

Racism in 21st century America by Elvis T.

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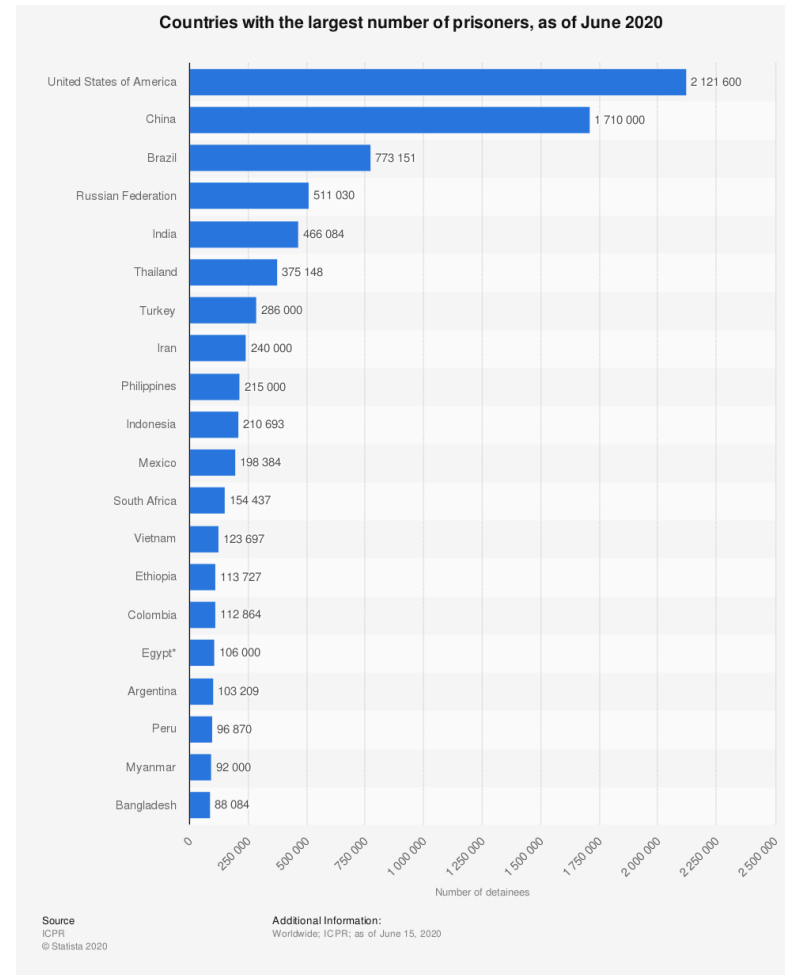


What Is Racism?

- Racism - the marginalization and oppression of a person or people based on their race or ethnicity
- Racism has been prevalent throughout history in America, largely against African Americans
- It still remains a challenge today by being more structural, legal, and systemic

