

Racial Discrimination Against Non-Whites is Rampant and Harms Working Class People of ALL Races

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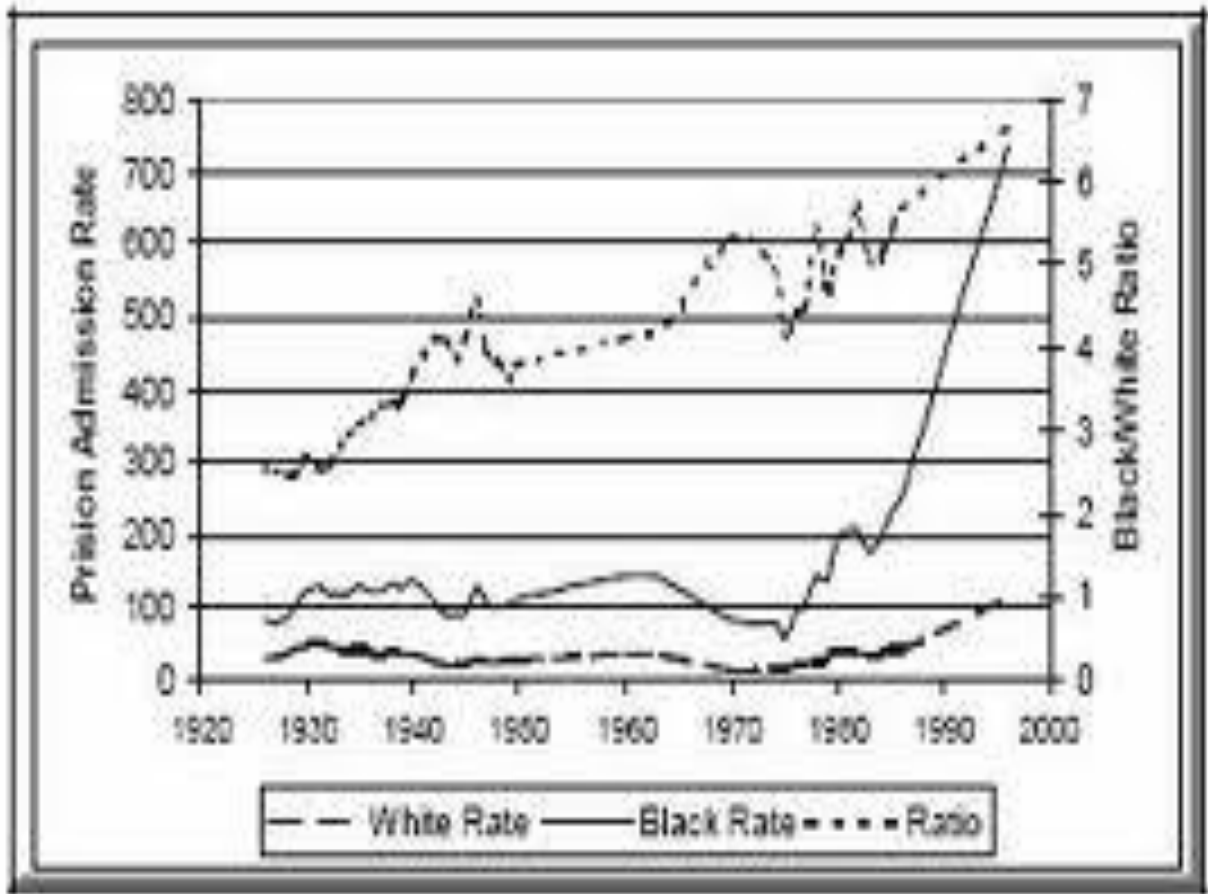
The stark reality of racial discrimination against blacks and Hispanics in the United States is indicated by the facts that these people have, on average, much less wealth, much lower incomes, much higher unemployment and much greater rates of incarceration than whites. The charts below demonstrate how great the magnitude of these gaps is. Reports of banks discriminating against racial minorities, such as [this report](#) and [this one](#), illustrate the [continuing fact of racial discrimination](#).

The only way to deny that [these facts prove](#) there is unjust racial discrimination would be to argue that there is something about blacks and Hispanics that makes it proper and just that they should be worse off than whites this way--that they are inferior races of people. Since this racist argument is false, the above cited facts have no explanation other than unjust systemic racial discrimination.

