

JJ  
2020

Rashelle  
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# Roots of Systemic Racism

To our readers,

Thank you for joining us on this fight against injustice. We believe it's important to educate ourselves on not only current events, but the past as well. This guides our work and helps us understand how we got to where we are today. In this project, we unpack and analyze the roots of systemic racism in the United States. We wrote about the War on Drugs and the impact of Capitalism on the Juvenile Justice system. We hope you learn something!

- Rashelle, Paige, and Mira

# Impact of the War on Drugs

by Paige Kenny

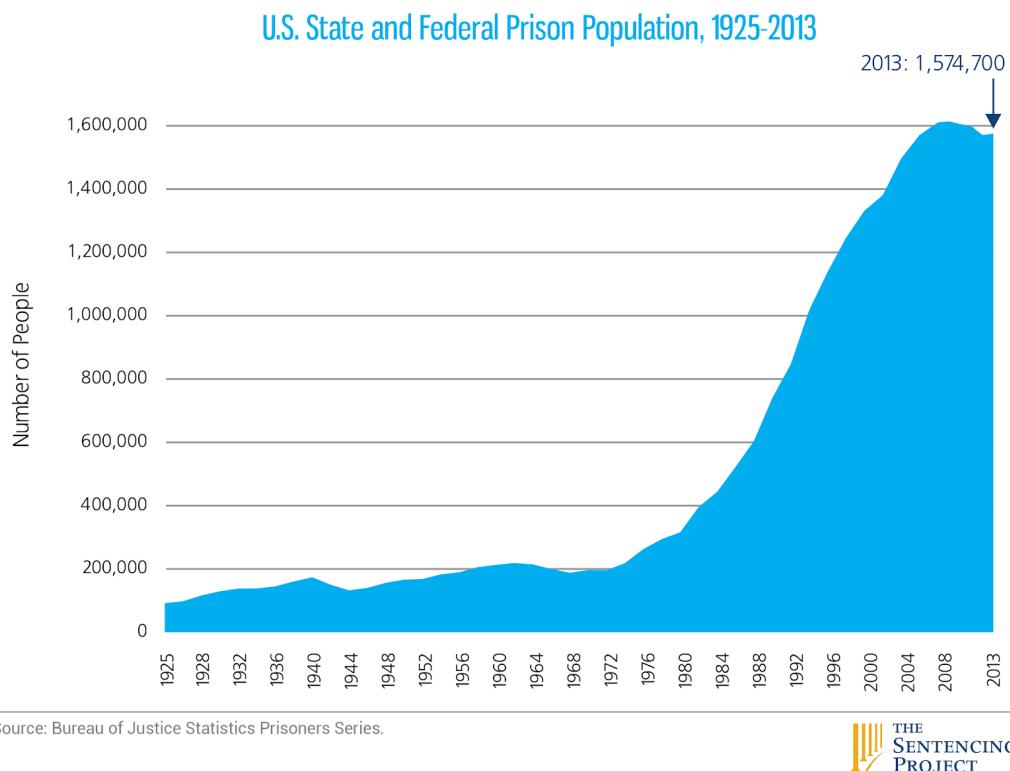
The War on Drugs was a conscious effort put forth by the Nixon administration to criminalize and imprison black Americans. On July 14, 1969, Nixon identified drug abuse as a national threat and called for national anti-drug policy at the state and federal level. In June of 1971 Nixon officially declared a “War on Drugs” and identified drug abuse in the United States as “public enemy No. 1”. After the war on drugs was declared, the number of people in American jails/prisons went from 300,000 to 2.3 million. This made the United States the

world leader in incarceration. Half of the citizens in prison are incarcerated for a drug offense, and two-thirds of those in prison for

a drug offense are people of color. These disproportionate drug arrests devastate communities of color. Blacks are 13.4 times more likely to be imprisoned than whites. This disparity is driven by racist undertones and targeting of drug laws and policy in the US. Between

1980 and 2011, arrests of black Americans for violent crimes dropped but arrests for drug offenses increased. Black Americans are more likely to be arrested for possessing or selling drugs even though whites use drugs at the same rate and are more likely to sell drugs.

