Black Masculinity in the Civil Rights Era: Non-Violent Protest Versus Armed Self-Defense

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The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was spurred on by greatly impactful events and created lasting changes to the way our nation interacted with Black Americans. As the movement grew, two factions developed, and each of these groups represented a unique set of ideals and methods to achieving true equality for all. One of the key factors in these ideologies is based in the concepts of Black masculinity and how each group viewed the role of Black men in American society. From "respectability politics" and non-violent protest, to armed self-defense and direct action, this presentation will explore the origins of these concepts and demonstrate how they were used. The unique stereotypes and expectations placed on Black men in the United States greatly impacted these different methods, and had lasting influence on the effectiveness of the 1960s movement.

Introduction

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was spurred on by many impactful and often terrifying events, and ultimately created lasting changes to the way our government and society interacted with Black Americans. As the movement grew, Black people from a variety of backgrounds began taking leadership positions in social justice organization, and eventually, a split occurred, creating two primary factions of the movement. One of the key factors in the cause of this split was rooted in each groups' ideas of what Black masculinity represented, and the unique experiences they had with racism and police presence. Jim Crow laws, voter suppression, and lynching, among other things, impacted each group in specific ways, and created a different set of needs for each part of the community, which required contrasting courses of action to address them. The distinct stereotypes and expectations that were placed on Black men in their local communities, and the United States overall, was one of the leading factors in the development of these individual methods. The way each group engaged with the fight for equality greatly impacted the movement as a whole, and while there was some success, the lack of effective police reform and economic empowerment that was needed is attributed to this ideological split.

The History of Anti-Black Stereotypes

American slaveowners required an excuse to uphold their unique brand of race-based slavery. The stereotypes of the mammy, the coon, the sambo, and the jezebel, created to dehumanize Black people and justify their enslavement, carried over into emancipation and the twentieth century. During the 1800s, abolitionists also used these depictions to support their cause, claiming that Black slaves, while human, were incapable on their own. "…Blackness, this sense of time-space is interrupted by a more weighty and seemingly more truthful…underside – where Black is naturally malignant and therefore worthy of violation; where Black is violated because Black is naturally violent; where Black is naturally less-than-human and starving to death and violated; where Black is naturally dysselected, unsurviving, swallowed up; where Black is same and always and dead and dying; where Black is complex and difficult and too much to bear and violated." (Abdur-Rahman, p. 3) These stereotypes also blurred gender distinctions under the realm of racial distinction, further dehumanizing those with darker skin.

The viability of Black maleness was minimized during slavery, when children born to a Black slave woman were decreed to hold the same social station as their mothers; children born to two white parents were held to the social station of their fathers. This released white slaveowners who raped their slaves from paternal responsibilities to any mixed-race offspring. It also relieved any white offspring who the slaveowner fathered from social and fiscal competition that the slave woman's child may have presented. By demasculinizing Black boys and men, white men kept authority over Black bodies even after slavery was abolished. (Staidum, Jr., pp. 18-20)

This parental dynamic gave Black boys a unique relationship with their mothers – their Blackness, which was inherited from her, made them killable and violable, but is simultaneously wrapped in the distinct brand of Black motherhood that could save their lives. According to Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman, associate professor at Brown University, "…being Black and Black being come from the mother line. For Black masculinities, the source of ruin [is] perpetual vulnerability and violability." (p. 40) By connecting Black boys to their heritage exclusively through the mother line, their own femininity was exaggerated, and any masculine traits embodied by a Black male were treated as a threat. "…Black masculine people are imputed with fantastical power and potency (cast as brute, buck, thug, gladiator, sex god/fiend) and simultaneously subjected to spectacular debasement and hurt (made slave, prisoner, lynched body, bullet-ridden corpse) vis-à-vis antiblackness." (Bost et al., p.4) After emancipation and with the rise of Black Codes and Jim Crow laws, "…the imminently killable non-subject" (Abdur-Rahman, p. 3), the emasculated Black man, was turned into a terrifying and morally bankrupt figure – the Black Male Rapist.

