

CRES 10  
Policing Testimonial 2

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Over the course we have touched on many different ways race and policing intersect. My current understanding of these concepts places them within a context that is much larger and more complicated than any single individual or group.

Race as a concept and ideology has been deconstructed during this course, as a social layer on top of the physical reality. Race is not tied to biology or history or appearance so much as it is a social othering, the relegation of some to the bottom of society. Personally I understand the cause of this to not be any single person or group hating another, but of many groups and people taking advantage of previous othering.

When colonizing Africa the rhetoric of civilizing and savagery worked well in convincing people to visit upon others horrific crimes. When someone needs cheap labor it is easy to piggy back off of the previous rhetoric to build an idea of a lazy African who can only be civilized through hard labor. When trying to win the votes of the Irish it was useful to align yourself with them, and against the lazy savage Blacks. In that way I see race as the product of many cruel, apathetic decisions. Each step was wrong but each action made the following ones easier until Race and racial identity was a bedrock upon which so much stood.

In this framing the role of police is that of control. It is the means by which the rhetorical framework of Race is replicated. Black people must be criminal, so over policing and targeted laws ensure Black people fill up prisons. Black people are lazy and poor, so regulations like redlining and sharecropping exist which all but guarantee it. And the role of police in all these systems is to be the physical violence which makes the lines solid and meaningful.

I think that these things are all good and important to learn, but they aren't really new to me personally. The things which have left the deepest impression on me is the fear Coates had when he spoke of being a Black boy in America, the way race becomes the governing force for real people. It is not precise nor is it an explanation of any kind. But it has something which I cannot help but value as much as the more technical explanations, it has a real human perspective.

The tragedy of Race isn't the particulars of its functioning but in the suffering and objectification it visits upon everyone who participates.

It is that kind of a perspective my first testimonial attempted to give. I am not a Black man and I have never been treated as anything other than White. However White people do not benefit from the existence of Race, they are made into tools, and separated from some of the best, kindest, most interesting, and beautiful people in the world. I still believe in what I said in the first testimonial. Policing is a corrupting force for the White men who do it, they are convinced that the harm done to others is good, and then they are recruited to participate in that harm. This is a view and perspective which is perfectly consistent with my understanding of Race and policing in a more abstract sense. White people may hate minorities but that isn't because of something innate to White people. Systems which were shaped by the decisions of thousands guide them down old paths.

That is the experience of police I wanted to share, that of seeing kids you know grow up and become cruel, become the tools of the cruel and apathetic. I think that in light of what I know this story is the one I should share. I am not a scholar with new ideas, nor am I a marginalized voice with direct uncomfortable experiences with policing. And to those with both the experience of being on the other side of the law, or with far greater historical knowledge of these systems I only want to offer my own human perspective.