

## SAINT JOSEPH MUSEUMS

3406 Frederick Avenue • P O Box 8096 • St. Joseph, M O 64508 • Phone: (816) 232-8471 • Fax: (816) 232-8482

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### Topics discussed in the Black Archives' Civil Rights Video

Voting rights, suppression, and Jim Crow laws by Loess Hedge

Clip from the movie Selma

Clip from The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow, episode 1 of 4

Kelsy Beshears an honored St. Joseph citizen that fought for equal rights by Lavell Rucker

Brown vs the Topeka Board of Education case stating separate was not equal and integrated schools

St. Joseph was the first district to integrate.

The Clark Doll Experiment narrated by Larolyn Hayes-Dodd

Clip from Separate but Equal

Separate was not equal, and the caste system by Drew Brown

Segregation in the Missouri prison system by Charles Triplet

Workplace segregation Alonzo Weston

Self-image by Ramadhan Washington

**Background information, discussion questions, and worksheet to supplement the film are attached below.**



[sjm@stjosephmuseum.org](mailto:sjm@stjosephmuseum.org)

American Indian & History Galleries • Black Archives Museum  
Doll Museum • Gloré Psychiatric Museum • Wyeth-Tootle Mansion

**Voter Disenfranchisement-** to take away a person's right to vote or to deprive someone of power, rights and privileges. During the Civil Rights Movement Disenfranchisement Methods were rampant:

- The Ku Klux Klan used violence and threats to frighten voters
- Black laborers on farms who complained about not being paid were jailed or threatened with other tactic
- Most whites refused to accept all the new amendments to the Constitution that gave former slaves and blacks their freedom and citizenship
- Intimidation
- Most of the rights blacks gained during Reconstruction were quickly lost by 1877.
- Jim Crow laws legislated segregation and other discriminatory practices:
  - Poll taxes
  - Grandfather clauses
  - Vagrancy laws
  - Property requirements
  - Voting fraud
  - Intimidation at voting places
  - Whites only primary elections

Voting Rights Protests that began in Selma, Alabama in early 1965 led the way for popular support for the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. There had been Voting Rights Act of 1964 but it was weak, including not authorizing public transportation of buses, not abolishing literacy tests, and basically no meaningful enforcement of the law. Within a year Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed to strengthen the voting provisions of the 1964 act.

- During this time, many civil rights activists were beaten, jailed, and killed. This included the late Rep. John Lewis. He dedicated his life to securing voting rights and other rights for those who were left out of the political process.

Down through the years there have been deliberate tactics and racialized rules that are intended to curtail voting of certain groups.

- The increased disenfranchisement of individuals with a criminal record {2013 Supreme Court decision effectively gutting the Voting Rights Act - making it increasingly difficult for progressive-leaning individuals to cast their vote, changing electoral rules, requiring a pre-clearance from the Dept. of Justice)
- The 1965 Voting Rights Act was meant to eliminate most of the Jim Crow barriers. (Such things as traveling 25 miles to vote)

Rules that could curtail black Americans' access to the ballot:

1. ID requirements
2. Ending or reducing early voting
3. Photo ID requirements- In 2016 in Wisconsin prevented roughly 200,000 people from voting, with disproportionate impact on people of color
4. Geographic Districts and racial gerrymandering undercut the political power of black Americans and other marginalized groups.
5. Police brutality against people of color, threats of deportation, divestment from social programs that low-income residents depend on to live

**Voting in 2020.** Tactics are still being used to manipulate political outcomes.

- A. Voter ID laws - Registration restrictions requiring documents to prove citizenship or identifications limiting the window of time to register
- B. Cuts to early voting
- C. Mass purges of voter rolls
- D. Systematic disenfranchisement/Felony Disenfranchisement
- E. Redrawing district lines/Gerrymandering
- F. Fewer voter precincts and drop-off ballot boxes
- G. Delays in mail service

## Why It's Missing the Point to Say "All Lives Matter"

While the intention of the phrase "All Lives Matter" may be to put everyone's life on equal footing and convey a sense of unity, responding "All Lives Matter" to "Black Lives Matter" is actually more divisive than unifying. That's because it discounts and diminishes the focus on the violence and discrimination Black individuals face every day in this country.

