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What is the new Jim Crow?

Calling someone black or white is something controversial, right? The words that older generations use are becoming more and more worse or is it just people nowadays are taking the words into more offense? Michelle Alexander, lawyer/scholar at Stanford Law School and Ohio State University, wrote an article about the effect of racism called “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness”. Just like after the civil war, they inflicted what we call the Jim Crow Law; in which were laws enforced on African American citizens to keep them like indentant servants. A way to suppress their liberties. Michelle Alexander argues that there is a new Jim Crow law. Back in the day it was called explicit racism but in today's world we call it Implicit Bias.

To get more context in what Michelle Alexander argues “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” tells of a man named Jarvious Cotton who can’t vote because he is a Felony. Saying that a lot of black Americans are considered Felonies and don’t have rights to vote and etc.. Like their fore-fathers, who could not vote based on the Jim Crow Laws. But now Michelle Alexander argues that the new Jim Crow laws are putting innocent black men as Felonies and take away their rights. It may not be legal to discriminate by color of skin but we can discriminate against the justice system. He thought the election of Barack Obama would end all racial tension. Sadly he just saw a shift, and learned of the new Jim Crow. It started with a poster saying “The Drug War is The New Jim Crow”, then Profesor Alexander

starting his job at the ACLU (Racial Justice Project of the American Civil Liberties Union in California). He learned of the unfair justice system and the effect of the drug war. Where one said that the drug wars were the government's way to put black into jail. Saying that the War on Drugs was targeted on the poor black communities. Saying that the government provided the drugs and arrested the users (blacks) for it. In which arrests for drugs increased and increased of black men in the prison system. When these men enter prison, they are now legalized to be discriminated against by normal citizens. Making them second-hand citizens. He calls out this as the new caste system just like the Jim Crow law given back in the 1900's; The new Jim Crow.

The so-called new Jim Crow that was described by Michelle Alexander is a big argument about how there is still a caste type system for our fellow African American and other minority neighbors. First to understand this big argument, what are the so-called old Jim Crow laws? According to History.com, Jim Crow Laws are a set of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. These laws started after the civil war and ended around 1968. Some types of segregation would imply the right to vote, to hold a job, to get an education or other opportunities.(Mullen) These laws restrict fellow african americans to have the freedom that is promised in the constitution. Also these days, we may not be explicitly racist but still there is an implicit bias.

I am of Latino descent and feel like my childhood is not like some of my counterparts. I was born in Orem, Utah and raised in the Utah valley in Utah. Where I did see some implicit bias as I grew up but never recalled it for the color of my mother's skin nor mine. Lookin but I never did see explicit racism but just Implicit bias. Like in the arguments that Michelle Alexander put out are directed a lot to the "the poor black neighborhoods of Los Angeles" or so called Black minority in big cities. In which, I could relate to but I do have a friend who could. (To protect his

identity a fake number was given) Tony, who was raised in downtown Los Angeles told me about his upbringing saying “ life wasn’t easy but it was easy to fall for the drugs.” He always had frequent check ups with the police. Even in Las Vegas, the effects of drugs on black men but it wasn’t just black men who were being drugged. Like what Tony says, first hand has dealt with drugs and crime but doesn’t see it as just a racist thing while in other parts of his life, he does see racism occur. The argument of mr. Alexander is specifically for the region of citizens who live in big cities in the United States, but the truth applies nation-wide. Michelle Alexander states, “ Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans.” (299). Is this true in my life? I remember watching the news with my parents and seeing all of the criminals, and my parents disgusted at them. This shows what the criminal system does to discriminate against thieves. Also that we have alerts for all the sexual offenders and where they live. Not only being tracked where-ever you move but on every resume, they do have to inform you of their second-hand citizenship as a felony. This is one truth that applies nation-wide. Nowadays it may be explicit racism as seen before but implicit bias as we watch the news or if we look over a felony's resume.

The justice of criminals shows that if there is not explicit racism, racism can be found even with the government itself. The Article talked about a major evidence of these could be found with the call of The Drug War. Ms. Alexander informed that “During this same time period, however, a war was declared, causing arrests and convictions for drug offenses to skyrocket, especially among people of color”(305). Which shows that this call of “war” was to fill up the prisons with more of our minorities. Where the government no longer could explicitly call out the minority but through implicit actions has placed them again as second hand citizens. Ms. Alexander reveals “The CIA admitted in 1998 that guerrilla armies it actively supported in

Nicaragua were smuggling illegal drugs into the United States” (305). In which, describes activities that if the government was truly wanting to attack this race, this would be the way. The way we could make this implied bias starts in our small communities first. As seen, there is always going to be bias in the means of growing up. If I was grown up in the streets of Las Vegas, I would have a different perspective on racism than the fellow raised in the small town of Midway in Utah. It starts as individuals to recognize when we create those biases and ask if that’s alright? Some ways I’ve seen people overcome their bias is through myself.

When I went to Bolivia, I was now called a minority. Being tall and of lighter skin than the average Bolivian made me stand out like a sore thumb. The difference in my scenario is that the racism against foreigners is different from the racism they had for bolivians that weren’t from their town. In Bolivia, the country is divided by the Ande Mountain range; one side of the country is 10,000+ feet from sea level while the other hand is on the amazon basin. So the indigenous and lifestyles are completely different but equally racist towards each other. The Cruzenos (the people from the town Santa Cruz) and the Pacenos (the people from the city La Paz) look, speak and act differently. In which creates this atmosphere is racism. The difference between racism in the United States and Bolivia is that the change of right for racism can impact lives for the better. While in Bolivia, any change won’t affect their lives even if there are no more implicit biases. The difference is that in truth, here we have the freedom to come from nothing and make millions of dollars and in Bolivia it’s not possible due to the economics in the country. The United States may not have explicit racism but still has bias.

In conclusion, Michelle Alexander “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness” enlightens us on the truth about the restriction used on African Americans. Like through the justice system to create them as felony without right for a lifetime. The

government also may play a role like in the War on Drugs. Even if this country is the standard for regulations to protect all our fellow Americans, we still have a bias. America we know today is not explicitly racist but still has an implicit bias.

Citation cite-

Mullen, Matt. "Jim Crow Laws: Definition, Facts & Timeline - History." *History.com*, History, 28 Feb. 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>.