Attacks on Black Bodies

Violence against Black Americans was used to enforce the institution of race-based slavery in the United States. After Emancipation, former slaveowners and others needed an excuse to continue this violent behavior toward their African-American neighbors. This is when many state and local governments began creating the "Black Codes," which were mandates and laws that criminalized otherwise standard behavior, such as waiting for the bus or getting laid off or fired. These rules were frequently written in the same language as the Slave Codes, and while many were not explicitly directed at Black peoples, their enforcement was almost exclusively based on the alleged offender's skin color.

Any incident of race-based violence was defended with ideas of racial hierarchy and Social Darwinism. Rooted in Enlightenment concepts that encouraged colonization and purported the "white man's burden," these ideas became the basis for medical and scientific experimentation on Black men and women. The most well-known of these experiments is the syphilis study conducted by the Tuskegee Institute. Lasting for 40 years, the study failed to inform participants of their diagnoses, used experimental treatment without disclosure, and left hundreds of syphilitic Black men untreated for decades, infecting their partners and in some cases, their children. After several news reports on the illegality of the study, it was halted in 1972. It took two years to reach a legal settlement on behalf of the Black families harmed by this study, but a quarter of a century passed before President Bill Clinton publicly apologized to the victims on behalf of the nation.

Another medical intervention enacted against Black bodies was the use of sterilization and eugenics to minimize the Black population in the United States. "The movement, which began in 1904, was a government-sponsored social engineering project which sought to improve the human species by encouraging "fit" people to marry and procreate while sterilizing and prohibiting unions between the "unfit."" (Coale, p. 1) The scientists behind these projects defended their actions with scientific evidence, arguing "…that non-whites were genetically inferior to whites…The eugenicists' claims were touted by opportunistic politicians..." (Manjoo, p. 4) In one study, Black people housed in public institutions, including poorhouses and women's shelters, were given IQ tests, analyzed for physical markers of alleged inferiority, and were observed for lifestyle abnormalities that were supposed to indicate moral deficiencies. "These facts became the basis of a landmark 1927 Supreme Court decision that allowed states to forcibly sterilize people who carried "hereditary defects." Carrie Buck was forcibly sterilized, and by the mid-1930s, about 20,000 people in the United States met the same fate under similar laws." (Coale, p.1) The story of the Buck family is not unique; many women of color were court-ordered to be sterilized under this precedent.

The most prolific excuse for the deaths of Black men is the threat they pose to white women. The myth of the Black male rapist is a relic of the Jim Crow era, where countless Black men and their defenders were extra-judiciously slaughtered by vigilantes and local police. However, the same fate would not await a white man who laid hands on a Black female: "One of racism's salient historical features has always been the assumption that white men – especially those who wield economic power – possess an incontestable right to access to Black women's bodies." (Davis, p. 175) This played out during slavery as Black women being raped and/or manipulated into bearing bi-racial children, fathered by white men who would never willingly acknowledge the children's parentage. Their white wives would abuse the Black women whom their husbands assaulted. Children born to Black mothers were automatically bestowed with their mother's social status – this was to protect the fathers from financial obligation, as well as to protect white children of shared parentage from competing with their mixed siblings.

After Reconstruction, as Jim Crow laws and Black codes took over towns across the nation, rape or assault accusations by a white woman were enough to get any man hung, but it was only marginalized communities that experienced innumerable counts of vigilante justice. "When Ida B. Wells researched her first pamphlet against lynching, published in 1895 under the title A Red Record, she calculated that over ten thousand lynchings had taken place between 1865 and 1895." (Davis, p. 184) After the fact, many of the accusers were caught or admitted to lying. None of the murderers met the same fate as the lynching victims.