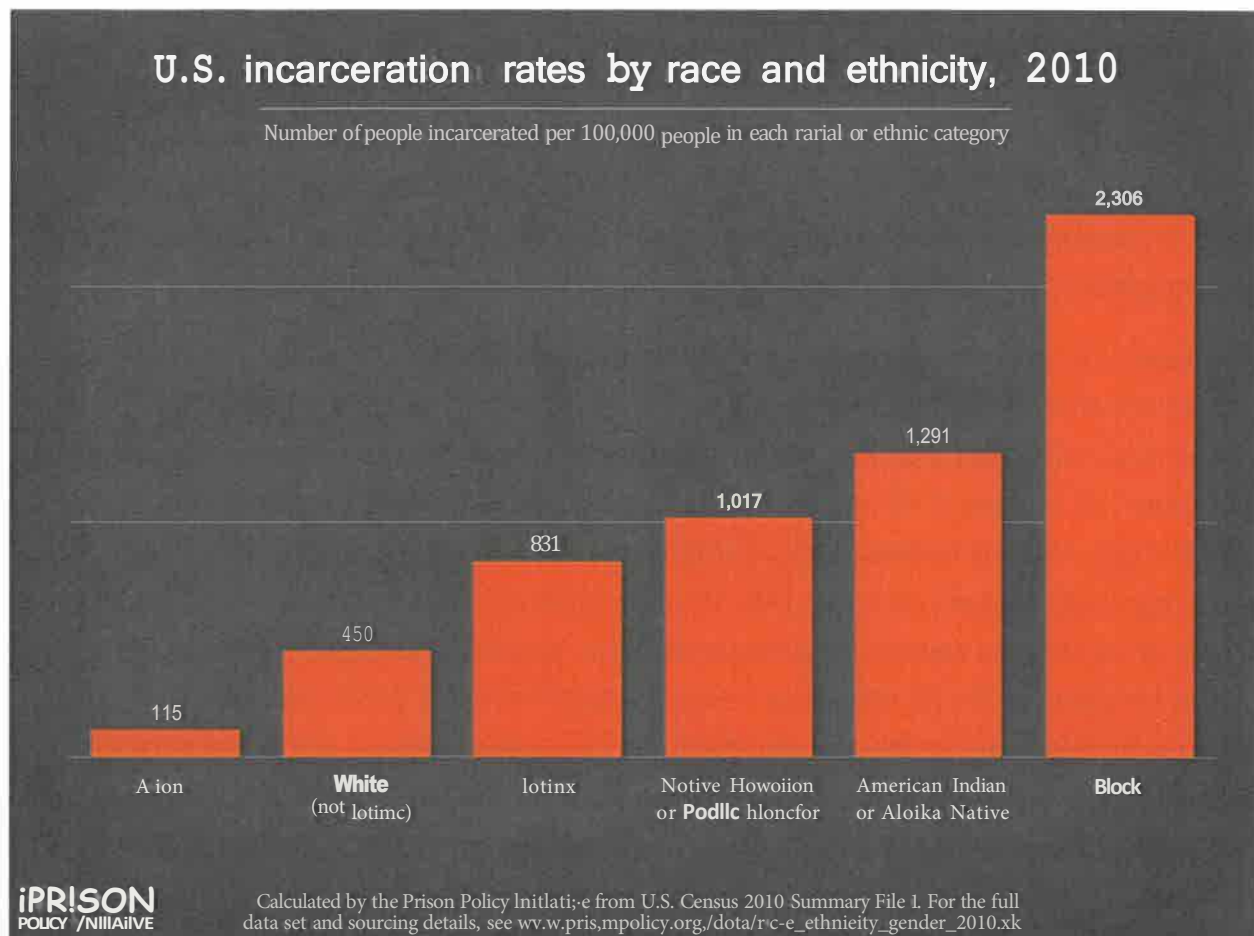
It's a natural reaction to respond to one group centering its experience with, "but what about all lives?" or "isn't my safety important, too?" Black Americans are disproportionately impacted by police violence and systematic racism in our nation. Asserting that "All Lives Matter" just reaffirms, or ignores, that reality. Of course every life is valuable, but not everyone's lives are in danger due to their skin color. Saying "Black Lives Matter" isn't equivalent to saying other lives don't, but rather that black lives should matter *as much as* white lives.

