

American
Identities
12/03/2020

A Nation of Discrimination

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introduction

Throughout even just the past year there have been countless incidents that again bring up the topic of discrimination in America. The horrible death of George Floyd sparked a reintroduction to the topic of police brutality against the African American community in the states and yet again shows how much more America has to change.

Discrimination has been seen all throughout

Americas history and although some laws and acts

have been set in place, This country still has a long

way to go.

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The New Negro

The New Negro was an article written by Alan Locke back in 1925 that showed the opportunity and equality, or lack there of, in America for Black individuals. This was written to teach black folk to not settle with what what they were and were not given, but to demand the rights they deserve, they will no longer sit back and just let it happen. Hence the “new negro”; a hardworking, deserving group of individuals.

Alan Locke, "The New Negro", 1925
Introduction

In 1925 The Sun City Graphic Magazine published a long essay written by Alan Locke in which he called for a new perception of African Americans. Ten years had passed since the 1915 celebration of the 50th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, and despite the still consistent a problem for US society and even black thinkers.

Alan Locke was considered not only as the father of the New Negro movement, also called Harlem Renaissance, but also as its most lucid voice. In 1925 he edited an anthology of black literature entitled *The New Negro: an interpretation*. Indeed, this evasive philosopher who had been educated in Harvard and Oxford, insisted on the central importance of culture in African Americans' advancement, contrary to early responses to the question of the 20th century two major thesis dominated people's opinion about the question of African Americans: if Booker T. Washington proposed a black accommodationism to white policies of Jim Crow segregation, his rival and major critic, William Du Bois, founder of the NAACP movement believed in a more important black involvement in politics and in a creation of a cultured elite who would lead the civil rights activism.

It is in the 1920's that black culture reaches its splendor in spite of the shadow spread by the Ku Klux Klan. Harlem, the biggest black neighborhood in the world, became the epicenter of cultural activities. Music was all the more important since the 1920 is also known as the Jazz age. African Americans changed the perception of themselves demonstrating that they were capable of high artistic and intellectual expressions.

To what extent could we say that what was new was actually not the so called "negro" but the perception of the "negro"? In this extract Alan Locke shows what the "new negro" is and later he tries to explain the astonishing effect produced by his new outlook. Therefore more than the birth of a "new negro" there was a shift of perception of "the negro" in the younger generations.



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Louisiana Breadline Image



This was an image taken by Margaret Bourke-White back in Kentucky of 1937. This image has so much irony surrounding it because it states there is no way like the American way, while a group of white individuals are on the billboard, living a lavish life, while many black individuals stand below waiting in line for food after a flood.

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There's no way like the American way, right?



Hollywood Beauty

Black women were never represented in any beauty ads during the early to mid 1900's. These ads were full of white women who were skinny and had long straight hair. There were even ads that included some women of other races, but African American was never one. **Every woman deserves to feel beautiful** and although it has gotten better in the beauty industry, it is not equal, as seen by one of many makeup shade ranges above.

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Brown vs. The Board of Education

One example of a time America was going in the right direction was in 1954 when the Brown vs. Education act was set in place. Although it should to have taken this long, it still did happen eventually. However, it is Crazy to think that less than 80 years ago, it was illegal to have children of color in the same school as white kids. This only hurts those kids' self-esteem as they grew up because they were always viewed as lesser than. This act was one step in the right direction, however not many of these steps are continuing to be taken.



*George
Floyd*

BLM



This is a mural painted in august of 2020 to remember George Floyd; a victim of yet another police brutality incident. As seen throughout all of Americas past, discrimination between Black Individuals has always been an issue, especially with the government and society. Police brutality has become a major issue in recent years and this is one example that really opened the eyes of the public back into why this is such a big deal and a cry for change.

The Black Lives Matter organization has been growing exponentially and is helping to try and make this change.

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Ethnic Hair Ted Talk

this Ted Talk shows how black individuals, specifically black women, were treated and looked at differently even just based upon the way the hair grows out of their head. This along with skin color are physical characteristics that the individual cannot change, or more over should never have to change, yet they get less job opportunity, and a harder way of living because of them.



Natural hair is beautiful hair and shall not be hidden

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Ragged Dick

Ragged Dicks shows how there is opportunity in America for some. In this case he was not black and he had a lot of luck and help to allow him to be successful and he was much more likely to obtain those opportunities because of his skin color, based off of America's past. This shows that although America claims to be equal; it is much easier for some rather than others. Even when it just comes down to physical characteristics



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How to get involved with BLM

Through the Black Lives Matter website there is a place to donate to the organization to help these individuals fight for the rights they have always deserved.

<https://blacklivesmatter.com>

Education is always a big part too.

Understanding the background of the issue helps to understand why it still remains a problem and what steps we can take to change.

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