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April 5th, 2021

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Why Is There Racial Bias in Policing and What Is Being Done About It?

Every day, one of the groups of real-life heroes that help us make our communities feel safer and more secure is the police, alongside firefighters, health workers, and rescue personnel. This title as real-life heroes is given to them for risking their lives, fighting crime, and keeping civilians safe. But is that the case all the time? Lately, people had been questioning the police force's ability here in the United States if their reputation as real-life heroes is still well-deserved. Questions will arise: ones like, “Are we still safe if the people whom we should entrust our safety as a community are the ones who initiate inflicting harm, violence, and practice inequality?” Issues regarding how the police handle criminals, disputes, and some who intentionally abuse their power as members of the police force are the possible root causes for people to doubt their trust in them.

One massively alarming and still problematic matter up to date is regarding the racial bias in policing. This has been a heated topic for decades now, and this issue ignited once again during the Shooting of Breonna Taylor on March 13, 2020, in Louisville, Kentucky (Oppel). A lot more when the news about the Killing of George Floyd incident on May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota were reported (The New York Times). These incidents of police misconduct, malpractice, and brutality had put the police force on the spot for criticism all over the world, which started protests and began the *Black Lives Matter* movement in up to 150 American cities

in the United States. It is a racial justice movement that had impacted not only in the U.S. but led to international discussions via the Internet during the peak of the issue: one that was considered as the period of reckoning for the country (Wen). People are publicly voicing out their thoughts, calling for reform. That had not happened since the last civil rights protests during the 1960s (The New York Times).

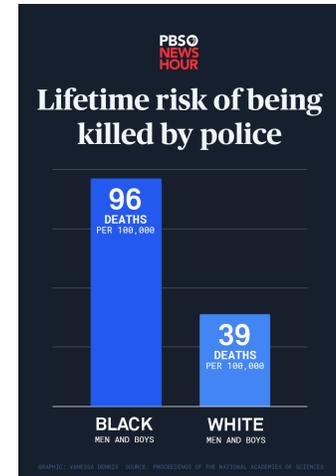


To be transparent, racial bias refers to one's judgment on another individual's race and mostly, color without any tangible or feasible basis. Another definition from a reference is that it is a form of racial prejudice that is done unintentionally, without direct knowledge, and often contradicts one's explicit beliefs and behaviors (Wen). It can root from implicit bias that is influenced by personal experience, one's environment upon growing up, and one's exposure to society. Culture is another factor for this, from the types of books that are read, television shows, and news that are followed (Wen). This is still happening among civilians, which should not be an excuse. More disturbingly, law enforcers exhibit this kind of treatment to other people too as they execute their power as part of the police force. What makes this sad is that studies are reporting “In the new study, black Americans were three times more likely to be shot and killed by police officers during interactions where the victim appeared to pose little or no threat to officers, the researchers found.” (Schumaker).

If not shot, they are unjustly treated during police operations where they may not be abused physically, but psychologically and verbally by the officers themselves.

No one can point out why people tend to view other people differently. Fear, prejudice, or simply false judgment are not enough reasons, to begin with. No notable news can be mentioned against police that they made a violent arrest against a white person, no matter how controversial or notorious their crimes may be. Instead, when they are arresting these people, they do not have any problems mentioning their Miranda Rights with enthusiasm. The police also do not have any issues knocking onto a white potential suspect's door at a well-known (or at least reputable, ordinary) neighborhood, knocking while telling them that they are the police. When an innocent, white person was not shot during a shoot-out, one can imagine a police officer telling them, 'Thank God.' Why do people like this still exist? What makes a black person so different from a pale, white person? They can both think. They can both speak. They can both act on their free will. They both work to meet their personal needs. Why treat them differently? No wonder this ongoing act that's taken for granted ignites a protest for change from people who are simply tired of the indifference or ignorance regarding the matter. One protester at the *Black Lives Matter* movement even said that this is not simply about them anymore but for the sake of the children in the future. People in the past began acting to make a change. In the present, it is still an ongoing fight. Concerned people for their future and others as well will surely worry if the problem does not stop.

This issue is ongoing for decades now that up to this point, there is still no resolution to this case. Scientists, psychologists, and other professionals concerning the field of science would want to run studies and conduct research that would solve racial bias, but while they may be able to execute randomized controlled studies, a real-life experiment on racial bias in policing cannot be done thoroughly because of two reasons. First, police reports and forms are not massively



accurate whether they used non-fatal force upon their arrests. These forms can be completely falsified at any time (Schumaker). The second reason supports the first reason from the root: racial bias in policing is a judgment conveyed by law enforcers psychologically that is not feasible nor tangible.

On a positive note, the police departments are now eager to remove, or at least reduce, the racial disparities issues among police enforcers while they are on the field. “In 2018, the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced that it would start collecting statistics about use-of-force from police agencies around the country, but that participation would be voluntary.” (Schumaker). It resulted that only 40% of the officers all over the country agreed to participate. That is a good start for the resolution because this would inform them to be mindful all the time while on duty and that they keep their accountability of everything they do in check via their required paper works. This data would be additional info to be tracked whenever there are trials in court, especially for innocent people mistaken as suspects.

Another way to begin resolving this issue is by having the officers undergo an unconscious bias training course. What other way to resolve a psychological issue by using a psychological method, right? “Experts say efforts to reach across racial lines to build ties with community members could help to reduce disparities. Community policing efforts might include town meetings, polls and surveys, sitting down with interest groups and foot patrols to increase an officer's interactions with the neighborhood.”(Wen) This will simply serve as a guide for the people taking the test to accept their implicit bias. The first and main step will be to recognize that one had the bias in the first place. Taking the Implicit Association Task (IAT) will help accomplish this. The reason is that, even when someone does not think they are biased against another group of people, our behavior in milliseconds will prove otherwise (Wen). The last and most basic way

to resolve this is to engage in long-term contact, whether in person or online, with the other group for someone to change their attitude and what they view against the other groups. This resolves in many aspects. It is a fact that a person does not experience anything new when they are within their comfort zones, so it can be stated that a person should try engaging themselves with what they are curious about or at least with what they want to understand so that they may be able to change their point of view. Willingness and transparency will help solve this issue.

To conclude, racial bias is still disturbing especially when a police officer knelt on a man's neck until he stops breathing which proves that this issue should be resolved before another extreme act happens again. It should be talked about because the law enforcement that is expected to be fair, right, and just to all human beings are the ones implicitly applying an inexcusable behavioral bias against other people. As of right now Derek Chauvin is on trial for George Floyd death. Issues of skin color, race, and ethnicity should be the very least people could concern about because, at the end of the day, we are all human. All humans do the same biological and psychological processes: we feel, we breathe, we think, and we act. If anything, all of us should be working on solving other issues instead of having to face problems against treating other people too differently as if the others are low lives. As a young black woman I don't want to see anymore incidents of police brutality or racism.

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