Nixon's domestic policy chief, John Ehrlichman later admitted the war on drugs was designed to criminalize the black community. Ehrlichman said, "The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people

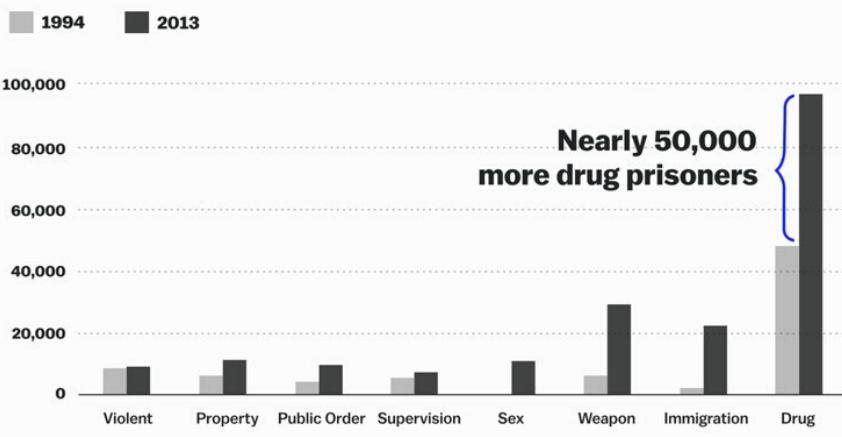


....We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did." This horrific effort vilified the black community and amplified the presumption of guilt that began with lynching during Jim Crow and has continued ever since. Nixon was successful in his efforts, and by vilifying black Americans, he created a political climate of fear and anger. To appeal to the fear and underlying racism of their constituents, every elected official had to be "tough on crime". Representatives used fear politics to gain support by claiming gangs and drugs had taken over the streets and damaged the school system. In the early 1990s, democratic candidate Bill Clinton gained bipartisan support by claiming to be "tough on crime". Not long after he was elected president, Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act in 1994. This bill allotted 12.5 billion dollars to increase incarceration. This "persuasive racial targeting", the perpetuation of stereotypes, and using fear to fuel mass incarceration, makes the mass incarceration the new Jim Crow.

# HALF of the people in federal prisons are serving time for a drug offense



Federal prisoners in 1994 vs 2013



Vox

The prison industry continues to expand, with the number of black men in prison exceeding the number of black men enslaved in 1820. This unique form of American apartheid strips black men of their freedom and human dignity. Declaring a war on drugs allows the United States to abandon other rules of conduct under the guise of reform. This country strips away the rights of convicted felons and is the only democratic country to deprive its citizens of their right to vote after they serve their sentences. The disenfranchisement of former felons is a direct attack on democracy. Prison labor is another way the federal government exploits people of color and takes away their liberty. This inhumane labor is a modern manifestation of slavery, with harsh conditions, little to no pay, and no control over their human dignity. Tons of large corporations use this labor since it's sourced in the United States and extremely cheap, increasing their profit margins. The Higher Education Act of 1998 stated that any person convicted of a drug offense would be blocked or delayed from receiving federal educational assistance like loans or work-study programs. This law doesn't affect the wealthy who don't need financial assistance; it plainly targets low-income people of color. While the HEA applies to those who've committed a drug-related offense, someone convicted of murder or rape will not be blocked from these benefits. The War on drugs is no longer a metaphor: these people are now prisoners of war. The United States federal government has declared a war on the Black community. It claims safety is the priority but turns a blind eye to the racial injustice the system promotes.

# Capitalism's Connection to Systemic Racism

by Mira Chawla

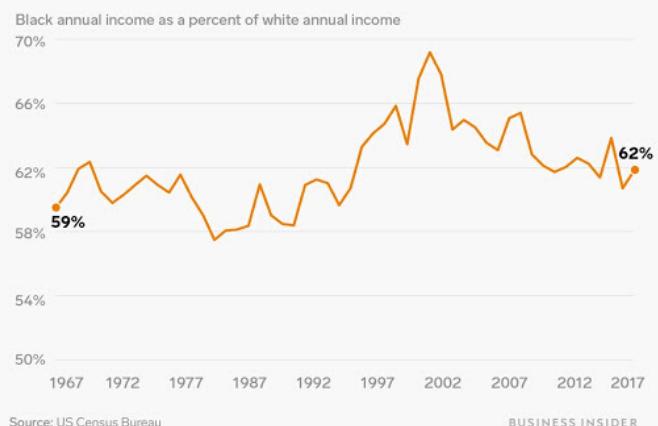
Systemic racism and capitalism are inextricably connected. As said by Ibram X. Kendi, author and founder of the Anti-Racist Research and Policy Center at American University, "the origins of racism cannot be separated from the origins of capitalism...the life of capitalism cannot be separated from the life of racism." "Racial capitalism" is extremely prevalent in

