

Money and Power, Blood and Terror

How Centuries of Policymaking Founded in Racism Continues to Hold Back the
U.S. Civil Rights Movement and Allows for the Growth of White Supremacy

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7 December 2020

America is the land of contradictions. It was founded on the ideals of equality and freedom but was built on systemic exclusion and suppression of communities of color. The economy was built on the exploitation and occupational segregation of people of color. From the beginning, instead of using the laws and policies to serve as the foundation to build progress, it was built to specifically prevent people of color from participating in the democratic process. These constraints are not some relic of a time long past but remain part of the fabric of policymaking and the democratic process today. The legacies of slavery that were then passed to the age of Jim Crow and the New Deal, in addition to limited funding and support for anti-discrimination agencies and programs, contribute heavily to modern inequality. Even as the nation fought to prohibit exclusionary policies over the last few decades, it could do little to uproot a system that is structurally built on racism. Workers of color were concentrated in chronically undervalued jobs, there were institutionalized racial disparities in wages and working conditions, and employment discrimination was rampant. This led to a stark and persistent racial disparity in jobs, wages, benefits, and nearly every other measure of economic success.

There is government-sanctioned occupational segregation, exploitation, and neglect that has and still does exacerbate the racial inequality in the United States. This has led to an American democracy whose power balance is distorted. Centuries of concentrated effort to keep people of color out of the democratic process has translated to a lack of political power for those groups. The political power white people take for granted - the ability to elect candidates with shared values, to access the right to vote without hindrance, and to enact public policy priorities - is still not evenly balanced amongst the American population. As a result, people of color

continue to suffer through exclusionary practices in the electoral process even 150 years after the abolishment of slavery. Lawmakers today continue to protect discriminatory policies and enact new flawed ones that intentionally preserve barriers in voting¹². Eliminating the current socio, economic, and political disparities in the American population will require intentional public policy efforts to dismantle systemic inequality, expand opportunities for all Americans, and combat discrimination in the workforce.

One Country, Under White Men, Divided, With Liberty and Justice For Some

The first slaves were brought over to what would become the United States as early as 1526³. On January 31st, 1865, slavery was abolished by Congress⁴. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed. Slavery may be abolished but its chains are still tied around the legs of American society, preventing the hindering the continuing civil rights movement that is advocating for social, political, and economic equality.

Slavery and Jim Crow concentrated workers of color in chronically undervalued occupations. From the 1500s to 1865, "By some estimates, slaveholders extracted more than \$14

¹ Maxwell, Connor, Danyelle Solomon, and Abril Castro. "Systematic Inequality and Economic Opportunity." Center for American Progress. August 7, 2019. Accessed December 05, 2020.

² Maxwell, Connor, Danyelle Solomon, and Abril Castro. "Systematic Inequality and American Democracy." Center for American Progress. August 7, 2019. Accessed December 05, 2020.

³ Ponti, Crystal. "America's History of Slavery Began Long Before Jamestown." History.com. August 14, 2019. Accessed November 28, 2020.

⁴ "13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery." National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed November 28, 2020.

trillion worth of labor, in today's dollars, from their captives"⁵. During Reconstruction, federal and state policies were put into place to encourage Black people to stay in the south and enter into contracts with the same people who had enslaved them⁶. After Reconstruction, officials codified these efforts with Jim Crow laws. In South Carolina, for example, 'Black Codes' were enacted which fined Black people who worked in any other occupation other than farming or domestic servitude⁷. Lawmakers also sought to prevent Black people from migrating in search of safety and economic opportunity.

