

# Blackklansman:

## From “Jim Crow” to the “Black Lives matter” movement

### Intro:

- **American Civil War:** United States from 1861 to 1865, between the North (Union) and the South (Confederacy).
  - Result of the long-standing controversy over the enslavement of black people
  - Loyalists of the Union in the North (including some geographically western and southern states) = support for the Constitution/ Secessionists of the Confederate States in the South = right to uphold slavery.
  - Casualties and losses: Military forces: 120 000 killed in action , total = 1.692 000 (killed, wounded, captured) + 50,000 free civilians dead & 80,000+ slaves dead (disease)
  - war effectively ended April 9, 1865 > Confederacy collapsed, slavery abolished, 4 million black slaves freed.
  - Reconstruction era followed war > national unity slowly restored, civil and political rights granted to freed black slaves through amendments to the Constitution and federal legislation.
  - Discriminatory laws enforced after Reconstruction era by Republicans in southern States, by skirting around the Constitution



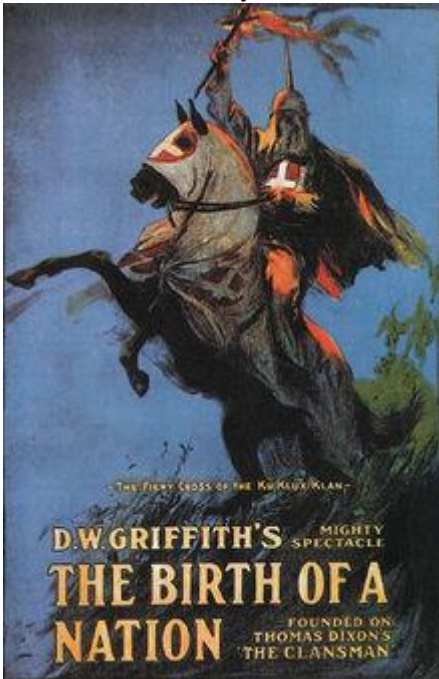
Throughout the 1830s and '40s, the white entertainer Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808-1860) performed a popular song-and-dance act supposedly modeled after a slave. He named the character Jim Crow.

**Jim Crow laws** were state and local **laws** that enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States. Enacted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by conservative white Democratic-dominated state legislatures after the Reconstruction period, the **laws** were enforced until 1965.



**Blackface** is a form of theatrical make-up used predominantly by non-black performers to represent a caricature of a black person. The practice gained popularity during the 19th century and contributed to the spread of racial stereotypes such as the "happy-go-lucky darky on the plantation" or the "dandified coon". By the middle of the century, blackface minstrel shows had become a distinctive American artform, translating formal works such as opera into popular terms for a general audience. Early in the 20th century, blackface branched off from the minstrel show and became a form in its own right. In the United States, blackface had largely fallen out of favor by the turn of the 21st century, and is now generally considered offensive and disrespectful though the practice continues in other countries.

- Two major references in Blackkklansman

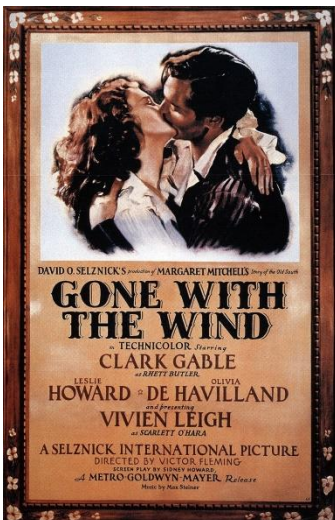


### Birth of a Nation, DW Griffith, 1915

It was the first American motion picture to be screened in the White House, viewed there by President Woodrow Wilson. It is also a very racist and controversial movie.

In his review of *The Birth of a Nation* in *1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die*, Jonathan Kline writes that "with countless artistic innovations, Griffith essentially created contemporary film language ... virtually every film is beholden to [*The Birth of a Nation*] in one way, shape or form. Griffith introduced the use of dramatic close-ups, tracking shots, and other expressive camera movements; parallel action sequences, crosscutting, and other editing techniques". He added that "the fact that *The Birth of a Nation* remains respected and studied to this day-despite its subject matter-reveals its lasting importance."

