

Example by StudyDriver

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Equality for African Americans Example

Shootings of unarmed African Americans by law enforcement have exacerbated rhetoric on both sides of the political spectrum and has sparked an activist movement. There have been marches and protests as a response to police officers not being held accountable for the slaughter of unarmed people of color, and the social movement that has emerged as a result is exemplified by a twitter hashtag #Blacklivesmatter. This civil rights movement is housed within a particular discourse of American society. The idea of a post-racial society is one that many people living in the United States believe that they are not racist and that we all live on an equal playing field, regardless of skin color.

It ignores historical injustices, and systematic repressive policy that has disadvantaged people of color drastically throughout American history. One could argue that it instead has led to an even more disparate racial impact. The idea of colorblindness is a direct result of the false ideology of a non-racial United States. The idea that we as a society have moved passed race has launched a counter-movement which is #Blacklivesmatter. This idea of colorblindness is exemplified with the counter twitter handle to #Blacklivesmatter, which is #Alllivesmatter. #Blacklivesmatter has received much backlash which draws parallels to the backlash of Civil Rights Movement of

the 1960s.

Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement began as a response to the killing of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. It continued to grow in strength with each act of police brutality. BLM was created as a counter to police brutality. It also functions to humanize and depict what Black lives actually are. The movement works as a counter balance to a society that targets People of Color and systematically works to maintain a regime of white supremacy. BLM works to change American's perspectives, to free Black lives from inequality and empower communities of color. All Lives Matter.(ALM) was crafted as a counter to the Black Lives Matter movement.

This is not a valid statement. It twists the ideology and message of BLM and portrays them as anti-white instead of being pro-black. While all lives do matter; black lives have been systematically devalued and dehumanized throughout our nation's history. In our history slaves were only counted as ?...— of a person when counting population for the census. Why even today in our supposed post-racial society do we continue devaluing the lives of people of color? The answer lies in our society, one where institutional racism is baked into the pie, and that ripples of our blatant past racism is just bubbling to the surface today as overt racism.

Race consciousness is defined as the understanding or awareness that there is a difference between one person's physical characteristics, culture and history. It is a modern phenomenon. Race was not a factor used to divide people in a society until the last few centuries. The first theories on race were based on biological characteristics of humans. When the first European explorers came to America and saw individuals who had different skin pigmentation as themselves, they began to question if they were of the same species (Omi and Winant 1986). This line of questioning lead to a desire to categorize humans in the same way animals were being classified.Race as a concept was tied to biological theory. Classification of peoples came next. The classification of these different races of people categorized by their skin color was further refined into the creation of the Great Chain of Being. The Great Chain of Being was a classification of all things on earth in a hierarchical order. It started with inanimate objects at the bottom, going up through inferior species, and then to humans that were the closest to God (Omi and Winant 1986).

At this point in time there was further classification, deciding which group of people based on skin pigmentation was more perfect than another. The Essay on the Inequality of Races was based off of the scientific studies that saw race as a biological feature (Omi and Winant 1986). Its main theme was that superior races produce superior cultures and still acts as the basis for racist ideology even today. Race then shifted from being thought of as biological to being thought of as a social construct. The belief of one culture being lesser than the other based biological theory was being rejected. In its place was race as being defined from both a social and historical perspective. Each racial group and its importance was now being determined by a combination of social, economic, and political forces (Omi & Winant 1986). This new conceptualization in which race was being formed now caused a person's skin color to be an indicator of personality traits. Biological factors were still being taken into account, but they were no longer the main reason that made one race inferior to the other. In its place, stereotypes that developed out of social, political and economic forces were linked back to the color of one's skin and it is those characteristics that society believed everyone of a certain group possessed. Racial formation, the theory developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, looks at race as a social construct. This theory says that what makes up a racial category and the importance of each racial category is based on a mix of social, economic and political forces (Omi and Winant 1986).

