

Human Rights and Racial Inequality Shifts in Contemporary United States

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Abstract: Racial inequality is a major aspect of America's history due to the major impacts that slavery had, with black people being the primary victims. Over the past decades, the shapes and forms of racism have changed from overt practices, such as slavery to covert forms. Reviewing the literature on racism in America showed that the changes led to the false illusion that racism ended in America, which is not true, considering the widespread discrimination of blacks and other groups. This paper mainly discusses human rights and racial inequality shifts in contemporary United States with cases studies, critically analyzes racism in contemporary America, including the case of police killing and abuse, show that racial minorities, for instance, African Americans endure high poverty rates, injustice, and victimization by the criminal justice system. The evidence of widespread racism in contemporary America demonstrates the need for change, focusing on addressing the underlying causes, including poor and unfair policies.

Keywords: Racial inequality, Human rights, United State Contemporary Racism

1. Introduction

Racial inequality has existed throughout history, especially in multi-racial societies such as the United States [1]. Racial inequality refers to the differential treatment of different groups in areas such as the allocation of resources, culture, power, and economic opportunities, due to racial differences [1, 2]. In the United States, the Biden administration and the US congress has taken positive steps that were limited during the previous administration and committed to racial equality. However, the US continues to fail in its human rights obligations [3]. One particular failure point is the area of racial justice, which is evident from the US' inability to end systemic racism. Some examples of America's failures include the legacy of slavery, immigration enforcement, and social controls on some groups, among others that affect several racial and ethnic minorities, but also the profound wealth gap [3].

Recently, countless discussions and studies have been done on racial inequality, but the question of whether the US has truly actualized equality and eliminated all forms of racial discrimination warrants further exploration. This paper critically examines whether racial inequality continues in US 'human rights performance, based on the shifts reported in the contemporary United States. The aim of the essay is to focus on the research of the racial inequality shifts in the United States in 18th century and compare the contemporary situation by using databases.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Historical Origins of Modern-day Racial Inequality in America

Oliver, Clair and Denis examine the historical roots of contemporary racism in America, including the first wave of racism that included the most heinous racist acts committed by European settlers [4]. The acts included taking away their lands and attempts to eliminate their cultures and political structures by subjecting them to deadly diseases. Similar disparities in pay between Chinese immigrants and non-Chinese workers doing the work, throughout the 1800s [5]. The second wave of racism was marked by the civil rights and post-racism era, when there was a noticeable drop in openly expressed racist beliefs among white Americans, which is similarly explained by Oliver, Clair, and Denis [4]. Overt institutional racism included discriminatory hiring policies and unequal criminal justice system victimization such as disproportionate sentencing [4, 6]. The first and second phases of racism in America were characterized by overt and mostly hidden racism. The third phase characterized by overt racist revival and post-racialism is currently being experienced in America.

2.2. Analysis of Racial Inequality Shifts since the Civil Rights Era

Overt forms of racism were not fully abolished throughout the era that followed the civil rights movement and era, according to Hughey [7], it has continued to resurge in political circles and discussions. Some analysts draw attention to the forms of racism that serves as the ideological foundation of the Tea Party movement, an alliance that promoted reduced taxes and weakened regulation [8]. Recent studies imply that Obama's election strengthened the relationship between support for such measures and racial prejudice, even though political scientists and sociologists have long noticed this association. For instance, Yadon and Piston discover that while prejudiced attitudes among some white voters appeared to be relatively stable during the electioneering time leading to Obama's presidency, the views grew more closely related to the lack of devotion and support for affirmative action and policy formulation from the white community, towards the black community [8].

According to Golash-Boza, the rise of overt racism may have made it easier to explain how racism, racial prejudice, and social injustice relate to one another during the current post-racial era [9]. Race theorists and sociologists have over the years, continued to explore how purportedly race-sensitive procedures and laws replicate historical inequities in more overt ways [5]. Although overt racism has returned, mainstream study on oppression continues to be remains largely reluctant to link modern discriminatory practices without first identifying racial bias, for example, using experimental methods to control all contributory "nonracial" factors [10]. Theorists studying racism from a critical viewpoint generally believe that such a strategy misses the mark; racism is almost likely a basic cause of racial oppression, even if it is not the direct reason [10]. This most recent stage in the study of racism is supported by these discussions along with increasingly advanced and inventive conceptual and analytical tools for measuring racism.