Griffith pioneered such camera techniques as close-ups, fade-outs, and a carefully staged battle sequence with hundreds of extras made to look like thousands. *The Birth of a Nation* also contained many new artistic techniques, such as color tinting for dramatic purposes, building up the plot to an exciting climax, dramatizing history alongside fiction, and featuring its own musical score written for an orchestra.



### Gone with the Wind, Sidney Howard, 1939

Set in the American South against the backdrop of the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era, the film tells the story of Scarlett O'Hara, the strong-willed daughter of a Georgia plantation owner. It follows her romantic pursuit of Ashley Wilkes, who is married to his cousin, Melanie Hamilton, and her subsequent marriage to Rhett Butler. The leading roles are played by Vivien Leigh (Scarlett), Clark Gable (Rhett), Leslie Howard (Ashley), and Olivia de Havilland (Melanie).

## I-Blaxploitation, an answer to the inequalities and racial discriminations in the seventies ?

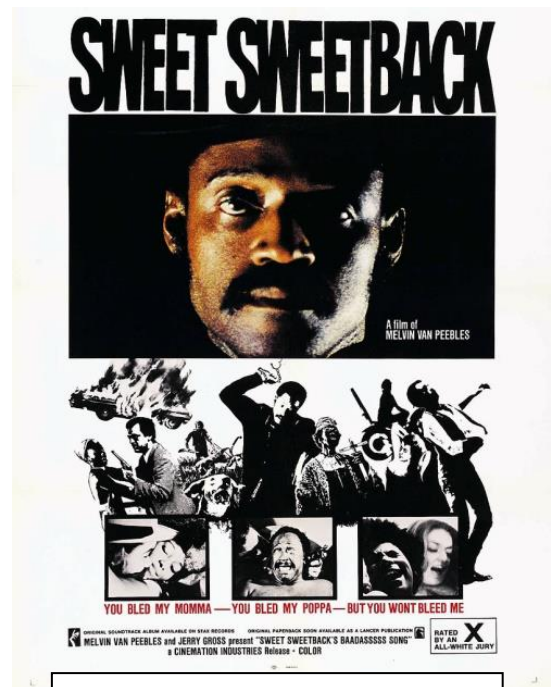
**Blaxploitation** or **blacksploitation** is an ethnic subgenre of the exploitation film that emerged in the United States during the early 1970s. The genre does rank among the first in which black characters and communities are the heroes and subjects of film and television, rather than sidekicks or villains or victims of brutality. However, the films, while popular, suffered backlash for disproportionate numbers of stereotypical film characters showing bad or questionable motives including criminals, etc., The genre's inception coincides with the rethinking of race relations in the 1970s.

Blaxploitation films were originally aimed at an urban African-American audience, but the genre's audience appeal soon broadened across racial and ethnic lines. Hollywood realized the potential profit of expanding the audiences of blaxploitation films across those racial lines.

The films used different codes but they had all the same issue: show black people as powerful people. Therefore, there is an obvious connection with political issues such as civil rights movement and black power.



*Shaft* (1971) brought the black experience to film in a new way, allowing black political and social issues that had previously been ignored in cinema to be explored. *Shaft* and its protagonist, John Shaft, brought African American culture to the mainstream world.



*Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) was one of the first films to incorporate black power ideology and permit black actors to be the stars of their own narratives, rather than being relegated to the typical roles available to them (such as the "mammy" figure and other low-

*Sweetback* and *Shaft* were both influenced by the black power movement, containing Marxist themes, solidarity, and social consciousness alongside the genre-typical images of sex and violence.

Many such films contained black heroes who were able to overcome the institutional oppression of African American culture and history.





## Superfly, 1972

Later films such as *Superfly* softened the rhetoric of black power, encouraging resistance within the capitalist system rather than a radical transformation of society. *Superfly* did, however, still embrace the black nationalist movement in its argument that black and white authority cannot coexist easily.

Still, these movies were criticized because of the way they are exploring and shaping race relations. Some held that the blaxploitation trend was a token of black empowerment, but others accused the movies of perpetuating common white stereotypes about black people (black men are pimps, blacks communities are hotbeds for drugs and violence ...)

