable. Meritocracy excludes people outside of the elite, excludes middle class people and working class people

³⁰ <https://phys.org/news/2017-10-myth-meritocracy-inequality.html>

³¹ <https://www.academia.edu/38122177>

³² <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/19/the-myth-of-meritocracy-who-really-gets-what-they-deserve>

from schooling, from good jobs, and from status and income, and then insults them by saying that the reason they're excluded is that they don't measure up, rather than that there's a structural block to their inclusion."³³ Phrases such as "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" have been identified as concealing the myth of meritocracy by placing the onus of upward class mobility solely on the individual while intentionally ignoring structural conditions. The minority of individuals who manage to overcome structural conditions and achieve upward class mobility are used as examples to support the idea that meritocracy exists.³⁴

Racial disparities define the American experience

Many Americans like to believe that everyone started from the same place at some point. However, this is not true for Black people; due to hundreds of years of slavery, they started even further behind everyone else. A key part of the "American Dream" is leaving your children in a better economic position than you were in, but that dream is less attainable for Black Americans.

Research has found that the children of White households in the bottom quarter of the income distribution were much more likely than children from Black households at the bottom to move up into a higher income bracket over their lives.³⁵ Furthermore, young Black Americans need two additional levels of education to have the same chance of landing a job as their White peers.³⁶ But to get there, they must accrue nearly twice as much debt as White graduates. And even with that education, the median net worth of Black families led by a college graduate--\$25,900--is nearly half that of White families led by a high school dropout.³⁷

³³ <https://www.fatherly.com/love-money/myth-of-meritocracy-middle-class-families/>

³⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103115000062>

³⁵

<https://www.businessinsider.com/us-systemic-racism-in-charts-graphs-data-2020-6#a-key-part-of-the-american-dream-is-leaving-your-children-in-a-better-economic-position-than-you-were-in-but-that-dream-is-less-attainable-for-black-americans-12>

³⁶ https://younginvincibles.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Closing_the_Race_Gap_TX-12.22.pdf

³⁷

https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/for-Black-millennials-an-endangered-american-dream/2019/01/25/d01853a2-19b8-11e9-8813-cb9dec761e73_story.html

Affirmative action seems unfair. Black people get more opportunities than us on account of their race.

What is affirmative action?

Affirmative action refers to policies positively supporting members of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups such as Black people that have previously suffered discrimination in areas such as education, employment and housing due to a long history of slavery and oppression.³⁸

Why do we need affirmative action?

Affirmative action seeks to bridge inequalities in employment and pay, increase access to education, promote diversity, and redress apparent past wrongs, harms, or hindrances. The purpose of affirmative action is to ensure that public institutions, such as universities, hospitals, and police forces, are more representative of the populations they serve.³⁹ It is true that the policy is inherently unequal; however, minding the inescapable fact that historic inequalities still exist in America, the policy is much more fair than one in which these circumstances are not taken into account.

Furthermore, affirmative action is an effort towards inclusion rather than a discriminatory practice. The idea is to help disadvantaged groups get back to a normal starting position after a long period of discrimination. The programs involve government action, sometimes with resources being transferred from an advantaged group to a disadvantaged one, which has been justified on the grounds that they counterbalance past discrimination.⁴⁰ In this case, "advantaged" groups refers to groups who are generally well-off due to advantages previous generations had, while "disadvantaged" groups refer to groups that are generally not as well-off due to historical oppression and discrimination. The most effective way to cure society of exclusionary practices is to make special efforts at inclusion, which is exactly what affirmative action does.⁴¹

But don't Black people already have equal opportunities in the U.S.?

No. You might think so because of the myth of meritocracy: the philosophy that anyone, regardless of their race or ethnicity, can succeed if they work hard enough. This myth suggests that if a person of color is not succeeding at work (e.g. not getting promoted), it must be due to laziness or a lack of effort

³⁸ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/affirmative-action/>

³⁹ <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~eandersn/biblio.htm>

⁴⁰ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equal-opportunity/>

⁴¹ <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/readroom/articles/affirm.htm>

on that person's part, rather than a structural barrier. However, the myth of meritocracy has been identified as a tool to both invisibilize institutional racism and justify racist attitudes, while also serving as an argument against affirmative action policies.⁴²

See [*The myth of meritocracy*](#) and [*Systemic Racism*](#)

Has affirmative action been successful?

