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### Racial Inequality & Discrimination and its Impact on American Society

Talks about racial inequality and discrimination have become more significant over these past few years. With the killing of George Floyd and several other Black Americans, and the hatred being thrown at the Asian American community because of COVID-19, this is a significant time where this has to be addressed. It is a must to engage and be aware of these things and learn about the roots of racial discrimination because this will help preserve the identity and history of the United States. However, there are several bills right now that are being passed to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory. Banning Critical Race Theory would only oppress academic freedom and critical thinking. It would limit students' ability to understand and address systemic racism, and this would perpetuate a culture of silence around race and racism.

In this time and age, addressing racial inequality and discrimination is much more important in this society than banning CRT. Sometimes I even wonder if conservatives are not aware that there are many people being assaulted, bullied, and killed daily because of their skin color and ethnicity. That is why we cannot be silent; we must teach the American people their history and why talking about these issues matters. Systemic racism has a lengthy history in this nation, spanning practices like slavery, segregation, redlining, and mass incarceration. These discriminatory policies lead to disparities that continue in the fields of education, employment, housing, healthcare, and criminal justice. Because of the

significant and pervasive impacts, honest discussion about racial inequality and discrimination is crucial to increase empathy and understanding. This essay not only aims to showcase what I have learned in this class but also explain racial inequality and discrimination by examining its historical and contemporary manifestations, the impact it has on various groups, and the responses to these issues.

The Doctrine of Discovery, Manifest Destiny, and Master Narrative have shaped American history and society. Reading *A Different Mirror* and *Unsettling Truths* made me realize that all these three concepts have been used to support the removal of indigenous peoples from their lands, the expansion of American history, and the belief in American exceptionalism. The Doctrine of Discovery, according to the book *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing, Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, is “a set of legal principles that governed European powers, particularly regarding the administration of indigenous land” (Charles and Soong-Chan 16). This has given them a legal justification for the colonization of indigenous land. As for manifest destiny, it was the belief that it was the divine mission of the United States to expand westward and spread American democracy and culture. The annexation of the Southwest and the violent removal of Native Americans from their traditional lands were both justified by this notion. Meanwhile, the master narrative is believed that United States of America was settled by European immigrants and Americans are white. Anyone who is not white is viewed as being different and inferior, and whiteness is the distinguishing feature of the American national identity. All three of these factors mentioned above continue to support and legitimize white supremacy and imperialism, creating a system of racial inequality and discrimination that still exists today.

Furthermore, a huge part of America's history is the legacy of slavery and segregation. 1619 was a significant year for America, for this marks the beginning of a long and tragic history of enslavement. This was when the first 20 enslaved Africans were brought here to the United States, specifically in Jamestown, Virginia, at Point Comfort. The ship that brought them here is the White Lion (also a title of the poem, which can be seen in the *1619 Project*). Then, to worsen the situation of slavery here in America, Jim Crow laws were established, which according to Britannica.com, "enforced racial segregation in the Southern part of the United States between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the beginning of the civil rights movement in the 1950s" (Urofsky). All of the examples mentioned above are indeed a part of the historical roots of racial inequality and discrimination.

Next, I would like to discuss the contemporary forms of racial inequality and discrimination. The first is the so-called "model minority myth," which is frequently applied to Asian Americans, who are thought to have succeeded more and been more fully assimilated into American society than other minorities. This stereotype is just a myth and also problematic because it overlooks the diversity of experiences among Asian Americans. It reinforces the myth of a meritocracy where success is solely based on individual effort, and this creates divisions among minorities. Second, there is the perpetual foreigner, which then again is a stereotype, assumption, or idea that Asian Americans, "No matter how long they were in the United States, no matter where they were born, no matter their citizenship, they are still not considered Americans. They are just extensions of Asia" as described by Dr. Jane Hong in her lecture.

In continuation, what I also consider as contemporary forms are the systemic racism and discrimination of different groups with housing and the criminal justice system.

And yes, up until today, these are still one of the biggest problems that minorities face. Lastly, there were laws that have put immigrants and undocumented people at a huge disadvantage because of the several policies that were made against them. An example of this is the Chinese Exclusion Act, which is a 10-year ban given to Chinese laborers immigrating here to America, and also Operation Wetback, which was a mass deportation campaign that targeted undocumented immigrants, including many Latin Americans.

Now that we are aware of the causes of racism and inequality, we begin to wonder as to how these issues affect various ethnic groups. For Native Americans, they have suffered from forced removal from their ancestral lands; genocides and mass killings; cultural erasure and assimilation; and were called “savages” and “primitives.” Many may not be even aware of the atrocities that the indigenous people have experienced. Wars even broke out because they were fighting for their land, resources, and sovereignty. Meanwhile, African Americans are victims of enslavement, Jim Crow laws, and racial violence, including lynching, mob violence, and race riots. They have suffered from mass incarceration and Black Codes, which limit their rights and freedoms (History.com). Also, many southern states used poll taxes and literacy tests to prevent African Americans from voting.

Then, we have the Latin Americans who suffered from xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment that has led to policies that discriminate against them. There were even English-only policies that forced them only to speak English and not their very own language. Also, they are prone to racial profiling and policing that has led to higher rates of police brutality and harassment. Next, is the Asian Americans who have suffered from exclusionary immigration policies, anti-Asian violence, stereotypes, and perpetual foreign status. Additionally, we cannot ignore the fact that during World War II, the US government

incarcerated hundreds and thousands of Japanese Americans on the pretext that they were "spies" and a threat to national security... Lastly, undocumented people and immigrants have suffered from deportation, family separation, and racial profiling, and they only have limited access to healthcare and social services. Most of the groups mentioned above have one thing in common, and that is discrimination in education, employment, and housing which is outrageous because everyone should have rights and access to these necessities.

Due to the years of exploitation and oppression of these different groups, there were several people who took a step to fight against all the inequalities and discrimination they have seen, heard, or experienced. A group of African American activists have then started the Civil Rights Movement to correct the wrongs and, of course, to fight for what is right. Many church leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. played a key role in this movement to end racial segregation and discrimination. This has greatly aided the fight against racism and injustice in America. On top of that, the movement had a significant influence on American culture since it helped important civil rights laws pass and raised awareness of racial and discrimination-related concerns. Other active social justice advocacy movements with the aim of eradicating all forms of racial injustice include the Black Lives Matter Movement, the American Indian Movement, and the Immigrant Rights Movement, and many more. Then, we also have laws and policies like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Affirmative Action, Fair Housing Act, Hate Crime Laws, and so on to address racism and inequality (Justice.gov). Even churches here in America took a step to address Racial Justice and Reconciliation to their congregation to remind them that God has taught us to love our neighbors and not belittle them.

In this nation where “greatness” is a term often used to describe America, I understand why some of the conservatives want to abolish CRT because history portrays this country as racist and oppressive, which is very “Un-American.” Yet, we cannot just dismiss and forget the things that happened in the past. All those injustices that occurred in the past must be corrected now so as not to prolong these issues that continue to disrupt the American society. Every single one has to learn and be able to accept America’s “reality” since only truth can set everyone free. I want to stress once more how crucial it is to discuss racial injustice and prejudice since it has a wide-ranging effect on society and impacts so many people. The goal of establishing a livable society for all people goes beyond issues of justice and equality. By addressing the history of racial inequality and its contemporary manifestations, we can move towards healing, reconciliation, and creating a more equitable and just society. Having simple, open, and honest conversations about these problems is a step towards a better future for everyone.

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