## II- Blakklansman, a reinterpretation of this movement?



Directed by Spike Lee in 2018 and based on the true story of Ron Stallworth, the movie is telling the infiltration of the KKK by the afro-american officer of Colorado Springs.

The film takes place in 1972, during the Blaxploitation and uses some codes and references to this movement and the Blackpower. Still, the hero is not a pimp but an officer and Spike Lee is showing us how extremism could be dangerous. At the end of the movie, Spike Lee is introducing pictures about the tragic events in Charlottesville in 2017 to pay a tribute to Heather Heyer, peaceful counter-protestor killed by white supremacists.

Video analysis:

- The Black power and the civil rights :
- Excerpt 1: the conference of Kwame Ture / Stokely Carmichael

Black Panthers > real characters

Propaganda

Spike Lee shows black faces emerging from the shadow > black is beautiful

Violence seen as inevitable ( to compare with Martin Lutherking)

- Excerpt 2: alternating sequence KKK initiation process/ witness testifying on Jesse Washington lynched

KKK's process shown as ridiculous, grotesque, stupid (close shots on fat hateful faces, dialogues, pictures from Birth of a Nation by Griffith)

Heartbreaking testimony about the lynched boy > very calm old man, silence, people closed to each other > unity and dignity

➤ Spike Lee clearly making an engaged movie

- Excerpt 3: the arrest

Discrimination fully embedded in behaviours and mentalities > policemen first attitude = the one to be arrested is the black guy

Spike Lee mixing burlesque and tragedy

- Blaxploitation codes

- Excerpt 1: Ron Stallworth to be a police officer

Ron Stallworth > clothes, haircut, behavior (to be compared with Shaft) + music (

To be a police man > a positive character (the 1st one > kind of positive discrimination)

Spike Lee also shows the problems involved: Stallworth seen as a betrayal by the black community and not accepted by his white colleagues

- Excerpt 2 : the walk with Patrice

Spike Lee references > posters of movies from the Blaxploitation

### III- Discriminations today

- Excerpt 1: the end of the movie

➤ Footage about Charlottesville, August 11 to 12, 2017

➤ A way to put the film in perspective

- Discrimination today:

**Doc 1: "Black Americans mostly left behind by progress since Dr Kings death"**

On Apr. 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while assisting striking sanitation workers.

That was 50 years ago. Back then, the wholesale racial integration required by the 1964 Civil Rights Act was just beginning to chip away at discrimination in education, jobs and public facilities. Black voters had only obtained legal protections two years earlier, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act was about to become law.

African-Americans were only beginning to move into neighborhoods, colleges and careers once reserved for whites only.

I'm too young to remember those days. But hearing my parents talk about the late 1960s, it sounds in some ways like another world. Numerous African-Americans now hold positions of power, from mayor to governor to corporate chief executive – and, yes, once upon a time, president. The U.S. is a very different place than it was 50 years ago.

Or is it? As a scholar of minority politics, I know that while some things have improved markedly for black Americans since 1968, today we are still fighting many of the same battles as Dr. King did in his day.

[...]

**This is now**

So, how far have black people progressed since 1968? Have we gotten our fair share yet? Those questions have been on my mind a lot this month.

In some ways, we've barely budged as a people. Poverty is still too common in the U.S. In 1968, 25 million Americans — roughly 13 percent of the population — lived below poverty level. In 2016, 43.1 million — or more than 12.7 percent — do.

Today's black poverty rate of 22 percent is almost three times that of whites. Compared to the 1968 rate of 32 percent, there's not been a huge improvement.

Financial security, too, still differs dramatically by race. Black households earn \$57.30 for every \$100 in income earned by white families. And for every \$100 in white family wealth, black families hold just \$5.04.



From Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter, many modern social movements decry the same inequality Dr. King did.

Lawrence Bryant/Reuters

Another troubling aspect about black social progress — or should I say the lack thereof — is how many black families are headed by single women. In the 1960s, unmarried women were the main breadwinners for 20 percent of households. In recent years, the percentage has risen as high as 72 percent.

This is important, but not because of some outmoded sexist ideal of the family. In the U.S., as across the Americas, there's a powerful connection between poverty and female-headed households.

