

The inequality of races in the United States of America

How does the Trump Administration affect it?



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1. Introduction

„Why are we having all these people from shithole countries coming [to America]?” – Donald Trump, current president of the United States 11th of January 2018. ¹

This statement was made by President Donald Trump at a meeting in the Oval Office during a discussion about the issue of the lack of safety and protection of Haiti, El Salvador and African countries.¹ Reading this quote, it is probably not shocking nor surprising for those of us familiar with the President. Donald Trump's choice of words have been marked “non-presidential” several times before. The key issue, which is resembled by this statement, is the overall attitude he represents towards Hispanic and black populated nations. Meanwhile a great part of the American population is still actively fighting against the big racial tension; the leader of the very same nation keeps putting out racist remarks like the one mentioned.

So how does this phenomenon of double standard influence the already existing issue of inequality of the races in the United States?

2. Ethnic discrimination in the United States

2.1. Racism

2.1.1. Race as a social construct

What we associate with the word “race” is a concept not built on biologically correct theses. It is indeed a fact, that there is only one race amongst mankind, which is the human race.² This way of viewing race is illusionary.³ However, there is an objective way of looking at race. Special inherited features like skin color or eye shape are rooted in our genetics.³ Based on these types of characteristics, people are assumed to belong to a certain ethnic group, which furthermore puts them in an assumed social category. The consequence of this racial classification is that there is little to no mobility concerning social position.⁴ This type of connection between ethnicity (based on fixed characteristics) and social mobility maintains the racial hierarchy in the United States. ⁵

¹ taken from: The Washington Post “Trump derides protections for immigrants from ‘shithole’ countries” by Josh Dawsey

² see: Thomson Gale, Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

³ see: David B. Crusky& Jasmine Hill, Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader, Racialization, p. 277

⁴ see: David B. Crusky& Jasmine Hill, Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader The dynamics of Racial Fluidity and Inequality, p. 282

⁵ see: David B. Crusky& Jasmine Hill, Inequality in the 21st Century: A Reader, Fluidity and Inequality, p. 283

2.1.2. Explanation of racism

Racial classification is directly linked to discrimination and stereotypical expectations. This concept relies on the fact that certain groups (built upon social categories based on the assumption of the belonging to a certain ethnicity *see: 2.1.1. Race as a social construct*) are being treated differently. For instance, those belonging to a valued group of race are preferred socially over those belonging to a not valued population.⁴ This concept suggests that there is a “superior race” which is the fundamental belief that creates racism. This belief results in complete or partial denial of rights to special subgroups.⁶ Although racism is often portrayed as “hate speech” and acts of racism as “hate crimes”, suggesting that the idea of racism is unusual and offensive, racial acts are rooted in the society of the United States in form of policies, ideologies and practices in institutional arenas.

2.1.3. Historic background

There have been several fundamental acts of racialization, which formed the historic background of race being a significant aspect when it comes to polity, economic structures and culture of the United States.⁷ Speaking about the very first act, which is the Atlantic Slave Trade, it is important to clarify that racial discrimination was the result of and not the cause for the development of slavery.⁸ The Atlantic Slave Trade began in the fifteenth century, slavery was legal everywhere in the New World. Although during the American Revolution, African slave trade got banned in several states, the US Constitution maintained the rights of slave masters and therefore slavery was still practiced in some parts of the US.⁹ The government later officially banned the African Slave Trade but did not include the prohibition of American ships engaging in the trade.¹⁰ This resulted in a lot of controversy and conflicts until stricter rules were introduced with the Treaty of Suppression of African Slave Trade in 1862.¹⁰ With the legal ban of slavery, former slaves thrived to achieve complete social equality, yet newly introduced ideologies maintained a racial hierarchy all throughout the nineteenth century, followed up by racial segregation in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹

⁶ see: Thomson Gale, Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, 2005, Stichwort und seite fehlt, Volume two

⁷ see: Verlag, Titel des Lexikons, Jahr, Racialization, Part IV., p. 277

⁸ see: Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, Modern Slavery to 1880: Causes and Effects, p. 963

⁹ see: Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, Slave Laws in the New World, p. 965

¹⁰ see: Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, Banning the Slave Trade, p. 965 f.

