

Institutional Racism Is Our Way of Life

Endless studies and reports show that racism exists, whether we want to believe it or not

Source: U.S. News and World Reports. May 6, 2015, 1:16 p.m. EDT. By Jeff Nesbit. Jeff Nesbit was the National Science Foundation's director of legislative and public affairs in the Bush and Obama administrations; former Vice President Dan Quayle's communications director; the FDA's public affairs chief; and a national journalist with Knight-Ridder and others.

It's probably time to dust off some of the profound, disturbing statistics on institutional racism in America that have been painstakingly chronicled by groups like the Sentencing Project, the ACLU, American Psychological Association, the Education Department's Civil Rights office and many others.

Because, apparently, we still don't get it.

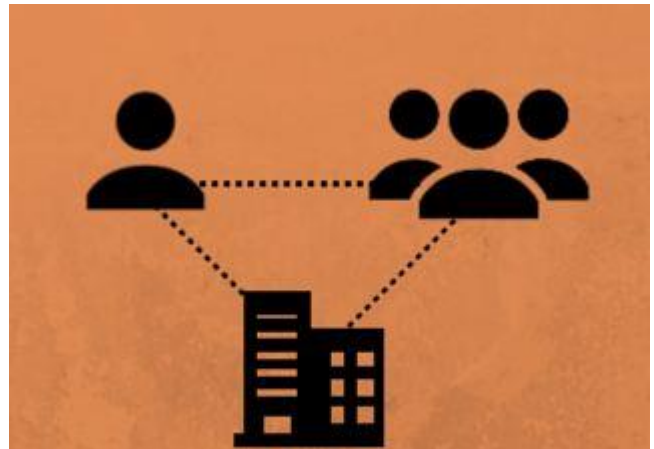
In the wake of Baltimore, Ferguson, New York City and elsewhere, most of us are at least somewhat aware of the nature of police violence against the black community in urban settings.

So maybe we should just start with institutional racism in schools, and work our way forward from there.

Let's start with pre-school. Black pre-schoolers are far more likely to be suspended than white children, NPR reported. Black children make up 18 percent of the pre-school population, but represent almost half of all out-of-school suspensions.

Once you get to K-12, black children are three times more likely to be suspended than white children. Black students make up almost 40 percent of all school expulsions, and more than two thirds of students referred to police from schools are either black or Hispanic, says the Department of Education.

Even disabled black children suffer from institutional racism. About a fifth of disabled children are black – yet they account for 44 and 42 percent of disabled students put in mechanical restraints or placed in seclusion.



When juveniles hit the court system, it discriminates against blacks as well. Black children are 18 times more likely to be sentenced as adults than white children, and make up nearly 60 percent of children in prisons, according to the APA. Black juvenile offenders are much more likely to be viewed as adults in juvenile detention proceedings than their white counterparts.

In the workplace, black college graduates are twice as likely as whites to struggle to find jobs - the jobless rate for blacks has been double that of whites for decades. A study even found that people with "black-sounding names" had to send out 50 percent more job applications than people with "white-sounding names" just to get a call back.

And it gets worse the higher up the pay scale you go. For every \$10,000 increase in pay, blacks' percentages of holding that job falls by 7 percent compared to whites.

The disparities exist in our neighborhoods and communities. About 73 percent of whites own homes,

compared to just 43 percent of blacks. The gap between median household income for whites (about \$91,000) compared to blacks (about \$7,000) is staggering, and that gap has tripled in just the past 25 years. The median net worth of white families is about \$265,000, while it was just \$28,500 for blacks.

A black man is three times more likely to be searched at a traffic stop, and six times more likely to go jail than a white person. Blacks make up nearly 40 percent of arrests for violent crimes.

Blacks aren't pulled over (and subsequently jailed) more frequently because they're more prone to criminal behavior. They're pulled over much more frequently because there is an "implicit racial association of black Americans with dangerous or aggressive behavior," the Sentencing Project found.