In the United States, racial formation started with the birth of slavery. Before slavery, a main source of labor came from indentured servants. During this period of time, both blacks and whites were in the same social class and it was the white ruling elite that were the upper class. The growing demand for cheap labor in the South and the large size of the lower class led to the enslavement of African Americans (Takaki 1993). The elite white land owning class was oppressing the lower class blacks and whites by controlling the majority of the land, money and politics. The elite class was terrified that the lower class would overthrow them.

In order to maintain power, the white ruling elite prevented the laboring class made up of black and white from joining together (Kendi, p.40). To justify the enslavement of black people the elite planter class used the excuse that blacks were a lesser race, thus both slavery and racism was born. To further reinforce this idea that black people were inferior and to divide the laboring class, whites were given more rights and positions of power

(through policing and patrolling slaves) over the black people (Kendi 2016). In the time period prior to the Civil Rights era the racist ideology was centered on African Americans inability as a culture and their lesser intelligence. It was during this time that racism was also completely overt. During this time period societal norms allowed for overt racism and it wasn't frowned upon, as it is in today's society. Policy, attitude and rhetoric were all more blatantly racist than they are in our current climate. Since this period of time, racism has evolved. When the Civil Rights Movement was first started, the agenda was to fight these forms of racism and get the government to guarantee fundamental citizenship rights for blacks (Kendi p.387). While the Civil Rights Movement removed some legal barriers of discrimination, it did not end all forms of discrimination.

Since the end of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, there has been a major shift in the expression of racism. The overt discrimination against groups of people based off of biological factors is no longer the main form of racism, it has been replaced by covert racism or the idea that we live in a post-racial America. One of the beliefs is that discrimination no longer exists and that Americans do not see the color of a person's skin; they are colorblind (Kendi, 2016). Also there is a belief that seeing race is admitting that it matters and it does still have an effect on the lives of people of color. This dichotomy of societal expectations have changed all across America in the post-Civil Rights era. Saying certain things in public or discriminating against someone based on skin color is no longer socially acceptable. Instead it is more acceptable to criticize a group due to cultural and social failings online, and most likely anonymously. Stating that America is a colorblind society is also assuming that we as a nation are able to leave behind the racial divisions that have been present in our society even before the inception of the United States.

That is not the reality, in fact America has simply developed a new form of racism that has replaced the overt racism of the past as the most common type of racism. This new form of racism is a culture-centered subtle form of racism, unlike the biological founded racism of the past (Kendi p.498). One of the first things people notice about someone is their race. It is used as a gauge to who they are as a person. The differences in skin color, facial features and other biological characteristics are used as a clue to determine who a person is on the inside (Omi and Winant 1986). There has been a change in what American people believe inequality is caused by. The

overt form of racism instilled the belief that persons of color are born with lesser potential and ability to whites is disappearing while the colorblind form of racism shown in the belief that it's black people's lack of motivation or willpower that leads to inequality (Kendi 2016). This means that American people say inequality has nothing to do with the color of one's skin but instead about their individual ability. This fallacy of individual meritocracy completely ignores that past history of oppression that black people suffered. It instead puts focus solely on stereotypes that are used as excuses to justify the oppression.

Since the beginning of America, black lives have been disvalued. Black people were put into bondage solely on the basis of the color of their skin and other biological characteristics. After the emancipation of slavery, black lives were still discriminated due to their skin pigmentation. The predominant form of racism is no longer overt or based on biological characteristics. This subtle form of racism has greatly influenced various parts of American society including the criminal justice system. The All Lives Matter response is a product of a colorblind society. It is used as an excuse to end conversations about race, and how it still plays a large role in our society.

The Black Lives Matter Movement is a civil rights movement to fight against overt and covert racism. It's stating that race matters in a society where race is stated to be insignificant and a thing of the past by many. BLM is arguing that instead of colorblind, we need to be color conscious. BLM is not ignoring that racism is still a problem in the United States, instead it brings our current inequalities to light; especially in the wake of killings of unarmed persons of color. Race matters and Black Lives Matter. It is Black Lives Matter's charge to shift public perception and make changes to the criminal justice system so that way we can live in a society that is more equitable for all lives.

Works Cited

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3. Takaki, Ronald T. A Different Mirror: a History of Multicultural America. Little, Brown, 1993.