

Transcript - Holy Post Video - Race in America

(With citations.)

We need to talk about race.

Why are people protesting? Why are people angry? Slavery ended 150 years ago. The Civil Rights movement was 60 years ago. Racial discrimination is illegal now. Heck, we even had a black president!

So why are people still mad?

We're going to go through history. And we're going to look at some data. And we're going to go quickly so this video doesn't get too long. So hang on.

These are two households in America. One is black, the other is white. Today, the average black household has 60% of the income of the average white household. But only 1/10th of the household wealth.

- [Kriston McIntosh, Emily Moss, Ryan Nunn and Jay Shambaugh, Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap, Brookings Institute - \(https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/\)](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/)

Why does that matter? Household wealth helps send kids to school. Helps launch small businesses. Stabilizes losses of income. And helps families survive catastrophic events like divorce or unemployment.

What's amazing about this number is that there are lots of extremely wealthy African Americans. Movie stars. Pop stars. 75% of the NBA. 70% of the NFL. Oprah. Tyler Perry. Ben Carson. Morgan Freeman.

And there are a lot of extremely poor white families. Think of Appalachia and other parts of rural America. But even when we factor all that in, the average black household still has only 1/10th the wealth of the average white household.

How did that happen? Here we go...

What happened after we freed the slaves? After the Civil War ended?

Nine states enacted vagrancy laws - making it a crime to not have a job. The law was applied only to black men.

- (Correction: Vagrancy Laws could be applied to all races and have been used for centuries to corral vagrants, prostitutes and troublemakers, but were used in the post-Civil War South primarily to detain freed slaves and funnel them back into the economy as "leased convicts.")

Eight of those states then allowed prisoners - black men who had just been arrested for not having a job - to be hired out to plantation owners, with little or no pay going to prisoners themselves.

That's right. Men who had been freed from the plantations found themselves right back on the plantations.

Additional laws prohibited "mischief" and "insulting gestures" - which allowed more black men to be arrested and creating a huge markets for convict leasing.

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 38](#)

Working conditions for these "leased convicts" could be worse than slavery because the plantation owner leasing the black prisoner had no long-term interest in his well-being.

By the turn of 20th century, every state in the South mandated racial segregation by law, "Jim Crow" laws, which supported a social ostracism for blacks that extended to:

- Schools
 - Churches
 - Housing
 - Jobs
 - Restrooms
 - Hotels & restaurants
 - Hospitals
 - Prisons
 - Funeral homes, morgues, cemeteries

White politicians competed with each other to be more strict and specific on segregation - for example - a law prohibiting blacks and whites from playing chess together.

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 38](#)

In 1896 the Supreme Court ruled that these "Jim Crow" laws were legal, because they "reflected customs and traditions" and "preserved public peace and good order." These laws stayed in place until 1954, when the idea of "separate but equal" was struck down in the ruling known as *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

So what happened next - after *Brown*?

1956: the "Southern Manifesto" was signed by 101 out of 128 congress members from the South - pledging to maintain Jim Crow by all means possible;

5 states passed nearly 50 new Jim Crow laws after 1954;

Private whites-only schools - dubbed "segregation academies" - popped up all across the South (many of them Christian);

But now widespread civil rights protests - combined with anti-war protests that were occasionally becoming violent - inspired the political rise of "law and order" rhetoric. Richard Nixon became the first candidate to campaign specifically on a platform of "law and order".

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, pp. 50-60](#)

1968: 81% of Americans agreed "law and order has broken down in this country" and majority blamed communists and "Negroes who start riots."

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 59](#)

Let's go back to household wealth. The average black household has 1/10th the wealth of the average white household. Why is that? Because the #1 source of intergenerational wealth in America is home ownership, and from the 1930s to well into the 1960s, the federal gov't enacted policies to actively encourage white families to own homes, and discourage black families from doing the same.

1934: Federal Housing Admin created a risk-rating system to determine which neighborhoods were safe investment for federally backed mortgages; black neighborhoods were deemed too risky, marked off in maps with in red, in a practice now known as "redlining".

After WWII, a boom of new suburban housing was built all over the country. Much of it restricted by deed to "whites only."

1948: 40% of new housing developments in Minneapolis had covenants prohibiting purchase by African-Americans.

- [Delegard, Kirsten, and Ehrman-Solberg, Kevin. "Playground of the People? Mapping Racial Covenants in Twentieth Century Minneapolis." *Open Waters*; Issue 6 - Spring 2017](#)

So Blacks couldn't live in white neighborhoods AND couldn't get federally insured loans for black neighborhoods.

Until 1950, the realtors' code of ethics specifically prohibited selling a house in a white neighborhood to a non-white family. You could lose your realtor's license if you helped a black family buy a home in a white neighborhood.