The numbers get ridiculous in certain parts of the country, the project found. On the New Jersey Turnpike, for instance, blacks make up 15 percent of drivers, more than 40 percent of stops and 73 percent of arrests – even though they break traffic laws at the same rate as whites. In New York City, blacks and Hispanics were three and four times as likely to be stopped and frisked as whites.

But the disparities become appalling in court.

If a black person kills a white person, they are twice as likely to receive the death sentence as a white person who kills a black person. Local prosecutors are much more likely to upgrade a case to felony murder if you're black than if you're white.

Juries are stacked against you if you're black. Racial bias in jury selection is ridiculous – qualified black jurors are illegally turned away as much as 80 percent of the time in the jury selection process.

The result? About a quarter of juries in death penalty cases have no black jurors, and more than two-thirds have two or less. When a black person is accused of

killing a white person – and the jury consists of five or more white males – the odds go way up for a death penalty verdict. Defense lawyers, and prosecutors, know that having just a single black man on the jury substantially changes the odds.

Black people stay in prison longer than white people – up to 20 percent longer than white people serving time for essentially similar crimes. They get much harsher sentences – black people are 38 percent more likely to be sentenced to death than white people for the same crimes.

And the color of the skin of the victims matters greatly in the punishment for capital crimes. Whites and blacks represent about half of murder victims from year to year, but 77 percent of people who are executed killed a white person, while only 13 percent of death row executions represent those who killed a black person.

I could cite hundreds of other statistics, much like these. And we haven't even touched on efforts to suppress voting, or unbalanced responses to riots, or the bizarre inequities in the never-ending war on drugs.

What they all point to quite clearly is that institutional racism exists in nearly every corner of American society today, and is what is driving the tension we are seeing on the streets in urban cities. The root causes are what we must deal with, not the symptoms.

So the next time you see someone questioning whether institutional racism exists in America, there's an obvious answer to the question. We may not like it, but pretending that it doesn't exist isn't right, either.

IS JUSTICE COLOR BLIND?

A Duke University-led study on the impact of race on conviction rates raises questions about the criminal justice system.

"Simply put, the luck of the draw on the racial composition of the jury pool has a lot to do with whether someone is convicted..." -- senior author Pat Bayer, chairman of Duke University's Economics Department

RESEARCHERS EXAMINED MORE THAN **700** FELONY TRIALS IN SARASOTA AND LAKE COUNTIES IN FLORIDA FROM 2000-2010.

Key findings:



In cases with no black people in the jury pool (typically consisting of around 27 people) blacks were convicted 81 percent of the time, and whites were convicted 66 percent of the time.



When the jury pool included at least one black person, the conviction rates were nearly identical.



Duke OFFICE OF NEWS & COMMUNICATIONS

<http://today.duke.edu/2012/04/jurystudy>
Design by Tamberly Ferguson

The Color of School Closures

School closures across the country disproportionately hurt Black and low-income students. Here are three of the worst examples, from this year alone:

CHICAGO

54 schools to be closed

AFFECTED STUDENTS ARE

88%

Black

43% of all Chicago students are Black

10%

Latino

44% of all Chicago students are Latino

94%

Low-income

76% of all Chicago students are low-income

0.7%

White

8% of all Chicago students are White

NEW YORK CITY

26 schools to be closed

AFFECTED STUDENTS ARE

59%

Black

30% of all NYC students are Black

43%

Latino

40% of all NYC students are Latino

82%

Low-income

73% of all NYC students are low-income

3%

White

14% of all NYC students are White

PHILADELPHIA

23 schools to be closed

AFFECTED STUDENTS ARE

81%

Black

58% of all Philly students are Black

11%

Latino

18% of all Philly students are Latino

93%

Low-income

81% of all Philly students are low-income

4%

White

14% of all Philly students are White

WHAT IS THE COLOR OF SCHOOL CLOSURES IN YOUR CITY? Send us your stories and data.

Find solutions at www.otlcampaign.org

Map is derived by Esri from Google.

Low-income students are calculated based on eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Lunch programs. All percentages from the US Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, 2010-11