

As proved by studies, in lots of places in the USA, it is more probable that a police officer stops you when you're a black person compared to being a white person.

In the century in which we live, how come does this exist?

In the summary of this book, you'll find out the way the so-called War on Drugs has resulted in mass imprisonment, which continued due to a racially biased police system and an unfair judicial system.

This huge, systemic segregation is similar to old Jim Crow laws that gave African-Americans inferior citizenship in the USA, laws that could just be abolished decades later via civil revolt that broke out with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

It is high time that another such movement came about. In this civil rights movement, it won't be a fight aimed to be able to enroll in universities or to have access to other public agencies but to set free millions of African-Americans who have been unfairly incarcerated for trivial drug crimes.

## Chapter 1 - The mass imprisonment of black people began during the time in which Reagan's government ignited the War on Drugs.

For starters, there are two truths that'll make you realize something.

One of them is that the highest imprisonment percentage on Earth belongs to the US, which is roughly eight times more than Germany's.

The other one is that between 1980 and 2000, the amount of imprisoned people rose exponentially, with an increase from 300,000 people to 2 million.

Furthermore, the large bulk of those incarcerated consisted of non-white people

What is the reason behind it?

At first, it started off in the 1970s, when Richard Nixon used the present-at-that-time racial segregation to attain an electoral upper hand. But, the situation got more severe with the War on Drugs in 1982 by Reagan's government. Despite the policy being presented as a drug war, there was a lot to do with race than all other things.

Back in the day, a "war" on drugs was met with a bit astounding since merely two percent of the American population thought illicit drugs constituted the US's most crucial political problem.

Then what caused the War on Drugs? It stemmed from the worries of white people living in poverty and in the countryside. There were uncontented with the advances in black civil rights and firmly backed Reagan's law-and-order policy.

With this political situation in the background, Reagan's government began a huge media campaign and pouring money into the implementation of drug laws.

The entire program was amply funded. From 1981 to 1991, the amount of money used by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to deal with illicit drugs rose exponentially from \$33 million to \$1.42 billion.

We should add here that at the time in which the War on Drugs began, conservatives members of Reagan's party were doubtful of this. However, this underwent a transition in 1985, the date in which crack cocaine began to be seen in impoverished, black communities, which brought about a drastic increase in violence and drug use.

What Reagan's government thought that crack cocaine and the violence it gave rise to could be a good plan to legitimize a fight against drugs.

Therefore, the DEA made further efforts to increase public awareness, bringing people's heed to the "novel" crack issue. Shortly later, the media also started doing the same thing, stressing the characterizations, using a racial subtext, of black "crack whores" and "crack babies" in the minds of people.

## Chapter 2 - People of black and Latino origins are imprisoned significantly more for drug-related crimes.

With the start of the War on Drugs, the amount of incarcerated people in U.S. prisons soared exponentially. However, simultaneously, while drug-related imprisonments soared, the true figures about the use of drugs showed that drug use was waning.

Currently, there are 2.3 million inmates living in the prisons of the US. A huge proportion of those who were incarcerated are black or Latino and they are put into jail for drug-related crimes.

What's more saddening is that the United States is the only nation on Earth that sends a great many of its racial or ethnic minorities into jail. Even the countries regarded as extremely authoritarian like Russian, China, or Iran haven't done that.

Actually, the imprisonment percentage of the black population in America is currently more than it was during the apartheid years of South Africa.

If you want to comprehend the whole extent of this crisis, think about this truth. Should you be young and a black person and dwell in Washington, D.C., there is about seventy-five percent chance that you'll be jailed at a time in your life, as put forward by statistics.

Naturally, most people think that people go to jail because they must have done something, not because of their racial qualities. Therefore, their thoughts follow like this: the reason why there are a lot of black people imprisoned for drug crimes stems simply from the black population being more disobedient to U.S. drug laws.

However, the bitter fact is that according to research, there is not that much difference between the races when it comes to usage and drug trafficking. In reality, studies have demonstrated that white people, and particularly those who are young among the white population, have more tendency to get involved in offenses about drugs than all other races.

Described in simpler words, despite the bulk of drug traffickers and users being among the white population, the seventy-five percent of people who went to jail for drug crimes in the US consists of black or Latino populations.

The final truth is that according to the people who are dubious of this, despite the four-times increase in those imprisoned for drug offenses over the last few decades, the U.S. crime percentage continues to hover at the same level.

## Chapter 3 - The U.S. criminal justice system doesn't work properly and makes mass imprisonment far easier

Then how does the U.S. judicial system affect this? What's the reason that it has been unable to stand against such unfair treatment?