For the reader who wonders if there is something about blacks that makes them prone to being

criminals instead of seeking good jobs, and that this "something" is why blacks are incarcerated more and earn less, please carefully read the discussion of crime [here](#), the discussion [here](#) about how the War on Drugs is designed to incarcerate more blacks than whites even though black illegal drug use is [LESS than](#) that of whites, and the discussion [here](#) of police oppression.

The Civil Rights Movement abolished the racist Jim Crow laws but racist oppression was not abolished; it merely took another form: "From the back of the bus to the front of the prison" or "[The new Jim Crow.](#)" As the figure below (giving prison incarceration per 100,000 population, for blacks and whites and the ratio, [from this source](#)) illustrates, Jim Crow was simply replaced with racist [prison](#) incarceration, accomplished in large part by the War on Drugs:

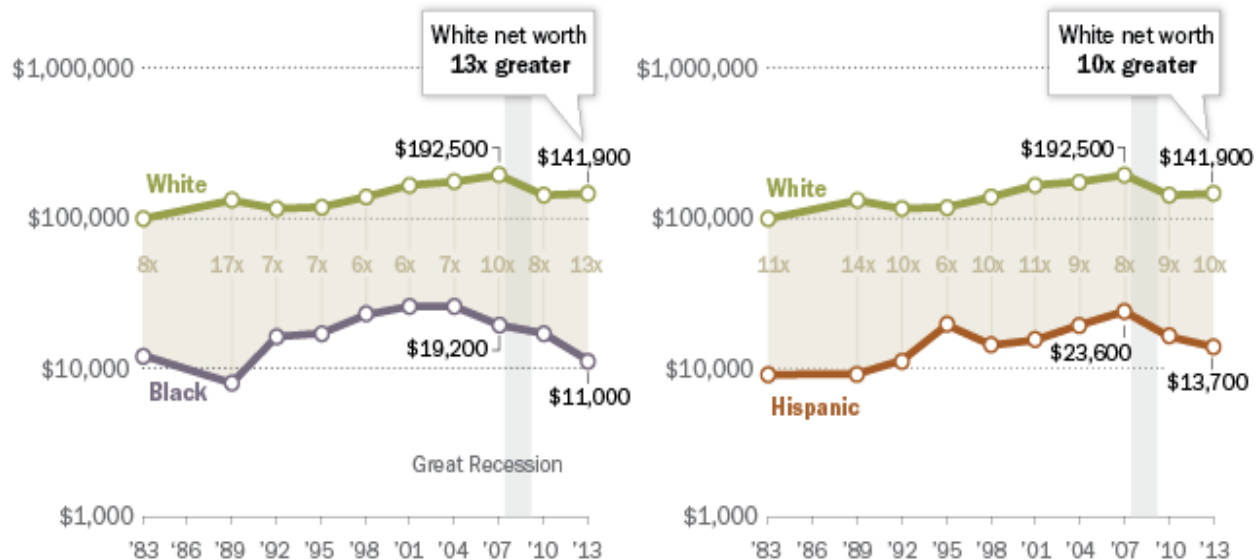


In 1975, shortly after Jim Crow became history, the rate of black imprisonment sky rocketed, having been essentially constant for the previous five decades, while the rate of white imprisonment after 1975 rose only very slightly. The oppression of working class blacks after the success of the Civil Rights Movement took a new form, and is arguably worse now than during the years of Jim Crow. *

The Pew Research Center [reports](#) on the gap in family wealth by race:

Racial, Ethnic Wealth Gaps Have Grown Since Great Recession

Median net worth of households, in 2013 dollars



Notes: Blacks and whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Chart scale is logarithmic; each gridline is ten times greater than the gridline below it. Great Recession began Dec. '07 and ended June '09.