¹¹ see: Encyclopedia of GENOCIDE and CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, Heritage of slavery since 1880, p. 964

2.2. Racialization of Islam and Islamophobia

Islamophobia has been around for a long time, but racial profiling of Muslims (or those assumed to be Muslim) and hate crimes against this group of people increased since the 9/11 terror attack in 2001. The spreading of fear through mainstream media is a key factor for the rise of islamophobia. Because of lack of understanding, Islam often gets associated with terrorism and ISIS, which eliminates the perception of Muslims as a religious group of people like e.g. Christians.¹² Although the term Islamophobia does not suggest it directly, it is a form of racism. People with certain features typical of those belonging to an Islamic religion (e.g. typical Middle Eastern characteristics like darker skin complexion or facial hair) are affected when it comes to being considered as violent all because of the racialization of Islam.¹³ This perception of Muslims oversimplifies the connection between race and Islam.

3. The Trump Administration

3.1. Who is Donald Trump?

Donald John Trump, who was born on June 14, 1946 in New York, comes from a wealthy family. Following his famous apartment-building developer father's footsteps, Donald started off his career by getting involved in the very same business. He had an overall successful business life, secured by several companies he owned. Prior to running for president, he was very active in the field of politics. He was a registered Republican Party voter and was never afraid to voice his passion about it. He gained a lot of attention in 2012 when he repeatedly questioned whether President Barack Obama was really born in the United States.¹⁴

3.2. How did he get elected?

Donald Trump's candidacy as the Republican nominee for the President of the United States was announced on June 16, 2015. His successful campaign with the slogan "Make America Great Again" was started shortly after. Focusing on foreign politics, Trump's main goals for his presidency included stopping illegal immigration from Mexico, bombing ISIS and banning Muslims from entering the country.

¹² see: Film: Islamophobia in the USA - Who and what is behind the rise of anti-Islamic sentiment in the United States? By Abdullah Elshamy

¹³ see: The Racialization of Islam in the United States: Islamophobia, Hate Crimes, and "Flying while Brown" by Craig Considine

¹⁴ see: Donald Trump by Encyclopedia Britannica

During his campaign, Donald Trump gained sympathy from a big part of the American population because he is considered not only a successful businessman but a “truth-talking problem solver” unlike any other candidates.¹⁵ This is strongly based on his outspoken way and harsh vocabulary. This is also reflected by the way he’s using the social media platform Twitter. His then ~ 3million¹⁶ (today ~ 51 million) followers got to engage in daily racist, Nazi-style tweets.

To get an idea of who actually voted for Trump: most of Trumps electoral support came from the privileged working class, meaning those earning above the average income level (mostly) consisting of white males. Trump also surprisingly received a plurality of votes amongst those without a college degree.¹⁷

3.3. The Cabinet

The President traditionally meets decisions based on the advice he receives from the Cabinet, hence why the members of the White House, Donald Trump gets to choose, plays a huge role. The Cabinet is currently dominated by white conservative men.¹⁸ When looking at the type of politicians Donald Trump is surrounded by, there is one thing that connects a lot of them which is, that most of them have been accused of being racist before.

Stephen Bannon, for instance, used to be the executive chairman of Breitbart news, a far-right and nationalistic American news Network. He was made Chief Strategist in the White House, in August 2016. Causing an even bigger outrage amongst the American population, the choice of Donald Trump making Bannon the second most influential person in the Cabinet was celebrated and supported by former KKK leader, David Duke.¹⁹

Another questionable decision, amongst many other, was the offer for Michael Flynn to be the National Security Adviser, which he accepted, but just after 24 days, he was fired.²⁰

¹⁵ see: The Washington Post, It’s not chaos. It’s Trump’s campaign strategy., By Paul Schwartzman and Jenna Johnson

¹⁶ see: Mother Jones, Raw Data: Donald Trump’s Twitter Followers by Kevin Drum

¹⁷ see: Monthly Review- An Independent Socialist Magazine, Neofascism in the White House by John Bellamy Foster

