

*Race and Racial Conflict*  
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*I. Introduction*

On May 27, 2009 I did a story circle with seven individuals including myself, who were nice enough to tell their experiences with racial conflict.<sup>1</sup> In doing the story circles I have discovered that racism and racial discrimination are among the most upsetting adversities in our society. Although racism is not as extreme as before (for instance, from Jim Crow racism to modern forms of racism)<sup>2</sup>, it still occurs, and seems like it will occur for many generations to come.

Racism can destroy communities and a person's self image; it can divide people, it is related to white privilege and unawareness, and can lead to hopelessness. In this paper you will read these individuals' stories (including my own) on how race and racial conflict has affected us and some of the factors that can lead to racism.

I will also list some fixes we can try to remove racism. Yet, this is a hard task knowing that racism has been around for such a long time. If we try to be open-minded we can begin to start making sense racism.

*II. Doing Justice to the 2009 Storytellers and Their Stories*

Race and Crime

The black community continues to fall behind the white community in every practical outcome; such as educational level of attainment, occupations, and level of income. This inequality between the black and white race points to the power of racial differences in this world. It also strengthens the idea that racism is simply a matter of ignorance. Race can destroy a person's self image, character, self-esteem, and integrity. Modern day racism can have a strong impact on a person's character, especially men.. This can include police racial profiling. This is when a police officer pulls over a minority for no particular reason, but only because they "fit the profile" of what a criminal should look like; usually what that means is the person is black.

Martin Lawrence has even made a satirical film focusing on police racial profiling called "*...*" In the film he does a stand-up comedy show where he says if you are stopped by the police then they will give you a DWB, in his definition this means driving while black. Even though individuals are not engaging in any criminal activity whatsoever to be pulled over, that individual is still being targeted, and being singled out on the basis of race. A young man, who participated in the story circles, was generous enough to provide me his experience of racial profiling which targets predominately black neighborhoods for drugs and blatantly ignores the scourge of drugs in the upper middle class areas where affluent whites reside. A system that imposes prison sentences onto black offenders and rehabilitation for white offenders are all factors which concern and at times rightfully inflames black Americans.

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*cops around, a whole bunch of stuff go on but when they bring out like other police like state troopers and*

*waaaaaaaay out the way, but I*

*y gon be out like all night and*

*and*

*with they never get pulled over you know what im sayin? Unless they just riding around wantin to be a fool riding around all drunk and stuff surviving. But like blacks can just be ridin on the street, not bothering  
he police put*

In this story you can see the relationship between race and crime. Crime is not seen here as a heinous act but instead it is seen as a black tendency. Having dark skin is treated as if it is a crime. This is seen in the article "Racial Typification of Crime and Support for Punitive Measures," where the authors Chiricos and Welch assess whether support for harsh punitive policies toward crime is related to the racial classification. The authors of this article argue that regardless of the racial composition of a neighborhood an explicit link between race and crime may be the basis of support for more punitive measures (360). They find that particularly for white Americans "racial typification is a significant predictor of punitive attitudes toward crime (378)," meaning that the more likely a white American is to support harsh punitive approaches to crime the more likely it is that this same person tends to see crime as a black problem and criminals as having black faces.

In addition, Jerome Miller offered a hypothesis for the rise in incarceration rates by saying,



In this story there is racial inequality in this Fairlawn community. For instance, here the storyteller sees her children as deprived of the everyday liberty of walking down the street, a barrier that non-minority citizens might not face because their skin color happens to be a lighter color. Instead minorities are faced with racial challenges. This is also seen in the article "The Mark of a Criminal Record," by Devah Pager. In this article Pager points out the relationship between being black and having a criminal record. She also points out the effects of race and the racial differences that still exist today. She states firmly when she says the chances of a black applicant getting a callback for a job is 40% less than a white applicant getting a callback for a job. In this article all one can see here is race. The reason that a black person is not getting the call back is because his skin color happens to be dark. Statistics are higher if the black person has a record with the law. In this case black applicants need not even apply.

It is saddening how you can take the same two individuals one being white and one being black with the same level of attainment and the white applicant will be the one to get the call back.