Black Americans today are also more dependent on government aid than they were in 1968. Currently, almost 40 percent of African-Americans are poor enough to qualify for welfare, housing assistance and other government programs that offer modest support to families living under the poverty line.

That's higher than any other U.S. racial group. Just 21 percent of Latinos, 18 percent Asian-Americans and 17 percent of whites are on welfare.

### **Finding the bright spots**

There are, of course, positive trends. Today, far more African-Americans graduate from college — 38 percent — than they did 50 years ago.

Our incomes are also way up. Black adults experienced a more significant income increase from 1980 to 2016 — from \$28,667 to \$39,490 — than any other U.S. demographic group. This, in part, is why there's now a significant black middle class.

Legally, African-Americans may live in any community they want — and from Beverly Hills to the Upper East Side, they can and do.

But why aren't those gains deeper and more widespread?

Some prominent thinkers — including the award-winning writer Ta-Nehisi Coates and "The New Jim Crow" author Michelle Alexander — put the onus on institutional racism. Coates argues, among other things, that racism has so held back African-Americans throughout history that we deserve reparations, resurfacing a claim with a long history in black activism.

Alexander, for her part, has famously said that racial profiling and the mass incarceration of African-Americans are just modern-day forms of the legal, institutionalized racism that once ruled across the American South.

More conservative thinkers may hold black people solely accountable for their problems. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson is in this “personal responsibility” camp, along with public intellectuals like Thomas Sowell and Larry Elder.

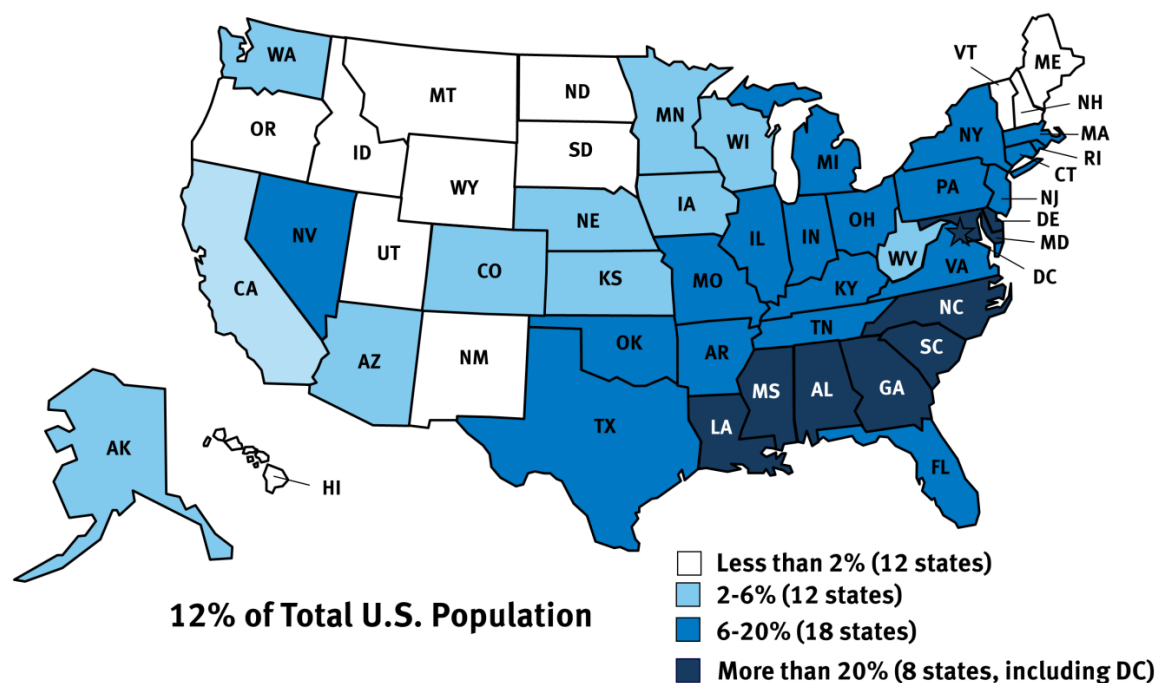
Depending on who you ask, then, black people aren’t much better off than in 1968 because either there’s not enough government help or there’s way too much.[...]

