

IV. RACE

Racism is often seen as a thing of the past but how true is this conception? In this chapter we will look at the historical origins of racism and the laws that have either supported or tried to **eradicate** racism. In the first instance we shall review the situation in the USA and evaluate the situation there by reviewing key legislation. Following this we will look at the current situation and theories concerning race and an experiment conducted by a teacher on her eight year old students before looking at apartheid in South Africa and then take a look at the current situation in Israel. Now we will look at some historical big steps made in the progress of race relations in the US.

KEY EVENTS IN THE US RACE HISTORY

1909 – A bi-racial group of activist establishes the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in NYC.

1915 – The release of D.W. Griffith’s film, Birth of a Nation, which glorifies the Klan and demonizes blacks. The film also **inflames** race tensions and sets off white attacks on black communities in many areas throughout the United States.

1919 – The Red Summer. Twenty-six documented race riots occur, where black communities across the country are attacked. Hundreds of blacks are killed and even more are injured in these attacks. There is widespread property damage in black neighborhoods. Whites also use **lynching** as a means to **intimidate** blacks. In some communities, like the District of Columbia, blacks **stand their ground**. In the 1920’s, riots in Florida and Tulsa destroy the black communities.

1939 – Billie Holiday records “Strange Fruit”—a haunting song describing lynching. Disturbed by a photograph of a lynching, Abel Meeropol, a Jewish schoolteacher and activist from the Bronx, writes this verse and melody under the pseudonym Lewis Allan. The song increases public recognition of lynching as racist terror. Between 1882 and 1968, mobs lynched 4,743 persons in the United States, over 70 percent of them African Americans.

1946 – President Truman issues Executive Order 9808, establishing the

President's Committee on Civil Rights to propose measures to strengthen and protect the civil rights. Truman appoints to the Committee leading black civil rights activist, Sadie Alexander, the first black woman to earn a PhD and an early leader in the Philadelphia Urban League. Its report, *To Secure These Rights*, led to Truman's orders to end **segregation** in the U.S. military and federal Civil Service system. Later in the 1960's President Johnson enlarges Truman's efforts with various civil rights and affirmative action laws to address persistent discrimination.

- 1954 – *Brown v. Board* decision declares segregation in public schools illegal.
- 1955 – The Montgomery Bus Boycott begins on December 5 after Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to **give up** her seat to a white man on the bus. This boycott lasts 381 days and ends with the desegregation of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system on December 21, 1956. As a pastor of a Baptist church in Montgomery, Martin Luther King, Jr. leads this black bus boycott and becomes a national hero.
- 1963 – King's Letter from Birmingham Jail **inspires** a growing national civil rights movement. In Birmingham, the goal is to end the system of segregation completely in every aspect of public life (stores, no separate bathrooms and drinking fountains, etc.) and in job discrimination. This same year, he delivers his I Have a Dream Speech on the Washington Mall, which becomes an enduring symbol of King's legacy and influence.
- 1964 – Beginning this year, growing frustrations in black communities over urban decay and lack of opportunities erupts into a wave of race riots through U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Newark (NJ) and Detroit Michigan. The years 1964 to 1971 see more than 750 riots, killing 228 people and injuring 12,741 others. Additionally, more than 15,000 separate incidents of arson leave many black urban neighborhoods in ruins.
- 1965 – Voting Rights Act is passed, authorizing direct federal intervention to enable blacks to vote.
- Malcolm X is assassinated by members of the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) in New York City.
- 1967 – Robert C. Weaver is appointed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. He is the first black to hold a Cabinet position in U.S. history. Edward Brooke (Massachusetts Republican) becomes the first black to serve in the Senate since Reconstruction.

1968 – On April 4, 1968, James Earl Ray assassinates Martin Luther King, while he is standing on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. In **outrage** of the murder, many blacks take to the streets in a massive wave of riots across the U.S.

Congress authorizes the 1968 Civil Rights Act, providing federal enforcement provisions for discrimination in housing. The 1968 expanded on previous acts and prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status. This law enabled housing opportunities for blacks beyond the “ghetto.”

2008 – On November 4, 2008, Barack Obama is elected President of the United States of America.

1. Complete the text below with one of the highlighted words above:

1. A sign of a good teacher is their ability to _____ their students.
2. In violent relationships the aggressor often threatens and _____ their partner.
3. Some species such as the Dodo have been completely _____ from the planet.
4. There was _____ after the president refused to leave his position after he lost the election.
5. Sometimes classes are _____ between boys and girls for physical education.
6. He tried to calm the situation down but his intervention seemed to _____ the situation further.

2. In groups pick one of the following tasks:

1. Who was Malcom X
2. 5 things about Martin Luther King
3. Brown vs Board of Education
4. Investigate lynching's in the USA (DEMOGRAPHICALLY)
5. What did the NAACP achieve
6. Was Barack Obama a good president

THE NEW THREAT: 'RACISM WITHOUT RACISTS'¹

In a classic study on race, psychologists staged an experiment with two photographs that produced a surprising result. They showed people a photograph of two white men fighting, one **unarmed** and another holding a knife. Then they showed another photograph, this one of a white man with a knife fighting an unarmed African-American man.