2.3. The Socialized Narrative of a Racism-free US

The US' collective consciousness includes a strong confidence in the country's resolution towards racial impartiality. In fact, the defeated via fights like the civil rights movement and that racial justice has been attained is the mindset that gives rise to this false idea. The decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. In 2008 are two historical events that are used as examples of racial progress [11]. Although the message is muted or ignored, it is also true that recent racial injustices, such as voter suppression and police-involved killings of defenceless Black and Latino people, show the need for far greater reform [12]. Even when instances of racial retrenchment and related agitation appear to

influence both implicit and overt racial attitudes, actual advancement toward racial economic justice and equality is rarely the result. To maintain that society has made significant progress toward complete racial impartiality, a large portion of Americans strongly believe in the particular, upbeat account about racial integration, despite the indisputable evidence of racism [11].

Regardless of notable progress in the direction of racial justice and impartiality since the country's establishment, the evidence available demonstrates that the American racial development narrative overstates the accomplishments and understates the difficulties. As a result, there is an unjustified optimism about the chances for racial impartiality [13]. As a result, contributory change such as policy changes are easily understood as racial justice [14]. For example, it is incorrectly believed that racial integration has been achieved following *Brown v. Board of Education*, ending public school segregation [13]. Similar to this, the decline in racial prejudice's acceptance in public discourse is understood as its eradication in Americans' minds and hearts. It is important to note the trend of overrating progress made demonstrates the popular opinion of race-neutrality in the US [15].

Unfortunately the legislation would not be taken while Americans are overly hopeful about the progress achieved toward the realization of racial equality [16]. More crucially, the mirage of racial equality will remain because cultural and societal change cannot be sought with the seriousness and energy it requires [16]. To make the necessary and significant corrective efforts, precisely assessing the extent of race-related disparities is required.

2.4. The Misunderstanding of Shifts in Racial Wealth Gaps

The information shown by Kraus et al. furthers the false impression that progress has been made by demonstrating that racial inequality in America is equally obvious in the economic outcomes for the various groups, notably between the white mainstream group and marginalized groups. The evidence is troubling because wealth, as opposed to other economic indicators like income, offers a more robust safety net for families when they faced with [11].

Determining the level of American awareness of racially-informed wealth distribution in present US is particularly crucial. The collective character of wealth increases. Such as redlining, which led to the wealth difference that has been documented over time. For instance, African Americans and other racial minorities were more negatively impacted by the economic shocks brought on by the COVID-19 [17].

In addition, which claimed that given the prevalent meritocracy ideals that underpin American society, wealth inequality. The report has showed the average American also underestimates the present income of other minority racial groups. Taking into account the noted differences, Asian Americans perform highly in educational. Moreover, races may diverge. As was to be predicted, the wealth disparity between Whites and Asians was smaller than it was for other racial minorities. Rationale for the phenomena presumably stems from the fact that Asian American and white families generally have more financial parity than other groups, notably African American households.

3. Critical Analysis of the US' Human Rights and Racism Profile Today

3.1. Contemporary Human Rights and Current Status

The 2022 World Report reports a summary of the US 'current human rights and racism standards as of 2021, showing recent progress, despite glaring gaps that need to be addressed [18]. For example, the report the current Biden administration and the US Congress have made major progress in improving inclusion for minority groups, marginalized racial groups. Other groups given major attention include women and LGBTQI, which had been oppressed for years by previous administrations [18, 19]. However, despite the recent efforts made, the United States continues to fall short, in its responsibility of meeting the human rights of different groups, including racial minority

groups such as African Americans and Latinos, among others, the focus of this discussion. The area of racial exclusion marks the government's failure profoundly, considering the failure to address the systematic racism traced to victimization, and other unacceptable forms of social control [3, 4, 18].

3.2. Contemporary Case Studies

3.2.1. Case 1: George 'Floyd's Inhumane Killing by Law Enforcement Officers

Floyd, who was 46-year-old was arrested and detained by police officers after using a fake \$20 cash bill. The police pinned Floyd was pinned to the ground by three police officers, as bystanders watched and even took videos that would later show evidence of police killing. He was pinned to the ground for 17 minutes while repeatedly telling the officers that he could not breathe [20]. The footage from a security camera and that taken by bystanders showed that Floyd died due to the use of excessive force by police, despite that he was not armed and did not show signs of violence. The implicated police officers were dismissed by the Police Department. Derek Chauvin, the white officer that pinned him to the ground, was charged with murder, and the other officers of assisting and abetting second-degree murder. In response, the police department gave false accounts about the time Floyd was pinned to the ground as 7 minutes and 46, not paying attention that doing that for even a minute could have killed him [20]. The case shows an incident of racial victimization and targeting, considering the police officer's use of excessive force, while others stood around and watched as the black man told them that he could not breath [20].