A 2017 study found that affirmative action in the United States increases the Black share of employees over time: in 5 years after an establishment is first regulated, the Black share of employees increases by an average of 0.8 percentage points. Strikingly, the Black share continues to grow at a similar pace even after an establishment is deregulated. One could argue that this persistence is driven in part by affirmative action inducing employers to improve their methods for screening potential hires.

Affirmative action is still needed to counteract continuing bias and prejudice against Black people and other minorities. Job discrimination is grounded in prejudice and exclusion, whereas affirmative action is an effort to overcome prejudicial treatment through inclusion. For example, job-seekers with Black-sounding names may be less likely to get a callback than those with White-sounding names, as proof that affirmative action is not obsolete.⁴³

Well, we worked hard to be successful. They just have to work hard, too.

Yes, we worked hard. But, we must recognize the privileges we have that allowed us to get there. These privileges have manifested in the form of more opportunities. Asians are generally more financially well-off than Black people, largely due to the differences in discrimination we receive and the way our society is set up. Once we receive an education, it is not so difficult for us to improve our socioeconomic status. On the other hand, Black people still suffer from the legacy of slavery and it is more difficult for them to improve their socioeconomic status. For example, consequences from redlining have significantly limited the quality of education and social mobility of Black Americans.

Despite affirmative action programs, institutions of higher education in America are not set up to accommodate the oppression of Black people. For example, standardized exams, if anything, simply predict the socioeconomic class of the student.⁴⁴ One does well on these exams by hiring tutors and enrolling in a test-prep program. We as Asians have the socioeconomic status and therefore the ability to provide these resources for our children, ensuring their admission to a good university.

⁴² <https://archive.org/details/meltingpotsrainb0000cock>

⁴³ Fryer, Roland; Loury, Glenn (2005). "Affirmative Action and Its Mythology". *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 19 (3): 147-162. CiteSeerX 10.1.1.169.4115. doi:10.1257/089533005774357888.

⁴⁴ <https://www.aaup.org/article/why-standardized-tests-have-standardized-postracial-ideology#.XvF6ahNKjBI>

On the other hand, those who are not as well off do not have the ability to provide these resources for their children. For example, the Yale Law School student body overwhelmingly comes from privilege. Just like every other elite university in the United States, Yale has more students at the top 1% of the income distribution than the bottom half.⁴⁵ Thus, simply working hard may not be enough to elevate one's socioeconomic status. It is a combination of working hard and having privilege and ample opportunities to be able to achieve social mobility.

See [*We enjoy privileges due to our "model minority" status*](#)

Why do Black people care more about White on Black crimes than Black on Black crimes?

When someone commits an act of terrorism against in the United States, which rightfully leads to anger and sadness, no one asks, "Well what about how many Americans kill other Americans each year?" This question simply deflects attention away from the issue at hand. Yes, the issue of Americans killing other Americans is an issue, but it does not make the issue of foreign terrorists killing Americans more acceptable.

Intraracial crimes are not limited to Black communities

You have probably heard people bring up that the majority of Black people murdered are killed by other Black people. This is true, but it is misleading. The overwhelming majority of White murder victims each year are killed by White assailants. When was the last time you heard the term "White on White crime?"

People generally commit crimes against people they know or live near.⁴⁶ White people commit crimes against White people at almost identical rates, because crimes are carried out due to proximity. The truth of the matter is that White people kill White people, Black people kill Black people, Latinos kill Latinos, Asians kill Asians, and so on. This argument is a verbal sleight of hand used to distract from the issue at hand and used to misdirect and derail the conversation.

Bias in the criminal justice system

It is not that Black people do not care about Black on Black crimes. The difference is that when a Black person commits a crime on another Black person, they will receive punishment and go to jail.

⁴⁵ <https://www.fatherly.com/love-money/myth-of-meritocracy-middle-class-families/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.cleveland.com/news/2020/06/stop-using-Black-on-Black-crime-to-deflect-away-from-police-brutality.html>

However, when a White person commits a crime on a Black person, many times they do not receive punishment and it can only be hoped that they will be arrested.