America and it is a systemic process that derives social and economic value from an individual's racial identity. The reason that this is so detrimental to society is that it commodifies people of color and cultivates race-on-race resentment. The United States has a horrific historical and ongoing capitalistic exploitation of black Americans in particular.

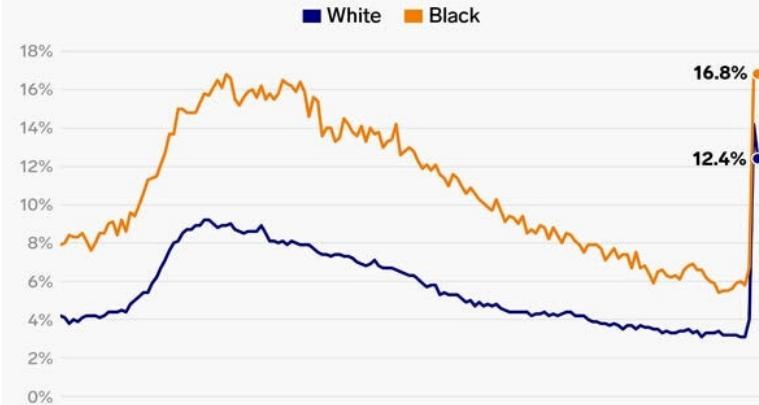
Capitalism thrives on racism and this dynamic exists because the foundations of the American economy originated from the use of slave labor. Without the economic exploitation of racial minorities, who still disproportionately occupy low-income jobs, America's economy cannot support itself. The institutions of this country were written by slave owners, who molded America's legal and socioeconomic systems specifically to protect their wealth, which had accumulated from their horrifically racist practices. Capitalism was never designed to work for every American, only members of the top percentage that are generally void of disadvantages such as race and gender. Considering that the US's institutions and foundations deliberately suppress black success, African-Americans do not benefit from capitalism and when they do, they are "beating the system," rising above every obstacle that we consciously place against them. Thus, a black person who manages to become successful in America is a rare case in the midst of atrocious levels of poverty inflicted on black communities.

Capitalism impoverishes black Americans and consequently places an entire racial community at a severe societal and economic disadvantage. The system inflicts severe psychological pressures on those who do not benefit from the potential grandeur and copious wealth. Capitalism's inherent stress, anxiety, and insecurity push to the background normal patterns of social conduct. When living in an environment of extreme poverty, the struggle to survive is perpetual and naturally feeds into crime. Criminality and poverty descend into a cycle as it becomes nearly impossible to obtain a job with a criminal record.

Wage gap between Black and white Americans



Unemployment rates of Black and white Americans



### Marijuana usage vs. possession arrests, by race

■ White ■ Black

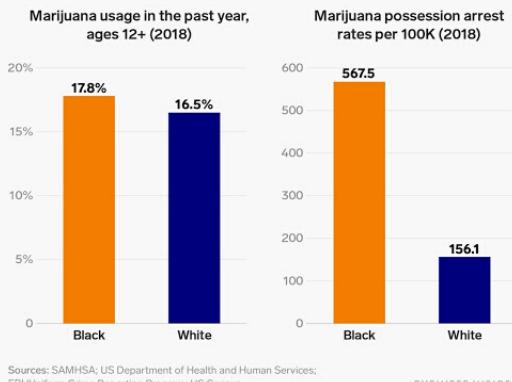
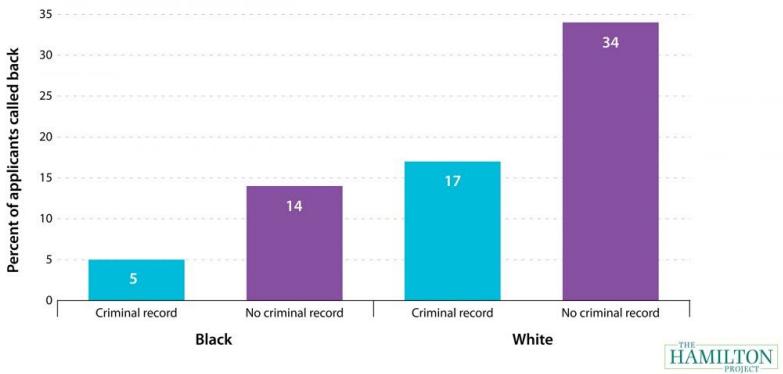