When they asked people to identify the man who was armed in the first picture, most people picked the right one. Yet when they were asked the same question about the second photo, most people incorrectly said the black man had the knife. Even before it was announced that a grand jury had decided not to indict a white police officer in the shooting death of an unarmed black teen in Ferguson, Missouri, leaders were calling once again for a “national conversation on race.”

But here's why such conversations rarely go anywhere: Whites and racial minorities speak a different language when they talk about racism, scholars and psychologists say. The knife fight experiment hints at the language gap. Some whites confine racism to intentional displays of racial hostility. It's the Ku Klux Klan, racial slurs in public, something “bad” that people do. But for many racial minorities, that type of racism doesn't matter as much anymore, some scholars say. They talk more about the racism uncovered in the knife fight photos -- it doesn't wear a hood, but it causes unsuspecting people to see the world through a racially biased lens.

It's what one Duke University sociologist calls “racism without racists.” Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, who's written a book by that title, says it's a new way of maintaining white domination in places like Ferguson. “The main problem nowadays is not the folks with the hoods, but the folks dressed in suits,” says Bonilla-Silva.

“The more we assume that the problem of racism is limited to the Klan, the birthers, the tea party or to the Republican Party, the less we understand that racial domination is a collective process and we are all in this game.” As people talk about what the grand jury's decision in Ferguson means, Bonilla-Silva and others say it's time for Americans to update their language on racism to reflect what it has become and not what it used to be. The

1 By John Blake, CNN 27 November 2014 <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/11/26/us/ferguson-racism-or-racial-bias/>

conversation can start, they say, by reflecting on three phrases that often crop up when whites and racial minorities talk about race.

I DON'T SEE COLOUR

It is a phrase, which some white people invoke when a conversation turns to race. Some apply it to Ferguson. They are not particularly troubled by the grand jury's decision to not issue an indictment. The racial identities of Darren Wilson, the white police officer, and Michael Brown, the black man he killed, should not matter, they say. Let the legal system handle the decision without **race baiting**. Justice should be colour blind.

Science has bad news, though, for anyone who claims to not see race: They are **deluding** themselves, say several bias experts. A body of scientific research over the past 50 years shows that people notice not only race but gender, wealth, even weight. When babies are as young as 3 months old, research shows they start preferring to be around people of their own race, says Howard J. Ross, author of "Everyday Bias," which includes the story of the knife fight experiment. Other studies confirm the power of racial bias, Ross says.

One study conducted by a Brigham Young University economics professor showed that white NBA referees call more fouls on black players, and black referees call more fouls on white players. Another study that was published in the *American Journal of Sociology* showed that newly released white felons experience better job hunting success than young black men with no criminal record, Ross says. "Human beings are consistently, routinely and profoundly biased," Ross says.

The knife fight experiment reveals that even racial minorities are not immune to racial bias, Ross says. "The **overwhelming** number of people will actually experience the black man as having the knife because we're more open to the notion of the black man having a knife than a white man," Ross says. "This is one of the most insidious things about bias. People may absorb these things without knowing them."

Another famous experiment shows how racial bias can shape a person's economic prospects. Professors at the University of Chicago and MIT sent 5,000 fictitious resumes in response to 1,300 help wanted ads. Each resume listed identical qualifications except for one variation – some applicants had Anglo-sounding names such as "Brendan," while others had black-sounding

names such as “Jamal.” Applicants with Anglo-sounding names were 50% more likely to get calls for interviews than their black-sounding counterparts.

Most of the people who didn’t call “Jamal” were probably unaware that their decision was motivated by racial bias, says Daniel L. Ames, a UCLA researcher who has studied and written about bias. “If you ask someone on the hiring committee, none of them are going to say they’re racially biased,” Ames says. “They’re not lying. They’re just wrong.” Ames says such biases are dangerous because they’re often unseen.

“Racial biases can in some ways be more destructive than overt racism because they’re harder to spot, and therefore harder to combat,” he says. Still, some people are suspicious of focusing on the word bias. They prefer **invoking** the term racism because they say it leaves bruises. People claiming bias can admit they may have acted in racially insensitive ways but were unaware of their subconscious motivations. “The idea of calling it racial bias lessens the blow,” says Crystal Moten, a history professor at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

“Do you want to lessen the blow or do you want to eradicate racism? I want to eradicate racism,” she says. “Yes I want opportunity for dialogue, but the impact of racism is killing people of color. We don’t have time to tend to the emotional wounds of others, not when violence against people of color is the national status quo.”

BUT I HAVE BLACK FRIENDS

In the movie “The Godfather,” the character of Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, hatches an **audacious** plan to kill a mobster and a crooked cop who tried to kill his father. Michael’s elders **scoff** at his plans because they believe his judgment is **clouded** by anger. But in a line that would define his **ruthless** approach to **wielding** power, Michael tells them: “It’s not personal. It’s strictly business.”

When some whites talk about racism, they think it’s only personal – what one person says or does to another. But many minorities and people who study race say racism can be impersonal, calculating, **devoid** of malice – such as Michael Corleone’s approach to power. “The first thing we must stop doing is making racism a personal thing and understand that it is a system of advantage based on race,” says Doreen E. Loury, director of the Pan African