For example, Amhaud Arbery was chased and killed by two White men. It had taken 2 months and *video evidence* for those two men to be arrested. While Black on Black crimes are an issue, it is not what needs to be focused on currently. This is similar to the comparison of the two sayings "All lives matter" and "Black lives matter." Yes, all lives matter, but, at the time being, Black people are suffering at the hands of White people.⁴⁷

Work is being done behind the scenes

You might think that Black people only care about the actions of others and do not worry about their own community. You accuse them of lacking personal responsibility and bring up Black on Black crime. They are not contesting that work needs to be done within the community--of course things can be improved. However, there is so much work already underway through organizations such as Reclaim the Block, Black Visions Collective and My Block My Hood My City. Just because you are not personally aware of it does not mean it is not happening.

To be clear, these protests are focusing on factors outside their control; i.e., police brutality and systemic racism. Black people do care about what is happening in their communities, and they are and have been taking steps to improve it. The movement now is protesting injustices caused by external societal forces, which is another side of the coin.

These are only a few isolated cases. Racism doesn't exist in the U.S. anymore.

While individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature (for example, saying the N-word), institutional racism is less perceptible because of its "less overt, far more subtle" nature. Institutional racism originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than individual racism.⁴⁸

When domestic terrorists bomb a Black church and kill five Black children, that is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city--Birmingham, Alabama--five hundred Black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and discrimination in

⁴⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8jUA7JBkF4>

⁴⁸ https://archive.org/details/Blackpowerpoliti00carm_0/page/4

*the Black community, that is a function of institutional racism. When a Black family moves into a home in a White neighborhood and is stoned, burned or routed out, they are victims of an overt act of individual racism which most people will condemn. But it is institutional racism that keeps Black people locked in dilapidated slum tenements, subject to the daily prey of exploitative slumlords, merchants, loan sharks and discriminatory real estate agents. The society either pretends it does not know of this latter situation, or is in fact incapable of doing anything meaningful about it.*⁴⁹

-Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton

Regarding police brutality, there are only a few bad apples. Most cops are good and protect us.

Police violence in the U.S. has always been blamed on "a few bad apples." However, the original phrase, "one bad apple spoils the bunch" is more appropriate.

*"We currently have a system which is set up to ignore bad apples, destroy bad apples' records, persecute good apples for speaking up and shuffle dangerous, emotionally unstable apples around to the point that children have to attend apple classes. You cannot look at our current situation and claim that anybody likes them apples."*⁵⁰

-John Oliver

It's not just the "bad apples" within police departments who cause citizens to lose confidence and trust in their local police. It's not just the cops who engage in discrimination or other forms of misconduct. It's these "good apples," too, the ones who obey the law, and the rules, but who countenance, excuse, justify, or defend the bad behavior of their friends and colleagues. So many "good apples" spend so much time defending the "bad apples" that it becomes hard to tell which apples are which.⁵¹ The problem is not individual cops acting on their own racist accord; rather, the problem is a system that is inherently racist and aggressive.

Background

In the United States, it is common for marginalized groups to perceive the police as oppressors, rather than protectors or enforcers of the law, due to the statistically disproportionate number of minority

⁴⁹ <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/segregation/text8/carmichael.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/news/a49180/john-oliver-police-accountability/>

⁵¹ <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/09/27/how-bad-apples-spoil-the-whole-bunch>

incarcerations.⁵² Data released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011) showed that from 2003 to 2009 at least 4,813 people died while being arrested by local police. Of the deaths classified as law enforcement homicides, there were 2,876 deaths; of those, 1,643 or 57.1% of the deaths were "people of color".⁵³

What is police brutality?

Police brutality is use of excessive and/or unnecessary force by personnel affiliated with law enforcement duties when dealing with suspects and civilians. The excessive force imposed by police officers has significantly increased over the past decade and caused social misinterpretations of the role that police officers play in the community.

Can't we trust the police to protect us?

