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Theology 4: Social Media Campaign Draft

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Abstract

This social media campaign will address the injustice of high black incarceration rates in the United States. In the past, slavery and Jim Crow laws have been the major weapons of black oppression in America. Today, such forms of overt racism and oppression have been replaced with a less overt but equally evil practice: the mass incarceration of the black community. This campaign will analyze the three main factors that have helped form this social injustice: history, the law, and the media. The main goal of this campaign is to bring awareness to this glaring issue and provoke righteous anger in viewers so they may go out and share their new knowledge with others and hopefully incite change.

Title

Modern Slavery: The Mass Incarceration of Black Americans

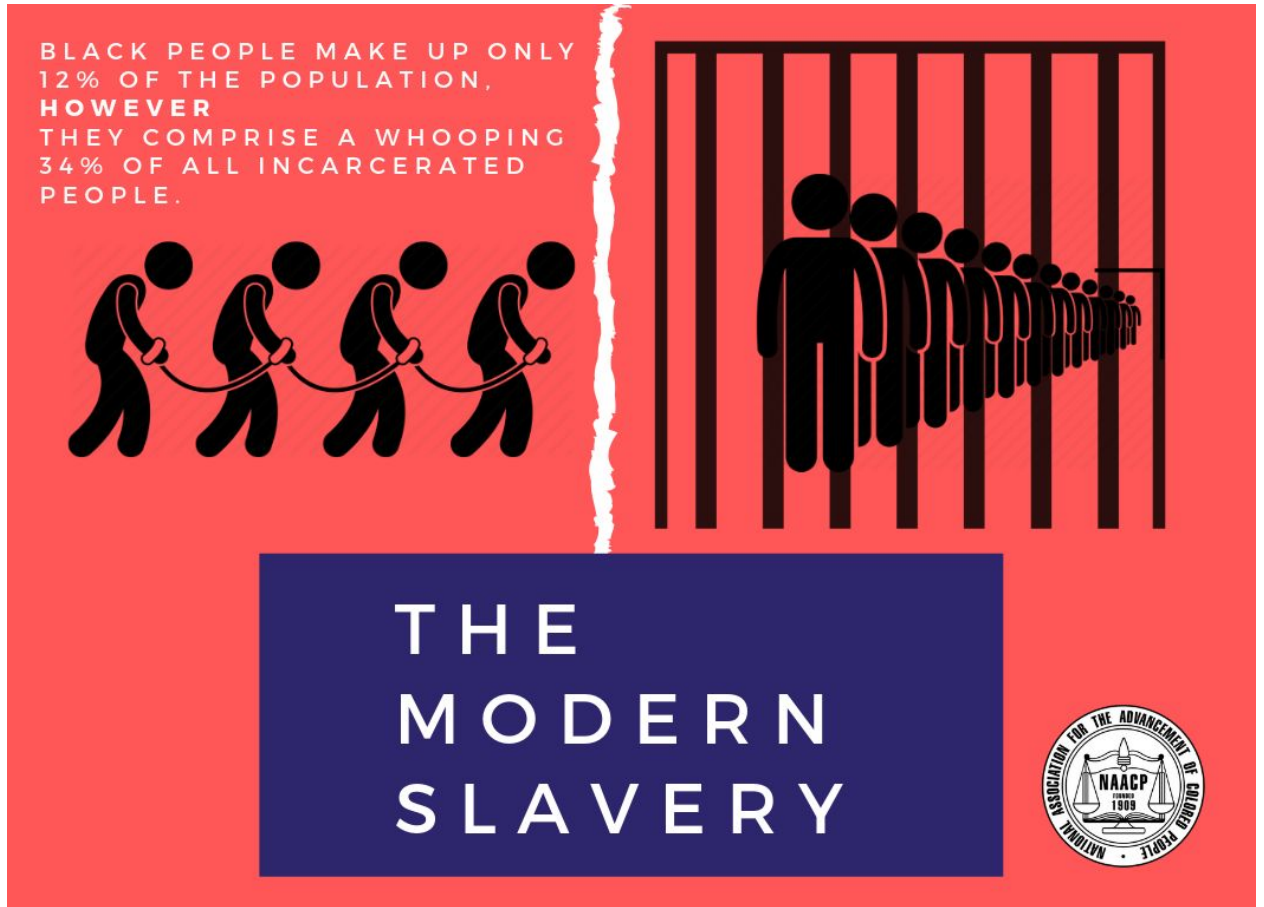
Basic Outline of the Content in Each Numerical Post

- Introduction - 1
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Sources

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The Actual Posts are located below. Keep scrolling!



1)

As the above poster states, black people make up roughly 12% of the American population, however 34% of the US correctional population is black. This equates to 2.3 million black prisoners and parolees out of the total 6.8 million people involved in the American prison system. Because so many black people are imprisoned, mass incarceration is informally referenced as the modern version of slavery. Now you're asking yourself, "Why is the number of black prisoners so high?" You may assume that black people commit more crimes than other races. This assumption is not uncommon as studies show that the American public associates crime with blackness and believes black people perpetrate crimes at a higher rate than other races. However, this is not true. Through the following posts, you will learn the **real** reason why black incarceration rates are so high.



