

# AFRICAN-AMERICANS and the CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM

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While many claim that the long tradition of racism in the united states ended with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the legacies of slavery and segregation continue to affect u.s. society on all levels. Today, African-Americans are disproportionately imprisoned by racist drug laws, denied access to the economic and educational benefits enjoyed by Anglo-Americans, and robbed of their civil rights and human dignity by a pervasive white supremacy that lurks just beneath the surface of our so-called democracy. This country's criminal justice system has not escaped the influence of, and is frequently the direct tool for, this racism. Our criminal *injustice* system creates a situation in which African-American men have greater than a 1 in 4 chance of going to prison (compared to 1 in 23 for a white man)<sup>1</sup> and in which the violence and horror of lynching have been transformed and institutionalized into a new form: the racist death penalty.

<sup>1</sup> *Lifetime Likelihood of Going to State or Federal Prison.* Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997.

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If you are interested in combating the racist criminal injustice system and in working toward true social justice, contact the Prison Activist Resource Center.



**[www.prisonactivist.org](http://www.prisonactivist.org)**  
**510-893-4648**  
**PO Box 339**  
**Berkeley, CA 94701**

*African-Americans represent:*

- **12.7%** of the US population
- **15%** of US drug users  
(72% of all users are white)
- **36.8%** of those arrested for a drug abuse violation
- **48.2%** of American adults in State or Federal prisons and local jails
- **42.5%** of prisoners under sentence of death

Why do African-Americans consistently benefit so much less than whites from a society as prosperous and “democratic” as ours?

Why does America’s criminal “justice” system incarcerate such a disproportionate number of African-Americans?

**21.5%** of African-Americans have no health insurance (compared to 15% of whites.)

**24%** of African-Americans 25 and over have not graduated from high school (compared to approx. 16% of whites.)

**26.5%** of African-Americans live below the poverty line (compared to 11% of whites.)

# LATIN@S and the CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM

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Latin@s are one of the most rapidly growing “minorities” within the United States and represent a formidable political and social presence. Latin@ culture has flourished in what is now the southwestern United States for centuries, well before westward U.S. expansion/conquest, yet Latinos are consistently treated as outsiders and foreigners by much of America. Racist, anti-Latin@ sentiments can be detected in the political rhetoric and legislation of many policy-makers. Latin@s, foreign-born or not, are subjected to blatant discrimination and mistreatment by the Border Patrol/I.N.S. Poverty, unemployment, and a lack of educational opportunity plague Latin@ communities across the U.S. Latino men, like African-American men, are disproportionately imprisoned by racist drug laws. While popular American culture appears to be extending an olive branch of inclusion to Latin@s, no *real* progress can be made for Latin@s until racist marginalization is addressed ***on all levels*** and eliminated.

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*Latinos represent:*

- **11.1%** of the US population
- **10%** of US drug users  
(72% of all users are non-Hispanic whites)
- approximately **22.5%** of sentenced State prisoners convicted of a drug offense
- **18.6%** of American adults in State or Federal prisons and local jails

**34.2%** of Latinos have no health insurance (compared to 15% of whites.)

**44.5%** of Latinos 25 and over have not graduated from high school (compared to approximately 16% of whites.)

**27.1%** of Latinos live below the poverty line (compared to 11% of whites.)

Why are 96.2% of “aliens” apprehended by the Immigration and Naturalization Service of Mexican origin...

...when the INS *itself* estimates that “aliens” from Mexico comprise only 54% of the illegal immigrant population in the U.S.?

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, Prisoners in 1998  
Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1999  
Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1998  
National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1998  
Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999  
1997 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service

# NATIVE-AMERICANS and the CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM

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The relentless racism that once exterminated entire populations of Native-Americans continues today at a fevered pace--whether it's the Washington State Republican party resolution calling for the abolition of all tribal governments<sup>1</sup>, or the illegal strip-mining of Native land. Native-American reservations are gripped by astronomical unemployment rates and life expectancies far below the national average. These conditions are incomprehensible given the tremendous financial resources of this country and its supposed commitment to equal rights. One result of these circumstances is that Native-Americans are placed under correctional supervision at twice the rate of whites. The criminal injustice system has become a vehicle for the continued persecution of native peoples. This racism not only permeates the criminal injustice system, but also underlies every American's lack of action on the issue.

*1 [www.spokane.net/news-story.asp?date=070300&ID=s821704&cat+section.Tribal\\_news](http://www.spokane.net/news-story.asp?date=070300&ID=s821704&cat+section.Tribal_news)*

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“At least 70%” of the violence  
“experienced by American Indians (is)  
committed by persons not of the same  
race”...

*from American Indians and Crime*

- Native-Americans represent less than 1% of the US population.
- Over 4% of Native-Americans are under correctional supervision (compared to 2% of whites.)
- Native-Americans are the victims of violent crimes at twice the rate of the general population.

The life expectancy for  
Native-Americans is over **5 years**  
lower than that for whites.

**34.4%** of Native-Americans 25 and  
older have not graduated from high  
school (compared to approx. 16% of  
whites.)

**31.2%** of Native-Americans live below  
the poverty line (compared to 11% of  
whites.)

“The majority (60%) of American Indian  
victims of violent crime described the  
offender as white.”

*from American Indians and Crime*

Sources: Trends in Indian Health, 1997  
American Indians and Crime, Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999  
Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1999  
Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1998  
Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin: Prisoners and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1999