3.2.2. Case 2: The Disproportionate Risks of Driving as a Black Person in Greensboro, North Carolina

In the affluent, leafy community of Greensboro, NC, 26-year-old black Rufus Scales was taking Devin, his younger brother, for hair-cutting lessons when the police flagged them to stop. Due to minor offenses like having outdated license plates and not hoisting a flag because he was carrying some scrap metal in the pickup's bed, the officers treated him like an armed criminal [21]. Firstly, after Rufus Scales reached out to ensure that Devin did not open the car door, a white police officer forcefully pulled him from the driver's seat, after another African American officer shot him with a Taser. The shock temporarily incapacitated him, causing him to fall onto the tarmac face down. Further, he was hauled over the asphalt. Despite the police's use of force, they wrote him tickets for four traffic penalties, including that of assaulting a law enforcement officer, although it was later dropped [21]. Rufus also suffered a chipped upper lip that required stitching, and a chipped tooth. The horrific events took place on May 2013, but the younger Devin always carries a toll-free number he can use to request legal assistance and a hand-held video camera to collect any crucial evidence when he leaves the house. Rufus, on the other hand, turns away from all police encounters [21]. The case is not unique to Rufus and his brothers, considering the statistics that blacks account for 54% of the drivers stopped by the police and often searched, despite that the group only accounts for 39% of the city's driving-age populace.

3.3. Human Rights Racial Inequality Shift Case Studies (Integrated Discussion)

3.3.1. Racial Discrimination and Injustice

Causadias the statistics demonstrating evidence of extreme racism in the US, demonstrating the need for immediate action and solutions addressing the underlying causes. Specifically, Causadias reports that an estimated 25% of all members of minority groups are discriminated against due to their race, ethnicity, and ancestry [22]. Additionally, an estimated 60% of the population suffers one or more

forms of discrimination, a state that worsened since 2016, after Trump's election. The underlying causes of the increase in racism levels were the promotion of racist dialogue by the president, practices, and racist and discriminatory policies. For example, Latino youth and others of all ages suffered due to the formulation of anti-Latino policies, such as the inhumane immigration practices of forced detentions and deportations [22]. The reported evidence shows a major need to strengthen the change initiatives taken by the Biden administration and the US congress aimed at guaranteeing improved inclusion and accommodation of people belonging to minority racial groups [18].

3.3.2. Poverty and Inequality

Iceland [23] reports the evidence showing the correlation that exists between racist tendencies and inequality in the US, demonstrating that the US government and other actors should initiate corrective measures. Specifically, the reported evidence includes that in 2015, the official poverty benchmark for the United States dictated that non-Hispanic whites showed a 9% poverty rate, 11% for Asian Americans, and higher percentage for Hispanics at 21%. The statistics showed that the worst-affected racial minority groups in America were African Americans, who showed a poverty rate of 24%, and American Indians, with more than a quarter of the population, or 26% living in poverty [23]. It is crucial to note that poverty levels have not reduced since the 1970s for some minority racial groups, particularly Asian Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics, highlighting that the changes instituted to address the high poverty rates should focus on the three groups. In particular, African Americans are a highly-affected racial group, compared to white Americans, as shown in Figure 1 below and the case study in Figure 2. On average, African Americans earn an average of about half of the income levels and net worth reported by their white counterparts.

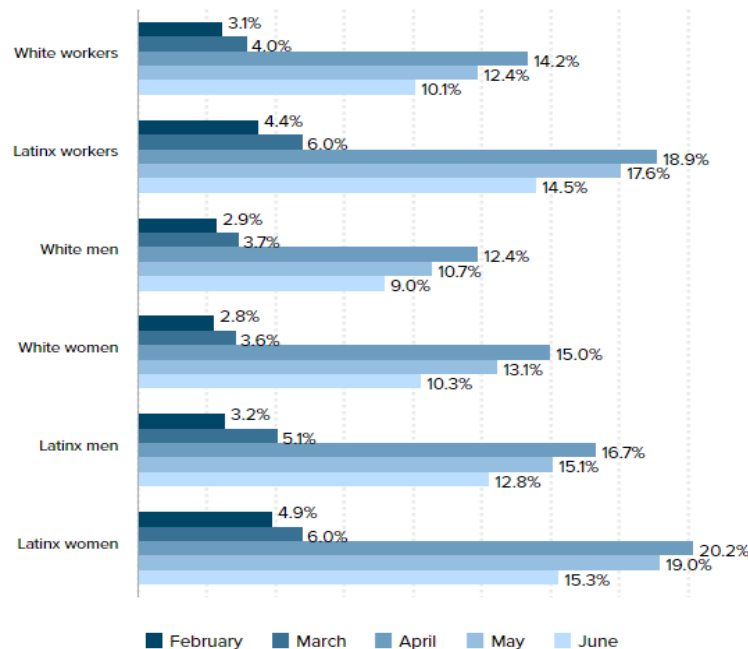


Figure 1: Median income and Net worth for Blacks and white Americans in 2018[1].