Lynching was not reserved for Black men; it was frequently enacted upon white abolitionists and sympathizers with the cause for Black equality. Women were also not immune from the brutality of lynch mobs. In Rape, Racism, and the Myth of the Black Male Rapist, Angela Davis recounts Ida B. Wells's recollection of "…the horrible case of the woman in San Antonio, Texas, who had been boxed up in a barrel with nails driven through the sides and rolled down a hill until she was dead." (Davis, p. 191)

The accusation of rape to justify lynching might be attributed to what Susan Brownmiller refers to as "[t]he historic price of woman's protection by man against man was…a crime committed against her body [which] became a crime against the male estate." (Brownmiller, p. 17) Despite Brownmiller's repeated references to "racial differences", which uphold the false narrative of men of color being prone to violence and rape, her position on the frame of femininity within the context of rape provides some insight to the uniqueness of masculinity in marginalized communities.

However, the most visible attacks on Black communities took place in the form of separating Black neighborhoods and then overpolicing those areas. This resulted in unprecedented miscarriages of justice, and skewed crime data that was then used to excuse violent treatment of Black suspects and the Black imprisoned. To police and government institutions, a Black person posed a threat, regardless of gender: "…Black genders are merely the exploited outcomes of distinct modes of racial terror." (Abdur-Rahman, on the murder of Korryn Gaines in 2016 by the hands of Baltimore police SWAT, p. 3) Using "…the notion of ineradicable race differences" to create legislation resulted in unequal application of laws, especially those laws which pertained to violence. (Handlin, p. 211).

Legislation and Actions Against Black Progress

Anti-Black legislation, mandates, and court rulings created a deep web of generational oppression and dehumanization of Black people across the United States. The nuances of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and segregation and their long-term effects on Black communities goes all the way back to Emancipation. President Lincoln's Proclamation was made in January of 1863; however, on June 19, 1865, two and a half years later, Texan slaveholders had still refused to release their slaves. The federal government, under the urging of Black soldiers who had risked their lives to fight for the Union, sent a military operation to Galveston, Texas, ordering slaveholders to grant all slaves full freedom, including paid wages and fair labor.

This action was just the beginning of Reconstruction, which took place from 1866-1877. During this time, the U.S. Congress passed and ratified the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, along with the Civil Rights Act of 1866. These ensured citizenship, voters' rights, land ownership rights, fair employment, and use of public spaces for Black men, and in part for Black women ("The African-American Odyssey"). Federal troop presence in the Southern states protected Black communities from white supremacist retaliation, and the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871 offered protection to Black families. In 1877, the presidential election caused intense conflict between the North and the South once again. In a last ditch effort to preserve a Republican administration, Northern representatives took the bait when Southern Democrats said they wouldn't contest Rutherford B. Hayes' presidency – if all federal troops were removed from the Southern states. Without viable enforcement, Southern white supremacists monopolized control over community economies, police forces, and government offices ("The Civil War and Reconstruction").

Debt peonage laws allowed Black people to be forced into indentured servitude for even the smallest debts. Sharecropping demanded that Black farmers pay for the use of land, equipment, and kept Black families in isolated Southern communities. These systems created traps of generational poverty, making it harder and harder for Black families to gain upward mobility, or even to relocate in search of better opportunity ("The Civil Rights Act of 1964").

The formation of the Ku Klux Klan in 1865 sparked terror in Black communities and their white allies across the nation. Despite the idea that the KKK was only prevalent in the South, there were chapters throughout the North and West, as well, targeting various communities who the Klan decided didn't fit their idea of the "superior white." Other white-supremacist organizations also formed, and these groups infiltrated police and government organizations, giving them an extra layer of defense against prosecution as they threatened, assaulted, and murdered thousands of people. Members were rarely prosecuted, and almost never convicted. Many of these groups, and their founders' descendants, still have a presence in the United States today.