[Sharon Austin](#), Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of African American Studies, University of Florida  
, 2018 February 7

<http://theconversation.com/black-americans-mostly-left-behind-by-progress-since-dr-kings-death-89956>

## Doc 2: Data about discrimination

### Black Population, by State, 2010-2011



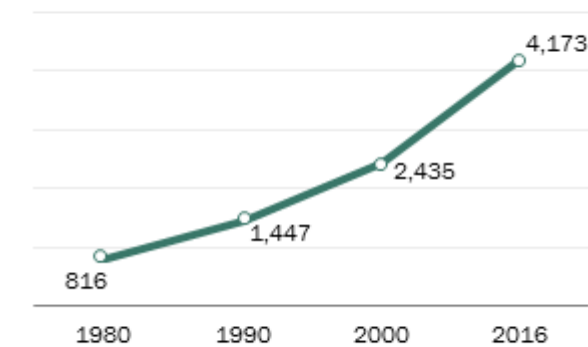
NOTE: Percent of Total State Population

SOURCE: KCMU/Urban Institute analysis of March 2011 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement



# Black immigrant population in the U.S. rose to 4.2 million in 2016

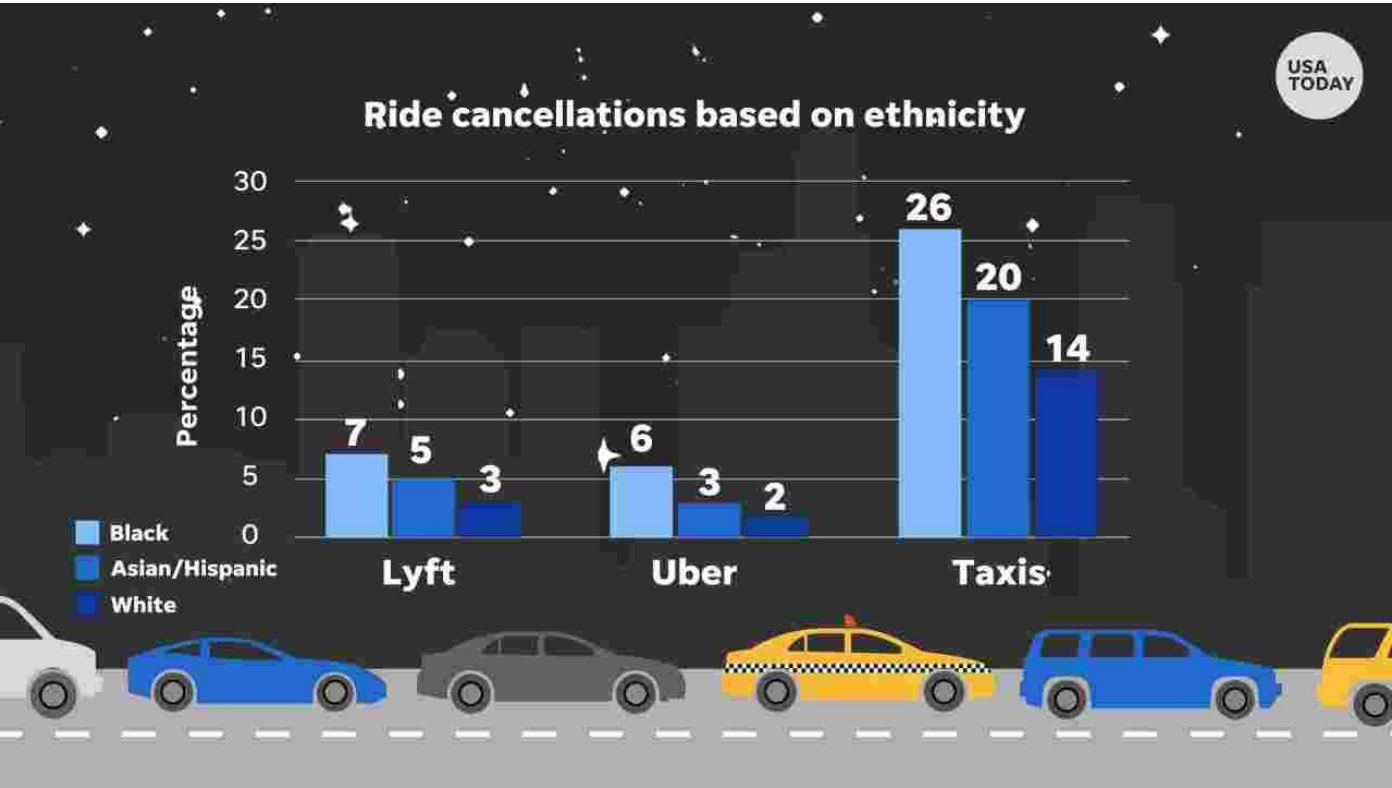
Total foreign-born black population in the U.S., in thousands



