**LIFE LIBERY AND INJUSTICE FOR SOME**

For this assignment, I will examine the segregation, current racism, discrimination and prejudice which exist in the American Society today, which led to the death and injustice for young men like Travon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner. I will use statistics and case laws such the “Mississippi Burning Trial” , Jim Crow Laws and information from the book “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee and other secondary sources to provide a clear picture of the inequality which still exists in America today, despite the fact that America claims equal rights and justice for all. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that America has not changed much since slavery, and as a result black people are still suffering.

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The fight for equality, freedom and justice seems like a fight that can never be over for certain group of people. It is sad to say, that despite all the time that has past and all the lives lost, certain group of people in America are still victims. They are victims to oppression and inequality. These groups of people are slaves to the broken, yet evolved governmental policies, rules and regulations which exist in the United States today. Presently there are three (3) branched of government in the United States that were theoretically designed for the people, by the people, the Executive, Legislative and the most popular of three in my opinion, Judicial.

Over the last few decades the American judicial system has been perceived by different ethnic groups as a body of law, completed segregated. Different ethnic groups have all been victims to this type of segregation at some point in time. However, there is one group in particular who always seem to be at a loss in all aspects of the judicial system.

According to the United States Census Bureau there are several different ethnic groups present in the United States of America today. Accordingly the Census Bureau estimated the population for each ethnic group in the United States as follows: Caucasian - 77.7%, Hispanic/Latino – 17.1%, Black -13.2%, Asian -5.3%, American Indian -1.2% and other -2.6%.

During the 1880s into the 1960s, majority of American states enforced segregation through "Jim Crow" laws. Jim Crow laws were put into practice to segregate the population of black and white throughout the United States of America. It was illegal for members of different race to intermingle with each other. For example in the State of Mississippi a law was implemented that states “separate schools shall be maintained for the children of the white and colored races.” Anyone who disobeyed these Jim Crow laws would be punished. Jim Crow laws were designed to maintain the system of White Supremacy. Although arguable today, many people are convinced that Jim Crow laws are still present in the year 2014.

After years of segregation throughout the United States the Civil War of 1861 to 1865 was fought. The United States amended its Constitution proclaiming that that all men were created with an equal right to liberty, formally abolishing slavery. Despite the amendment to the constitution, many states were sluggish in accepting the change. The State of Mississippi is among one of the States that refused to Change their laws ending segregation. Mississippi held itself to be a perfect example of a successful segregated State. During 1964 Civil Rights activists organized a Voter Registration project called “Freedom Summer” aspire to increasing voter registration numbers for Blacks in Mississippi. The police, Ku [Klux Klan](http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedom-summer), and even state and local authorities carried out a systematic series of violent attacks; including arson, beatings, false arrest and murder against Blacks in Mississippi. Freedom summer which was designed to assist black voters led to the death of three Civil Rights volunteers Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, all [shot](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/price&bowers.htm) and killed in Neshoba County, Mississippi.

The FBI arrested nineteen men for conspiring to deprive Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman of their civil rights under color of state law.  Six days later, a U. S. Commissioner dismissed the charges, declaring that the confession on which the arrests were based was hearsay evidence.

A month later, government attorneys secured indictments against the conspirators from a federal grand jury.  [Federal Judge William Harold Cox](http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/Cox.htm), a devoted segregationist, threw out the indictments against all conspirators other than Rainey and Price on the ground that the other seventeen were not acting "under color of state law."

In March, 1966, the United States Supreme Court overruled Cox and reinstated the indictments to 18 of the nineteen men that were indicted.  On February 28, 1967, the list of those indicted changed to eighteen out of the nineteen klansmen. On December 29, Judge Cox imposed sentences.  Roberts and Bowers got ten years, Posey and Price got six years, and the other three convicted defendants got four.  Cox said of his sentences, "They killed one nigger, one Jew, and a white man I gave them all what I thought they deserved".

For year the outrage continued, people were at a loss for words because of the outcome of the case. At least 19 men were involved in killing these three young men and no one was prosecuted for murder until the year 2005, Almost 40 years after the three civil rights volunteers were murdered, [Edgar Ray Killen](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/Killen.htm) was charged with murder in connection with the slayings of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman. The judicial system in my opinion has failed the families of these 3 civil rights volunteers who were murdered.   The movie"Mississippi Burning” displayed a good depiction of how bad things were for black people in the United States.

All these men murdered were victims. The abuse has been going on for many decades and it continues, similar to that of a rape victims as depicted in the movie “The Accused” wherein the victim had to relieve the crime again on the stand after being raped, then to have the perpetrators walk away, not been found guilty of the crime itself but, to a lesser charge, I don’t see the justice in the movie like I don’t see the justice for Schwerner, Chaney, Goodman, Travon Martin, and Eric Garner, the judicial system is broken and it needs to change significantly.

As far back as I can remember people who are considered less than, by people who consider themselves superior, always fall prey to inequality and injustice in America, despite the motto of equality for all. The novel “To Kill a Mockingbird “by Harper Lee was published in the year 1960 Harper Lee uses notable characters to explore civil rights and racism in the segregated Southern United States of the 1930s. Told through the eyes of Scout Finch, you learn about her father Atticus Finch, an attorney who hopelessly strives to prove the innocence of a black man unjustly accused of raping a white woman. We are almost at the end of the year 2014 and 54 years later the racism Harper Lee wrote about still exists in today’s society because of the segregation of the people.