FIGURE 11.

### Callback Rate, by Race and Criminal Record

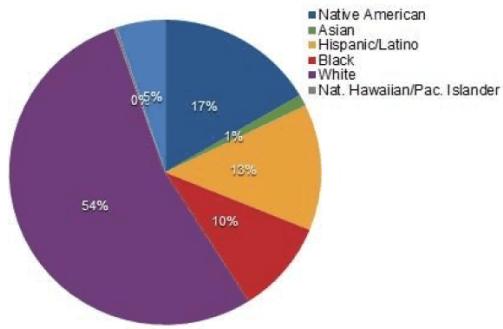
The presence of a criminal record decreases the probability of receiving a call back for a job interview.



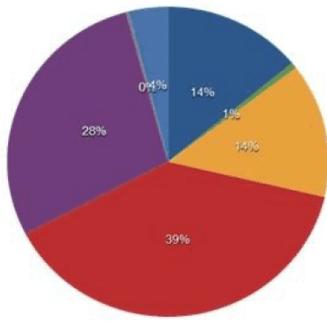
**Unemployment leads to poverty, which in turn leads to crime once again. Poor economics and the lack of resources are common denominators of crime in black communities, but society's deep-rooted racism refuses to acknowledge black crime as a repercussion of capitalism. Instead, the perpetrators' race becomes the incriminating factor, further contributing to racism. In order to regulate crime, police officers are stationed disproportionately in black communities and fear of blackness is instilled in police officers to a lethal degree. Racism within the criminal justice system often magnifies minor offenses by black people to detrimental criminal convictions, again feeding into unemployment, poverty, and crime. The lack of financial resources in black communities leads black defendants unable to afford expensive (but often necessary) legal assistance. They then rely on public defenders who are often incapable of adequately proving the defendant's innocence or reducing the sentence.**

### Civil Rights and the School to-Prison Pipeline in Oklahoma

#### Enrollment by Ethnicity



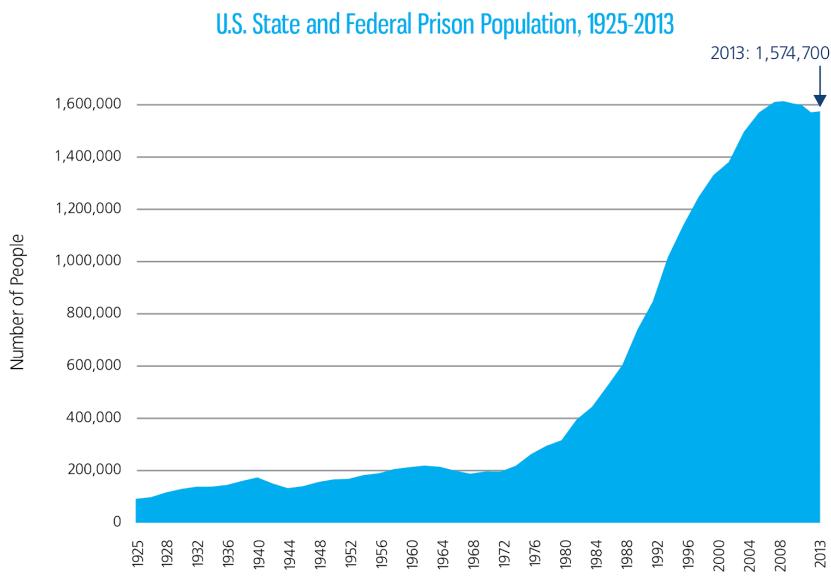
#### Expulsions under zero-tolerance by ethnicity<sup>104</sup>



In order to combat institutionalized racism, we need to dismantle the economic system that supports it. Crime rates and poverty are nearly direct results of capitalism because it creates a massive wealth disparity. Socialism, or at least democratic socialism, will mend the economy that afflicts African-Americans by providing adequate access to housing, food, and education, thus lowering the rates of crime and disassembling the school-to-prison pipeline.

