

Professor Name

Course Name

Date

Strong similarities exist between the old and new Jim Crow system.

The book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, is written by author Michelle Alexander and was released in 2012. This book analyses the history of the correctional system in the United States of America and discusses how the system inherently controls the black race through purposely chosen and methodically forced legal restrictions. It is noted that the incarceration rate in this country is the highest globally and that majority of them are blacks. Alexander shows her audience that the New Jim Crow is just a smarter way to implement the same old Jim Crow laws and that it enables racial stratification and social segregation of the black community.

Analyses of the book and other sources have shown that the Old Jim Crow and the new one are merely the same just under different terms. One thing that became evident was the fact that the only thing changed was the 'language'. In our current times of color blindness, it is not allowed to use race as reasoning for discrimination, segregation and social disapproval. What we do instead is instead of calling them people of colour, we call them 'criminals'; simply swapping words. Today, it is 100% legal to discriminate against criminals, as it was once possible to discriminate people of colour. If you are labelled a criminal, former discrimination tactics now apply to you i.e. Employment, Housing, Denial of voting rights and even jury duty (The Center for Law and Justice, 1). This types of discrimination are what used to apply to the blacks in the old days, the ones that they petitioned against and won; they are now cleverly hidden under the name 'criminals' or

‘felon’. Presently, there are even more African Americans in the American correctional system (prison, probation or parole) as compared to 1850 (ACS blog, 1). In 2004, more blacks were excluded from voting because of their felon records and this number was higher than the number of black men excluded in 1870. For example in Chicago, over half the black men of working- age have a criminal record and thus are legally discriminated for the rest of their lives. It seems that we have not removed the Old Jim Crow System; we merely cleverly redesigned it.

The number of African American people in prison doubled between 1975 and 2005. Annual spending now exceeds \$64 billion dollars, yet the crime rate has also dropped across the country. Many people are very much in favor of mass incarceration of blacks. There are apparent and short-term reasons as to why mass incarcerations for blacks exist. The agenda of mass incarceration for blacks have three main points. These three points are economical, political, social as well as psychological. (ACS blog, 1).

In an economical sense, mass incarceration of blacks helps maintain the culture of economical dependency as well as reduces the competition for entry-level jobs. The prison industries bring in over \$1.31 billion a year. With over 2 million criminals imprisoned, tycoons can pay inmates -- mostly black and Hispanic, low wages. These companies also don't have to worry about strikes, unemployment insurance, vacations or comp time, putting even more money in their pockets. They essentially hit a pot of gold.

The political agenda with mass incarceration for blacks is it makes a good argument for a politician. Politicians often mention criminal justice reform in their campaign, even though no actions have been taken to reform the justice system. Another political reason the government side with mass incarceration is that it prevents people from making social and political movements.

The social agenda in which mass incarceration of blacks is promoted is it keeps the poor on good behavior, makes them appear to be non-threatening. The mass incarceration of blacks also reinforces class and race division and den forces liberal ideology of individualism.

The opposing side defends mass incarceration by debating that this form of detention keeps our nation safe. The legal system should be strict and fair because we are dealing with the lives of human beings. Unfortunately, that does not mean that our legal system is by no means fail-safe. Often, black people are charged with crimes out of police intimidation or fear. Mass incarceration however causes more harm than good.

Others argue that Alexander's claim is valid and that mass incarceration is drastically affecting the African American community by enabling racial stratification and social segregation of the black community. The main reasoning behind this, as depicted by the book, has been the War on Drugs. The prison systems have basically exploded after the focus was shifting to war on drugs and inherently more black people are incarcerated, put in the system and in the end unable to access rights that everyone should have. Sadly, politics played a huge part into this whereby focus was mainly on this 'war', definition of the enemy and segregation of several people due to a new caste. The Supreme Court of the country has denied claims of racial biasness thus not curbing the new caste system from the aspect of legal challenge, just as slavery and Jim Crow played into the judicial authorisation back in the day (Alexander, 190).

In conclusion, the Old and New Jim Crow System seem to be one and the same. Discrimination of the black community continues to be apparent. Alexander's book illustrates that stereotypes and discrimination is fuelled by popular culture and thus have led to the

Strong similarities exist between the old and new Jim Crow system.

4

black finding themselves once again being called inferior and criminal. It is quite unfortunate that after years of fighting against oppression, the black community finds itself right back where they started; discriminated.

Works Cited

New Jim Crow. Center for Law and Justice. 2012

<<http://www.cflj.org/new-jim-crow/>>

ACS Blog. *New Jim Crow, Same (Effect) as the Old Jim Crow*. American Constitution Society for Law and Policy. 2010

<<http://www.acslaw.org/acsblog/node/15487>>

Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

The New Press. Print. 2012