The United States has developed a notorious reputation for cases of police brutality, having reported far more incidents of killings by police officers than the rest of the Western world.⁵⁴ U.S. police killed 1,093 people in 2016 and 1,146 people in 2015.⁵⁵ Mass shootings have killed 339 people since 2015, whereas police shootings over the same time span claimed the lives of 4,355 people.⁵⁶

Further, police killings are one of the leading causes of death for young men in the United States. A study predicts that 1 in 2,000 men and 1 in 33,000 women die as a result of police use of deadly force. The same study predicts the risk is highest for Black men, as approximately 1 in 1,000 Black men can expect to be killed by police.⁵⁷

See [*Police brutality*](#)

Cases of police brutality against Black Americans

Some may think that cases of police brutality against Black Americans are few and isolated, but they are in fact part of an inherently racist system. Here, we recognize some of the Black lives that have been tragically and needlessly taken at the hands of the police.

⁵² Powers, Mary D. (1995). "Civilian Oversight Is Necessary to Prevent Police Brutality". In Winters, Paul A. (ed.). *Policing the Police*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press. pp. 56-60. ISBN 978-1-56510-262-0.

⁵³ <http://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/being-arrested-can-be-hazardous-your-health-especially-if-you-are-person-color>

⁵⁴ <https://www.vox.com/cards/police-brutality-shootings-us/us-police-shootings-statistics>

⁵⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>

⁵⁶ <https://truthout.org/articles/presidential-candidates-cant-discuss-gun-deaths-without-discussing-cops/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6708348>

George Floyd (2020)

George Floyd was a 46-year-old man that wanted to "touch the world" but was arrested and suffocated to death as a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes for allegedly using counterfeit money to purchase cigarettes.

Breonna Taylor (2020)

Breonna Taylor was a 26-year-old emergency medical technician who was shot eight times when three Louisville Metro Police Department officers entered her apartment during a no-knock search warrant to search for two men that were suspected of using her apartment to receive packages for selling drugs.

Charleena Lyles (2017)

Charleena Lyles was a 30-year-old pregnant woman struggling with mental health issues who was fatally shot by Seattle police while displaying a knife after she had called the police to her home to report an attempted burglary.

Michael Brown (2014)

Michael Brown was an 18-year-old man that was fatally shot six times by a White Ferguson, Missouri police officer after being stopped for jaywalking and then being suspected as a robbery suspect of a nearby convenience store.

Tamir Rice (2014)

Tamir Rice was a 12-year-old boy who was killed by a Cleveland, Ohio police officer after being seen carrying a replica toy Airsoft gun.

Eric Garner (2014)

Eric Garner was killed when a New York City Police Department officer arrested him and put him in a chokehold for being suspicious of selling single cigarettes from packs without tax stamps.

Freddie Gray (2015)

Freddie Gray was a 25-year-old man who died from spinal cord injuries sustained when being arrested by six officers from the Baltimore Police Department for possession of a knife.

Aiyana Jones (2010)

Aiyana Jones was a seven-year-old girl who was shot while sleeping in her home when the police raided her home in search of a murder suspect and a policeman accidentally pulled the trigger.

What are some solutions?

Activists and advocates have taken different approaches regarding solutions:

1. **Police reform:** Those who advocate for police reform offer specific suggestions to combat police brutality, such as body cameras, civilian review boards, improved police training, demilitarization of police forces, and legislation aimed at reducing brutality (such as the Justice in Policing Act of 2020).⁵⁸ However, police departments have been implementing reforms for years with little progress to show for it.⁵⁹
2. **Defund the police:** Those who advocate to defund the police call for the full or partial diversion of funds allocated to police departments, which would be redirected toward community and social services.⁶⁰
3. **Dismantle the police:** Those who advocate to dismantle the police call for police departments to be dismantled and rebuilt from the ground up.
4. **Abolish the police:** Those who advocate to abolish police departments call for police departments to be disbanded entirely and to be replaced by other community and social services.⁶¹

Why are there violent protests?

Rioting and violence

In most cases, riots do not start out of nowhere but after years of neglect by law makers, media, and the public.⁶² Over time, years of tension over unresolved issues will build up until a horrific event, such as the deaths of Rodney King, Freddie Gray, and George Floyd, that showcases the underlying issues and brings them to the surface, catalyzing a series of riots because people's voices are still left unheard. These riots are not for random acts of violence or taking advantage of a situation to cause destruction but out of desperation to force change.

