

**Dismantling Systemic Racism in America's Criminal Justice System**

Manas Srinivas Gowda

College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, Arizona State University

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Dr. Jennifer Robinson

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The systematic racism in the criminal justice system in today's world is a pressing matter in contemporary society. This topic provides an interesting look into long-standing historical challenges and their current consequences, particularly for the African American population. It promotes a deeper comprehension of the complexity involved by encouraging a critical assessment of society institutions via an interdisciplinary lens. By addressing this problem, we may promote introspection and raise public knowledge of the issue while working toward practical solutions for justice and equity

Systemic racism in the criminal justice system in the United States presents significant obstacles for the African American community, particularly for those living in urban areas. This universal problem, which has its historical roots in the times of slavery and segregation and has developed over time into more complex forms of racial discrimination, is deeply rooted in the fabric of American society. Michelle Alexander's groundbreaking book, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness," illuminates the contemporary processes that sustain racial disparities, most notably the War on Drugs' impact on mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010). Despite similar rates of drug use among racial groups, African Americans are significantly more likely to be arrested and receive harsher sentences, highlighting a glaring disparity that underscores systemic **oppression**.

The African American **community**, especially in urban areas, has developed a unique **culture** that encompasses resilience and solidarity in the face of systemic oppression. Cultural expressions within this community, including music, art, and literature, often serve as forms of resistance against societal marginalization. However, these expressions can also become targets of criminalization, reflecting broader societal biases that view African American culture through a lens of suspicion and criminality.

This form of oppression is not merely a byproduct of individual prejudice but is embedded within the **power** structures and **contexts** of the legal and social systems. Bail regulations and sentencing rules that disproportionately impact African Americans contribute to systemic racism. For instance, African American defendants are disproportionately burdened by the cash bail system since they are less able to afford it, which raises the likelihood of pre-trial imprisonment for this group. The Sentencing Project's 2020 report to the United Nations on racial disparities illustrates the extensive reach of this issue, with African Americans more likely to be imprisoned, often subjected to longer sentences compared to their white counterparts for comparable offenses. This imbalance of justice points to a deeper, systemic issue that intertwines with societal **attitudes and beliefs** that implicitly or explicitly criminalize African Americans.

The book "Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do" by Jennifer L. Eberhardt delves into the ways in which discriminatory actions seen in legal and law enforcement settings are influenced by implicit biases (Eberhardt, 2019). African American kids are subjected to harsher disciplinary procedures in schools, which increases their likelihood of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. This phenomenon is known as the "school-to-prison pipeline," and it is another example of institutional racism. To stop institutional racism from continuing, it is imperative to address this educational gap. Racial disparities are further strengthened through a feedback loop that is fueled by media portrayals and social narratives that promote assumptions of criminality among African Americans. These actions, attitudes, and beliefs are **communicated** through various channels, reinforcing systemic biases. Destroying these deeply rooted **beliefs** and the institutions that support them is necessary to break this cycle.

The path to reducing racial disparities in the criminal justice system requires both **learning and unlearning**. It is essential to educate people about the background of racial oppression and the current forms of systematic racism. Public campaigns and community programs aimed at raising awareness about racial bias and promoting dialogue between law enforcement and African American communities can foster mutual understanding and respect. Groups like the NAACP stress the importance of enacting laws that specifically address racial inequities in order to advance comprehensive criminal justice reform. Reforming police practices through the implementation of body cameras, de-escalation training, and community policing strategies can also significantly reduce incidents of racial profiling and police brutality. Alongside this, there needs to be a purposeful **unlearning process** that challenges and rejects the cultural myths and prejudices that have long disregarded African Americans. This can be achieved by developing training programs for law enforcement that center on bias awareness and reduction in addition to changing school curriculum to present a more truthful picture of African American history and contributions (NAACP, n.d.).

Achieving **equity** in the criminal justice system and broader society calls for substantial reforms that address the root causes of racial disparities. Policies such as eliminating mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenses, investing in community-oriented policing, and implementing rigorous accountability measures for police misconduct are vital steps forward. The Equal Justice Initiative underlines that such improvements contribute to a greater shift toward justice and equality for all people, bringing us closer to a society in which the scales of justice are balanced for all individuals, regardless of race (EJI, 2019).

In conclusion, the fight against racial inequality in the criminal justice system is a complex battle that requires addressing deep-seated attitudes, beliefs, and systemic structures. By

focusing on education, policy reform, and societal change, there is hope for dismantling the new form of racial caste system that Michelle Alexander so vividly describes. It is only through acknowledging the historical **context** of this issue, actively working to change harmful perceptions, and implementing equitable policies that we can aspire to create a just and equal society for the African American community and beyond.

## References

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