Note: In 2000 and later, foreign-born blacks include single-race blacks and multiracial blacks, regardless of Hispanic origin. Prior to 2000, blacks include only single-race blacks regardless of Hispanic origin since a multiracial option was not available.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2016 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS) and the 1980, 1990 and 2000 censuses (5% IPUMS).

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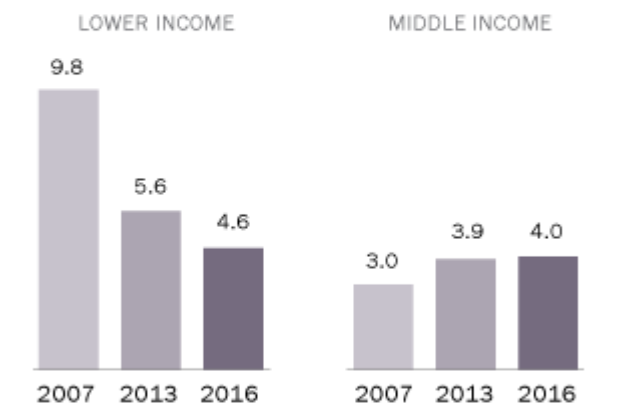
Marco della Cava USA TODAY , Published 8:12 p.m. UTC Jun 28, 2018



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**Wealth gaps between blacks and whites decreased among lower-income families but increased among middle-income families**

*Median net worth of white lower- and middle-income families is \_\_\_\_ times greater than that of black lower- and middle-income families*



Note: Blacks and whites are single-race only and include only non-Hispanics.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Survey of Consumer Finances public-use data.

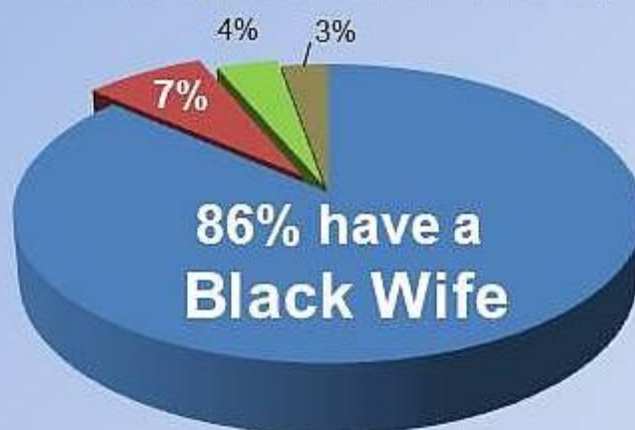
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# Black Marriage in 2014