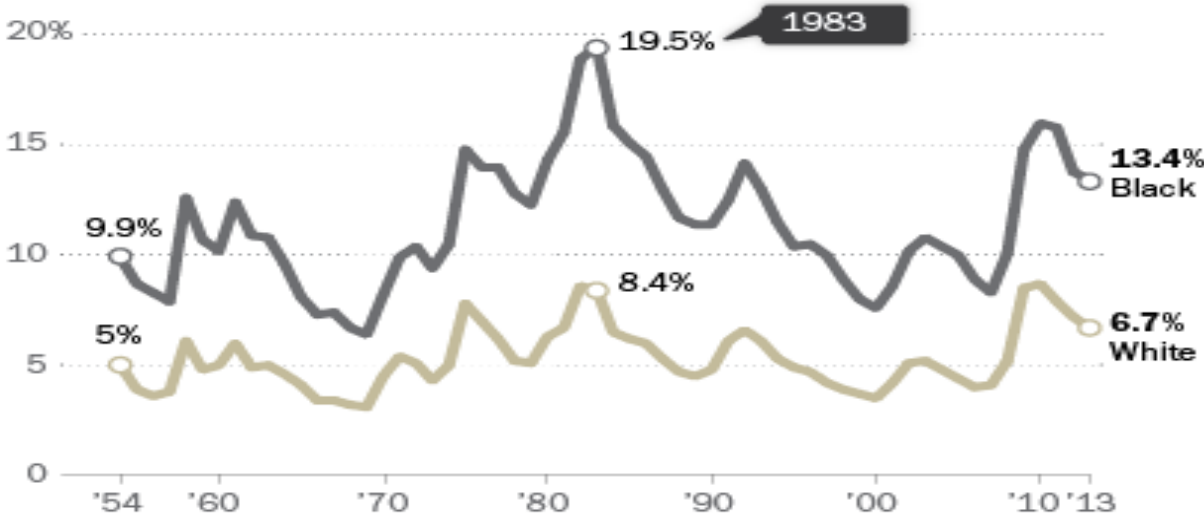
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Survey of Consumer Finances public-use data

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The Pew Research Center [reports](#) a similar gap in unemployment by race, specifically that the "black unemployment rate is consistently twice that of whites.":

Unemployment rates by race

Seasonally adjusted



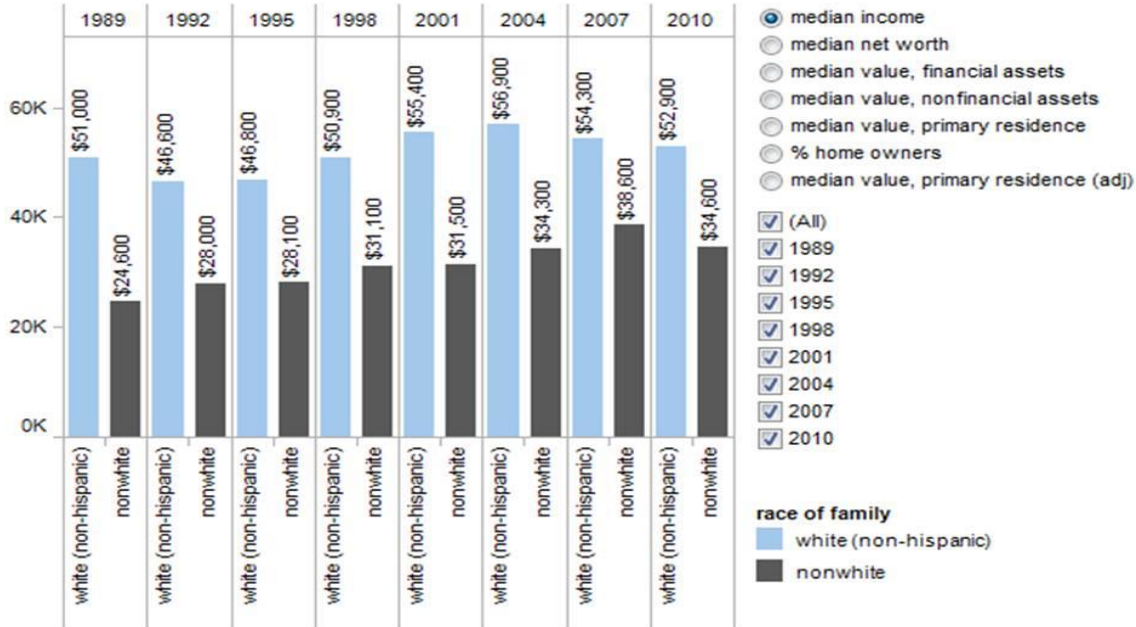
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Note: "Black and other," 1954-1971; "Black or African American" thereafter. 2013 average is January-July.