In history there have been many nonviolent forms of protest, such as kneeling when the American national anthem plays.⁶³ However, if no action results from nonviolent protest, people may turn to

⁵⁸ <https://www.joincampaignzero.org/solutions>

⁵⁹ <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/police-reform-defund-iacp/>

⁶⁰ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/06/us/what-is-defund-police-trnd/index.html>;
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/08/us/what-does-defund-police-mean.html>

⁶¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/calls-reform-defund-dismantle-abolish-police-explained-n1227676>

⁶² <https://www.vox.com/2015/4/30/8518681/protests-riots-work>

⁶³

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/taking-a-knee-national-anthem-nfl-trump-why-meaning-origins-racism-us-colin-kaepernick-a8521741.html>

violence, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) famously stated, "a riot is the language of the unheard."

⁶⁴ Nonviolent protests raise awareness, but violence draws further attention and instills a sense of urgency, prompting important discussion revolving around race relations in not only the national but also the international community. When Colin Kaepernick knelt, people got angry and did not pay attention to his message. Even though it was a peaceful protest, his message was quickly rebuked and no real change was achieved by it.

Furthermore, violence has sometimes been incited by police. In the recent protests, police have fired rubber bullets, tear gas, and pepper spray on peaceful protestors, causing some protestors to fight back in the form of looting in response.

While violence causes destruction and may not be the best way to encourage sustainable change, history shows evidence of riots leading to social reforms.⁶⁵ The Rodney King riots were some of the most controversial and violent protests, but they also raised political attention and catalyzed change. South Central L.A. representative Maxine Waters had taken initiatives prior to these riots; however, after the violence, she began to understand the pain that the people had been going through and began shifting course by focusing on passing bills to address protestors' concerns. From there, she worked on public housing, neighborhood infrastructure bills, and inner city job creation bills.⁶⁶ Most notably, following the assassination of MLK in 1968, over 100 riots broke out across America. Five days later, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was passed.⁶⁷

Looting

To be clear, we do not condone looting. We understand that it significantly harms small businesses, including POC-owned ones. However, we did some research to try and understand why exactly people loot. Why do they feel the need to resort to this level of violence, even burning down businesses of their own along the way?

The term "looting" has military roots and usually occurs under circumstances where there is "evidence of human depravity."⁶⁸ There is a long history of looting in American with the most famous early example being the Boston Tea Party in 1773 when Americans dumped an estimated \$1 million of tea into the Boston Harbor.

⁶⁴ <https://timeline.com/by-the-end-of-his-life-martin-luther-king-realized-the-validity-of-violence-4de177a8c87b>

⁶⁵ <https://news.northeastern.edu/2020/06/10/are-peaceful-protests-more-effective-than-violent-ones/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.gq.com/story/why-violent-protests-work>

⁶⁷

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/nation-world/2020/06/09/politifact-tracing-civil-rights-legislation-before-and-after-martin-luther-king-jrs-death/>

⁶⁸ <http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/2347/Article%2015.pdf> p.10

While the intentions behind looting groups may vary, the targets of vandalism tend to be of symbolic rather than material value.⁶⁹ Some loot to take advantage of the current state of unrest and take away a good that they are deprived of but that the other party may obtain easily with their privilege.⁷⁰ The looter does not necessarily want the item; rather, they seek the experience of taking it. For others, looting may act as a form of empowerment to reclaim dignity following decades of police abuse and make sure protesters' voices are heard.⁷¹

For example, in 2015 following the death of Freddie Gray, a 25-year old Black man who died in police custody following neck and spinal cord injuries at the hands of six police officers, protests, riots, and lootings exploded in his Baltimore neighborhood.⁷² In an area where generations of peaceful protests against the Baltimore Police Department had failed to spur any action, the world started watching when the local CVS was burned, eventually leading to an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

⁷³

People loot because they feel like they have no other choice. They have reached rock bottom and are desperately looking for a way out. We must ask ourselves, what has caused them to feel this way?⁷⁴

The toll of being Black and everyday racism

Some will say Black people love to make a big deal out of things and draw attention to themselves; however, what they may not realize is how much everyday racism hinders, threatens, and disrupts Black people's lives in America. While segregation is no longer integrated into the law as it was decades ago, it has not disappeared, as residual racism towards Blacks is still a large issue in society today whether it be in housing, education, the labor market, socioeconomic status, etc.