Alicia Garza, one of the creators of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, explained in 2014 how Black lives mattering is a precondition for all lives mattering:

"Black Lives Matter doesn't mean your life isn't important- it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide-reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end the hyper-criminalization and sexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free."

Think of it this way: If you get into a car crash and one person has a serious head injury but the others have a few bumps and bruises, the person whose life is at risk gets first priority when it comes to medical care. That doesn't mean paramedics won't help the rest of the passengers, but that triage places the most dire situation first in line. Or, to look at it another way, if someone keeps setting your house on fire, you'd want firefighters to do something about it. Wouldn't it upset you if instead, people kept telling you that "all houses matter equally," if yours was the one burning?

Prison System information. This is a brief overview; more information can be gathered at [prisonpolicy.org](http://prisonpolicy.org) and [sentencingproject.org](http://sentencingproject.org)



## Drivers of Disparity

Persistent racial disparities have long been a focus in criminological research and the presence of disparities is not disputed. Proposed explanations for disparities range from variations in offending based on race to biased decision making in the criminal justice system, and also include a range of individual level factors such as poverty, education outcomes, unemployment history, and criminal history. Research in this area finds a smaller amount of unwarranted disparity for serious crimes like homicide than for less serious crimes, especially drug crimes.

Alfred Blumstein's work in this area examined racial differences in arrests and, after comparing these to prison demographics, determined that approximately

80% of prison disparity among state prisoners in 1979 was explained by differential offending by race, leaving 20% unexplained. He noted that if there was no discrimination after arrest, the racial makeup of prisoners should approximate the population of arrestees. The greatest amount of unexplained disparity was found among drug offenses: nearly half of the racial disparity for prison among those convicted of drug crimes could not be explained by arrest. In a follow-up study, Blumstein found that the proportion of racial disparities found in prisons explained by arrests in 1991 had declined to 76%. Subsequent studies have replicated this work with more recent data and found even higher amounts of unexplained disparities, particularly in the category of drug arrests.

One issue raised by Blumstein's approach is that the use of arrest records as a reflection of criminal involvement may be more accurate for serious offenses than less serious offenses. For less serious crimes, authorities may exercise greater discretion at the point of arrest. Cassia Spahn's research on sentencing reasons that for less serious crimes, judges might depart from the constraints of the law, allowing other factors to enter into their judgment. These factors might include forms of racial bias related to perceived racial threat.<sup>19)</sup> Despite the possibility of failing to account for all variance, research that relies on incident reporting (i.e., self-report data rather than police data) to circumvent these potential problems also reveals unexplained racial disparities. Patrick Langan's work, for example, estimated unexplained disparity to be in the range of 15-16%, and though this is a smaller amount of unexplained variance (compared to that found by Blumstein, for example) it is likely due to the fact that his analysis did not include drug offenses.

Analyses of more recent data all come to similar conclusions: a sizable proportion of racial disparities in prison cannot be explained by criminal offending. Some analyses have focused on single states while others have looked at all states individually to note the range of disparity. Studies that examine regional differences within states are also revealing. Researchers Gaylen Armstrong and Nancy Rodriguez, whose work centers on county-level differences in juvenile justice outcomes found that it is not solely individual-level characteristics that influence outcomes, but the composition of the community where the juvenile resides that makes a difference as well. Specifically, they conclude that "juvenile delinquents who live within areas that have high minority populations (more

heterogeneous) will more often be detained, regardless of their individual race or ethnicity." And finally, studies seeking to better understand the processes between arrest and imprisonment, particularly at the stage of sentencing, have been pursued in order to better understand the unexplained disparities in state prisons.