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Likewise there is a gap in income by race as seen in [this chart](#):

Racial Gaps in Income and Wealth, 1989-2010



Data from the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances; dollar amounts in 2010 (inflation-adjusted dollars)

"Financial assets" include bank accounts, savings bonds, retirement accounts, cash value of life insurance and stocks and bonds; "non-financial assets" include vehicles, real estate, (inc. primary residence), and business equity.

"Median value, primary residence" is for all homeowners; "median value, primary residence (adj)" is for all families (accounting for different rates of homeownership).

Colin Gordon, September 2012
www.telltalechart.org

Today's **racial gaps** in wealth, income, unemployment and incarceration are due to a combination of currently existing discriminatory practices and the effects of no-longer existing discriminatory practices from the past, going back to the years of chattel slavery.

The greater poverty of blacks compared to whites is largely due to the fact that the enslavement of blacks in earlier generations prevented wealth

from being passed down to current generations of blacks, in great contrast to the inheritance of such wealth by current white generations. This is spelled out in an academic study [here](#) (pdf).

While most people know about the fact of chattel slavery, not as many know that as recently as FDR's New Deal racial discrimination was standard procedure, as described in this [Digital History](#) summary:

"Most New Deal programs discriminated against blacks. The NRA, for example, not only offered whites the first crack at jobs, but authorized separate and lower pay scales for blacks. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) refused to guarantee mortgages for blacks who tried to buy in white neighborhoods, and the CCC maintained segregated camps. Furthermore, the Social Security Act excluded those job categories blacks traditionally filled.

"The story in agriculture was particularly grim. Since 40 percent of all black workers made their

living as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) acreage reduction hit blacks hard. White landlords could make more money by leaving land untilled than by putting land back into production. As a result, the AAA's policies forced more than 100,000 blacks off the land in 1933 and 1934. Even more galling to black leaders, the president failed to support an anti-lynching bill and a bill to abolish the poll tax. Roosevelt feared that conservative southern Democrats, who had seniority in Congress and controlled many committee chairmanships, would block his bills if he tried to fight them on the race question."

Academic papers [like this one](#) support the charge that the purpose of the New Deal's exclusion of farm workers from the maximum hours and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act was racial discrimination.

Now, of course--one would assume--our government's leaders readily admit that Social

Security's past exclusion of categories of work that were predominantly black was wrongful racial discrimination. Except, no! They admit no such thing. The current Social Security [website](#) gives this defense of its past racially biased exclusions:

"The Social Security Act of 1935 excluded from coverage about half the workers in the American economy. Among the excluded groups were agricultural and domestic workers—a large percentage of whom were African Americans. This has led some scholars to conclude that policymakers in 1935 deliberately excluded African Americans from the Social Security system because of prevailing racial biases during that period. This article examines both the logic of this thesis and the available empirical evidence on the origins of the coverage exclusions. The author concludes that the racial-bias thesis is both conceptually flawed and unsupported by the existing empirical evidence. The exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers from the early

program was due to considerations of **administrative feasibility** involving tax-collection procedures. The author finds no evidence of any other policy motive involving racial bias." [my emphasis--J.S.]

But even the Roosevelt Institute--"Carrying forward the legacy and values of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt"--admits that FDR's New Deal, despite FDR's supposedly personal desires to the contrary, was forced to stay within the racially discriminatory parameters insisted upon by the overtly racist pro-segregation Southern Democratic Party leadership. Here is how the [Roosevelt Institute](#) puts it:

"As the leader of a political party that was heavily represented in Congress by racist Southern Democrats who supported segregation and even opposed the adoption of a federal anti-lynching law as an infringement of state's rights, FDR had to choose his battles carefully and at times appears timorous in the face of racial injustice--especially when viewed from today. But this is

the President who appointed a far greater number of blacks to positions of responsibility within his government than any of his predecessors, so much so in fact that this group became known as the "Black Cabinet" or "Black Brain Trust" in the press."

The fact that the Social Security website still denies that racial discrimination was behind its original exclusionary practices indicates the extent to which those in power today continue to view racially discriminatory practices as acceptable, with thread-bare rationalizations such as "administrative feasibility."

Today domestic workers are covered by Social Security but [they are NOT covered](#) by the National Labor Relations Act or by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or by the Occupational Safety and Health Act or by the Family and Medical Leave Act or by the Americans with Disabilities Act or by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act. Blacks and Hispanics are disproportionately working as

domestic workers: while blacks and Hispanics combined are only [30.9%](#) of the American population they are a much larger percentage of domestic workers, who are mainly immigrant women of [color](#). Racial discrimination by the Federal government is clearly not just something that happened in the past.

