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ENG1121

Unit 1 Writing Assignment

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In May of 1992, Rodney King said, "People, I simply want to say, can't we all get along? Can't we all get along?" King uttered these words in the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles riots sparked by the acquittal of four police officers charged with assaulting one Rodney King. The assault occurred in 1991 when police officers were caught on videotape brutally beating a man who later came to be identified as Rodney King. Three months after the incident, the police officers involved in the assault were acquitted of all charges by a majority white jury and following the trial's movement to Simi Valley from Los Angeles. The brutal beating of Mr. King, which left him with serious injuries, was an act of police brutality in 1991. It is an act of police brutality in 2020. It will be an act of police brutality forever. Rodney King was Black; he was African American.

In May of 2020, George Floyd said, 'I can't breathe' Nearly 30 years later, almost to the day, a videotape surfaced on news channels around the world depicting one of the most televised acts of police brutality ever recorded. The video depicted one George Floyd laying shirtless on a Minneapolis asphalt road, with a police officer's knee painfully placed on his neck, pinning him to the ground. Later, the officer identified as Derek Chauvin, knelt on Floyd's neck for a disturbing 9 minutes against the concerned citizenry's pleas, which can be heard pleading with the officer to let him up. Floyd later passed on evidently due to asphyxiation caused by the

actions of the officer. His death caused one of the most massive outbreaks of nationwide civil unrest ever witnessed in America. Floyd was a Black man; he was African American.

What these two men have in common is the fact that they are both middle-class black men who, no matter their criminal history or the offences that they had committed, faced the most brutal and unnecessary actions at the hands of American police officers. They endured pain and even death because persons who were legally empowered to protect them attacked them in the most brutal of ways. If it were not for their blackness, these men would not have experienced the unbearable pain that they endured. Were it not for his blackness, a downed Rodney King would not have been beaten bloody by four officers. Were it not for his blackness George Floyd would not have lost his life. I believe that individual police officers bear personal responsibility for the deaths of thousands of black men like King and Floyd. I believe that a systemic racist police force is the driving force behind the state of police brutality that black people in America have endured for hundreds of years. As Niall McCarthy stated on Forbes "Police violence has reared its ugly head in the United States yet again with thousands of people hitting the streets of Minneapolis to protest the death of George Floyd over the past few hours." Policies are not doing what is supposed to be done so people are talking procurement by protesting against what they have been doing.

Statistical data and research on the disproportionate use of police and law enforcement against black race persons paint a bleak picture of just how entrenched this system of racial bias is. Black people form the highest percentage of police action (31% of fatal police shootings) while making up only 13% of the American Population. Blacks also experience disproportionately higher arrest rates than whites; in 2011, 69.2% of all arrested individuals in the U.S. were white, and 28.4% were black. Research has also shown that people and, in many

cases, police officers carry 'implicit biases' that can affect their behaviour; studies on the extent of these biases show that there is a tendency to associate white people with more favourable concepts and blacks with less favourable ones. Implicit bias is where individuals are not consciously aware of their bias and cannot self-correct. The black community has taken the brunt of their prejudices against their racial identity. These statistics confirm the existence of a distinctive bias and racial inequality against black people. This diagnoses the systemic racism that I have alluded to as the cause of police brutality against blacks.

Let it not be seen that I am trying to infer a non-existent idea. While statistics and data seek to satisfy the need for a universally acceptable picture based on scientific study, members of the Black American community's personal experiences give a human angle to the extent of brutality a black person has to contend with in America. The police brutality victims' families continue to shed tears for their brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers. The numerous cases of unreasonable use of violence lend credence to the ideas of police racism. The case of Eric Garner, Kelly Thomas, Breonna Taylor, Michael Brown, and hundreds of others who suffered at the hands of police officers enforcing the rules of a system that regards them as either subhuman or non-deserving of the most basic of human rights. These people didn't deserve their fate; their rights were unduly and unjustly taken away by a biased and racist system.

A most saddening indication of an endorsement of the bias and racial inequality that characterizes racism in America is the continued lack of sanction and amnesty that perpetrators of police brutality. A considerable percentage of police officers involved in police brutality cases are either acquitted or have their charges; this is if they have been charged at all. A majority of police brutality cases do not give rise to convictions or indictments because police officers enjoy a level of protection in America. Conservative figures show that U.S. police escape 96% of

federal charges levelled against them in police brutality investigations. In 1996 in the case of Anthony Baez, there was clear evidence of the widespread disregard of brutality complaints among police officers and a diabolical code of silence. During the trial, in what the trial judge referred to as a "nest of perjury," officers adduced such an inconsistent wave of testimonies that the judge ruled the prosecution's case unproven. Baez had been choked to death in a confrontation with New York police officer Francis Livoti who had a slew of brutality complaints to his name. There was a clear obstruction of justice in this case. The Baez affair exemplifies the systemic loopholes that have allowed the police to engage in brutal acts without fear of sanction freely.

As I have postulated in my speech, my brethren, there is a diabolical system of racism in our police force, judiciary, and other law enforcement organs. For the black community to achieve its constitutionally provided freedom, this system's complete destruction is warranted. It is pertinent that the black community pushes for a new system, an altered reality for our children's children. This can only be done by ensuring proper participation in the democratic process through voting in the right people and demanding policy change from our leaders. In the immortal words of Malcolm X in *By Any Means Necessary*, "You're not to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it." We are implored to fight against this evil and to defeat it.

Works Cited

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