### **Causes of Disparity**

The data in this report document pervasive racial disparities in state imprisonment, and make clear that despite greater awareness among the public of mass incarceration and some modest successes at decarceration, racial and ethnic disparities are still a substantial feature of our prison system.

Three recurrent explanations for racial disparities emerge from dozens of studies on the topic: policies and practices that drive disparity; the role of implicit bias and stereotypes in decision making; and, structural disadvantages in communities of color which are associated with high rates of offending and arrest.

### **Policies and Practices**

The criminal justice system is held together by policies and practices, both formal and informal, which influence the degree to which an individual penetrates the system. At multiple points in the system, race may play a role. Disparities mount as individuals progress through the system, from the initial point of arrest to the final point of imprisonment. Harsh punishment policies adopted in recent decades, some of which were put into effect even after the crime decline began, are the main cause of the historic rise in imprisonment that has occurred over the past 40 years.

The rise in incarceration that has come to be known as mass imprisonment began in 1973 and can be attributed to three major eras of policymaking, all of which had a disparate impact on people of color, especially African Americans. Until 1986, a series of policies was enacted to expand the use of imprisonment for a variety of felonies. After this point, the focus moved to greater levels of imprisonment for drug and sex offenses. There was a particularly sharp growth in state imprisonment for drug offenses between 1987 and 1991. In the final stage, beginning around 1995, the emphasis was on increasing both prison likelihood and significantly lengthening prison sentences.

The scene from the movie "Selma" is symbolic of what it was like for African Americans who attempted to register to vote during the 1950's and 1960's.

1. What do you notice about the scene?
2. What conclusions can be drawn from what was said by the clerk and the woman who came to register to vote?
3. Do you think you could pass such tough questions?  
Do you know the preamble to the Constitution?  
How many county judges are in Missouri?  
Can you name them?

Define the terms that relate to voting:

1. Voter Registration -
2. Voter Suppression -
3. Voter Intimidation -
4. Voter Disenfranchisement-
5. Reconstruction Period -
6. Poll Tax -
7. Literacy Tests -
8. Grandfather Clause -



9. Jim Crow Laws -
10. Black Codes -
11. Voting Rights Act of 1965 -
12. Amendment 13 -
13. Amendment 14 -
14. Amendment 15 -
15. Changes in the Voting Rights Act in 2013 -

Certain Communities are particularly susceptible to Voter Suppression and may be targeted:

- People of color
- Students, especially college students
- The elderly
- People with disabilities

**Why do you suppose these groups are more likely to be targeted?**

**List 5 examples of Voter Suppression.**

- 1**
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.**
- 5.**

**List three things Kelsy Beshears did to further equality in St. Joseph.**

- 1.**
- 2.
- 3.

**List 3 types of businesses that were still segregated after schools had been integrated by law.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.**

**The Clark Doll Experiment had tremendous impacts in the Brown vs Topeka Board of Education case because it showed a tort, or harm, to black children. What were some questions asked to the black children about the dolls?**

**How were black schools not equal to white schools?**

**Name 3 areas in the Missouri prison systems that were segregated.**

- 1.**
- 2.
- 3.

**What are some reasons why black citizens are incarcerated more than white citizens?**

**We continue to fight for Civil Rights in America today. Multiple tactics can be used to fight for equality. What is the difference between protest, riot, and political action? Discuss the pros and cons of each action in getting positive results (policy changes, awareness, new laws, etc).**

**What is one area you still see inequality, or a need for change, in your community? What are some steps you can personally take to make a difference for a better future?**

**Discuss the phrase "Black Lives Matter." What does it mean to supporters? How does the phrase "All Lives Matter" differ and in what ways does it affect BLM?**

**How does the Clark Doll Experiment connect to what Ramadhan said about self-image today?**