# What do those graphs mean?

by Rashelle Amao



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics Prisoners Series.

In the 1970s, President Richard Nixon formally launched the war on drugs to eradicate illicit drug use in the US. Over the next couple decades, under the Reagan administration, the number of people in state and federal prisons greatly escalated. Lopez, German. "The War on Drugs, Explained." Vox, Vox, 8 May 2016, [www.vox.com/2016/5/8/18089368/war-on-drugs-marijuana-cocaine-heroin-meth](http://www.vox.com/2016/5/8/18089368/war-on-drugs-marijuana-cocaine-heroin-meth).

African Americans face systemic racism in nearly every facet of life. The resulting data illuminates the disparities that exist specifically in the unemployment rates in America.

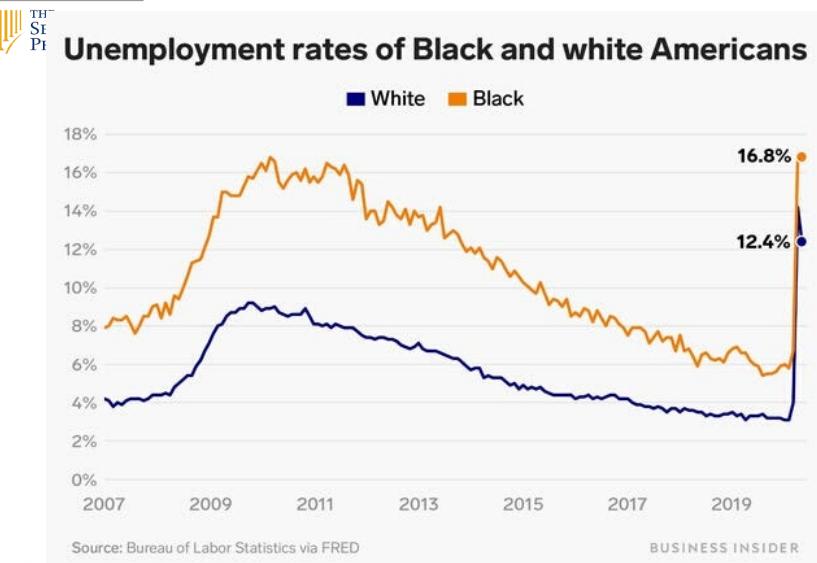
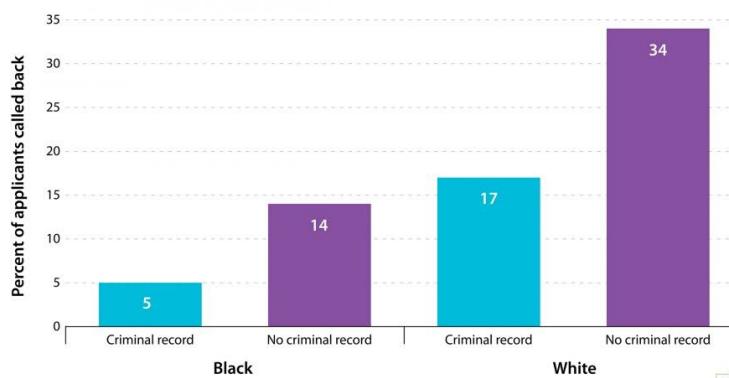


FIGURE 11.  
Callback Rate, by Race and Criminal Record

The presence of a criminal record decreases the probability of receiving a call back for a job interview.