2)

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The long dark history of black oppression in the United States is the main cause of the black incarceration epidemic. This history is largely shaped by the institution of slavery which proclaimed white superiority and black inferiority. Further, white America believed that black people were not only inferior but also savage and dangerous if left to their own devices. So, after the 13th Amendment emancipated all slaves, white lawmakers quickly passed strict and oppressive Black Codes that limited the rights of newly freed African Americans and skyrocketed the number of blacks that were arrested and incarcerated. Hence, the beginnings of black mass incarceration in America.



3)

In the late 1970s, beliefs of black criminality caused Nixon to target already disenfranchised black communities in his “War on Drugs” and crime. Congress passed punitive laws that targeted black Americans and caused over-policing of black communities, resulting in an astronomical upsurge of incarcerated blacks. The most notorious law passed during this time was the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which is still active today. This law ascribed wildly disproportionate sentences to people who possessed powder cocaine, predominantly by lower-class black Americans, and people who possessed crack cocaine, upper and middle-class white Americans, even though they are the same drug on a molecular level. Because of this law, possessing crack cocaine results in a much longer sentence than possessing powder cocaine does. Thousands and thousands of black people have been incarcerated under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. This discriminatory law continues to contribute to high black incarceration rates today.

4) Video: Implicit Bias: Peanut Butter, Jelly and Racism

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JVN2qWSJF4>

(Cannot embed a video in Google Docs)

Overtly racist laws that cause over-policing of black communities and disparities in prison sentences directly contribute to high black incarceration rates. However, there is another less obvious factor that contributes to the black incarceration epidemic: implicit bias. Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. When you are walking down the street and see a group of black men ahead, your implicit bias tells you to avoid them because black men are dangerous. This sort of unconscious racism results in corrupt police training, prejudiced prosecutors, unjust jurors, and assumptive judges who *expect* black people to be up to no good. Implicit bias is largely informed by the media. The presentation of black people in modern media is hugely misleading and detrimental to the public's perception of black individuals.



5)

The media perpetuates a single, harmful narrative about black people by depicting black people, especially black males, as thugs and criminals. For example, news networks and websites tend to use mugshots or intimidating-looking pictures when referencing black people. Conversely, white criminals are often pictured in professional attire or family pictures, even when they have committed dangerous crimes. Both sets of men above committed the same crime, burglary. In the case of the three black men, the media used the men's mugshots in their news reports.

Oppositely, the media used the high school yearbook pictures of the three white burglars for their news coverage. The practice of painting black people as criminals is so common that even when black people are victims of a crime, not perpetrators, the media uses mugshots or intimidating

looking pictures of them in their coverage. By doing this, the media creates a damaging monolithic narrative about black people that warps the public's perception of the black race.

6)



Black mass incarceration rates directly violate the Catholic Social Teaching of a Call to Family, Community, and Participation which declares that humans are inherently social beings who must be immersed in community and family settings to thrive. Mass incarceration prevents blacks from flourishing and building strong communities and families, as they cannot raise their families or boost their community's economy from prison. Mass incarceration is the biggest contributor to the destruction of the black family unit, as it forces black parents to leave their children and spouses, helpless and in financial and emotional need.



7)

The mass incarceration of black Americans also violates the Catholic Social Teaching of the Life and Dignity of the Human Person. This teaching proclaims that each human life has inherent value and that all humans have fundamental rights that must be protected and respected, regardless of race. Mass incarceration denies inmates of their fundamental rights, strips them of their humanity and reduces them to a sentence. Black prisoners are often targeted by correctional officers because of their skin color. As a result, they experience disproportionate amounts of verbal, physical, and mental abuse. This horrific treatment violates the following human rights that fall under the Life and Dignity of the Human Person: the right of each and every member of society to be valued and to be treated with respect regardless of their status as either a free or imprisoned person.



8)

To respond to the injustice of media driven racial bias and resulting mass incarceration I composed a two-step action plan that will help dispel the harmful influence of media that perpetuates a false narrative about black people. As previously described, this narrative paints black people as thugs and criminals and causes the public to equate black people with criminality. Part one of my action plan is to educate my peers and the wider community about my social injustice topic through this social media campaign. I want people to understand that black people are not inherently criminal. Black incarceration rates are not so high because black people commit more crimes than other races, it is because black people are, and have always been, set up for failure by the American “justice” system. So, when you see black faces plastered on your TV screen with big letters spelling out the words “criminal” or “thug” underneath, remember that although the news makes it seem like black people as a whole are wrongdoers and

delinquents, they aren't. Just like any other demographic, *some* black people commit crimes. However, the large majority of black people have simply been abused by the criminal justice system, and as a result, they have been imprisoned. Hence, the mass incarceration of the black community. To bring further awareness to the issue of media driven racial bias I will write a letter to local and national news organizations explaining how their damaging depiction of black people is detrimental to the public's perception of the black race. I will conclude my letter by asking them to change the way they depict black people on their media platforms.

Picture and Video Sources:

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