Similarly, agricultural workers today are overwhelmingly (99%) non-white and continue to suffer from overt racial discrimination by the Federal government. Here is how the [Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative](#) summarizes it:

"Agricultural workers in the United States suffer from an institutional racism reflected in discriminatory U.S. laws derived in an unbroken chain from the institution of slavery that characterized U.S. agriculture until 1865.

- . Farmworkers are the lowest paid occupational group in the United States, with the vast majority living below the poverty level.

- Over one third own nothing more than what fits into their bags as they migrate from farm to farm.
- Farmwork is one of the most hazardous occupations in the nation, with an accident and injury rate far higher than the average. Farmworkers are also exposed to toxic chemicals on a routine basis. Most farmworkers do not have access to adequate medical care, compounding the health risks they face on the job.
- Ninety nine percent of all migrant farmworkers are members of an ethnic minority, the vast majority are Latino. Seventy to seventy five percent of the entire agricultural workforce (migrant and non-migrant) in the U.S. are members of racial minority groups.

"The dismal socio-economic status of farmworkers in the U.S. is not a reflection of the inherent nature of agriculture, but rather

it is the direct result of deliberate policy positions that have been enacted that grant farmworkers fewer rights and social benefits than any other occupation in the nation.

- . Farmworkers, together with domestic workers, are exempted from collective bargaining rights granted workers in all other industries by the National Labor Relations Act .
- . Farmworkers have fewer legal protections than other workers or are entirely exempt from a wide range of federal laws, including minimum wage, overtime, child labor, Social Security, and unemployment legislation.
- . U.S. laws pertaining to farmworkers violate many international human rights laws.

"These policy injustices are steeped in a history of racism that dates back to the institution of slavery in the United States."

Another major reason why blacks have so much less wealth than whites in the United States is this. About one quarter of the United States population (as of 2000) were descendants of people who became land owners for the first time because of the 1862 Homestead Act that gave them--essentially for free--160 acres of good farmland to own outright. The people who were able to get free land this way were almost entirely white; hardly any blacks were able to get land this way due to a host of various racially discriminatory practices and laws including, but not limited to, slavery itself. After working as slaves on southern plantations, blacks were denied any ownership of the plantation acres, which remained the property of the slave owners. "As sociologist Thomas Shapiro pointed out, if that many Americans can potentially trace their 'legacy of property ownership' to these entitlement programs, modern-day issues like 'upward mobility, economic stability, class status, and wealth' need to be understood as directly related 'to one national policy--a policy

that in practice essentially excluded African Americans." [*Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* by Keri Leigh Merritt, citing *The Hidden Cost of Being African American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 190.]

How Does this Racial Discrimination Against Blacks and Hispanics Harm White Working Class People?

It is obvious that racial discrimination against blacks and Hispanics harms them. It is less obvious how it harms white working class people. Why is it true, as the best people in the Labor Movement have always said, that "An Injury to One is an Injury to All"?

First let's see that it is true. Then we'll look at why it's true.

The culture of Jim Crow laws and the associated informal understanding by business and political leaders in the South to discriminate against

blacks in hiring and related matters persisted flagrantly in the American South after the Civil War until the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The upper class told white workers that this racial discrimination benefited them. Their argument was simple:

"Think how much worse off you'd be if we treated you the same as we treat the blacks. You're very lucky we treat you so much better and give you the good jobs because you're white. Without Jim Crow you'd be worse off."

It may have been a simple argument, but it was flat out wrong. Southern white workers who compared their lot to that of the worse-off Southern blacks (as the wealthy employer class urged them to do) failed to notice what they would have seen if they had compared their lot to the better-off white workers in the North where Jim Crow didn't exist. Here's what they would have seen:

“In 1907, Southern wages were at 86% of the national average and remained at about the same level in 1945. From 1945 to 1960 wages in the region remained between 20%-25% below the national average.”[reference: <https://www.iwu.edu/economics/PPE09/amanda.pdf>]

As Theodore Allen notes:

"Textile mill wages in the South were not only low relative to those of New England, but absolutely low with reference to their own daily needs." [reference: *The Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1. pg. 157]

Jim Crow and racial discrimination in the South made it easier for the employers to lower the wages of the "better-off" white workers below what they would have been in the absence of the racial discrimination. How come?

