

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

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**THE ROOTS AND CAUSES OF THE RECENT RACE RIOTS IN THE UNITED  
STATES**

Bakalářská práce

Studijní program: Anglická filologie

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### **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma The Roots and Causes of the Recent Race Riots in the United States vypracoval samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedl jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V ..... dne.....

Podpis.....

## **PODĚKOVÁNÍ**

Rád bych poděkoval svému vedoucímu Mgr. David Livingstone Ph.D. za odborné vedení práce, cenné rady a především trpělivost a čas, který mi věnoval.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	6
<b>1. Inequality in Modern Society</b> .....	7
1.1 Housing .....	7
1.2 Education .....	14
1.3 Employment.....	19
<b>2. Racial Riots</b> .....	24
2.1 Riots in LA (1992) .....	24
2.2 Riots in Ferguson (2014) .....	31
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	37
<b>RESUMÉ</b> .....	40
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	43
<b>LIST OF PICTURES</b> .....	48
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	48
<b>ANNOTATION</b> .....	49
<b>ANOTACE</b> .....	50

## INTRODUCTION

Racial tension in the United States continues to be an issue in the 21st century. In my thesis, I would like to look at the factors that have negatively impacted the African-American community and together with injustice and racial profiling by the police, led to violent riots and conflicts between these two groups. I will be focusing on housing, education and employment opportunities.

The first chapter will provide a historical background of each these factors. In the case of housing, we will look at some of the laws that enabled white Americans to progress in a rather fast manner, compared to their fellow black citizens, who fell victim to practices such as housing segregation and redlining. This fact had shaped the black community for decades to come, forcing them into poorly equipped and maintained neighborhoods that later became ghettos we see today. Bills that had played a significant role in housing, such as the GI Bill had also influenced other areas of black lives. The chapter will discuss in detail the impact of school segregation under the Jim Crow laws as well as the struggle of black soldiers to access promised benefits of the GI Bill and acquire their college degree to achieve financial sustainability. This is closely connected to the absence of black middle class in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the chapter will present conditions under which blacks struggled to get access to equal job opportunities.

The second chapter will examine the Los Angeles riots of 1992 and the Ferguson riots of 2014, both events being the result of continuous oppression, segregation and racial profiling of blacks by the Police. In the first part, the chapter will describe the LA riot itself as well as the incidents that had led up to them – the beating of Rodney King and the trial of California versus Powell, Wind, Briseno, and Koon. The thesis will present psychological factors described by Lawrence Vogelmann in his essay *The Big Black Man Syndrome: The Rodney King Trial and the Use of Racial Stereotypes in the Courtroom*, which according to him explain the fear many white people experience when dealing with black bodies. The second part of the chapter will cover the events in Ferguson, 2014 – the shooting of Michael Brown and following Ferguson riots that lasted for months.

## 1. Inequality in Modern Society

African-Americans living in the United States have been struggling to be accepted by the rest of the society for hundreds of years. Even though the fight for equality is an ongoing process that had started after the American Civil War, the fight is far from over. Many social and economic factors have been and still are contributing to this problem. This thesis will focus on three major factors that have been present since the Civil War and that have actively stripped African-Americans off equal opportunities and put them in a disadvantageous position in comparison to their white counter partners. Andrew Hacker, the author of *Two Nations*, had used Benjamin's Disraeli's description of the poor and rich Victorian England to describe the ongoing racial problem in the United States. "Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thought, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets."<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Housing

It is important to accept that the historical events are a crucial factor concerning the issue of inequality between white Americans and the people of color. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, over 90% of black Americans lived in the Southern part of the US, mostly in rural areas.<sup>2</sup> These people were skilled in agriculture, and other blue-collar professions often hired for a particular task. According to the farm records mentioned in Thomas Maloney's essay *African-Americans in The Twentieth Century*, black and white workers were paid approximately the same wage. However, whites were much more likely to own a land.<sup>3</sup>

A dramatic change came in early 1900 with the Jim Crow laws. Even with the Civil Rights Act of 1875 that was supposed to stop the segregation in its early stages, the Congress had claimed it had no control over individuals and private business. These laws were used to enforce the segregation of whites and black in the southern

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<sup>1</sup> Hacker, Andrew. *Two Nations*. New York. Scribner. 2003. Print. page 7.

<sup>2</sup>United States Bureau of the Census "Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1900" Web. April 19 2017. [https://www.census.gov/library/publications/time-series/statistical\\_abstracts.html](https://www.census.gov/library/publications/time-series/statistical_abstracts.html)

<sup>3</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century." *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

part of the US. The laws segregated many services such as transport, lodging, and schools. These services were described as separate but equal. However, this could not be further from the truth.<sup>4</sup>

Even after being liberated, African-Americans were still looked at as inferior, less developed and more violent. There had been a several legislations passed in between 1934 and 1977 that had played a key role in segregation of whites and blacks. The chapter will further describe these legislations and their contribution to the segregation of American people. Segregation laws together with growing demand for workforce in the Northern parts of the United States in the mid-1910s resulted in African-Americans leaving the South in large numbers. The Northern economy had suffered a decrease in numbers of European immigrants who were often used as a cheap labor force when the World War I broke out. The situation did not improve after the war, due to new laws limiting immigration to the US.<sup>5</sup> Many African-Americans seized this opportunity hoping to access a better-paid job and thrive in better living conditions up North. Not everyone had welcomed the fast-growing African-American community, and the black homes were once again segregated from the white ones.

