

### **Treatment of Blacks by Law Enforcement**

Blacks have for long been victims of various forms of discrimination in many aspects of their lives. They have been denied access to vital areas of life and treated as sub-human species for many years. The mood changed largely from the days of legal slavery and the racial segregation of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the areas in which blacks have suffered most harm at the hands of bigotry is in the areas of law enforcement. Blacks have for long been seen as potential criminals, which finally led to the unequal treatment of blacks, in contrast to the way white people were treated.

This essay will seek to show the ways in which the discrimination against Blacks has come to the fore. It will also explore the likely consequences of the probable causes for the discrimination which was curbed to considerable extent as time passed and the attitudes towards the Black people changed, but which still exists, especially in the sphere of law enforcement.

The biggest problem that advocates for human rights have to grapple with in their fight against racial discrimination is the continued Racial Profiling that is rampant in the field of law enforcement. A phenomenon is largely based on historical stereotypes that were coined and spread by bigots.

### **Racial Profiling**

Racial profiling refers to the phenomenon of the use of a person's racial or ethnic characteristics to base the judgement on when evaluating the person's likeliness of being involved in a crime, and in similar situations. It is based solely on a racial bias or an acquired attitude that leads one to believe that people from certain races are more likely to do certain things or act in a certain way.

There are many who have viewed this as the reason for the fact that the people prevailing in prisons are Black. Indeed, it seems that the suppositions of the jury's impartiality have sufficient grounds. There can be no doubt that the Black people make the greatest number of the imprisoned.

Some have argued that, in the process of the maintenance of law and order in a society, the police and other law enforcement agencies are permitted to use any characteristics with the of which they can identify and stop criminal suspects and potential criminals. They argue that the refusal to use race as a characteristic trait would not be sensible.

Race relations in the country have been easy or smooth. There were numerous occasions where the races traded accusations concerning the alleged discrimination of other races. None, however, was as loud and frequent as black people were.

Black people, or African Americans, as they are referred to in a politically correct way, have experience in many forms of discrimination and mistreatment, dating back to the days of slavery, all through the Middle Ages to the present time. They have suffered mistreatment from other races in many ways.

One of the main elements of society in which discrimination and mistreatment of blacks was evident is in the field of law enforcement. African Americans have unfairly been targeted by its agencies and were the subject of suspicions perpetrated by racist agents, who spread the hate and prejudices among the public (Smith et al., 2002). The manner in which African Americans are treated by law enforcement will be the subject of this essay.

Racial profiling is one phenomena that is generally referred to as Racially Biased Policing. It involves other practices like the discriminatory treatment of racial and ethnic minorities, which is not based on race, differential and biased police practices in

neighborhoods occupied mainly by minorities, in contrast to those inhabited by whites (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

It could seem that this bigotry towards blacks started with the advent of slavery. This was the time when various races clashed into each other in great conflicts. The slaves, the Black minority, were considered and treated as subhuman creatures. They were abused for centuries in the name of labor and industry.

The intolerance spread through the social structures, the membership of Racial Supremacist and Extremist movements, such as the infamous KKK and The Aryan Nation, and inevitably permeated into law enforcement agencies; moreover, some of the law enforcers were the members of such groups or had similar racial bias.

One area in which law enforcement's obvious bias against Blacks is evident is the Drug Enforcement. This field strives to clean the world of drug users and drug peddlers, who settled in the country decades ago. This branch of law enforcement has been discriminatory on Blacks.

The so-called War on Drugs has been for years waged primarily against African Americans, which led to imprisoning large numbers of them over drug related issues. It happens despite the fact that most drug users in the country are white and that the African Americans arrested and convicted, have rarely been above middle level in the drug hierarchy (Human Rights Watch).

The response to questions on the policy of targeting predominantly black neighborhoods was that the drug war is aimed at ridding poor neighborhoods of addiction as well as other ills such as violence associated with drug dealing (Human Rights Watch).

There has also been racial discrimination on the good side of the law. This is mostly evident in the courts system during jury selection whereby African Americans

and members of minority races are more likely to be deprived of their jury duty than whites. It is due to the widespread belief that they are not committed to the legal system and that they are more likely to be sympathetic to members of their races accused of any crimes (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006).

The decision in the case of *Batson vs. Kentucky* 476 U.S. 79 (1986) (Weitzer & Tuch, 2006) that made the jurors resort to the peremptory challenge on the basis of race was a big step in the right direction. In the case, it was also considered that where a person is tried and members of their race are not among the jury, the defendants are not likely to get a fair trial.

African Americans were also subjected to motor vehicle searches on a far more frequent scale than whites were, for example. This is due to the prejudice in the sphere of law enforcement, which says that blacks carry and conceal weapons as well as drugs in their cars. However, The Fourth Amendment to The Constitution states clearly that people have the right to protest against the unreasonable search and seizure without probable cause for the detention or the search (Smith et al., 2002).

It is about time that the law enforcement agencies changed their attitude towards African Americans and put the confrontation between the two groups to an end. It appears that the continued targeting of blacks caused a vicious cycle of violence and revenge with blacks reacting angrily to the mistreatment of their people by the police.

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