Why Is An Injury to One an Injury to All?



To understand why racial discrimination makes things worse for the group not directly targeted by the discrimination (*i.e.*, why An Injury to One is an Injury to All), one has to look at things from the point of view of the upper class, the employer class. The employers know that the one and only thing that can force them to pay higher wages than they want to pay is the workers all being united in refusing to work for lower than acceptable wages. This requires solidarity among all the potential workers, based on mutual trust and respect. The whole purpose of Jim Crow and related racial discrimination in the South was to prevent such solidarity--between the black and white workers--from ever developing.



The purpose of racial discrimination in the South was to foment mistrust between the two races: the blacks distrusted the whites because the whites went along with the racial discrimination and the whites distrusted the blacks because they feared that blacks would work for the employer for lower wages whenever they had the chance (*i.e.*, if the Jim Crow discrimination were ended). Solidarity to force the employers to pay higher wages would have required white workers to be

in the same organization with blacks, which would have required them to break the Jim Crow law against blacks and whites being in the same organization.

Here is an example of how the upper class in the South preached racist contempt for black people for the precise purpose of preventing blacks and whites from developing solidarity. In the 1940s a notoriously reactionary Texan named [Vance Muse](#) had "wealthy sponsors, ranging from Texas oil and cotton magnates, to northern petrochemicals titans like the DuPonts and the Pews." Muse warned whites not to join labor unions with these words, "From now on, white women and white men will be forced into organizations with black African apes whom they will have to call 'brother' or lose their jobs."

The whites who mistakenly believed that the Jim Crow laws benefited them were not of a mind to break those laws. The result was that the white workers had to accept lower wages than whites in the North. Racial discrimination--in particular

the refusal of the whites to see it as an attack on them as well as on the blacks, and their refusal to join blacks in fighting to abolish the racial discrimination--created so much mistrust between black and white workers that solidarity between them was impossible. This harmed the white workers. It did not benefit them at all, despite the upper class argument that "Jim Crow is good for the whites." (There were working class white tenant farmers who united with black tenant farmers in the Deep South during the 1930s, and who broke the Jim Crow laws by meeting and going on strike together. [This was the Southern Tenant Farmers Union](#). They won important gains.)

In the United States today the ruling plutocracy uses racial discrimination to create mistrust between whites and non-whites. Blacks and Hispanics know from first hand experience how they are discriminated against. Because whites don't experience this discrimination they are less aware of its existence and are susceptible to being

persuaded by lies saying that the discrimination is a myth (*e.g.*, "The police don't single blacks and Hispanics out for worse treatment; it's just that they're all a bunch of low life criminals.") Some whites may even believe the lie that they benefit from racial discrimination against blacks and Hispanics. (The Left, after all, tells them they benefit from it, calling it "white privilege" as if it were a "privilege" [the word means a benefit, by definition] to have one's solidarity with other working class people destroyed.)

Naturally the failure of whites to join blacks and Hispanics in demanding an end to the racial discrimination causes blacks to mistrust whites, even in some cases to view them as their enemy. By the same token, whites who think blacks and Hispanics are criminal races tend to fear them. All of this results in the destruction of solidarity between working class people of all races. This is precisely the purpose of racial discrimination: Divide-and-Rule.

This divide-and-rule is what enables the Big Money class to rule over us. It is why the 400 richest Americans are able to own [more wealth](#) than half of all Americans combined. Divide-and-rule is what lets the rich get away with this injustice despite the fact that virtually all ordinary people think it is morally wrong. Working class people--of ALL races--suffer greatly from this terrible economic inequality. Because the lion's share of the wealth we produce goes to benefit a Billionaire class living in unimaginable luxury (as described [here](#)), ordinary people of ALL races live in economic insecurity. One big medical bill that the insurance policy won't cover or a job layoff or firing is all that it takes to drive many into missing a mortgage or rent payment and being homeless. For fear of being unemployed working people of ALL races put up with terrible abuse on the job. None of this is necessary. But to end it we must have the solidarity and mutual trust that it takes to remove the rich from power and

have real not fake democracy with no rich and no poor.

What to Do?