For the Black people that are considered lucky, residual racism will take shape in small acts:

*"It's the job that was available until you showed up, or the apartment, or the loan. Or the 'compliment' on your natural hair that doubles as a gentle reminder that straightening it might look more presentable."*⁷⁵

-Joy-Ann Reid, Host, "AM Joy"

However, for the unlucky:

⁶⁹ <http://udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/2347/Article%2015.pdf> p. 11

⁷⁰ <https://timeline.com/by-the-end-of-his-life-martin-luther-king-realized-the-validity-of-violence-4de177a8c87b>

⁷¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/06/why-people-loot/612577/>

⁷² <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-cvs-pharmacy-baltimore-riots-20150428-story.html>

⁷³ <https://www.vox.com/2015/4/30/8518681/protests-riots-work>

⁷⁴ <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/06/why-people-loot/612577/>

⁷⁵

<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/everyday-racism-america-being-Black-means-constantly-rendering-yourself-unthreatening-ncna878291>

"If you're unlucky, though, that residual racial cough becomes a full-body fever that won't go away. In this case it's the cop who pulls you over for a minor traffic violation and then stands warily outside the driver's side door with his hand hovering over his gun. And it's the deep ache in the pit of your stomach that starts every time you see red and blue flashing lights closing in behind you thereafter, even when you've done nothing wrong. It's the time you called 911 because you heard a noise in your house but were more afraid after the police arrived--and seemed to be searching your home for weed or guns instead of for a burglar.

And if you're really unlucky, you've had the cops called on you for just being in a public space where a White person thought you didn't belong. And in the worst-case scenario, you or someone you love doesn't walk away from that interaction alive, whether because of the police or just some random civilian armed with a gun. Just ask the parents of Trayvon Martin."

-Joy-Ann Reid, Host, "AM Joy"

From the moment that Black people were forcibly brought to the country as enslaved labor, transgressing White spaces could result in humiliation, persecution, or death. While the scale has shifted down, the same outcome stays true today. Black Americans are living under the "constant threat of removal," but there is no way to make others see them as less of a threat.⁷⁶ Black people are fighting for their voices to be heard to reverse everyday racism to ensure that they can live their lives without being on a constant lookout and held back by past centuries of racism and segregation.

See [Segregation](#) and [Systemic racism in the U.S. criminal justice system](#)

What and why is it different this time around?

More technology, awareness, and diversity

Throughout the decades, there have been many mass protests for equality whether it be the summers between 1963 and 1968 or the more recent Black Lives Matter demonstrations and uprisings from 2014-2015. However, this time around we are also faced with another daunting plight caused by the

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<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/everyday-racism-america-being-Black-means-constantly-rendering-yourself-unthreatening-ncna878291>

COVID-19 pandemic, which has instilled the mounting uncertainty and anxiety-ridden unemployment rates.

Amongst the hardest hit from the pandemic are the minority groups, specifically the Black population. Coronavirus has already brought the existing health disparities for Black people in the U.S., which had likely frustrated many protesters already; however, the nearly nine-minute video recording of George Floyd's suffocation was the tipping point.

Sure, there have been many incidents, evidence, and recordings of faultless of Black individuals being shot or killed by police before, but never had there been any evidence or video as clear cut as that of Floyd's in showing that the man had done no harm to the police officer to warrant suffocation and death.

The new age of technology has allowed many from all over the country, even worldwide, to see Floyd's demise. As people flock to social media outlets, including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, not only does Floyd's story get shared but so does information regarding police brutality, the inequalities in the U.S., and the systemic racism that lingers in our society. The protesters have shown up over the weeks, more diverse than before and armed with a greater recognition and understanding of the different systems of inequality, whether it be housing, criminal justice, the labor market, etc., that Black Americans have been suffering through.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/06/04/protest-different-299050>

Resources

Articles

[30+ Ways Asians Perpetuate Anti-Black Racism Everyday](#)

[Anti-Racism for Asian Americans](#)

[Anti-Racism in the South Asian Community](#)

[Anti-Racism Resource List](#)

Videos

[Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man](#)

On his YouTube channel, Emmanuel Acho creates a safe place to have uncomfortable conversations about race that many people have been too afraid or never have been able to have. In each episode, he removes those barriers and provides a place for curious White people to ask and have their questions answered. He goes through questions such as "How can I have White privilege if I'm not wealthy?" or "is racial profiling ok if Black people tend to commit more crimes" and my personal favorite from a 19-year-old girl from rural Alabama named Amy who asked, "if Black people can say the N-word, why can't I?" And many, many more.