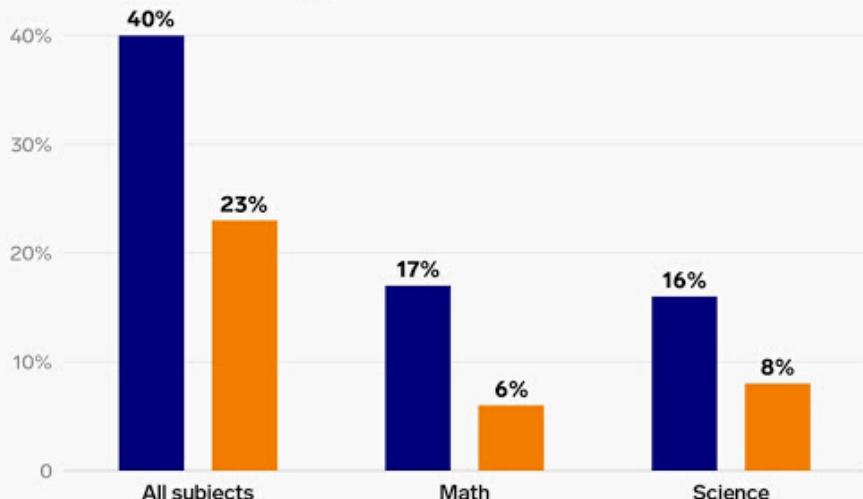
Source: Pager 2003.

This illustrates the fact that black people with no criminal record are called back fewer times than caucasions with a criminal record. This also reveals that only 5% of black applicants with a criminal record got called back.  
[https://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/callback\\_rate\\_by\\_race\\_and\\_criminal\\_record](https://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/callback_rate_by_race_and_criminal_record)

## Advanced course credit earned in secondary school, by subject and race

■ White ■ Black

Percent of students earning any credit in Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses



Source: US Department of Education, 2013

BUSINESS INSIDER

**There remains a huge divide in educational opportunities. In this study, it shows that African Americans are only about a third as likely to receive advanced course credit for math.**

## Wage gap between Black and white Americans

Black annual income as a percent of white annual income  
70%

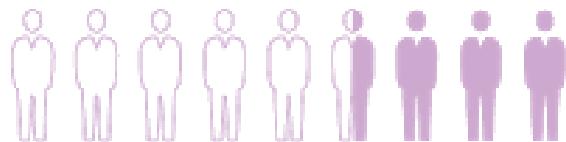


Source: US Census Bureau

BUSINESS INSIDER

**This visualization shows the wage gap between African Americans and Caucasians. This is communicating that in 2017 the average black worker earned just 62% of what the average white worker made. Shayanne Gal, Andy Kiersz. "25 Simple Charts to Show Friends and Family Who Aren't Convinced Racism Is Still a Problem in America." Business Insider, Business Insider, 12 June 2020, [www.businessinsider.com/us-systemic-racism-in-charts-graphs-data-2020-6](http://www.businessinsider.com/us-systemic-racism-in-charts-graphs-data-2020-6).**

# AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINOS CONSTITUTE



# 57%

of people in state prisons for a drug offense despite the fact that drug use is roughly similar among all racial/ethnic groups

**People of color experience discrimination in every facet of the criminal justice system. These statistics prove the fact that minorities are more likely to be incarcerated compared to those of caucasian descent.**

Ghandnoosh, Nazgol. "Race and Punishment: Racial Perceptions of Crime and Support for Punitive Policies." The Sentencing Project, 3 Sept. 2014, [www.sentencingproject.org/publications/race-and-punishment-racial-perceptions-of-crime-and-support-for-punitive-policies/](http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/race-and-punishment-racial-perceptions-of-crime-and-support-for-punitive-policies/).

#### Past-month illicit drug use

2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health



#### Drug-related arrests per 100,000 residents of each race

2013 FBI Uniform Crime Reports / US Census Bureau

WHITE 332



BLACK 879



## AMERICAN SLAVERY

246 Years

1619

Slave Market

1700

1800

## SEGREGATION

89 years

1865

1900

1954

## MASS INCARCERATION

61+ Years

2000

?

This timeline communicates the history of black enslavement in America. It started with slavery and slave codes, which lead to black codes and Jim Crow segregation, and now we are in the age of mass incarceration.

<https://peoplesschooldc.wordpress.com/the-impact-of-historic-racism-and-white-privilege/>