The solution to this Big Problem--rampant racial discrimination being used as a weapon of social control to protect a dictatorship of the rich--is a Big Solution: egalitarian revolution as discussed [here](#). This Big Solution will require enormous solidarity, which in turn will require that ALL ordinary people work to abolish racial discrimination. Wherever racial discrimination exists everyone should denounce it and work to abolish it, no matter what their race. This is how we can make our society truly equal, with no rich and no poor, with an economy based on the principal of "From each according to ability, to each according to need."

Reject the Left's "white privilege" guilt tripping (that is [pushed by Big Money](#))

This doesn't mean (as the Left preaches) that whites should feel guilty for being white or feel

obliged to apologize for having white skin and "white privilege." Ordinary whites do not benefit from this system of racial discrimination and they were not the ones who created it. It was--historically--the wealthy tobacco plantation owners in the Virginia Colony who invented it. Specifically they invented the idea of making all Africans, no matter how much property they owned, inferior under the law to all people of European descent no matter how little property they owned. This was a complete break from centuries of British common law, which accorded rights under the law based on property, not skin color.

To appreciate just how extreme a break this was, read what the British Attorney General, who had to approve of all laws that the Virginia Colony rulers wanted to enact, wrote in 1723 when he first read their proposal to enact a law with these words:

'...no free negro, mulatto, or indian whatsoever, shall have any vote at the election of burgesses, or any other election whatsoever.'

The Attorney General was shocked that skin color, not property, was proposed to be the basis for one's status under the law. He wrote:

'I cannot see why one freeman should be used worse than another, merely upon account of his complexion..., to vote at elections of officers, either for a county, or parish, etc., is incident to every freeman, who is possessed of a certain proportion of property, and, therefore, when several negroes have merited their freedom, and obtained it, and by their industry, have acquired that proportion of property, so that the above-mentioned incidental rights of liberty are actually vested in them, for my own part, am persuaded, that it cannot be just, by a general law, without any allegation of crime, or other demerit whatsoever, to strip all free persons, of a black complexion (some of whom may, perhaps be of considerable substance,) from those rights, which

are so justly valuable to every freeman.'" [from The Invention of the White Race, Volume II, by Theodore W. Allen, pg. 241]

The Virginia Colony plantation owners eventually prevailed and made it the law that no African person had rights under the law that any person of European descent had to recognize. This created--for the first time--a new category of people under the law: people of European descent. Such people came to be known as "white." Prior to this nobody was known as or considered themselves to be white; the concept did not exist. People were British or French or Irish or African or Scottish or of this or that native American tribe, *etc.*, but never "white."

Why did the Virginia Colony plantation owners make this extreme break from British common law? The reason is because they were frightened to death by the recent Bacon's Rebellion in which bonded (indentured or slave) laborers--Africans and British--united and attempted to overthrow the class of plantation owners with a military

attack that damn near succeeded. A British naval ship captain, Thomas Grantham, used deception to help defeat the rebellion. His own words indicate the unity of African and British laborers:

"I there met about four hundred English and Negroes in Arms who were much dissatisfied at the Surrender of the Point, saying I had betrayed them, and thereupon some were for shooting me and others were for cutting me in peeces: I told them I would willingly surrender myselfe to them, till they were satisfied from His Majestie, and did engage to the Negroes and Servants, that they were all pardoned and freed from their Slavery: And with faire promises and Rundletts of Brandy, I pacified them, giving them severall Noates under my hand that what I did was by the order of his Majestie and the Governor....Most of them I persuaded to goe to their Homes, which accordingnly they did, except about eighty Negroes and twenty English which would not deliver their Armes...."113

[reference: <http://clogic.eserver.org/1-2/allen.html>]

The Virginia Colony rulers decided that they had to break up this solidarity, and the method they chose was racial discrimination. The Left calls this system of racial discrimination "white privilege," but it is no "privilege" to have one's solidarity with fellow working class people destroyed so that the Big Money class can more easily dominate and oppress one! Unfortunately for all the subsequent generations of working class people, Big Money's racial discrimination method of social control has proven all too effective. For this we should blame the very rich, not ordinary people of European descent!

What About Affirmative Action?