Voting and citizenship were largely denied to people of color until 1870. The 1790 Naturalization Act restricted natural citizenship to free white [people] ... of good character"⁸. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that no Black person could become a citizen and therefore was offered no protections to exercise their right to vote⁹. After the Civil War, the U.S. ratified the 14th and 15th amendments which granted citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the country and prohibited disenfranchisement based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude¹⁰. The national adopted Enforcement Bills passed in 1870 and 1871 which provided federal oversight in elections and criminalized voter suppression¹¹, which "broke the back of the first iteration of the Ku Klux Klan and led to hundreds of arrests, indictments, and convictions for those who sought to interfere with Black citizens' right to vote"

⁵ Thomas Craemer, "Estimating Slavery Reparations: Present Value Comparisons of Historical Multigenerational Reparations Policies," *Social Science Quarterly* 96 (2) (2015): 639–655

⁶ National Museum of African American History and Culture, "The Freedmen's Bureau Records,"

⁷ History.com Editors, "Black Codes," History, June 1, 2010

⁸ 1790 Naturalization Act, 1 stat 103, 1st Cong., 2nd sess. (March 26, 1790)

⁹ *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 (1856)

¹⁰ U.S. Constitution, 14th Amendment, Section 1, and 15th Amendment, Section 1

¹¹ U.S. Senate, "Landmark Legislation: The Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871,"

¹². By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, at least 1,510 Black Americans had held every elected office between local government to the Senate¹³.

Lawmakers continued to exclude and suppress Americans of color even after the 14th and 15th amendments. While the 13th Amendment prohibited slavery, it also provided an exception as a punishment for crime, which was then utilized as many states criminalized low-income Black residents by making vagrancy illegal and prohibited people with convictions from voting¹⁴. The exception permitted 'convict leasing', which allowed states to lease prisoners for free labor¹⁵. After Reconstruction, white nationalists waged a campaign of terror to suppress Black voters and seize control of Southern state legislatures. States adopted poll taxes and fined literacy tests, which white residents were conveniently excused from due to "grandfather clauses,' which allowed anyone who was eligible to vote prior to the 15th Amendment, along with their descendants, to vote in elections"¹⁶.

In the 20th century, due to technological advancements, discriminatory U.S. Department of Agriculture policies, rampant lynchings, and Ku Klux Klan terror, thousands of Black households fled north. Occupational segregation and the persistent devaluation of workers of color are a direct result of intentional government policy. To this day, people of color remain overrepresented in the lowest-paid agricultural, domestic, and service vocations.

¹² Maxwell, Connor, Danyelle Solomon, and Abril Castro. "Systematic Inequality and American Democracy." Center for American Progress. August 7, 2019. Accessed December 05, 2020.

¹³ Eric Foner, "South Carolina's Forgotten Black Political Revolution," Slate, January 31, 2018. Accessed December 05, 2020.

¹⁴ Angela Caputo, "A Southern Strategy, Redux," *APM Reports*, November 1, 2018. Accessed November 05, 2020.

¹⁵ Equal Justice Initiative, "Convict Leasing," Accessed November 05, 2020.

¹⁶ Alan Greenblatt, "The Racial History Of The 'Grandfather Clause'," NPR, October 22, 2013

Slavery and Jim Crow devalued these types of work, and the legacy of these institutions continues to inform the American economic system and its outcomes.

New Deal programs helped institutionalize racial disparities in wages and benefits. While millions of families were able to find work, increase wages, and secure employment benefits under The New Deal, policymakers reserved most of those benefits for white workers while deliberately excluding people of color. This only further institutionalized racial disparities in economic states that is still felt to this day. Today, due to the lack of inclusion of domestic, agricultural, and service occupations in The New Deal's Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA)¹⁷, children as young as 12 years old are legally allowed to work in the fields¹⁸, agricultural and domestic workers—many of whom today are Latinx or Asian American—remain some of the least protected employees in the United States¹⁹, and trapped families in poverty and tacitly endorsed the continued exploitation of workers of color. These actions helped institutionalize and validate racial disparities in economic well-being, and the effects are felt to this day, as “millions of people of color remain trapped in low-paying jobs with few benefits, limited employment security, and sordid working conditions as a direct result of these intentional government policies”²⁰.