- (Note: From 1924 to 1950, Article 34 of the Realtor Code of Ethics read: "A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.")

In the 1930s the FHA's Underwriting Manual said "incompatible racial groups should not be permitted to live in the same communities."

FHA went on to recommend that highways would be a good way to separate black neighborhoods from white neighborhoods.

- [Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law*. p. 65](#)

FHA funded huge "white only" suburban housing developments, leaving blacks in inner cities;

- [Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law*. p. 199](#)

After WWII, the GI Bill provided subsidized mortgages to help millions of men returning from war buy their first home.

While technically eligible for the GI Bill, the way it was administered left 1mm black veterans largely on the outside, looking in.

- In NY and New Jersey the GI Bill insured more than 67,000 new mortgages. Fewer than 100 of them went for homes purchased by non-whites.
- In 1947, there were 3200 mortgages in Mississippi guaranteed by the gov't for returning veterans. Of the 3200, only two of them went to black veterans.
- As a result, white families after the war were able to build home equity, growing wealth for retirement, inheritance, and college education for their kids.

- One historian has stated there was “no greater instrument for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America than the GI Bill.”
 - Blakemore, Erin. “How the GI Bill’s Promise was Denied to a Million Black Veterans.” (<https://www.history.com/news/gi-bill-black-wwii-veterans-benefits>)

And then came the “War on Drugs”

Inner-city blacks’ were extremely vulnerable economically:

The overwhelming majority of African Americans in 1970 lacked college degrees and had grown up in fully segregated schools

In the second half of the 20th century, factories and manufacturing jobs moved to suburbs; Black workers struggled to follow the jobs - they couldn’t live in many of the new suburban developments, and as late as 1970 only 28% of black fathers had access to a car;

- Garner, Roberta, and Hancock, Black Hawk ed. *Social Theory: A Reader - vol 1*, p. 216

When a white man in Cicero, IL, just outside Chicago, sublet an apartment to a black family, the white community rioted - setting fire to the apartment building and smashing windows until the national guard had to intervene.

The result of all of this:

In 1970, 70% of African American men had blue-collar jobs; by 1987, only 28% did.

- Garner, Roberta, and Hancock, Black Hawk ed. *Social Theory: A Reader - vol 1*, p. 243

As unemployment sky-rocketed in African American communities, so did drug use. As drug use increased, so did crime. A dynamic today that we see playing out in white rural communities hit hard by unemployment and opioid addiction.

Throughout the 1970s, white America became increasingly concerned by images of black violence shown on TV and in magazines. Drugs were the problem! Drug dealers and drug users were the enemy!

We decided to treat the drug epidemic not as a health crisis, but as a crisis of criminality. And we militarized our response:

Reagan/Bush anti-drug budget allocations, 1981-91:

Dept of Defense: \$33M to \$1.042B

Drug Enforcement Agency: \$86M to \$1.03B

FBI: \$38M to \$181M

Nat’l Inst on Drug Abuse: \$274M to \$57M (‘81-’84)

Dept of Education: \$14M to \$3M (‘81-’84)

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 59

1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act

- Mandatory minimum sentences, much harsher for distribution of crack cocaine (associated with blacks) than powder cocaine (associated with whites);
- Mandated evictions from public housing for any tenant who permitted drug-related criminal activity to occur on or near premises;
- Eliminated many gov’t benefits, including student loans, for anyone convicted of a drug crime;

- 1988 revision: set a 5-year minimum sentence for possessing any amount of crack cocaine even if there was no intent to distribute; previously had been 1-year maximum for possessing any amount of any drug without the intent to distribute.
 - [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 67](#)

Clinton presidency:

- Funding for public housing cut by \$17B (-61%)
- Funding for prisons increased by \$19B (+171%)
 - [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 72](#)

of Americans imprisoned for drug crimes exploded:

- 1980: 41,000
 - Today: 500,000 (more than entire '80 prison population)
- Most arrests for possession
- 2005 – 80% for possession, 20% for sales
- Most arrests for marijuana
- 80% of growth in drug arrests in 1990s
 - [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 76](#)

In a bizarre twist, we also militarized our police forces:

The police chief of New Haven, CT said: “I was offered tanks, bazookas, anything I wanted.”

Between 1997 and 1999, Pentagon handled 3.4 million orders for military equipment from

11,000 police agencies: Including:

253 aircraft (including Blackhawk & Huey helicopters)

7,856 M-16 rifles

181 grenade launchers

8,131 bulletproof helmets

1,161 night-vision goggles

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, pp. 94-95](#)

We also changed policing tactics.

A “no-knock” entry is when a SWAT team literally breaks down your door or smashes in through the windows.