Before starting to answer these, the essential thing is to know that the smallest punishment given for drug violations in the United States is very harsh.

To illustrate, take federal courts where the normally given compulsory punishment for a drug crime committed for the first time is five to ten years in jail. In contrast, the punishment you'd get for the same offense would be six months or no time in jail in other developed countries.

Punishments like these have been present for many years. Back in 1982, for instance, an adult who was convicted of drug possession and intention to traffic nine ounces of marijuana was condemned 40 years of jail time. What's worse, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed the decision and jail time.

an important reason for the malfunction of the system. From the bottom to the top, police forces have an excessive amount of power and they aren't sufficiently supervised.

An officer in law enforcement, for example, has the right to stop and search anyone he sees. Should there be illicit drugs on someone, the officers who searched his body has the right to get that someone to a police station and record their charge.

But the huge bulk of such police searches never ends up with a trial. Rather, many of such issues are settled by means of plea bargaining, whereby the person admits his offense in the hopes for a milder sentence.

Unless a person undertakes plea bargaining, then he has to appear in court, which is a process lasting very long and it generally means the person has to spend money for attorney expenses and might wind up receiving a harsher sentence.

Because of this, most people choose to plead guilty because they are unable to get an attorney and fear that the sentence may be harsher. The motives for plea bargaining are so compelling that there can be people pleading guilty though they are actually innocent.

As shown by estimates, four-tenth of U.S. prisoners aren't truly guilty; however, they chose to plead guilty anyway simply not to appear in court.

## Chapter 4 - The suspicion of law enforcement forces is based on racial profiling following from the nature of drug enforcement and bias that police officers haven't realized.

Most people think that we have moved beyond the era when race mattered and that U.S. law forces don't make any discrimination.

However, despite the veracity of most policemen being not being obviously racist, we all have to tackle this problem: What is the reason that police work yields that much racially prejudiced results?

Though it is difficult to find clear-cut evidence, studies have revealed that it is very possible for most of us to make discrimination in some way that hinges on race, and we are unconscious about it. Actually, research has demonstrated that almost all of us are under the sway of unconscious cognitive prejudices stemming from racial stereotypes.

For instance, in a questionnaire carried out in 1995, people were asked to answer this question: "Shut your eyes and conceive a drug user. Could you tell me how this drug user's appearance is?"

And what was the outcome? Surprisingly, almost each of the participants delineated the drug user as someone black. By comparison, the true statistics demonstrate that merely a quarter of U.S. drug users were black back in 1995.

To put it differently, many people – among whom there are law forces as well – carry some racial prejudice they are unaware of. But, drug law enforcement inherently has to engage with drug issues more actively, the result of which is racial stereotypes being higher in this field.

Many offenses are about a victim who wants to get police aid. However, there is generally no victim when it comes to drug offenses. As drug traffickers and drug users are undertaking an illicit act, none of them would probably seek out help from police when some undesired things happen.

As a result, this pushes police officers to be more strategic at their work since it is evidently impossible to stop and search every individual they bump into on the pavement.

Also, considering the social and historical circumstances we have covered before, from the initial soar in crack usage in impoverished communities to sensationalist media's reporting of "black addicts," we can easily figure out the people most targeted by law enforcement. Every clue proves that law enforcement targets black people.

## Chapter 5 - Systematic discrimination goes on even when prisoners have "served their time" and they can leave jail.

As observed in preceding chapters, the criminal justice, and drug law enforcement systems in the US hold racial prejudices, which causes jails to fill with black Americans found guilty of merely keeping drugs on them.

Yet, there is more to the injustice.

When prisoners have served their time and are allowed to leave the prison, they deal with a great many very unfair regulations. To illustrate, roughly 5.1 million people in the US were not given the right to benefit from public housing and partake in the federal food stamp program in 2008 after having served their time.

Private house owners and possible employers may be biased toward ex-prisoners. While applying for a job or renting a house, many application forms add a box for applicants to check if they were found guilty of a crime. By providing this data, it becomes almost improbable for ex-convicts to find employment.

People who were previously found guilty of a charge have no right to vote, either.

What's more, regardless of who they are, every person on parole or probation is under the intense scrutinization of police monitoring and monitoring and police officers have the right to stop and search them whenever they wish to do so.

The fundamental thing to keep in mind is that due to the War on Drugs, many ex-convicts served their time for petty drug delinquencies. One research carried out in Cook County of Chicago demonstrated that in roughly three-fourth of drug-related charges, seven-tenth of them were viewed as crimes.