[Episode 1](#)

[Episode 2](#)

[Episode 3](#)

[Episode 4](#)

Books

How to Be an Antiracist

Ibram X. Kendi

In his memoir, Kendi weaves together an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law, and science—including the story of his own awakening to antiracism—bringing it all together in a cogent, accessible form. He begins by helping us rethink our most deeply held, if implicit, beliefs and our most intimate personal relationships (including beliefs about race and IQ and interracial social relations) and reexamines the policies and larger social arrangements we support. *How to Be an Antiracist* promises to become an essential book for anyone who wants to go beyond an awareness of racism to the next step of contributing to the formation of a truly just and equitable society.

Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America

Ibram X. Kendi

In this deeply researched and fast-moving narrative, Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-Black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history. *Stamped from the Beginning* uses the life stories of five major American intellectuals to offer a window into the contentious debates between assimilationists and segregationists and between racists and antiracists. From Puritan minister Cotton Mather to Thomas Jefferson, from fiery abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to brilliant scholar W.E.B. Du Bois to legendary anti-prison activist Angela Davis, Kendi shows how and why some of our leading proslavery and pro-civil rights thinkers have challenged or helped cement racist ideas in America.

So You Want to Talk About Race

Ijeoma Oluo

Widespread reporting on aspects of White supremacy--from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans--has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair--and how do you make it right? How do you explain White privilege to your White, privileged friend?

This Book Is Anti-Racist: 20 lessons on how to wake up, take action, and do the work

Tiffany Jewell

Gain a deeper understanding of your anti-racist self as you progress through 20 chapters that spark introspection, reveal the origins of racism that we are still experiencing and give you the courage and power to undo it. Each chapter builds on the previous one as you learn more about yourself and racial oppression. Exercise prompts get you thinking and help you grow with the knowledge.

Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

Beverly Daniel Tatum

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, White, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This book is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of race in America.

Living for Change: An Autobiography

Grace Lee Boggs

Living for Change is a sweeping account of the life of an untraditional radical from the end of the thirties, through the cold war, the civil rights era, and the rise of Black Power, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panthers to the present efforts to rebuild our crumbling urban communities. This fascinating autobiography traces the story of a Chinese American, middle class, highly educated woman who transcended class and racial boundaries to pursue her passionate belief in a better society.

Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama

Diane C. Fujino

On February 12, 1965, in the Audubon Ballroom, Yuri Kochiyama cradled Malcolm X in her arms as he died, but her role as a public servant and activist began much earlier than this pivotal public moment. *Heartbeat of Struggle* is the first biography of this courageous woman, the most prominent Asian American activist to emerge during the 1960s. Based on extensive archival research and interviews with Kochiyama's family, friends, and the subject herself, Diane C. Fujino traces Kochiyama's life from an "all-American" childhood to her achievements as a tireless defender of - and fighter for - human rights, detailing her meeting Malcolm X, who inspired her radical political development and the ensuing four decades of incessant work for Black liberation, Asian American equality, Puerto Rican independence, and political prisoner defense.

Movies

13th

Filmmaker Ava DuVernay explores the history of racial inequality in the United States, focusing on the fact that the nation's prisons are disproportionately filled with Black Americans. The title refers to the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in 1865, which abolished slavery throughout the United States and ended involuntary servitude except as a punishment for conviction of a crime.

When They See Us

In 1989 a jogger was assaulted and raped in New York's Central Park, and five young people were subsequently charged with the crime. The quintet maintained its innocence and spent years fighting the convictions, hoping to be exonerated. This limited series spans a quarter of a century, from when the teens are first questioned about the incident in the spring of 1989, going through their exoneration in 2002 and ultimately the settlement reached with the city of New York in 2014.