#### Division among Individuals due to Race

Once we have made a solid relationship between race and crime, race and the community then we can start to make a connection between the division among individuals due to race and racial discrimination. Racism can be expressed through words, emotions, feelings, or thoughts. Racism can be viewed as a social control theory, a learned theory, or as a social disorganization theory. Social control can be seen in this story:

*ther*

*this was 1983 and so we had heard about incidences that had happened cus in Akron they had just began busing I think in 1981 or 82; busing the students from the west side out to [a local city]. And so that*

Once we have made a concrete relationship between race and crime, race and the community, and the division among individuals due to race and racial discrimination, then we have to make sense of the connection between race and unawareness. Many people do not believe that racism still exists. Should I say this again many people do not believe that racism still does exist.

Many whites hold a lot of prestige and access to things that blacks do not have access to. Because of this, some whites may not see racism as still existing because they have never been discriminated against and they will probably never be discriminated against to the extent that blacks have been discriminated against. Blacks have to deal with discrimination in the job-market and most importantly in the criminal justice system and in the educational system.

There are still hate crime groups in this world such as the KKK, skinheads, and white supremacist. We have just recently had in the news a 70 year old white supremacist male shot and killed a black guard. Not only did he kill the black guard but he left a note about his deep hatred for Jews, blacks, and even the president. If these groups still exist today then why are so many people still so unaware of racism? It seems that whites have the privilege of not even knowing that racism exists simply because they are white. Whites have a privilege of getting a better job, better education and many endeavors in life. White privilege includes the luxury of remaining unaware. In this next story white privilege is seen from this storyteller when she says...

*ow predominantly*

*white. There were a couple of different races there but all the teachers and everyone was white and then I went to high school and it was a richer area I would say, like a middle class/low class but my family and I were like on the low*  
*handful of black people actually my brother his best friend is African-American umm.. but I guess I never looked at it as black and white I mean he acted just the same to me actually this class has really opened up my eyes just I guess you know like you were saying mis-*

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The next story you will read is also about white privilege. This white privilege is impending from schools when he says:

*out it on the news?*

*television] so I turned it up so everyone could hear. But umm I guess there were three black students they were all brothers umm*  
*letters and at first they thought it was a joke. A joke about you*

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From this next storyteller we can find that white privilege and racism does still exist. These three black students had an opportunity to attend a predominately white school where they felt they would be better educated, but instead they were confronted with racism again because of the color

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## Hopelessness

Once we have made a tangible relationship between race and crime, race and the community, and the division among individuals due to race and racial discrimination, and white privilege and unawareness then we can make a connection between blacks and hopelessness. Hopelessness in the black community can stem from many different reasons; from always getting pulled over by the cops, to knowing that no matter how hard one may strive the societal racial difference for that minority is still 40% less than that of whites attainment. This hopelessness can be seen in several stories as well.

This is my own personal story that you will begin to learn about...

*ss. So we became very poor*





*turn the tall against the short, the dark skin against the light skin, the females against the male the ignorant*

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Story 1 is continuing his conversation about hopelessness when he refers to hopelessness as a "situation that we can't escape..."

*escape. That situation is racism that interrupts our total being. One of the things we are doing is how this is not an accident or is an incident. It started the day we go to school or go to church and this something else we go ha*

He also mentions how anyone can spot a black person coming from twenty miles away when he mentions...

*(Talking to Story # 7)*

*hide your blackness though wherever you go I can see you coming twenty miles away as a black guy; so in order to hear words we have to learn to deal with this situation. This is what this whole group needs to talk about. Now our life stories are very good*

*(Touching Story # 2).*

This storyteller is making a comment on how the black community cannot hide their blackness. In this sense, the storyteller is signifying that black people are going to be discriminated against because of the color of their skin and it is no way that they can hide it. Not only is the storyteller explaining how it is hard to hide a "person's blackness", he also talks about the lack of correspondence that blacks face from "being shot down like dogs in the street"

In this logic, the storyteller is underlining the way that people treat the black community. He highlights that the black community is not being treated like human beings instead they are being treated like dogs on the street. The storyteller says this when he says "we being shot down like dogs in the street" You can understand the hopelessness in this story for the black community.

### *III. Final Reflections on Stories, Data, and Understanding Racial Conflict*

#### Data

In gathering all of my information about racism from the stories, I have learned that racism is still very much present in our society. As I have mentioned racism is not as extreme as it was before. Racism is a mental illness if someone is still racist today. Racism is a big issue in America; we are losing lives still due to racism. It still exists even though people try to hide it. Racism destroys, it

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