Following the start of the civil rights movement in 1954 by Black activists, many obstacles to electoral participation were dismantled through nonviolent protests, civil disobedience,

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, “Handy Reference Guide to the Fair Labor Standards Act,”

¹⁸ National Center for Farmworker Health Inc., “Child Labor in Agriculture” (Buda, TX: 2018)

¹⁹ James Lin, “A Greedy Institution: Domestic Workers and a Legacy of Legislative Exclusion,” *Fordham International Law Journal* 36 (3) (2013): 706–741

²⁰ Maxwell, Connor, Danyelle Solomon, and Abril Castro. “Systematic Inequality and Economic Opportunity.” Center for American Progress. August 7, 2019. Accessed December 05, 2020.

litigation, education, and determination. Together, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 ushered in a new era of democratic participation and civil rights in the United States.

The Civil Rights Act “prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, [...] forbade discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing,” and “prohibited discrimination in public accommodations and federally funded programs. It also strengthened the enforcement of voting rights and the desegregation of schools”²¹.

The Voting Rights Act aimed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote as guaranteed under the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Voting Rights Act is considered one of the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in the United States²². Under Section 5 of the Act, jurisdictions with a history of discriminatory voting policies were required to seek permission from the Department of Justice or a federal court before any change to election processes or their voting procedures was made²³.

The underfunding and limited scope of anti-discrimination agencies that were established in the 1960s to hold people and institutions accountable for engaging in discrimination perpetuate inequality. Lawmakers never fully funded these institutions as well as provided exceptions for employers that do not have many employees, allowing them to still

²¹ "Legal Highlight: The Civil Rights Act of 1964." U.S. Department of Labor Seal. Accessed December 06, 2020.

²² History.com Editors. "Voting Rights Act of 1965." History.com. November 09, 2009. Accessed December 06, 2020.

²³ U.S. Department of Justice, "About Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act,"

discriminate with little culpability²⁴. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was created in 1965 to enforce federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against job applicants and employees based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or genetic information²⁵ but it does not have the funding and staff necessary to fully ensure that bad actors are held accountable. Ample evidence demonstrates that racial discrimination in employment and wages remains rampant more than 50 years after the passage of landmark civil rights legislation. In fact, studies show that “hiring discrimination against Black people has not declined in decades”²⁶.

The United States has experienced a resurgence of voter suppression following two Supreme Court decisions in 2013²⁷, despite the fact that in 2012, the national voter turnout rate exceeded that of white Americans for the first time²⁸. The decisions by the Court gave states the green light to suppress voters of color. In *Shelby County v. Holder*, Section 5 of the Voting Right Act was gutted because the formula that was used to determine the covered jurisdictions was judged as unconstitutional²⁹, “meaning that states with a history of overt white supremacy and voter suppression can once again manipulate their voting policies and procedures without first

²⁴ American Federation of Government Employees, “EEOC Union Condemns Drastic \$23.7M Budget Cut to Civil Rights Enforcement in #MeToo Era,” Press Release, March 21, 2019

²⁵ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Overview,”

²⁶ Lincoln Quillian and others, “Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 114 (41) (2017): 10870–10875

²⁷ New York University School of Law Brennan Center for Justice, “Shelby County v. Holder,” August 4, 2018; New York University School of Law Brennan Center for Justice, “Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute,” June 11, 2018

²⁸ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Black voter turnout fell in 2016, even as a record number of Americans cast ballots,” Pew Research Center, May 12, 2017

²⁹ *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 529 (June 25, 2013)

seeking approval from federal officials”³⁰. This led to swift reaction by many states, such as North Carolina, where lawmakers rushed to impose a voter ID requirement described by the NAACP as permitting “only those types of photo ID disproportionately held by whites and excluded those disproportionately held by African Americans”³¹ to be used. Similar rules were put into place all over the country, leading to “in 2017 alone, Native Americans, Latinos, and African Americans were two, three, and four times, respectively, more likely than their white counterparts to report experiencing racial discrimination when trying to vote or participate in politics”³².