I Am Not Your Negro

In 1979, James Baldwin wrote a letter to his literary agent describing his next project, "Remember This House." The book was to be a revolutionary, personal account of the lives and assassinations of three of his close friends: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. At the time of Baldwin's death in 1987, he left behind only 30 completed pages of this manuscript. Filmmaker Raoul Peck envisions the book James Baldwin never finished.

Just Mercy

After graduating from Harvard, Bryan Stevenson heads to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper representation. One of his first cases is that of Walter McMillian, who is sentenced to die in 1987 for the murder of an 18-year-old girl, despite evidence proving his innocence. In the years that follow, Stevenson encounters racism and legal and political maneuverings as he tirelessly fights for McMillian's life.

The Hate U Give

Starr Carter is constantly switching between two worlds--the poor, mostly Black neighborhood where she lives and the wealthy, mostly White prep school that she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is soon shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer. Facing pressure from all sides of the community, Starr must find her voice and decide to stand up for what's right.

LA 92

Told through archival footage, this documentary chronicles the 1992 Los Angeles riots 25 years after its passing. This film includes film and video from the 1965 Watts Riots, the 1973 election of Tom Bradley, the 1978 promotion of Daryl Gates, the shooting of Latasha Harlins, the Rodney King videotape and the subsequent riots and violence that erupted after the acquittal of the officers involved in King's beating.

How to Take Action Effectively

Understand methods to effectively engage in discussion

The LARA Method and Empathy

It is not always easy to talk about sensitive topics like this.

LARA (Listen, Affirm, Respond, Add Information) is a method of nonviolent dialogue that can be used as a tool. This can be used to help respond to comments and questions, especially those that are hostile or threatening.

Listening and having empathy are just as important as talking. In order to have productive dialogue, both sides need to understand where each is coming from and why their backgrounds or experience influence their opinions.

Conflict and Interpersonal Communication

Conflict is inevitable in interpersonal relationships and especially when talking about sensitive topics like this. Read this to get a better understanding of conflict and how to better handle conflict.

6 Ways Asian Americans Can Tackle Anti-Black Racism in Their Families

White supremacy fed us anti-Black racism and many of us believe it out of fear--and hope. So it's up to us to right anti-Black racism in our communities. It's up to us as Asian Americans to show up for Black community with our family, friends, and kin. Here are six tips for how to broach these conversations with your family.

Have a conversation with your family members

Letters for Black Lives

This is a good place to start. Often, there is a language barrier between Asian immigrants and their children. For those who lack the words and vocabulary in their family's native language to explain the Black Lives Matter movement, Letters for Black Lives is a set of crowdsourced, multilingual, and culturally-aware resources aimed at creating a space for open and honest conversations about racial

justice, police violence, and anti-Blackness in our families and communities. There are over 40 translations available.

Letters for Black Lives Follow-Up Conversations Guide

This is a Talking Point guide and supplement to the 2020 Letters for Black Lives for additional follow-up conversations with your friends and family about anti-Blackness. There are a lot of complex issues around anti-Black racism and protests that we didn't have space to address in the main letter, so this resource is for people to continue those conversations with their family and respond to the questions or concerns they might bring up.

6 Ways Asian Americans Can Tackle Anti-Black Racism in Their Families

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Being an ally

20+ Allyship Actions for Asians to Show Up for the Black Community Right Now

In light of #AhmaudArbery and ongoing police violence, how can the Asian American community show up for our Black siblings?

Aspiring Social Justice Ally Identity Development

What kind of ally are you? While many people can claim they are allies for a social justice effort, not all are always effective in their anti-oppression efforts for social change. Here, you can learn about how varying underlying motivations form three different kinds of allies. Use this to self-reflect and understand how to develop yourself to be a more effective ally for social justice.

The Costs of Oppression to People from Privileged Groups

Do those in privileged groups face the consequences of inequality too? Yes. While most people tend to talk about how the privileged groups oppress others and benefit, it is important to understand that the oppressed are not the only ones who are affected by an unjust system. Read the [full article](#) or the [summary points](#).

Strategies for social change

The Social Change Wheel

There are many different ways to initiate social change. Educating ourselves is only the first of many. Read this to see all the other ways you can take action to contribute to social change.