¹⁸ see: The Guardian, “Q&A: What are Trump and the White House’s links to the far right?” by unknown

¹⁹ see: The Sun, “THE GREAT MANIPULATOR Who is Steve Bannon, what’s the former White House chief strategist’s net worth and why has he left Breitbart?” by Chris Masters

²⁰ see: Chicago Tribune, “Commentary: Trump finally turns on the formerly ‘wonderful man’ Michael Flynn” by Paul Waldman

The “wonderful man” (as called by Donald Trump), Michael Flynn has used his voice to spread fear of Muslims with the help of anti-Islam propaganda in the past.²¹

4. Trumps policies

Now, being familiar with the general motives and views of the Trump Administration, it is important to look at the actions taken. Since President Trump started campaigning, there have been many controversial ideas on how to “Make America Great Again”. Due to the shortage of this research paper, I’m only going to discuss the three –in my opinion- most important aspects regarding racial inequality.

4.1. Muslim ban

The Executive Order 13769, also known as the Muslim ban, was introduced on January 27, 2017. The ban included citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries (Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen) to enter the US for 90 days. There is an indefinite ban on Syria as well.²²

Trump’s reasoning behind this is that he wants to protect the American people from terrorist attacks done by foreign nationals. He also argued by saying he ordered this law, so that the court has some time to “figure it all out”. He’s further arguing with the 9/11 Terror Attack in 2001, in which case the VISA applications of the ones committing the cruel attack allegedly weren’t investigated enough because of the State Department policy. Although rules for the reception of a VISA were made stricter since then, it still didn’t completely stop attacks by foreign nationals in the US. The White House suspects, that terrorist are likely going to take advantage of the situation in war-torn countries, trying to enter the US legally, as a refugee.²²

To stick strictly to his argumentation, using the picture of the 9/11 attack, yet not including the countries, where the 19 hijackers committing the attack originate from, only contributes to spreading the fear of Muslims. Although this leads to speculating, an interesting connection to keep in mind between the countries, where the hijackers actually originate from (which are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Lebanon) and Donald Trump, is that Trump previously had business interest in some of these countries.²³

²⁰ see: Twitter of Michael Flynn (@GenFlynn)

²¹ see: BBC News, “Trump’s executive order: Who does travel ban affect?” by unknown

²² see: White House.gov, “Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States”, Donald J. Trump

²³ see: BBC News, “Trump’s executive order: Who does travel ban affect?” by unknown

The law suggests the idea of associating a complete religious group with terrorism, maximizing the perception of Muslims as dangerous. By doing this, President Trump is oversimplifying the connection between terror and a religious group, contributing to a partial denial of rights to special subgroups. Regarding to my previous definition of racism (2.1.2. Explanation of racism), there is no question about considering this act as racist.

4.2. About immigration from Mexico

One of the focus of Trump's campaign was to ban illegal immigration from Mexico by building a wall on the southern border of the US, financed by Mexico. Trump clarifies he's not against immigration, he just doesn't like illegal immigration because it's not "fair". Trump wants to put America's safety above everything else by keeping Mexicans out of the country because Mexico is allegedly "not sending their best people" but "rapists, drug dealers" and overall "very bad people".²⁴

Trump manipulates by stating how important the relationship between the US and Mexico is for the Mexican people and threatens to end this relationship by cutting foreign aid to Mexico which is a very nationalist way of going about solving a problem.

Trump's overall goal is to keep out unskilled workers and criminals who enter the states illegally. On the other hand, he wants educated people to come legally. While working on keeping those coming to America illegally out of the country with the wall and better border control²⁵, the President has no possible idea on how to make the situation better for the Mexicans having to wait way too long for an American citizenship. This leaves a big part of the population with the assumption of Trump wanting to ban immigration from Mexico completely, which would be equivalent to discriminating people based on racial profiles.

4.3. The DREAM Act/DACA

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) is a program introduced in 2012 by the Obama Administration protecting young undocumented immigrants (Dreamers). With the help of DACA, immigrants are able to obtain conditional permanent resident status²⁶, if every requirement is fulfilled.