The United States of Hate Crimes, Terrorism, and Eugenics

People of color do not only face setbacks from lack of political or economic power, but from the constant threat of violence from white supremacists. The average American may wish to believe that the surge in white-supremacist violence and recruitment - seen televised during the march in Charlottesville, Virginia, where neo-Nazis chanted “Jews will not replace us”; the 2019 el Paso mass shooting by white nationalist that killed 23; the hate crimes whose perpetrators invoke the president’s name as a battle cry - has no roots in American society and that it is a small group of racist zealots with a foreign pedigree and an allure that only influences a few. The average American may not realize that it is white supremacists born and raised in their very neighborhoods, not Muslim extremists from a place that can’t identify on a map,

³⁰ Maxwell, Connor, Danyelle Solomon, and Abril Castro. "Systematic Inequality and American Democracy." Center for American Progress. August 7, 2019. Accessed December 05, 2020.

³¹ N.C. State Conference of the NAACP v. Patrick McCrory, No. 16-1468(L) (July 29, 2016)

³² Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and NPR, “Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views on Affects of Discrimination Across Major Population Groups in the United States” (Boston; Princeton, NJ; and Washington: 2017)

"remain the most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland," according to the Department of Homeland Security³³. This summer, amid the largest protests in American history, at least four African American men were found hanging from trees. Authorities did not investigate these as lynchings. In the last twenty-five years, 329 murders have been linked to far-right white supremacist groups³⁴.

It is important to understand that the white supremacist ideology is not simply the feelings of fringe, poorly educated, rural Americans. For much of American history, it has frequently been espoused by Presidents, lawmakers, lawyers, and Supreme Court justices. The history of racism and white supremacy as being tools of the state is long and bloody. White supremacy enjoyed large political support in the era of slavery and during the subsequent Jim Crow period of legal segregation in the United States. While most people liken racism to the South, in reality, much of the nativist movement came from the Northeast and was funded by old-money elites and fueled by labor struggles in the Pacific Northwest that lead to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882³⁵.

President Harding in 1921 said that "A fundamental, eternal, inescapable difference" exists between the races and that "racial amalgamation there cannot be"³⁶. Indeed, for the latter half of the 19th century until after the Second World War, the United States was lauded as a

³³ Shinkman, Paul. "DHS: White Supremacists 'The Most Persistent and Lethal Threat' Within the U.S." U.S. News & World Report. October 6, 2020. Accessed November 28, 2020.

³⁴ Pasley, James. "Trump Frequently Accuses the Far-left of Inciting Violence, Yet Right-wing Extremists Have Killed 329 Victims in the Last 25 Years, While Antifa Members Haven't Killed Any, According to a New Study." Business Insider. July 31, 2020.

³⁵ Serwer, Adam. "White Nationalism's Deep American Roots." The Atlantic. April 07, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.

³⁶ Harding, Warren G. "Warren G. Harding 'Address at Birmingham' Speech Text." Voices of Democracy. October 21, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.

haven for eugenists and was frequently quoted for inspiring much of Hitler's policies in the Third Reich.

“‘It was America that taught us a nation should not open its doors equally to all nations,’ Adolf Hitler told *The New York Times*, just one year before his elevation to chancellor in January 1933. Elsewhere he admiringly noted that the U.S. ‘simply excludes the immigration of certain races. In these respects, America already pays obeisance, at least in tentative first steps, to the characteristic *völkisch* conception of the state.’ Hitler and his followers were eager to claim a foreign—American—lineage for the Nazi mission”³⁷.

This very popular racist ideology that fueled Jim Crow policies for decades did not simply disappear after 1945. As stated by Ira Katznelson, while Americans remained committed to democracy to a degree that the Germans underestimated, the South remained hawkish towards Nazi Germany not because of their disagreement with their ideology but with their fascism. White supremacists in the U.S. didn't want to live under a fascist government, they wanted “a *herrenvolk* democracy, in which white people were free and full citizens but nonwhites were not”³⁸.

However, by the mid-1950s, prompted by both desegregation and decolonization, overtly racist doctrines fell into disfavor across much of the western world. In the 1950s-1970s, the American civil rights movement progressed, leading to civil rights legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as well as important Supreme Court decisions that invalidated many racially discriminatory laws, such as *Brown v. Board of*

³⁷ Serwer, Adam. "White Nationalism's Deep American Roots." *The Atlantic*. April 07, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.

