

Crime Falls, Inequality Rises

In America, we assume equality, and our society is portrayed as a system in which all are presented with identical circumstances to succeed. So why should government agencies continue to collect racial statistics from prisons, hospitals, and schools; why is it wrong for the government to create a law that bans the collection of social statistics?

The answer is simple; outlawing the collection racial statistics in California will further render ignorance of racial inequality and create a capitalistic ideology that justifies minority oppression.

To further introduce the idea of a capitalistic ideology, James Baldwin, an inspiring social and political activist states, “To be white in America means not having to think about it”(Qtd. in Johnson 22). Most whites get through life thinking that capitalism works for everyone, because it works for them. They promote the idea of a meritocracy, the idea of the cream rising to the top, without considering the racial inequalities that exist in the world. Ironically, they do not realize that by participating in a capitalistic economy, they create a world in which inequalities are produced and disregarded.

To illustrate the inequalities that exist in our society, writer and essayist Adam Gopnik highlights some basic inequalities concerning modern American society by stating that blacks are incarcerated seven times as often as whites. Accordingly, there are instances where society on the whole is not presented equal opportunities, and is dichotomized particularly in the domain of criminal justice. To further illustrate inequities within the criminal justice system, Michelle Alexander, a law professor, points out the relationship between the incarceration of black Americans and crime: “Crime rates have fluctuated during the past 30 years and today are at historical lows, but incarceration rates have consistently soared”(par. 6). As a result, even in a time of lower crime rates, black incarceration rates continue to far outpace those of white offenders. Relating back to the unfair capitalistic ideology, white groups will always have an unearned privilege, which forces them to assume that the rest of society exists in the same conditions.

This unequal environment puts a greater percentage of minority groups than white groups into a prison, where they are marked and labeled as felons for the rest of their lives; once these people are labeled as felons finding a job, renting an apartment, and buying a house become a struggle. It creates a demoralizing society, in which change seems far away. It forces black Americans to live in a society where they feel trapped and oppressed by the white group above them; thus, an unequal society is formed that favors white groups.

Accordingly, America is composed of a false illustration of an equal and free society. The reality is that minority groups are persecuted, and live in a society where white males have unearned privilege, meaning that they gain privilege without even knowing it, and dominance over minority groups. Connecting the idea of white privilege, capitalism, and the unjust prison system, a world is created in which whites have an entitlement that minorities are denied. When one group puts dominance over another group, it creates racism.

White groups are able to say that they have worked hard to earn their position, and this idea that the capitalistic way of running things is the only way that a society can exist fairly. They are able to define society with a meritocratic structure, thus establishing a state of normalcy. This group believes in the theory of capitalism; they think all groups can attain a certain position within the economy through labor. For instance, consider the answer given when Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, a sociology professor, asked college students for the reason blacks lag behind whites, one college student answered: "If, if they worked hard, if, if they just went out to college and just worked as hard as they could, they would, I mean, they, they could make it just as high as anyone else"(137). Their answer perfectly illustrates that there are people in U.S. society that believe equality is the entity of America, and cannot see the reality that exists in the world.

However, the unequal lived experience of minority groups is extremely different from this capitalistic theory. Removing racial statistics gives these groups the ability to justify their dominance and theory over minorities. It creates a barrier between white society and racial inequality that gives the ability to justify their unearned privilege. A paradox is formed in which white groups earn privilege without realizing that they possess privilege. Society believes that racism does not exist because white groups claim that they do not see color and either by true or willful ignorance, they ignore the inequalities that exist in American society; this process is essentially colorblind racism. Again, this creates a contradicting situation because white groups choose to believe that society is structured equally, and by doing so they create a racist society.

This law will simply erase the reality that Black Americans are treated similar to how slaves were treated a century ago. These minorities are stripped of their sense of self because they are placed in a position where statistics show that they are more likely than whites to be incarcerated, stripped of their freedom, their family, and their rights. Relating to the circumstances of the slave trade, this structure is depriving Black Americans of their human entitlement and liberty, for the sake of profit in favor of private prison corporations. Accordingly, passing a law that eliminates these statistics from society will remove all proof of this repressive structure, and will further increase private prison capitalistic venture. Due to colorblind racism, our society ignores this unequal structure, creating an oppressive environment.

Removing the truth from reality causes groups with power and financial ability to continue to receive their "hard earned money" without even acknowledging the hardships and the fact that Black Americans are not presented with these same opportunities.

American society is built on the foundation of this idea that if an individual tries hard enough, they will reach their goal and achieve their passion in life. Those families with financial stability are able to raise their kids up in a way where hard work does pay off because they are able to send their kids to college and graduate school, and thus the structure works in favor of these families, who are most often white middle class and upper class. To illustrate, in 2008, black males accounted for five percent of the college population, but thirty-six percent of prison population (Wilson 17).

The paradox of capitalism, believing in equality but creating inequality, manifests itself as an oppressive system in which industrial structures, such as the criminal justice system, create an environment that perpetuates inequality within minority groups. The more privileged white

groups lack knowledge that leads to disunity and antipathy towards minorities because of their “lack” of diligence. Witnessing this privileged capitalistic scene, and observing the ignorance of many white groups, our society will simply regress with the incorporation of this new law. If the world accepts this society as the status quo, our nation will rapidly start establishing a horrifyingly unequal structure.