Meanwhile, Washington, D.C. offered no respite. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of segregation in 1896 in the case of *Plessy V. Ferguson*, making room for the Black Codes of the Jim Crow era to go into full effect. These mandates included vaguely worded "vagrancy laws," which allowed the arrest of a Black person for nearly anything, even just sitting at a bus stop. The accused were typically put to work in unpaid labor houses. All Southern public facilities were mandated to be segregated, and in 1913, President Woodrow Wilson extended this mandate to the military and federal offices. Legal segregation was not overturned until 1954, in the landmark Supreme Court case of *Brown V. Board of Education*, when it was determined that segregated facilities could not be "separate but equal." ("The Civil War and Reconstruction")

As soon as federal troops withdrew from the South, anti-Black measures were quickly enacted. For example, the previously integrated state university of South Carolina promptly shut down, reopening as an all-white university three years later. Harvard's first Black graduate was a professor there; his job vanished, along with integration. In Louisiana, voting restrictions such as literacy tests and limited poll access, caused the Black male voter registration to drop nearly 99% in less than five years. (Gates, Jr.)

Redlining was the act of re-zoning residential areas to legally segregate Black and other marginalized communities from the rest of the population. It also limited BIPOC access to good-paying jobs, adequate housing, and even created barriers to practicing the right to vote. This practice, and the rise of racial ideologies helped create the "Negro Ghetto" in cities across the nation, including the very diverse mini-melting pot of Chicago, Illinois. In the late 1860s, there were almost no all-Black blocks and most neighborhoods were well-integrated; "[b]y 1915… the physical ghetto had taken shape; a large, almost all-Negro enclave on the South Side, with a similar offshoot on the West Side, housed most of Chicago's Negroes." (Spear, p. 219) This played out in similar ways in nearly every state, with Black ghettos emerging in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, and many other metropolitan areas during the same period. The effects of these actions are still seen today in urban neighborhoods that are predominantly communities of color, are largely underfunded and have limited access to resources available in other, white-dominated neighborhoods. "The housing problem for Negroes was not restricted to the poor; even the affluent were blocked in their quest for a decent place to live." (Spear, p. 223) This created a distinct racial wealth gap between communities of color and white neighborhoods. Upward mobility was difficult for most, but extremely restricted resources and the need to commute to decent paying jobs, often requiring upwards of an hour on freeways and toll roads that poor communities couldn't access on public transportation, made "moving on up" a near impossibility for members of these redlined neighborhoods. Redlining Black communities also made overpolicing and unequal enforcement of law easier to conduct, and much harder to prove to those outside the community.

The legislation passed during this period across the United States demonstrates the ideology that, no matter how upstanding and revered a Black man is, the white man or woman has the power to reduce them to another violent, animalistic face in a sea of Black men. According to post-Reconstruction lawmakers, "…the Negro was inherently inferior, did not need or deserve, could not use or be trusted with, the rights of humans." (Handlin, p. 210)

Mass Incarceration

The Slave-Codes-turned-Black-Codes brought about the chain gangs and ghettoization of early-twentieth century America. Black fathers were ripped away from their families and sentenced to unpaid labor, and redlining and gerrymandering sliced up cities into segregated neighborhoods and funneled taxpayer dollars into stable white-dominated neighborhoods. Marginalized communities, who desperately needed infrastructure invests in education, healthcare, jobs, housing, and roads, had more and more of their tax funding reallocated to already-secure areas. Lawmakers who allowed these policies across the nation believed that "…[Black] racial inferiority justified a position of permanent subordination." (Handlin, p. 211) This is an area in which meaningful progress is still lacking, as thousands of Black men and women are serving long-term prison sentences for misdemeanors and other non-violent crimes today.

Beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement

The beginnings of the Civil Rights movement can be traced back to the 1790s, when the United States was a brand new nation, and slavery was legal in most states. There are several examples of slaves who petitioned for freedom, or free Blacks who petitioned for equal rights. ("Free Blacks Petition", pp.163-164) This momentum was continued after emancipation, through the Jim Crow era. Lynchings and rising police brutality in marginalized neighborhoods led Black leaders to organize and put an end to racial violence and inequity.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was founded in April of 1960 as the result of a meeting called by Ella Baker, who was concerned that Dr. King and the Southern Christian

Leadership Conference (SCLC) were not relatable or appealing to young adults who were looking for ways to make more meaningful changes, more quickly. SNCC participated and helped organize the Freedom Rides and voter registration drives. The passion of youth soon overtook the organization; three members were killed by the Ku Klux Klan in 1964, and in 1966, Stokely Carmichael was elected to head the organization. The creator behind the Black Power movement, Carmichael advocated for self-defense in the form of violent retaliation – giving young Black members the support they needed to finally fight back. This resulted in escalated clashes with white conservatives and police, and in 1967, the organization was disbanded after Carmichael's successor, H. Rap Brown, was arrested for incitement to riot. ("SNCC")

In 1909, Oswald Garrison Villard issued forth a call to action for the protection and advancement of the Black community. As lynchings became more common and Jim Crow laws made it more difficult for Black people to exercise their civil rights, a group of Black leaders came together to form the National Negro Committee; on the NNC's one-year anniversary, May 30, 1910, the name was changed to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The organization was created to be interracial, and conducted legal work against racial injustice and other inequalities. The NAACP's special publication, *The Crisis*, was edited by W.E.B. Du Bois, and the leadership was full of recognizable names. However, some whites and conservatives felt that the NAACP was "radical," and other Black advancement organizations refused to support the association. Despite this adversity, the NAACP is still an active and influential organization today. (Grant et al., 210-214)

Civil rights organizations across the nation began voter registration drives, encouraging Black citizens to engage in democracy and politics. The urban drives were largely successful, but many rural Black communities did not have access to reliable transportation and were terrorized by the white Southerners in their area. This made it both difficult and unsafe to travel to a courthouse to register, especially with police officers ignoring or even participating in the harassment and assault. Armed guards and armed self-defense advocates protected organizations and members from white intimidators and violence. (Grant et al., 258-259)

These organizations and their members' participation in political activism led to the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1960 and 1963. "Lack of urgency in Washington" was cited as an issue by Black leaders, as endless meetings with government officials led to watered-down bills with limited enforceability; this was a slap in the face to Black leaders who felt that asking for equal treatment wasn't a big ask. This sentiment "Either party is welcome to claim credit for enactment of the wretched remnant of what was not very much at the outset." (Grant et al., 368) Discontent with passive stance of President John F. Kennedy (most far-reaching legislation of its kind, but failed to include "a fair employment practices provision" (Grant et al., 368)) Government's goal in the 1960s, it seems, was to appease the masses, not to pursue justice and democracy for all.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed with the goal of making the Fifteenth Amendment enforceable. This act banned literacy tests, poll taxes, and intimidation tactics that were frequently used to keep Black citizens from voting. Some organizations advocated for special municipal elections after this bill was signed into law, to ensure Black voters were properly represented after the upcoming election. While this wasn't included in the bill, a suit was brought in Sunflower County, Mississippi proclaiming the regular local election invalid. The suit was won, and despite white intimidation, Black voters turned out in droves, and they lost the special election by only 30 votes. (Grant et al., 369) Several states challenged the act in court, but several Supreme Court decisions, in cases such as *South Carolina V. Katzenbach* and *Allen v. State Board of Elections*, upheld the constitutionality of the act, and by the end of 1965, 250,000 Black voters were registered to vote for the first time.

In 1964, white middle-class students traveled to Mississippi to help with voter registration and to teach in Freedom Schools. When two of these young workers disappeared with one of their Black peers, federal action was finally taken. The Mississippi and Louisiana rivers were dragged in search of the young men; countless dismembered Black bodies were pulled up from the bottom. Finally, the nation could no longer deny the terror that Black citizens had faced, and a report on racial violence was done by the Southern Regional Council. However, despite massive efforts by Black-led political organizations to achieve equal representation for Mississippi Blacks, they were not exactly welcomed by mainstream Democrats. Voter suppression and economic oppression based on race were never efficiently eliminated.