³⁸ Katznelson, Ira. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2014.

Education of Topeka in 1954. This led to increased hostility among some American whites towards the civil rights movement and led to a revival of the white supremacy movement. It developed into the 'White Power' movement, which arose in reaction to the 'Black Power' movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Social conservatives and supremacists were concerned by the government's adoption of or acquiescence in measures such as school busing, affirmative action, and anti-discrimination rules in the housing market, which contributed to the growth of various groups that actively preached white supremacy. These groups included the KKK, various neo-Nazi organizations, and the religious Christian Identity groups (who claimed that northwestern Europeans were direct descendants from biblical tribes of Israel and that the upcoming Armageddon will produce a 'final battle' pitting whites against nonwhites). By the second half of the 20th century, the ideology of Christian Identity groups became the most prominent viewpoint of white supremacists in the country.

Yet historical amnesia - which has led Americans to forget the memory of how it was American racism that inspired much of the Third Reich - has allowed for these ideologies to bloom again in the 21st century. The philosophical framework of the early 1900s has found new life amongst extremists and the echoes of the rhetoric of eugenists and supremacists can be heard in the Republican base and conservative media, as well as - once again - in the highest reaches of government.

This resurrection of the fear of white genocide can be traced to white supremacist David Lane, who claimed that 'racial integration' is "only a euphemism for genocide" and whose 'fourteen words' manifesto, which states "we must secure the existence of our people and a

future for white children”, is now one of the pinnacles of the white supremacist movement³⁹.

This creed is closely tied to the modern white nationalism movement, which is “the idea that white people are going to unify together as one national polity either in a white homeland or a white nation — or even in a white world — through the violent killing or exclusion of other people”⁴⁰.

In 2009, Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States. The same year, the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation warned that right-wing militias and white supremacist groups were gaining new recruits by stoking fears of gun control and expansion to welfare to exploit resentment created by the 2008 recession.

In early 2016, Donald Trump's presidential campaign attracted significant support from white supremacists and so-called white nationalists. These nationalists largely disavowed racism but still celebrated a ‘white identity’ and lamented the supposed erosion of ‘white culture’ as well as a political and economic power as nonwhite immigration and multiculturalism grew. He also attracted members of the alt-right movement, who are a loose association of younger supremacists, nationalists, extreme libertarians, and neo-Nazis.

His campaign included calling Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists, proposing a ban on all Muslims entering the US, and suggesting a judge should recuse himself from a case solely because of the judge's Mexican heritage. The trend has continued into Trump's presidency. From stereotyping a Black reporter to pandering to white supremacists - “there were fine people

³⁹ Serwer, Adam. "White Nationalism's Deep American Roots." *The Atlantic*. April 07, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.

⁴⁰ Collins, Sean. "Trump Once Flirted with White Nationalism. Now It's a Centerpiece of His White House." *Vox*. July 21, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.

on both sides⁴¹ - after they held a violent rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, to making a joke about the Trail of Tears, Trump hasn't stopped with racist acts after his 2016 election. Most recently, Trump has called the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus the "Chinese virus" and "kung flu" — racist terms that tap into the kind of xenophobia that he latched onto during his 2016 presidential campaign⁴².

The Trump Administration is no stranger to the white supremacist movement. In 2016 and 2020, he received the endorsement of David Duke and many other prominent KKK leaders. President Trump's senior policy advisor and chief speechwriter, Stephen Miller, is considered to be the most ideologically extreme member of the administration and has proven over four years to be one, if not the most, effective of Trump's bureaucratic advisors. In December of 2019, the Southern Poverty Law Center released a cache of over 900 emails between Miller and Breitbart News (which is a hyper-conservative 'news' website) exchanged before the 2016 election, in which Miller advocated for a slew of white supremacist concepts which included: the "great replacement" theory, race science, eugenics, fears of white genocide due to immigration, linked immigration to crime, the glorification of the Confederacy, and the promotion of the genocidal book *The Camp of the Saints* as a roadmap for U.S. policy⁴³. Both former advisor Steve Bannon⁴⁴

⁴¹ PolitiFact, and Donald Trump U.S. President. "PolitiFact - In Context: Donald Trump's 'very Fine People on Both Sides' Remarks (transcript)." @politifact. April 26, 2019.

