

Student's Name

Instructor's Name

Course

Date

### **Racial Discrimination**

Racial discrimination refers to the treatment of a person unfavorably based on their skin color. Racial discrimination was nowhere rampant in the U.S. at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in the Southern States (Alderman et al., 2018, pp 227-249). Although, people of color were subjected and still are implicitly discriminated against through racial slurs or derogatory statements about their cultures. Some of the employment policies adopted at the time contributed mainly to the discrimination of African Americans, as they were considered inferior to their white counterparts. Out of the heroic acts performed by ordinary African Americans, revolutions such as the civil rights movement began. Racial discrimination was rampant in the Southern States to the extent that African Americans were not supposed to share the same amenities with their white counterparts. Both working men and women of color had to be forcibly ejected from train coaches reserved for the whites on the premises of the Jim Crow laws.

#### **An African American Woman: Surviving the South**

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women of color, especially from the Southern States, were subjected to humiliations and violence from their white counterparts. The autobiography would reveal that she was shielded from discrimination as the parent were comfortable enough to educate her through private schooling mainly because they understood that the child would be subjected to harassment in public schools that were predominantly white (Katz and Lehman, 2003, p.122). She claims that this was sufficient reason to warrant insults and violence from the

white supremacists who believed that they would not share anything with African Americans due to their color. Yet, in hiding, they would pursue black women. The narrator explains how the majority white population dehumanized them:

Today I have the same feeling my parents had. There is no sacrifice I would not make, no hardship I would not undergo rather than allow my daughters to go in service where they would be thrown constantly in contact with Southern white men, for they consider the colored girl their special prey. (Katz and Lehman 122).

Despite having achieved much more than their white counterparts, they were constantly reminded that they were inferior and if it were in the power of the white supremacists, they would have remained enslaved. The concept of people of color was deeply enshrined behind the minds of the white Southerners, and it was applied across the board, including other individuals such as the Chinese. However, since African Americans had been enslaved and there was a systemic racial hatred in the South, they were subjected to a more significant degree of racial discrimination than others. She narrates in one incidence where she was humiliated for sitting in a seat reserved for whites on a train couch. As she explains the incident, the seat was the most convenient for her; however, her decision to sit resulted in her being forcibly ejected from the coach (Katz and Lehman, p.124). Her bad experiences would continue as she tried to gain entry in a lift, during which she was denied access (Katz and Lehman, p.125).

The level of discrimination witnessed in the Southern States was exacerbated by the fact that it was condoned at all levels of society. Parents taught their children it was okay to insult African Americans, and they were not allowed to have anything to do with them; this included their children playing with theirs. The children grew up knowing that children of color were inferior to them even they owned more than the whites. It was universally agreed among the

white society that they were better than all other races. She was astonished by the way that the whites, who claimed that they were Christians but they were comfortable with killing others on the pretext that they were superior to African Americans and as such they would own them, sell and buy them, and physically hurt them if they felt that they deserved it. So when any black person accumulated wealth and made something of themselves, such as being educated than a white person, they were despised for it.

The greatest worry of the narrator is the outcome of her children in a world where the odds of them achieving success are limited. She knows that the struggles that her children are going to face will be immense, as she relates this with her own experience (Katz and Lehman, p.128). She is taken aback by the imagination that her children will face more challenges than hers on the premise that they will be more educated. Again society will only focus on their color, not on the context of what they have achieved, and have the same opportunities as the white children. Based on her encounters with the white men, she only sees her daughter being made more advances than her white counterpart and her son being denied the opportunities on account of the white young man entitled more than her son.

### **The Color Line**

To reaffirm the white rule in the South, the conservatives ensured that African Americans would have difficulties when it came to voting. They would change the polling stations without notifying voters of African Americans. To maintain the rule, the Democrats understood the importance of having many votes. They would instruct the black voter on voting and even sponsor multiple candidates while having one candidate from their side. Having numerous candidates meant that votes were divided amongst the many black candidates making the individual conservative the only single candidate with a unified block of votes. Politicians such

as Tom Watson from Georgia understood that he needed to enlist the support of black votes to win the election. During his campaign, he argued that African Americans, especially the poor, were not included in some crucial issues.

To stop the spread of such coalitions, conservative Democrats had to curtail the spread of such political ideologies as it would have forced them out of government altogether, which would have meant the end of their rule. They argued that the inclusion of black people in politics exacerbated corruption. Eventually, the white politicians agreed that it was essential to disfranchise black votes; they argued that only intelligent people and those who owned property would vote. This ideology meant that black voters were disqualified as they were seen as less competent and did not have properties; this meant that the South was a Democratic side while the North was a Republican. African Americans were seen as poor, uneducated, and lacking property; these characteristics determined fitness to participate in government processes (Keele, 2021, pp. 694-700). Despite the increased number of black people who had begun owning properties and were educated, the conservatives agreed that America was a nation that should be led by white men only.

The legalization of segregation was brought at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Supreme Court stated that people would be separate but remain equal. Plessy, used in the test case, bought a first-class ticket; the lawyers had agreed upon Plessy being used as a test as he appeared as a light-skinned African American and would pass as white. They would use the test to challenge the Supreme Court's ruling that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional (Franklin, 2003, p.270). The court argued that any acts of discrimination were subject to the state but not the federal government. This ruling prompted a lot of states to adopt new constitutions that implemented segregation laws, which most people challenged, especially the African

Americans who were the most affected by the segregation laws. A section of colored litigants began challenging these new laws through the courts; they adopted to challenge the ruling by using the test case ideology (Franklin, 2003, p.270). Plessy was arrested for refusing to move from the coach as per the demand of the conductor, after which it was argued that segregation laws were essential in ensuring the society was able to live harmoniously (Franklin, 2003, p.270).

The segregation laws saw an increase in urban migration, and some urban cities saw an influx of African Americans. However, they were met with the challenges of the color line; they were handed fewer jobs as most opportunities were reserved for white people while other employers did not want to disgruntle their white employees (Franklin, 2003, p.273). Despite having fewer jobs, there were other problems within these societies. One such challenge was the lack of housing; with the segregation laws, African Americans stayed in one section of the city while whites stayed in another section where amenities were better compared to the section where black communities (Ware, 2021, pp. 92-109). Transportation was a challenge since most of them were not allowed to be in the same streetcar as white people (Franklin, 2003, p.274). It became apparent that the whites yielded a lot of power. To assert the ideology, they were more superior, and the white supremacist mob took offense if they were wronged in any way. They resulted in lynching the suspect without seeking any other form of justice, especially when punishing African Americans.

### **Support**

The primary source, *An African Woman: Surviving the South*, supports the secondary source, *The Color Line*. The primary source is a narration of the events of an African American about the struggle people from black communities went through under the white supremacist

rule, especially in the Southern States. The second source gives a detailed account of what individuals from the black community underwent due to segregation laws. The primary source details the struggle of African Americans due to systemic oppression exacerbated by the blatant disregard of the rule of law by the whites. Just as in the Color Line, where African Americans were denied equal job opportunities and transportation services, in An African Woman: Surviving the South, she was humiliated as Plessy for having sat in a train section only reserved for whites.

### **Conclusion**

Since the slavery era, the black community has faced stricter rules and laws meant to suppress them. It is common knowledge that racism does still exist even today. This explains some of the events that have occurred since the civil rights movement and the policies that have been put in place by subsequent administrations that seem to be targeting African Americans only. However, there seems to be a glimmer of hope as newer generations seem to welcome the idea that racism is wrong and cuts both ways.

### Works Cited

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