Briefly, for ex-convicts who went to prison for drug charges, the stakes of reintegrating into society to a full extent aren't that high, considering all the extremely exclusionary laws. As a

result, this makes ex-convicts more likely to go back to jail since, for them, engagement in more criminal activity looks like the sole solution— a vicious cycle.

In order to comprehend the whole extent of this, think about these statistics. One research undertaken by the Bureau of Justice Statistics demonstrated that nearly three-tenth of ex-convicts were reimprisoned during the first six months of their release. And within three years, the figure leaps to seven-tenth of ex-convicts.

Usually, the charges of reimprisonment follow from petty offenses like drug or property crimes.

## Chapter 6 - Mass imprisonment of the black population is a novel method of social control that bears similarities to the times of Jim Crow.

All the things we've discussed in preceding chapters in total have formed a novel lower class of second-class citizens that consists of Afro-Americans under the pressure of a white majority by means of judicial institutions.

This whole thing resembles a lot the systematic repression of the black population in the times of institutionalized slavery and Jim Crow laws.

The fundamental thing to write down here is that the reason behind the collapse of these systems was not only due to genuine freedom blacks enjoyed for a short time intervals but also to confusion, which paved the way for novel instruments of social controls to bring back an institutionalized racial caste system.

When slavery came to an end, for example, the Jim Crow legal system was introduced, which made discrimination in many fields of society to continue. With the abolishment of the Jim Crow legal system in the 1960s after the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Drugs kindled once again a new system of oppression.

However, what is the reason for such repressive systems never to come to an end? Who is advantageous because of these systems?

In a similar fashion with Jim Crow laws, this novel system of repression was introduced by white elites to abuse the concerns and racial bitterness of working-class whites, so that they can get politically more influential.

By bringing mindfulness to the so-called threatening "other," which are blacks, the political system was able to divert voters' heed away from other grave political problems.

In the same mode in which right-wing politicians at times of the Jim Crow would race against one other through the introduction of extremely oppressive laws against Afro-Americans, at

the time of the War on Drugs, politicians chose to call their actions as being “tough on crime.” Such a political stance attracted the attention of poor white voters.

Undoubtedly this is a saddening and dreadful political situation. How can we transform this situation?

## Chapter 7 - If we want to stand against racially-prejudiced imprisonment, we need to establish critical consciousness with regard to this topic.

Systematic and racially-prejudiced mass imprisonment is a genuine and intricate issue.

Then, how can we end it and turn the situation into something better?

This issue is firmly established in U.S. society and unfortunately, that'll take some time to rectify this. If we want to transform things for better, though, we have to make people become conscious of this issue by means of a crucial method.

To attain our goal, all of us have to learn to speak up candidly when it comes to race. One vital thing that hinders us from discussing racial unfairness is a headstrong dedication to the concept of colorblindness.

Color-blindness follows from the idea that discrimination against an individual due to their race is socially intolerable. Even if one has a good intention, this social rule may cause people to act as if they are color-blind, which renders it more difficult to find where the origins of the problem lie and eternally eradicate racial prejudices that are unknown to us.

Studies have revealed that many of us, yet particularly whites, dislike discussing racial injustice. As demonstrated by one research, some white people will go as far as to wholly shun having conversations with Afro-Americans since they don't want to let something slip out and make them feel resentful or possibly aggressive.

Therefore, this hinders us from holding a frank debate regarding race and comprehending the way racial resentment may be abused by political leaders in order to make political gains.

Moreover, Afro-Americans have to step into action more proactively and grow awareness mostly on the subject of mass imprisonment. Employing this strategy would turn people's gaze to this situation, divert their attention from higher-profile policies such as affirmative action (ensuring that institutions don't become homogeneous, such as elite universities).

It is crucial since there is a disparity in discussions: we raise our voices too much when it comes to racial justice in terms of elite institutions and societal roles and don't touch upon as much when it comes to the underprivileged and socially repressed in society.

## The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander Book Review

Put into practice to some degree as a reaction to accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement and strengthened by the War on Drugs, the current system of mass imprisonment of blacks has formed a novel lower class in the United States. Not only are Afro-Americans incarcerated because of drug-related crimes more than white people but they experience institutional discrimination upon their release from jail as well.

Get more conscious of your own biases.

What would your answer be like were you to be asked in a questionnaire to shut your eyes and picture a drug trafficker? Would you describe the person like almost everyone who delineated an Afro-American? It's vital to pose such questions to yourself and to respond to them candidly since this will assist you to eradicate your own biases. Make an effort to comprehend the root of these prejudices in order to be able to fight them.

<https://goodbooksummary.com/the-new-jim-crow-by-michelle-alexander-book-summary-review/>