⁴² Lopez, German. "Donald Trump's Long History of Racism, from the 1970s to 2020." Vox. July 25, 2016. Accessed November 29, 2020.

⁴³ Michael Edison Hayden, "Stephen Miller's Affinity for White Nationalism Revealed in Leaked Emails," Southern Poverty Law Center, November 12, 2019

⁴⁴ Blumenthal, Paul, and JM Rieger. "This Stunningly Racist French Novel Is How Steve Bannon Explains The World." HuffPost. March 06, 2017. Accessed December 01, 2020.

and Rep. Steve King (R-IA) have quoted extensively from and encouraged others to read the same book⁴⁵.

It is reported by the Southern Poverty Law Center that “the number of recorded hate crime incidents was around 6,200 in 2016 – a 5% jump from 2015. According to an FBI report on the issue, this figure increased by 17% in 2017” and that “59.6% of incidents were motivated by bias against race, ethnicity, or ancestry. Crimes motivated by a victim’s religion constituted 20.6% of attacks, and crimes against a person’s sexual orientation made up 15.8%”⁴⁶.

In 2020, Massachusetts alone has 15 hate groups that are tracked by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Of those, 11 would be considered far-right, including those who are anti-LGBTQ, anti-muslim, white nationalist, and neo-nazi. The entire United States has 940 hate groups that were tracked in 2019⁴⁷.

While white supremacists and nationalists participate in many acts of violence such as hate crimes, riots, and other forms of civil unrest, terrorism has long been and likely will continue to be the method of choice to cause real harm in the country. Terrorism is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations as “the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives”⁴⁸. It is important to note that terrorism is

⁴⁵ Osita Nwanevu, “GOP Congressman Steve King Is Now Endorsing Explicitly Racist Books, Because He’s Steve King,” *Slate*, March 14, 2017

⁴⁶ Ruebner, Josh, Richard Falk, and Politics Today. “Hate Crimes Increase in the US since Trump’s Election.” *Politics Today*. May 29, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020.

⁴⁷ “Massachusetts.” *Southern Poverty Law Center*. October 21, 2020. Accessed December 04, 2020.

⁴⁸ “Terrorism 2002/2005.” *FBI*. May 21, 2010. Accessed November 28, 2020.

committed by non-state actors with the goal of gaining political power. It can then be broken down into domestic and international terrorism.

Domestic terrorism refers to the unlawful use of force or violence by a group or individual based and operating within a state without foreign direction committed against persons or property to “intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof in furtherance of political or social objectives”⁴⁹. As stated before, DHS views far-right domestic terrorism as the greatest threat to the United States. The Center for Strategic and International Studies defines far-right terrorism as “the use or threat of violence by subnational or non-state entities whose goals may include racial or ethnic supremacy; opposition to government authority; anger at women, including from the involuntary celibate (or “incel”) movement; belief in certain conspiracy theories, such as QAnon; and outrage against certain policies, such as abortion”. Among domestic extremist movements active in the United States, white supremacists are by far the most violent, committing about 83% of the extremist-related murders in the United States in the past 10 years⁵⁰. White supremacists have conducted 67% of terrorist attacks in 2020⁵¹.

One of the largest acts of racial violence took place between May 30th-June 2nd, 1921 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa was a thriving Black community of nearly 10,00 people, many of whom were descendants of slaves. The neighborhood had become known as ‘Black Wall Street’. Following a demonstration outside of a jail on the 31st, on the

⁴⁹ “Terrorism 2002/2005.” FBI. May 21, 2010. Accessed November 28, 2020.