There are two ways, short of an egalitarian revolution, to redress the decades of racial discrimination in hiring and school admissions. The first way produces great resentment of whites against blacks and Hispanics and undermines solidarity. The second way produces great solidarity between whites and blacks and Hispanics. Our ruling elite made their choice

shortly after the Civil Rights Movement had garnered tremendous support from white working class people on the basis of opposing racial discrimination; the Movement gained so much widespread support for this goal that it was able to abolish Jim Crow's racial discrimination in law. Which way do you suppose was chosen by our ruling plutocracy (in particular by its chief agent at the time, President Richard [Nixon](#))? If you guessed the first way you would be right.

The ruling class chose what came to be known as Affirmative Action. Affirmative Action sets lower criteria for minorities than for whites to be hired or accepted into a college or university. Instead of being against racial discrimination, Affirmative Action is for it. What has been the result? Terrible! For decades now whites have been hearing employers or schools tell them, "We're sorry. We couldn't give you the position you applied for because we had to give it to a less qualified minority person." Could a better method of creating racial resentment ever be

invented? (Furthermore, as the above charts on incarceration, wealth, income and unemployment by race make quite clear, Affirmative Action has not come close to delivering the goods or even moving things substantially closer to the goal of racial equality.)

The second method, the one the plutocracy avoided like the plague, is this: Make the criterion for being hired to a job or admitted to a school be the same regardless of race: that the applicant has what is really required to do the job or benefit from the school. Stop requiring applicants to get some arbitrary score on a test (like the SAT) that correlates far more with race and economic status than with actual ability to succeed as an employee or student. In addition, bring back on-the-job training (something only older people remember) so that the criterion for getting hired is what really matters--simply the ability to learn the relevant new skills. This alone would dramatically increase the numbers of minorities hired for jobs or admitted to schools.

In addition, however, the second method would include guaranteeing anybody, regardless of race, this: If you're willing to work reasonably doing something socially useful (that's different from making a profit for a capitalist!) then you'll have the opportunity to do so and to receive in return the same standard of living as anybody else. And furthermore the second method would include this: Create schools sufficient in number and appropriate in type of instruction to enable any person who wants to further their education to do so.

The second method of redressing past racial discrimination would result in ZERO unemployment among minorities as well as whites and would enable EVERY minority person and every white person who wanted to further their education to do so. If THIS were the solution to making up for past racial discrimination in hiring and school admissions (even just the first part of the method alone) then white working people would be in agreement

with it. They'd LOVE it. But no, the plutocracy didn't choose the second solution because it would not have furthered divide-and-rule. Still, the second solution is the kind of solution that we should fight for as a way of ending racial discrimination and making a better world for all of us. It's an egalitarian solution.

* For more hard data and analysis of the crime/race connection see the following:

["Incarceration & social inequality"](#) (2010), published by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which states:

"In the last few decades, the institutional contours of American social inequality have been transformed by the rapid growth in the prison and jail population.¹ America's prisons and jails have produced a new social group, a group of social outcasts who are joined by the shared experience of incarceration, crime, poverty, racial minority, and low education. As an outcast group, the men

and women in our penal institutions have little access to the social mobility available to the mainstream. Social and economic disadvantage, crystallizing in penal confinement, is sustained over the life course and transmitted from one generation to the next. This is a profound institutionalized inequality that has renewed race and class disadvantage. Yet the scale and empirical details tell a story that is largely unknown.

"Though the rate of incarceration is historically high, perhaps the most important social fact is the inequality in penal confinement. This inequality produces extraordinary rates of incarceration among young African American men with no more than a high school education. For these young men, born since the mid-1970s, serving time in prison has become a normal life event.

"The influence of the penal system on social and economic disadvantage can be seen in the economic and family lives of the formerly incarcerated. The social inequality produced by

mass incarceration is sizable and enduring for three main reasons: it is invisible, it is cumulative, and it is intergenerational. The inequality is invisible in the sense that institutionalized populations commonly lie outside our official accounts of economic well-being. Prisoners, though drawn from the lowest rungs in society, appear in no measures of poverty or unemployment. As a result, the full extent of the disadvantage of groups with high incarceration rates is underestimated. The inequality is cumulative because the social and economic penalties that flow from incarceration are accrued by those who already have the weakest economic opportunities. Mass incarceration thus deepens disadvantage and forecloses mobility for the most marginal in society. Finally, carceral inequalities are intergenerational, affecting not just those who go to prison and jail but their families and children, too."

by John Spritzler
PDRBoston.org