Conflicts in the Black Experience

Economic competition and biases based on the previously discussed stereotypes influenced how white people categorized Black members of their community. Anti-Black and anti-immigrant propaganda created and strengthened racial chauvinism, built on the ideal of racial purity. The "white Christian savior" trope offered a mask to hide covert racism, and when unsolicited and harmful advice was rejected by the Black community, the "white saviors" used this as proof of racial inferiority. White concepts of what a "respectable citizen" looked like and behaved shaped their interactions with Black people, and that experience could change drastically based on the context, environment, and subject of the encounter. These variables affected the way different types of communities thought they could achieve racial equality and civil rights.

In 1899, Rudyard Kipling wrote and published the poem "The White Man's Burden," which expressed the author's opinion that people of color were "half devil and half child" and that it was the white man's obligation to colonize, capture, and convert anyone who was not born with the blessing of whiteness. (Kipling) This rhetoric shaped many Progressive Era policies that directly harmed the Black community. These policies included eugenics programs, ghettoization, and pseudoscience-based propaganda campaigns that instilled a deep-seated contempt for anyone with darker skin. These efforts also targeted ethnic whites in the beginning, and were marketed as if to save marginalized people from their own self-destructive behavior, although there was no evidence for such a proclivity. This concept is the basis for the white savior complex, in which white individuals or institutions cause harm to the Black community by implementing or suggesting ideas based on bias instead of on the Black experience.

Respectability is a concept based on the idea that successful individuals looked, spoke, and behaved a certain way, and anyone who did not follow these recommendations were a "hopeless case," destined to live in squalor and disgrace. "The politics of respectability entailed "reform of individual behavior as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform." Respectability was part of "uplift politics," and had two audiences: African Americans, who were encouraged to be respectable, and white people, who needed to be shown that African Americans could be respectable." (Harris, p. 213) These ideals were adopted and adapted by some of the Black community, regarded as the only way to claim "equal status and citizenship during the Progressive era." (Harris, p. 219)

However, implicit and overt biases proved itself much harder to overcome than expected. "The informal economy, the diverse ideologies it fostered, and the leaders it spawned lessened the influence of bourgeois respectability within the African American community. At the same time, it was becoming clear that the tactic of bourgeois respectability was not effective in changing white people's racial attitudes." (Harris, 215) Despite massive efforts to police their own behavior and embody white ideals of propriety, Black citizens couldn't avoid racist treatment and policy.

Some, mostly middle-class educated Black individuals, blamed the poor, urban Black neighborhoods for these failures: "…a small, compact, but rapidly growing community divided into three broad social groups. The "respectables" – churchgoing, poor or moderately prosperous, and often unrestrained in their worship – were looked down upon somewhat by the "refined" people, who because of their education and breeding, could not sanction the less decorous behavior of their racial brothers. Both of these groups were censorious of the "riffraff," the "sinners" – unchurched and undisciplined." (Spear, 217) As the Black community turned inward and began to divide, the civil rights movement split between the "refined/respectables" and the "riffraff," each group taking its own path and making its own demands. This split caused tension between the movement and the government, and eventually, several organizations from both camps disbanded, causing the overall movement to lose traction, both in media and in government.