⁵⁰ “With Hate in Their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the United States.” Anti-Defamation League. Accessed December 03, 2020.

⁵¹ Jones, Seth, Catrina Doxsee, and Nicholas Harrington. “The War Comes Home: The Evolution of Domestic Terrorism in the United States.” The Center for Strategic and International Studies. November 23, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020.

morning of the 1st, a white mob raided the neighborhood, armed, and slaughtered any Black person on sight. They looted the homes and business, raped women, and set buildings on fire. The National Guard joined the mob and the killings. Around 300 people were massacred, 8,000 homeless, and as many records as possible destroyed. The bodies were buried in mass graves and to this day, the city remains largely segregated⁵². This massacre would have met all of today's standards for terrorism if the FBI classified white supremacist attacks as terrorism.

Money and Power

In *The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States* by Walter Johnson, as he dives into the history of racism and violence in the U.S., he has a guiding principle he calls 'racial capitalism'. This is the theory that racism is used as a technique for exploiting black people and for fomenting the hostility of working-class whites toward blacks, so as to enable white capitalists to extract value from everyone else. Johnson writes how racial capitalists conquered the West; racial capitalists waged the Civil War; racial capitalists industrialized St. Louis, and then deindustrialized it, at every step exploiting black people just as brutally as slaveholders did. In 1965, when pushing for the passage of the Voting Rights Act, Martin Luther King Jr famously said that "the segregation of the races was really a political stratagem employed by the emerging Bourbon interests in the South to keep the southern masses divided and southern labor the cheapest in the land"⁵³.

⁵² Astor, Maggie. "What to Know About the Tulsa Greenwood Massacre." *The New York Times*. June 20, 2020. Accessed December 06, 2020.

⁵³ King, Martin Luther, Clayborne Carson, and Kris Shepard. *A Call to Conscience: The Landmark Speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: IPM (Intellectual Properties Management), in Association with Warner Books, 2002.

A key feature of capitalism is markets. Cara Nguyen writes how economic liberalism built a market system which is based on the belief that it is separate from other social institutions and operates without bias, and that while the classic value is that the market is built to serve, capitalism exists within a context in “which societal contracts like cultural and racial contracts” influence the market outcomes. “Specifically”, she argues that “the racial contract in the United States contextualizes the capitalist free market system as a system that normalizes, empowers, and encourages the exploitation and abuse of Nonwhite people, specifically Black and Indigenous folks”. The capitalism model of free markets was structured and functions within a white supremacist society, so therefore “its outcomes uphold white supremacy”. It is through neoliberalism, economization, settler versus Indigenous views of land, and the creation of racial contracts, and market embeddedness that capitalism and white supremacy are closely tied. Nguyen’s final argument is that while everyone participates in the capitalist market system, people of color will continue to be disproportionately exploited by those in power to keep the structure of the market, and therefore, a capitalistic system that predominantly benefits white people. White supremacy cannot be fully abolished while there is still an economic system that uses it as a means to an end⁵⁴.

In *Stay Woke: A People’s Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter*, Lopez Bunyasi and Smith write that, structurally, white supremacy is “the systematic provision of political, social, economic, and psychological benefits and advantages to whites, alongside the systematic provisions of burdens and disadvantages to people who are not white.” White supremacy isn’t

⁵⁴ Nguyen, Cara (2020) “The Relationship Between White Supremacy and Capitalism: A Socioeconomic Study on Embeddedness in the Market and Society.” SUURJ: Seattle University Undergraduate Research Journal: Vol. 4 , Article 6.

just an ideology; it is an actual system that has been used to build government and create policy in the real world. This concept is what allowed for the enslavement of Black people, the Native American genocide, and the overall allocation of resources that make up modern systemic racism. This is why everyone - no matter if one believes in white supremacy or not - lives in a system that is built on and actively benefits from white supremacy.

How to Fix a Broken Nation

So if the United States is to remain capitalist (as any major shift towards socialism would be exceptionally unlikely at this point without full scale revolution or major enlightenment), how are Americans expected to eradicate white supremacy and work towards creating a society that is as equitable as possible within the current economic model?