On February 26, 2012, [George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch captain in Sanford, Florida, calls 911 to report "a suspicious person"](http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/18/justice/florida-teen-shooting-details) in the neighborhood. He is instructed not to get out of his SUV or approach the person. Zimmerman disregards the instructions of the police. Moments later, neighbors report hearing gunfire. Zimmerman acknowledges that he shot Martin, a 17 year old boy, claiming it was in self-defense. On **February 27, 2012** Trayvon Martin’s father, Tracy Martin filed a missing persons report. Tracy Martin was contacted by the police and was able to identify his son’s body using a photograph. Sanford Police Chief Bill Lee says that Zimmerman has not been charged because there were no grounds to disprove his version of the events. A petition was filed on Change.org calling for the arrest of Zimmerman, exceeding votes by 1.3 million people. Sanford Police Department's homicide detective Christopher Serino recommends Zimmerman be charged with manslaughter. He was arrested and charged; the jury had three choices to find Zimmerman guilty of second-degree murder, the lesser charge of manslaughter; or to find him not guilty. On July 13, 2013, the jury found George Zimmerman not guilty. If this case is not a clear sign of the broken judicial system in the United States I don’t know what is I believe it is a complete injustice to the family.

Choke holds has been banned by the New York City Police Department since 1993. The procedure in New York grew from concern about the rising number of deaths in police custody over the last several years, including that of Federico Pereira, a 21-year-old man who died in 1991 from what the medical examiners called "traumatic asphyxia” also known as a choke hold. Five officers were charged, but the charges against four were dropped and the fifth was acquitted. Choke holds is the restraining maneuvers that cut off the flow of blood and oxygen to the brain.

Racism is everywhere in America, every ethnicity experience it at some point in time, the novel “Snow Falling on Cedars” Guterson wrote about the trial of a Japanese-American man accused of killing a white fisherman and explores the racial tensions that exist similar to the tensions these black men in America encounters on a daily basis.

On July 17, 2014, [Eric Garner a 43 years old unarmed black man, died after a white police officer, Daniel Pantaleo, and four other police officers who witness Pataleo put him in a chokehold. Garner died](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/nyregion/staten-island-man-dies-after-he-is-put-in-chokehold-during-arrest.html) after he was wrestled to the ground by the officers arresting him for selling untaxed cigarettes. A video of the encounter prompt widespread protests and encouraged the police commissioner, William J. Bratton, to order a review of the department’s training and tactics regarding the use of force. A grand jury heard evidence in an effort to determine if any criminal charges will be filed in the case. According to the Medical Examiner office, the officers acted “recklessly and negligently” in wrestling Eric Garner to the ground using a chokehold, a procedure that has been banned by the New York City Police Department since 1993. The city’s medical examiner ruled the death a homicide and found that Mr. Garner died from a chokehold by the compression of his chest by police officers. The officers who murdered Eric Garner was not charged with a crime. Protesters began several marches around the United States in an effort to seek justice for Eric Garner and his family. The attacked was recorded and was being broadcasted over many television channels, you could hear Eric Garner on the videos saying “I can’t breathe”, the justice system has continued to fail and it’s getting worst. Many people thought that this case was as simple as it could ever be, because the attack was made public. I find it completely unjust that the justice system failed to charge the perpetrators with a crime, Eric Garner was murdered, and it should not be in vain.

It is an absolute tragedy that so many young men are being murdered by people who took an oath to ensure their safety. It is a misfortune comparable to that of the tragedy written in the noel the “Pact by Picoult” wherein the authority focused on the fact that Christopher was a male predictor rather than a child in pain. I believe the justice system does not evaluate the case thoroughly when it involves the death of a black man. These young black men who lost their lives to police are not seen as young men, they are being seen as people whose lives are not worth the same as everyone else’s because of the stereotype that has been perpetuated throughout the American Society about black men since the beginning of slavery.

In conclusion, I believe black people struggle the most out of all the ethnic groups present in the United States today. Black men in particular have come the furthest, they have been fighting for their survival in the United States of America for decades. Black men in the United States are the only men whom the police think it is ok to stop and frisk without a reason.

The judicial system is not on the side of the black men, and it has been proven again and again for decades, black men cannot expect justice from the court system. From the minute it was made legal for black people to be held as a white person’s property and Jim Crow laws were made legal, black people stood no chance at obtaining equal rights or justice in any aspect of the United States of America legal system.

Many people may argue that things have changed, I agree that it has changed, it has changed a lot compare to how bad it was before however, things have not changed that much, especially with everything that is going on in the news today, all the protests as a result of the increase in crime rate against young black man who lost their lives and received no justice because of the systemic racism which exists today.

Young men like Travon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown are only the most recent cases; the same problem has been present for years. The civil rights volunteers who were murdered in 1964, were not murdered because they did anything wrong, they were murdered because they were assisting black people to vote in the state of Mississippi, a state that did not want to end their segregation policies which existed among black and white.

These men who died and received no justice are victims to the same racism, injustice and in equality that were present during slavery. There are a lot of things that has changed since the days of slavery and now, however in the 21st century we are still experiencing racism. The police officers in the cases I mentioned above were not charged with a crime because of the laws that were implement during slavery that are still affecting black people today. I think its ambitious for us to believe we would get the same treatment in America as well as everyone else however, what we believe should happened and what is happening in the United States are just not the same, certain law are just not caught up to date with the standard that we the people expect in the United States today.

**WORK CITED**

# Movie, The Accused

# Snow Falling on Cedars by David Guterson

# The Pact by Jodi Picoult’s

# To Kill a mocking Bird by Harper Lee

**Secondary Sources**

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# [Civilwar.org](http://www.civilwar.org), *A Brief Overview of the American Civil War A Defining Time in Our Nation's History, By Dr. James McPherson*

# CNN U.S. - Trayvon Martin Shooting Fast Facts

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National Park Service - “Jim Crow Laws “

United States Census Bureau