The National Housing Act of 1934 was signed by Franklin D. Roosevelt to improve National-wide housing standards, to provide employment and to stimulate industry during the Great Depression. Many people had lost their homes due to their inability to pay the mortgage. The National Housing Act had introduced a new system of mutual mortgages. FHA or the Federal Housing Administration had revolutionized home ownership and led to a building boom in the US. Many low and moderate-income families had found new homes which might indicate the success of this Act.

However, together with all the benefits and newly built homes, the legislation had a desolating impact on the black community. Black people were often zoned out of white suburban areas, which prevented the two communities from merging and

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<sup>4</sup> Tischauser, L. Vincent "Jim Crow Laws" 1st ed. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2012. Web. 8 April 2017.  
[https://books.google.cz/books?id=whk2vBbjHp4C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.cz/books?id=whk2vBbjHp4C&printsec=frontcover&hl=cs&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>5</sup> Department of Homeland Security. "Mass Immigration And WWI." *USCIS*. N.p., 2017. Web. 24 April 2017. <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/our-history/agency-history/mass-immigration-and-wwi>



helped to set the foundation for future Black Belt or ghetto areas.<sup>6</sup> Prof. Gibson described this situation in her essay *Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000*: “Realtors, lenders, and government guarantors widely promoted the use of restrictive covenants (mutually agreed upon by builders, Realtors, bankers, appraisers, insurers, and residents) that forbade non-Whites to own property in specific areas.”<sup>7</sup> However, the biggest change brought by this act came with the introduction of redlining. The term redlining was introduced by sociologist John McKnight in the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Redlining is a practice of denying services to residents of certain areas based on the ethnic makeup of those areas. Banking services like loans or insurance were often among these services. New “residential security maps” were introduced, outlining American cities and dividing them into areas from A to D. These maps were supposed to help the investors and banks find safe areas for real-estate investments. One such map of Los Angeles is presented in picture 1. below, outlining areas with high African-American population with red color. Areas marked as A or green color were the first-grade areas, typically suburban areas inhabited primarily by whites. Areas marked as B or blue color were considered as “still desirable”. Areas C, marked with yellow color were labeled as “declining”, and finally areas marked with D or red color were described as dangerous for investments, not worthy any mortgage support.<sup>9</sup> The result of this was that the areas selected as unfit for investment were left without any financial aid, often with neglected public services such as schools, street and building maintenance, garbage disposal, etc. These areas set the foundation for ghettos and larger black communities still visible today.<sup>10</sup>

The classical ecology theories of Chicago School sociology describe the decline of neighborhoods as a natural, inevitable process which unfolds diachronically in following stages: rural, residential development, full occupancy, downgrading, thinning out, cash or renewal. Robert E. Park, who is considered to be one of the most influential researchers in the early U.S. sociology, had associated the stage of downgrading to the outflow of original, wealthier residents and inflow of lower-

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<sup>6</sup> Gibson, J. Karen. “Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000.”

<sup>7</sup> Gibson, J. Karen. “Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000.” Page 5.

<sup>8</sup> Hillier, E. Amy. "Redlining and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation" *University of Pennsylvania*, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Hillier, E. Amy. "Redlining and the Home Owners' Loan Corporation" *University of Pennsylvania*, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Gibson, J. Karen. “Bleeding Albina: A History of Community Disinvestment, 1940-2000.”