Back to Minneapolis:

In 1986, Minneapolis SWAT teams performed “no knock” entries 35 times.

in the same city, in 1996, they performed “no knock” entries 700 times.

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 95](#)

There were financial incentives for arresting more drug users.

Federal grants to local police departments were tied to the number of drug arrests;

Research suggests the huge surge in arrests from increased drug enforcement was due more to budget incentives than to actual increases in drug activity.

What was the result? An explosion of our Prison Population.

In 25 yrs, the US prison population went from 350,000 to over 2.3 million;

US now has highest rate of incarceration in world.

We imprison a higher % of our black population than South Africa ever did during Apartheid.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 117

Data shows that the increased prison population was driven primarily by changes in sentencing policy - there was no visible connection b/w higher incarceration rates and violent crime rates.

If you are a Drug felon:

- Barred from public housing
 - Ineligible for food stamps
 - Forced to 'check the box' on employment applications marking yourself as a convicted felon.
- A criminal record has been shown to reduce the likelihood of getting a callback or job offer by as much as 50 percent. The negative impact of a criminal record for an African American job applicant is twice as large as for a white applicant.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 117

In 2006, 1 in 106 white men was behind bars

For black men, it was 1 in 14

For black men between the age of 20 and 35 - the age where families are built - it's 1 in 9.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 125

Do blacks use drugs more than whites?

Overall, African Americans and white Americans use drugs at similar rates, but the imprisonment rate of African Americans for drug charges is almost 6x that of whites.

- NAACP, "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet" (<https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>)

There isn't explicit racism in our legal system anymore. But it doesn't mean "justice is blind."

Study: A law in Georgia permitted prosecutors to seek life imprisonment for a 2nd drug offense; Over the period of the study this law was used against 1% of white second time offenders, and 16% of black second time offenders; As a result, 98% of prisoners serving life sentences under this law were black.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 143

Study: African-American youth in U.S. make up

- 16% of all youth
 - 28% of juvenile arrests
 - 35% of youth sent to adult court instead of juvenile court
- 58% of youth admitted to adult state prison

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, pp 147-148

Study: Blacks on New Jersey Turnpike

- 15% of all drivers
- 42% of all stops by police
- 73% of all arrests
- Among all drivers stopped, white drivers were 2x more likely than black drivers to be carrying drugs.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 167

Study: Volusia County, Florida

- 5% of drivers were black or Latino;
- 80% of drivers stopped were black or Latino.
 - [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 167](#)

Study: Oakland, California

Black drivers are twice as likely as white drivers to be stopped and 3x more likely to be searched.

- [Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow*, page 167](#)

In Minneapolis, Philando Castile had been pulled over 49 times in 13 years, mostly for minor infractions (failing to signal before turning into parking lot, failure to repair seat belt). The 49th time he was pulled over - the officer shot him sitting inside his car. He'd been pulled over for a broken tail light.

Chuck Colson's organization, Prison Fellowship, recently organized a manifesto that was signed by evangelical leaders asserting "our over-reliance on incarceration fails to make us safer or restore the people and communities who have been harmed."

Unconscious bias seeps into schools, too, as white teachers often assume black students are less intelligent than they actually are.

A gifted student usually has to be recommended by a teacher to move to a gifted track. When a teacher is black, an equally gifted white and black student have comparable chances of being recommended. When the teacher is white, the black student's odds of being recommended are cut in half.

- [Grissom, Jason, and Redding, Christopher. "Discretion and Disproportionality: Explaining the Underrepresentation of High-Achieving Students of Color in Gifted Programs." \(<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2332858415622175>\)](#)

Are white teachers racist? No. Are they affected by bias? Yes. And it affects black students every day.

So where are we?

The average black household has 1/10th the wealth of the average white household. This didn't happen by accident. It happened by policy.

We - the majority culture - told them where they could live, and where they couldn't. Then we moved most of the jobs to the places we told them they couldn't live.

When the predictable explosion of unemployment and poverty resulted in a predictable increase in drug use and crime, we criminalized the problem.

We built \$19B of new jails and sold grenade launchers to the police. As a result, a white boy born in America today has a 1 in 23 chance of going to prison in his lifetime. For a black boy, it's 1 in 4.

And that is why people are angry.

Many people care deeply about these issues. Many have suggested solutions. Some of those have been tested, with results ranging from moderate success, to abject failure. I'm not here to tell you what the right solutions are, because I don't know.

I'm just here to ask you to do one thing. It is the thing that begins every journey to a solution for every problem.

What am I asking you to do?

Care.

Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 1:17

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say "It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem." Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

- Fred Rogers

"Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God"

- Bob Pierce, Founder World Vision