²⁴ see: CNN Politics, "Trump basically called Mexicans rapists again" Video "Donald Trump doubles down on calling Mexicans 'rapists'"

²⁵ see: Crippled America- How to Make America Great Again by Donald J. Trump

²⁶ see: American Immigration Council, "FACT SHEET The Dream Act, DACA, and Other Policies Designed to Protect Dreamers"

The Requirements include having a high school diploma/being in high school, having been brought to America under the age of 16, as well as having no criminal record. This enables the “Dreamers”, striving for a better future, to get a job legally and most importantly, not to get deported. The Trump Administration announced that they are planning to end the DACA program in 2017 ²⁷ putting current CPR status recipients in risks of losing their legal status as well as rejecting all of the new applications for this very same protection that is called DACA.

By looking at the group of people, Donald Trump wants to keep out of the country (e.g. 4.2. About Immigration from Mexico) the recipients of DACA don't fall under the same category because of the existing requirements they have to meet in order to get DACA in the first place.

By ending the Dream Act, leaving about 800.000 affected ones unsure about their future, Trump generalizes all “illegal aliens” (including those meeting all the requirements which suggest that they most likely don't have the intention to harm the US), which further maintains the racial hierarchy amongst the American population.

5. Consequences

Having clarified how far the ideology of the President can be considered racist, the consequences of this are next to discuss.

The way the United States is represented by Donald Trump, regarding racism, indirectly weakens the US economy. Because of Trump's hostility, foreign governments are scared off when thinking about cooperating with the country, considering political connections as “too risky”. ²⁸

The way Donald Trump portrays Muslims is offensive, disrespectful and very provocative towards foreign extremists. The controversial anti-Muslim attitude and unstable politics of Donald Trump is in favor of making the United States a target of Islamic terrorist organizations like ISIS or al-Qaeda, which furthermore puts the United States in danger. ²⁹

Regarding the transnational influences, the success of right-wing parties in e.g. Europe is linked to Trump's hostility against certain ethnic groups. As an example, the fear of Muslims he contributed to spreading played a role in the vote for Great Britain to leave the EU. ³⁰

²⁷ see: Fox News, “What is DACA and what does the Trump administration want to do with it?” by Kaitlyn Schallhorn

²⁸ see: The National Interest, “The foreign consequences of Trump's racism” by Paul Pillar

²⁹ see: Business Insider, “Donald Trump is the 'preferred candidate' of ISIS”, experts warn by Pamela Engel

One of the most important consequence is the belittlement of a huge problem that is racism. This is done by Trump constantly incorporating more and more racially discriminating acts in his politics, which, as for the short-term effects, makes the American population infuriated, resulting in protests against the White House. Speaking about the long-term effects though, Americans are slowly getting used to the racist ideology, unable to even acknowledge some of its visible ramifications.

A threatening consequence regarding the safety of certain subgroups amongst the United States is the empowering of far-right extremist organizations like the Ku-Klux-Klan. By seeing part of their hostile vision represented in the White House, it encourages them to further showcase their racist, nationalist views via violent actions.

Overall, Trumps policies do not only maintain but even exaggerate the racial hierarchy that is already present in the pattern of the American society. Indicating that there is a superior race (which in this case is the Caucasian race), the rights of certain subgroups automatically get partially abandoned, which is discrimination. This phenomenon results in the nation splitting further and further apart between different ethnic groups.

Racism, which is represented in the White House, makes significant changes in the American society and economy.

6. Conclusion: Make America White Again

During the U.S. presidential election of 2016, the phrase “Make America Great Again” was used as a slogan for advertising Donald Trump. This phrase implies that America used to be great at one point, but the situation got worse hence why we need to re-establish the “greatness” the United States used to be. This is exactly the opposite development of racial equality, which evolved and is still evolving over time.

“Make America Great Again” should suggest the improvement of a nation regarding (inter alia) the equality of races. Instead, all I associate with it is racism.

Regarding what Trump has and hasn't done for ethnic minorities, the key to make America great again is apparently to Make America White Again.

³⁰ see: The National Interest, “The foreign consequences of Trump's racism” by Paul Pillar

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