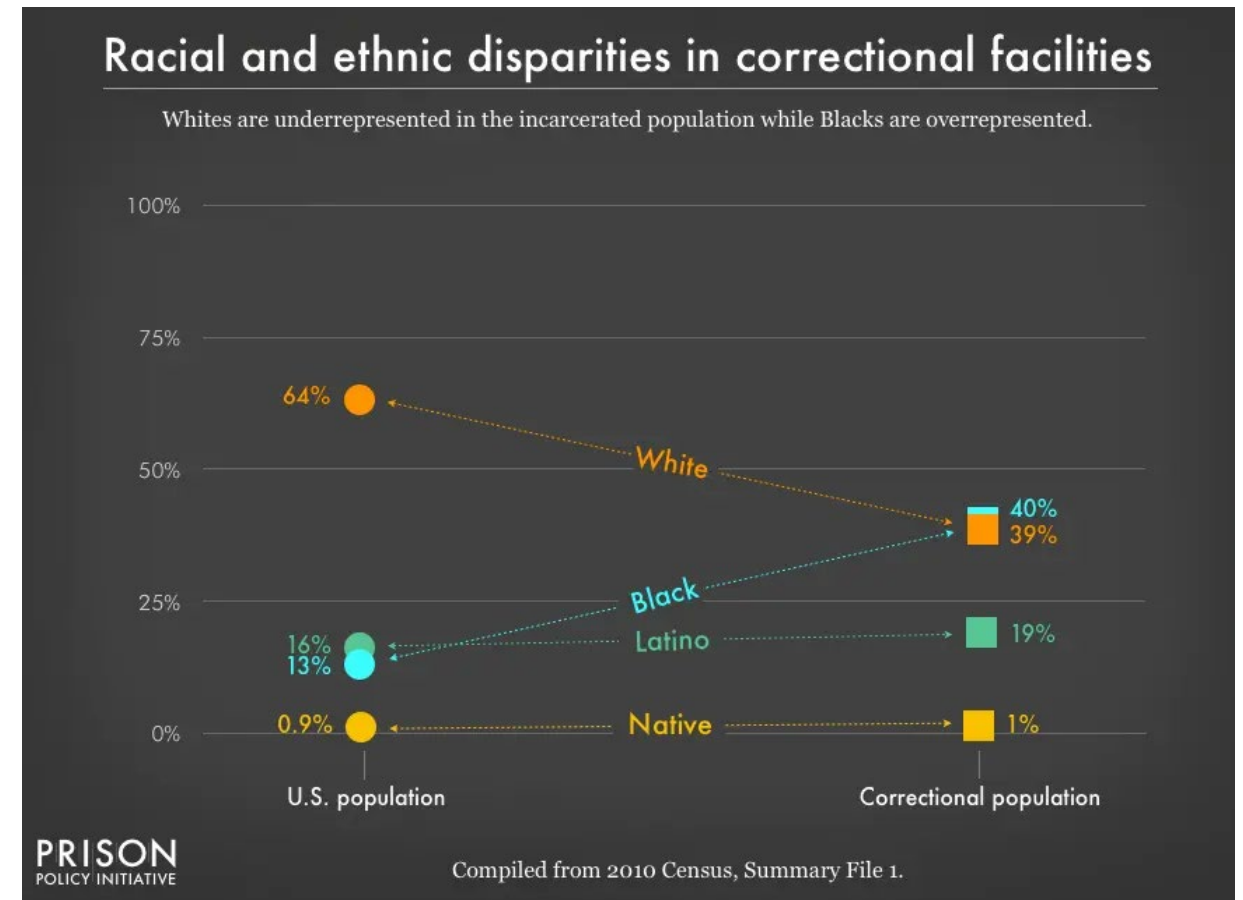
One structural factor of racism in America is the criminal justice system

- America has the largest prison population in the entire world
 - 2.3 million prisoners (Sawyer, 2020)



See notes down below ↓

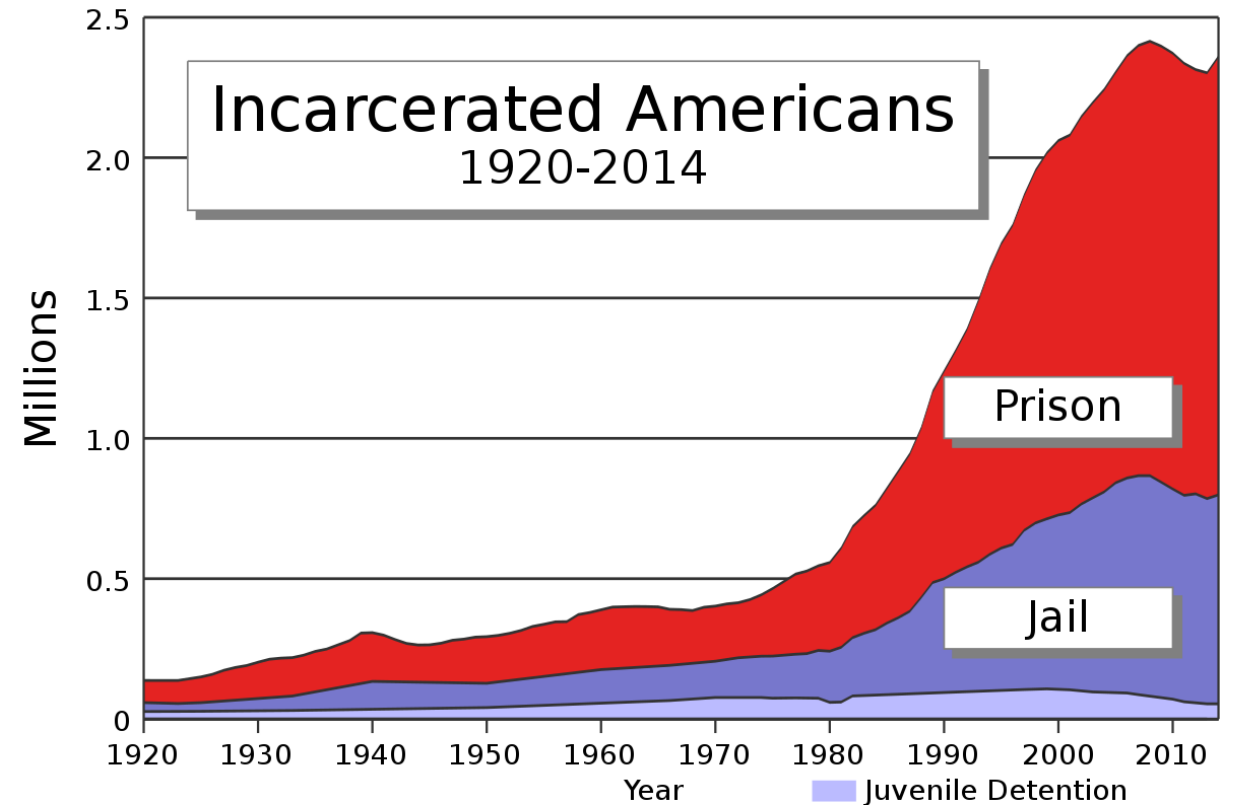
- 13% of the U.S. population are black (Sawyer, 2020)
- Yet they make up 40% of the U.S. prison population
 - In comparison, more than 60% of the U.S. population are white
 - But they only make up 39% of the prison population