among non-Hispanic African Americans age 15 and up

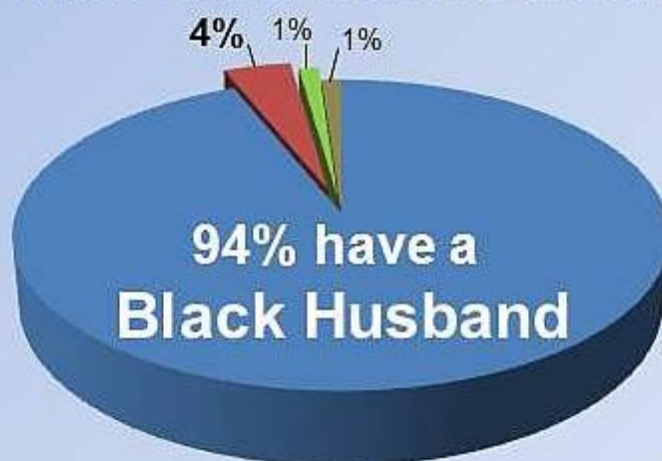
## Who Black Men Marry



- Black Spouse
- White Spouse
- Hispanic Spouse
- Other Race

**NOTE: There are 364,000 more married Black men than married Black women**

## Who Black Women Marry

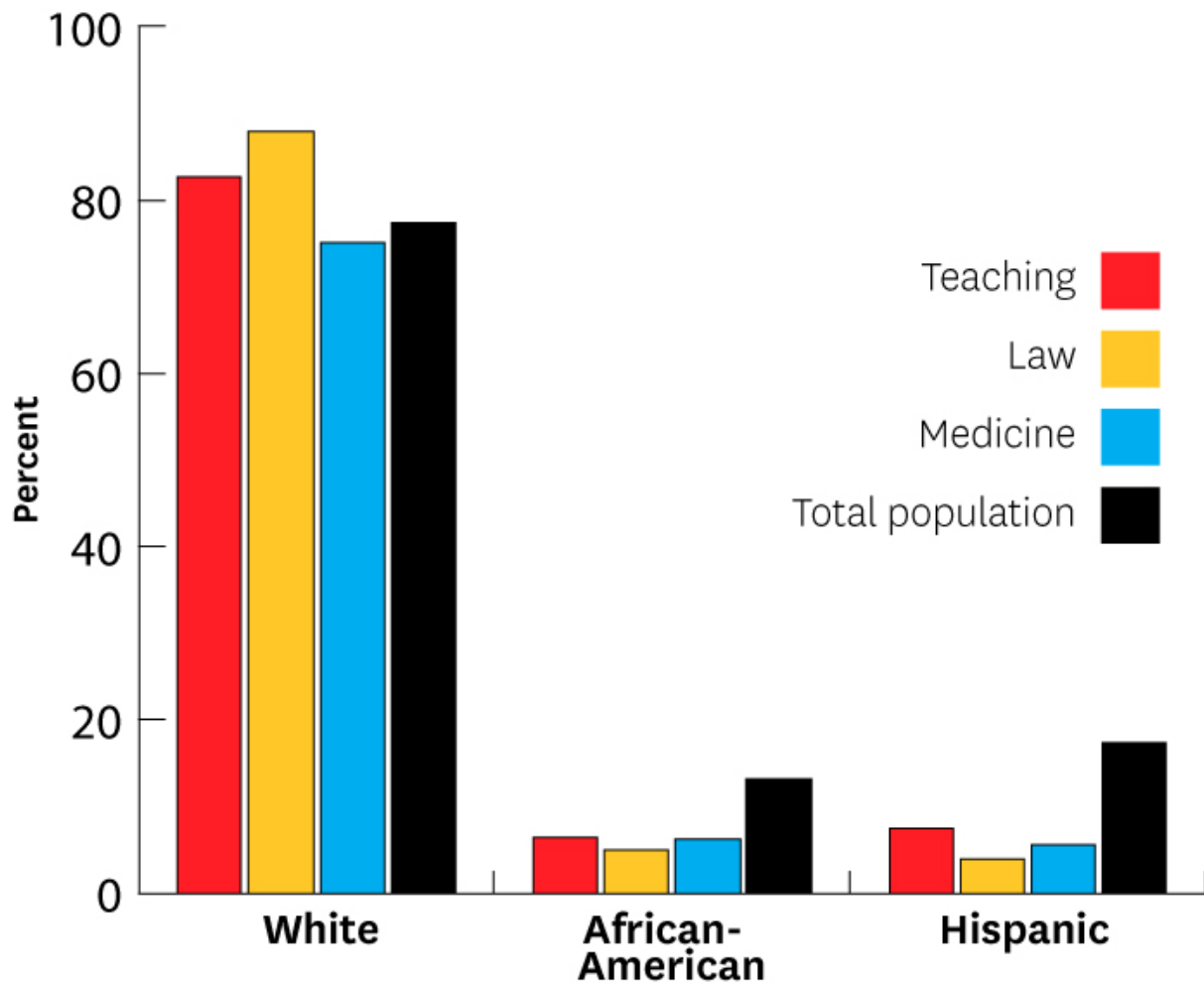


NOTE: White" refers to Non-Hispanic White alone, "Black" to Non-Hispanic Black alone, and "Other" to Non-Hispanic Other alone or any race combination.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2014 Annual Social and Economic Supplement