First off, enduring and emerging threats to voting rights are a constant reminder of how far America needs to go to ensure full access to American democracy. Without a functional democracy, there can be no successful government to implant change that would benefit all. A successful democratic system requires the full participation of its citizens, yet the United States continues to be held down by the chains of the past by employing new voter suppression tactics against people of color. It is not an option to any ethical lawmaker to stand idly by while so much of the American population faces active discrimination in an effort to maintain a white-dominated power system.

Secondly, federal lawmakers should fully restore Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act and enact new laws to prevent foreign powers from targeting voters - especially voters of color - in disinformation campaigns. State officials should repeal any and all felony disenfranchisement, strict voter ID, poll tax, and voter purge policies. They should pass new laws that prevent polls

closing unnecessarily and ensure that all Americans can vote, regardless of English proficiency. These are but steps in the process so that all Americans can participate in U.S. democracy, yet it is necessary for these critical steps to be taken and for lawmakers to uphold their oaths to work for all Americans, not just white Americans.

In addition to inequalities in voting, structural racism in federal, state and local policymaking has only exasperated economic inequalities. Lawmakers need to defend workers' rights dismantling all exclusions under the Fair Labor Standards Act, increase the minimum wage to a liveable wage, abolish the tipped minimum wage, repeal "right-to-work" laws, create a well-rounded parental leave program, create a universal healthcare system, and make giant leaps on progress with fighting climate change as people of color are unequally facing the dangers. The EEOC needs to be well funded and be more diligent in weeding out discriminatory practices in the workforce. As with voting rights, these steps are not a panacea and will not solve all economic and racial disparities that currently exist, but they will put the United States on the right path towards achieving racial equity in the economy.

One possible model for further civil rights and racial justice action is something called the Hamer-Baker Plan by Barbra Smith, which is a "comprehensive racial justice program even more sweeping than the Marshall Plan". The goals of the Marshall Plan were both economic (as in rebuilding a war-torn continent) and ideological (gain allies for the Cold War), and the goal of this plan would also be both ideological and economic.

"Because racial capitalism has had such grievous repercussions for generations of people of color, economic interventions would be at the forefront of this project. Eradicating poverty; eliminating the racial wealth gap; investing in the infrastructure of Black,

brown, and Indigenous communities whose labor and natural resources have been stolen; and guaranteeing full employment are some of the actions that must be taken to rectify centuries of economic exploitation. The cancellation of student loan and medical debt, stricter sanctions against discriminatory lenders, a viable federal minimum wage, paid family leave, free quality child care, and pro-union labor laws are examples of policies that can address economic inequality. It also would make sense to explore reparations as part of the plan's economic agenda"

The United States currently has a system in place that has the capacity to implement many of these ideas. The Nurse-Family Partnership pairs low-income mothers with visiting nurses who help families get a healthy start and work toward economic stability. The Harlem Children's Zone offers wraparound programs for children, from birth through college, assisting their families to overcome poverty and ensuring their academic success. Cure Violence uses a highly effective public health model, including violence interrupters, to end gun violence. The Green New Deal recognizes that environmental devastation disproportionately affects communities of color and that interventions in these communities need to be a priority. It also would be a source of thousands of new infrastructure jobs. Medicare for All would address racial health disparities resulting from the lack of access to affordable quality health care. The severely disproportionate impact of Covid-19 upon communities of color shows the pressing need to establish health care as a human right⁵⁵.

In the history of human civilization, change comes not from the top, but from the streets. This summer saw the largest civil rights protests in American history and credible

⁵⁵ Smith, Barbara. "How to Dismantle White Supremacy." *The Nation*. September 02, 2020. Accessed December 06, 2020.

changes were created because of it. It is only through people organizing and demanding that dehumanization and discrimination must stop and a deep moral reckoning amongst the American population that the system of white supremacy will end. Maybe Americans can create a truly equal society while also existing as capitalists, or maybe the choice will have to come between human beings and the profits of a select few.