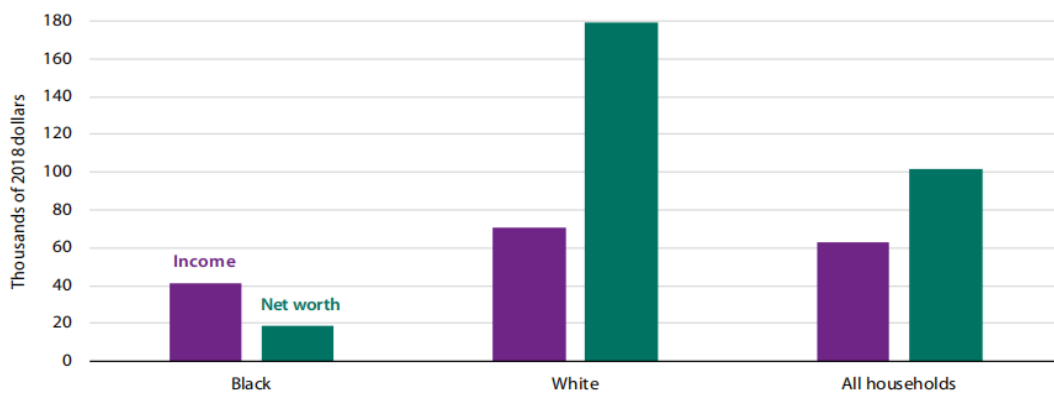


Figure 2: Unemployment Rate Increases for White and Latino Americans in 2021 [2].

The bar chart has illustrates the changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic shows a disproportionate effect on the minority group, showing evidence of a relationship between racism and poverty [24]. Despite the surge in unemployment levels, the chart shows that the Latinx population suffered a bigger blow due to COVID-19, with a rate of 18.9% in April 2020, compared to 14.2 for whites [24].

3.3.3. Criminal Legal System

The criminal justice system equally continues to underperform and victimize the members of racial minority groups [18]. The evident racist treatment of racial minority populations by the discriminatory criminal justice system includes that blacks are highly overrepresented in American jails and prisons, since 2009. For example, according to the Prison Policy Initiative [25], African Americans comprise about 38% of the people held in American prisons and jails, despite that the minority racial group only accounts for 13% of the total US population. Further, blacks endure an extremely high incarceration rate, compared to whites, with a reported ratio of 2,306 vs. 450, showing clear evidence of racial discrimination and victimization [25, 26]. The worst form of racial discrimination against racial minorities in America, especially blacks in recent years is police brutality, which has caused the death of many African American young men and women [27]. The entire event captured by a bystander sparked country-wide protests, but the killer officer was not prosecuted. Further, the police killing happened a year after the Black Lives Matter movement started, showing irrefutable evidence that African American lives are considered inferior [27].

3.4. Conclusion Summaries

As the review of contemporary racism and racial prejudice in contemporary America shows, racial and ethnic minority groups continue to be excluded, despite the illusory view that racism is part of America's past, as noted by Harris and Lieberman [13]. Specifically, the evidence showed that racial discrimination is the everyday experience of blacks, Asian Americans, and Latinx [28]. Some victims of racism include George Floyd and Rufus Scates, who suffer police victimization and abuse due to their race. The evidence of racist treatment includes the high rates of poverty, the marginalization in the community, and the victimization by the criminal justice system.

4. Conclusion

Racism and the disregard for human rights remains a major part of American society over the years. The marginalization and discrimination of racial minority groups such as African Americans can be traced to the era of slavery when blacks were used as slaves. The historical reflection on modern-day

racial inequality in America showed that it may be covert, but is as harmful as it was decades ago. The racial shifts reported in the past, including the cases of police brutality and black victimization, reflect overt racist practices, due to the pressure to end racism in America, especially, after the Civil Rights movement [29]. However, as many Americans think, the misleading racist narrative continues to trick many Americans into believing that racism is no longer practiced. However, examining contemporary case studies. This essay showed that African Americans and other racial minority populations continue to endure racism and discrimination every day, from the criminal justice system and society as a whole.

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