History of black incarceration in America

- The Civil War destroyed the economy in the South by freeing black slaves who were the integral part of the economic production system in the South
 - 13th Amendment – All Americans are granted freedom, except for prisoners
 - To rebuild the Southern economy, freed African Americans were arrested en masse for minor crimes (like loitering and vagrancy) and were sent back to the South to provide labor once more (Little, 2018)



See notes down below ↓

One cause for black incarceration in America now

- U.S. prisons are exploited for financial and political gains
- American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) - a political lobbying group, comprised of politicians and corporations, who pushes for laws that will benefit the shareholders



What did ALEC pass?

- Truth in Sentencing – Prisoners must serve at least 85% of their sentence
- Mandatory minimums – Offenders are to serve a fixed prison term for certain crimes
 - For example, selling 28 grams of crack will automatically land you 5 years in prison
 - Prevent judges to carefully consider the circumstance of a crime and give fairer trials (DuVernay, 2020)



Members of ALEC

- Wal-Mart advocated for Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law
 - This law allows citizens to shoot and kill anyone they believe were dangerous
 - The effect of this law was that it boosted gun and bullet sales for Wal-Mart
- Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) created the "Three Strikes" law
 - This law states that when you commit a third felony, you will be sentenced to life
 - The effect of this law was the continued increase in prison population
- UNICOR makes \$900 million annually through free prison labor (DuVernay, 2020)



Prisons and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Prisons in America defy the Universal Declaration of Human Rights multiple times. For example,
 - "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." (Roosevelt, 1948)
 - Prisons exploit free labor, which violates the human right of prisoners
 - "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." (Roosevelt, 1948)
 - The convicted experience terrible prison conditions, which also violates their human right

The "Blueprint"

- In an effort to reduce racism in America, we need to push for reforms in the criminal justice system and in prisons
 - Cut off the lobbyists operating around law-making and prisons
 - Subsidize non-private prisons, using the money from corporations, to make better prison conditions and to rehabilitate the prisoners
 - Give more freedoms and incentives to ex-convicts so that they can thrive back in society
 - Hold the law enforcements and prison guards more accountable, as they are the ones more responsible for arbitrary arrests and killings of African Americans

Summary

- Systemic racism still exists through the criminal justice system, which is biased against people of color
 - Blacks are overrepresented in prison population; a huge disparity between black prisoners and crime rate
- Prisons are cash cows for big corporations
 - Corporations use their political powers to pass laws that can generate prisoners, make them stay longer, and exploit them for free labor
- To end systemic racism, we need to reform the criminal justice system and the prison system
 - First and foremost, we stop letting lobbyists have a hand in law-making and in the way prisons operate

Reference Page

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