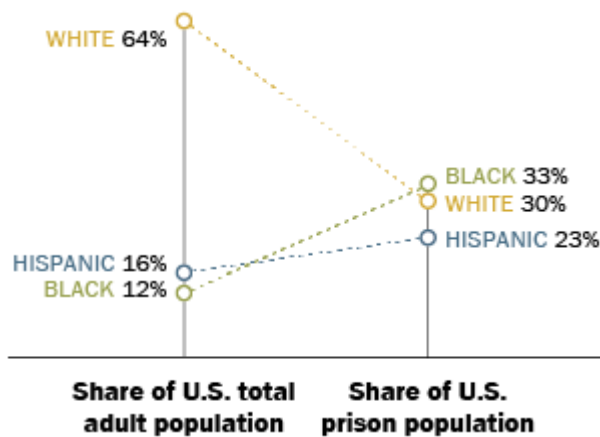
# Diversity gap in teaching, law and medicine



**Sources:** "What Do the National Data Tell Us About Minority Teacher Shortage," Richard Ingersoll, University of Pennsylvania; Lawyer Demographics 2015, American Bar Association; Diversity in the Physicians Workforce: Facts and Figures 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

## Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in U.S. prisons

Total U.S. adult population and U.S. prison population by race and Hispanic origin, 2016



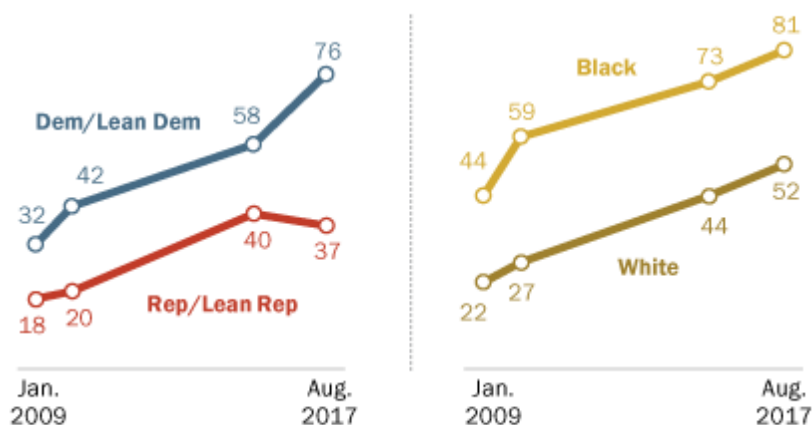
Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are single-race, not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Prison population is defined as inmates sentenced to more than a year in federal or state prison.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics.

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## Wide partisan gap in views of racism as a 'big problem' grows even wider; racial differences persist

% who say racism is a 'big problem' in our society today



Note: Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Aug. 15-21, 2017. 2009 and 2010 surveys from ABC News/Washington Post.

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### Doc 3 : Black Lives Matter

Source: wikipedia



Alicia Garza



Patrisse Cullors



Opal Tometi

Black Lives Matter (BLM) is an international activist movement, originating in the African-American community, that campaigns against violence and systemic racism towards black people. BLM regularly holds protests speaking out against police killings of black people, and broader issues such as racial profiling, police brutality, and racial inequality in the United States criminal justice system.

In 2013, the movement began with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of African-American teen Trayvon Martin in February 2012. Black Lives Matter became nationally recognized for its street demonstrations following the 2014 deaths of two African Americans: Michael Brown—resulting in protests and unrest in Ferguson, a city near St. Louis—and Eric Garner in New York City. Since the Ferguson protests, participants in the movement have demonstrated against the deaths of numerous other African Americans by police actions or while in police custody. In the summer of 2015, Black Lives Matter activists became involved in the 2016 United States presidential election. The originators of the hashtag and call to action, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, expanded their project into a national network of over 30 local chapters between 2014 and 2016. The overall Black Lives Matter movement, however, is a decentralized network and has no formal hierarchy.