Dayla Littlejohn

Mrs. Camp

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Big Paper #1

Two friends are driving back to their home together, late at night, after having dinner with other friends. As they are driving, they see blue lights behind them and pull over on the side of the road. The passenger seems to be a little more uneasy than her friend and suddenly had a pit in her stomach, but her friend assures her there is nothing to worry about. The police officer walks up to the window; he asks questions and states he pulled them over because they were speeding. Nonetheless, he begins to question, examine, and harass the passenger more than her friend, who was actually driving. The reason for this could be the physical difference between the women, the color of their skin. Nikole Hannah-Jones, an award-winning, staff writer at *New York Times,* wrote “Yes, Black America Fears the Police. Here’s why,” in 2015 about a previous Fourth of July experience and her thoughts on police misconduct against black people. This article accurately brings light to the skepticism black people feel in a situation where the police are involved or may need to be. Her argument is a great representation of an African American’s view on police misconduct, but it needs to be updated since her statistics are outdated and the Black Lives Matter movement has grown and had a major impact since 2015.

Nikole Hannah-Jones’ primary purpose of her essay is to explain the long history of unjust police exchanges with black people and her thoughts and feelings as a black person herself. She begins her essay reminiscing about a chilling experience her family and friends had from the previous Fourth of July. They were on the beach on Long Island and gun shots were fired quickly; everyone was shaken up and in disbelief. Hunter, a 16-year-old intern from Oregon who was staying with Hannah-Jones’ family was on the phone with the police, something that hadn’t even once crossed the others minds. Furthermore, Hannah-Jones provides claims of prejudices she has witnessed, such as numerous instances where local police stop and pester mostly young black men walking down the street, in front of her home for no absolute reason. In addition, she offers statistics of how “young black men are 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by the police than a young white man” (559). In 2013, also “50% of murder victims in America are black” (560). At the time of publishing, these statistics would have been valid, but they are almost a decade old now.

This article has correct information, but it was published in 2015. It needs to be updated with statistics from recent years; it also needs to address the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement, which wasn’t as crucial and well-known back then as it is now. A key part from current events is the death of George Floyd, a black man killed in May 2020 from police brutality caused riots all throughout America that lasted for months, billions of dollars of property damage, and the arrests of thousands of people (Pavilions). Although police killings had a slight decrease in 2020 and 2021, the percentage of those deaths that were black people was still the same as previous years.

The fear of police is instilled in most black people’s head, especially young men, at a young age. They either instinctively pick it up as they get older or after witnessing police brutality towards another black person. Hannah-Jones says when recalling her experience on Fourth of July, “We had seen witnesses treated like suspects, and knew how quickly black people calling the police for help could wind up cuffed in the back of a squad car” (554). This shows what runs through a black person’s mind when deciding if they should call the police, in a situation where calling them shouldn’t even be a question. Police should be local heroes in a community and make sure everyone is safe; but in some instances, a person may feel safest not calling the police at all.

Ultimately, Nikole Hannah-Jones’ essay is accurate and true, but it isn’t necessarily up to date. Since then, the Black Lives Matter movement is bigger than ever and making a serious impact in America. Additionally, her essay explains the long history of unjust police interactions with black people and her views as an African American herself. Hannah-Jones’ essay is subjective, and another black person may not agree with her statements or feel the same. Even though her essay isn’t up to date with current events, it still gives a valid depiction of what black people endure in America due to the color of their skin.

Works Cited

Hannah-Jones, Nikole. “Yes, Black America Fears the Police. Here’s why” The Writer’s Mindset, E-book, edited by Lisa Wright Hoeffner, McGraw Hill, 2022, p.153

Pavilonis, Valerie. “Fact Check: Thousands of Black Lives Matter Protesters Were Arrested in 2020.” *USA TODAY*, 22 Feb. 2022, eu.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2022/02/22/fact-check-thousands-black-lives-matter-protesters-arrested-2020/6816074001.