Relevance to Today

The effects of systemic racism and white patriarchal ideals continue to cause issues for the Black community and other marginalized groups. "Today's continuing inequalities in education, housing, employment, wealth, and representation in leadership positions are rooted in our country's shameful history of slavery and systemic racism." (United Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1) In the United States, median wealth for white households is ten times greater than for Black households, and eight times greater than for Hispanic households. "Unemployment rates for Africans Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are considerably higher than the national average. Growing income inequality increasingly affects marginalized groups. Minority homeownership rates lag behind their white counterparts, and yet research shows that minorities face extra hurdles in getting approved for mortgages. African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are disproportionately affected through every stage of the criminal justice system, despite the evidence that different racial and ethnic groups commit crimes at roughly the same rates." (United Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1)

The solution for correcting these issues is not to assert white goals and experiences onto Black communities, but instead, we need to listen to those most affected by these disparities and apply resources appropriately to make their goals attainable. The unique situation that Black males face requires a specialized type of policy reform. "…Differences, and those who are "different," must be acknowledged in intellectual work and welcomed in activist circles." Conversations surrounding intersectionality between race, sexuality, and class is key to understanding the issues that face marginalized communities and the individuals within them. (Harris, p. 219) Scholar Joshua Bennett agrees: "My sense is that any such endeavor would necessarily begin with the voices of Black men and boys themselves," and indeed, only Black men and boys can share their experiences with us. (Bennett, 31)

The contemporary Black male experience "…is rooted…in…a systematic, ravenous hunger for Black male flesh, a desire to view, consume, and use Black men and boys as…raw material…. In the contemporary context, this yearning is made legible in the form not only of state-sanctioned ritual killings at the hands of police, security guards, and vigilantes, but in the virtual afterlife of that violence. The footage of Black men killed on camera that circulates for days, weeks, and months on end. Only in death do they reach their full potential. Even in death, they are said to take up too much space. Their corpses crowd the discourse. The gathered masses observe, take their fill, and look away." (Bennett, p. 27) How can they be heard when, in life they are muted, in death they are disparaged, and in memory they are pushed aside?

Today, the approach we take to social justice efforts should bear the mark of the history of the movement, and one of the most effective methods that has proven effective is to dismantle the systemic barriers that are built into existing and pending policy and legislation. "Racism can only end if we contend with the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate and preserve the inequality—economic and social— that we still see all around us. – U.S. bishops, Open Wide Our Hearts." (United Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 2) Another lesson we should carry forward is the fact that turning a blind eye to racist behavior in any context only perpetuates the damage caused to Black communities across the nation. "Openly rejecting stereotyped joking [is] an anti-racist way that reflects a continuing use of the equality-and-justice framing of society." ("Two-faced Racism", p. 15) Finally, admitting our own inherent biases and actively working to correct them is key to enacting lasting and meaningful change. For instance, claiming to be color-blind, in a way to deflect evidence of one's own racist behaviors and biases, ignores the impacts that institutionalized racism has had on communities of color, and only works to uphold those same institutions. If one is called out on their racist rhetoric or behavior, even if one's intention was not to be disparaging, one must apologize for the wrong done, admit their personal gap in knowledge regarding the harmed person's experience, and work to correct this even when not in the presence of a marginalized person.

Conclusion

While many of the initial goals of Civil Rights advocacy were reached, many Blacks today are still trapped in the oppressive cycle of institutional racism. Because the experiences of urban, low-income Blacks were so different from the experiences of middle-class Blacks, more impactful actions were difficult to maneuver. The same stereotypes that excused the enslavement and abuse of Africans and Black Americans for 400 years still exist today. Countless organizations, including the ACLU and Black Lives Matter, continue to push for equity. As in the

1960s, college students continue to be some of the primary participants in the revived fight for equality.

The effects of slavery, racism, and the stereotypes surrounding Black maleness are still prevalent in the disproportionately high numbers of Black men who have been imprisoned, Black families trapped in generational poverty, and Black peoples who have been killed by police and white supremacists, who receive little to no repercussions in most cases. Racist rhetoric has been deeply ingrained into the fabric of American society, and the 1960s movement only laid the foundation for all the changes necessary to undo those stitches. Today, Black Lives Matter has replaced SNCC and the Black Panthers, and continued activism, even in the face of intense adversity, is building on the groundwork of the past to teach empathy and correct implicit biases. By understanding Black masculinity and the politics of the Black community, we can create a better understanding of our nation's past, and work together toward a more equitable and just future.

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