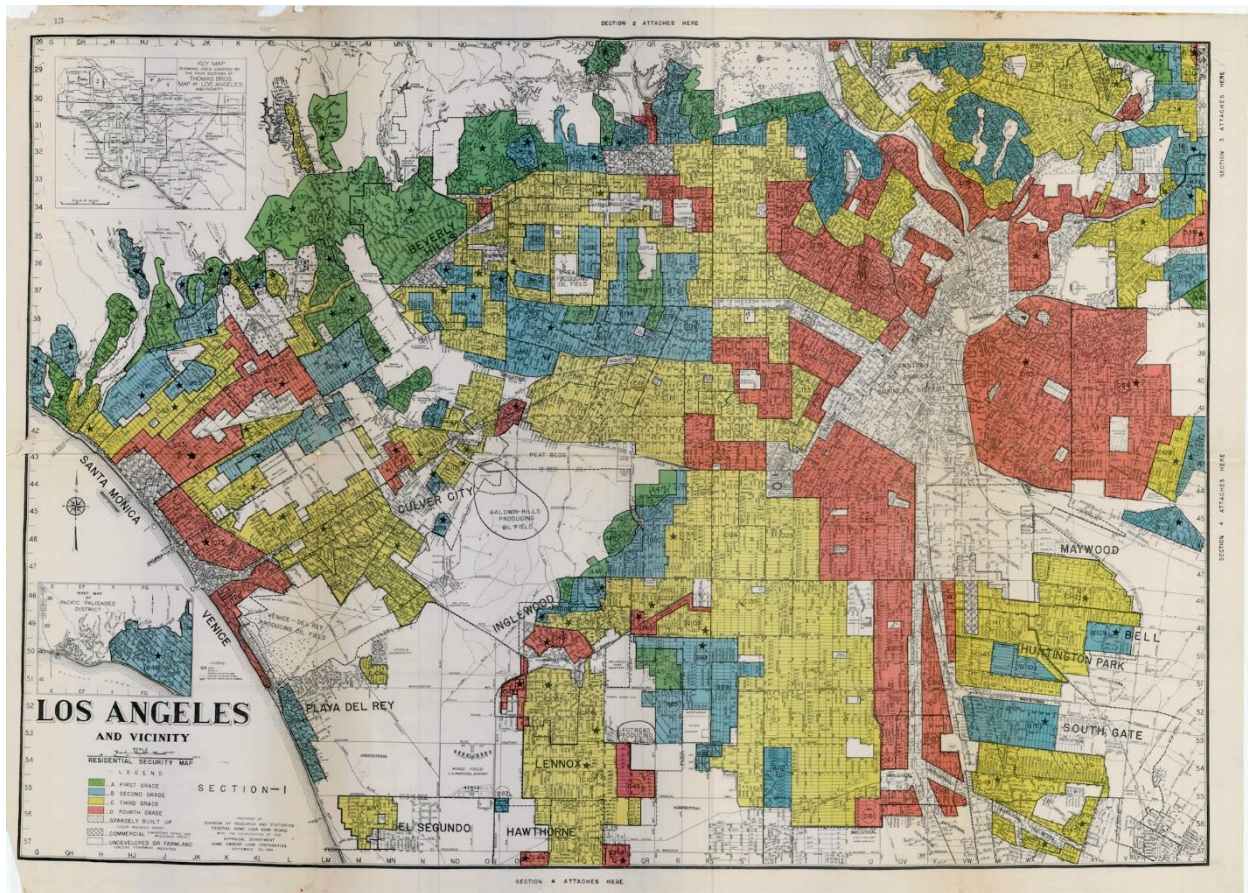
income residents.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, more critical scholars such as professor Neil Smith of the City University New York had analyzed neighborhood decline by emphasizing the profit-taking of Realtors, bankers and other profiting figures, who had systematically reduced the worth or value of housing in these areas. Professor Smith named this process devalorization. The process has five stages: new housing construction and the first cycle of use, the transition to landlord control, blockbusting, redlining and finally, abandonment. After new housing ages, owners move elsewhere, and the property is being rented. This means that the neighborhood now has more renters than actual house owners. During the second stage, it is up to the proprietor to choose to profit off the rent, resulting in a decrease of maintenance of the property. The next step involves Realtors who use Blockbusting to force to the homeowners to sell their houses at below-market prices by using fear of racial turnover in the neighborhood. The Realtors then sell the property to low-income families at inflated prices, moving the area to the fourth stage, which is the actual redlining itself. The banks redline the neighborhood which reduces the home owner occupancy and makes it harder for the homeowners to sell property they no longer want to keep. The neighborhood then moves to the final stage, the abandonment. The home owners often take drastic, desperate steps like arson to cash out the property through fire insurance.<sup>12</sup>

If we compare point of view of the classical school with more critical scholars, we can notice that even though the traditional model might be helpful for understanding the stages of neighborhood change, it does not take into account the problem of space, race, power, and class. Therefore, it does not describe why do these changes occur and does not go in depth into factors that might be causing them.

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<sup>11</sup> Park, Robert Ezra et al. *The City*. Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier*. London, Routledge, 1996.



**Picture 1. The map of Los Angeles showing the redlined neighborhood (1939)**

Source: This 1939 map of Los Angeles ranks neighborhoods by desirability, as determined by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC).

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/10/housing-discrimination-redlining-maps/>

The Servicemen Readjustment Act of 1944 also known as the G.I. Bill was signed by president Franklin D. Roosevelt that aimed at reintegration of the American soldiers returning home from the World War II. The main benefits for the soldiers concerned tuition for education and training, small loans, and mortgages for new home ownership and in cases of unemployed veterans, a weekly paycheck of 20\$ for 52 weeks.<sup>13</sup> With millions of soldiers returning after WWII taking advantage of the bill, American cities had experienced a massive growth of suburban areas. However, African-American soldiers did not meet with the same condition as their white

<sup>13</sup> "History And Timeline - Education And Training." Benefits.Va.Gov, 2017. <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>.

counterparts. Although the Bill itself was not written in a way, that would advocate racism, the government programs were directed by local, mostly white officials. Therefore, the Bill was interpreted in different ways for blacks and whites across the United States. African-American citizens were not able to purchase a property in predominantly white neighborhoods due to Blockbusting. The Realtors believed that a black family moving into a white neighborhood would negatively influence the prices of surrounding properties and that this would lead to a rapid decline of the neighborhood itself. This had forced the black population to move into redlined, inner cities, slowly creating slums with high criminality due to the absence of financing and availability of public services.<sup>14</sup>

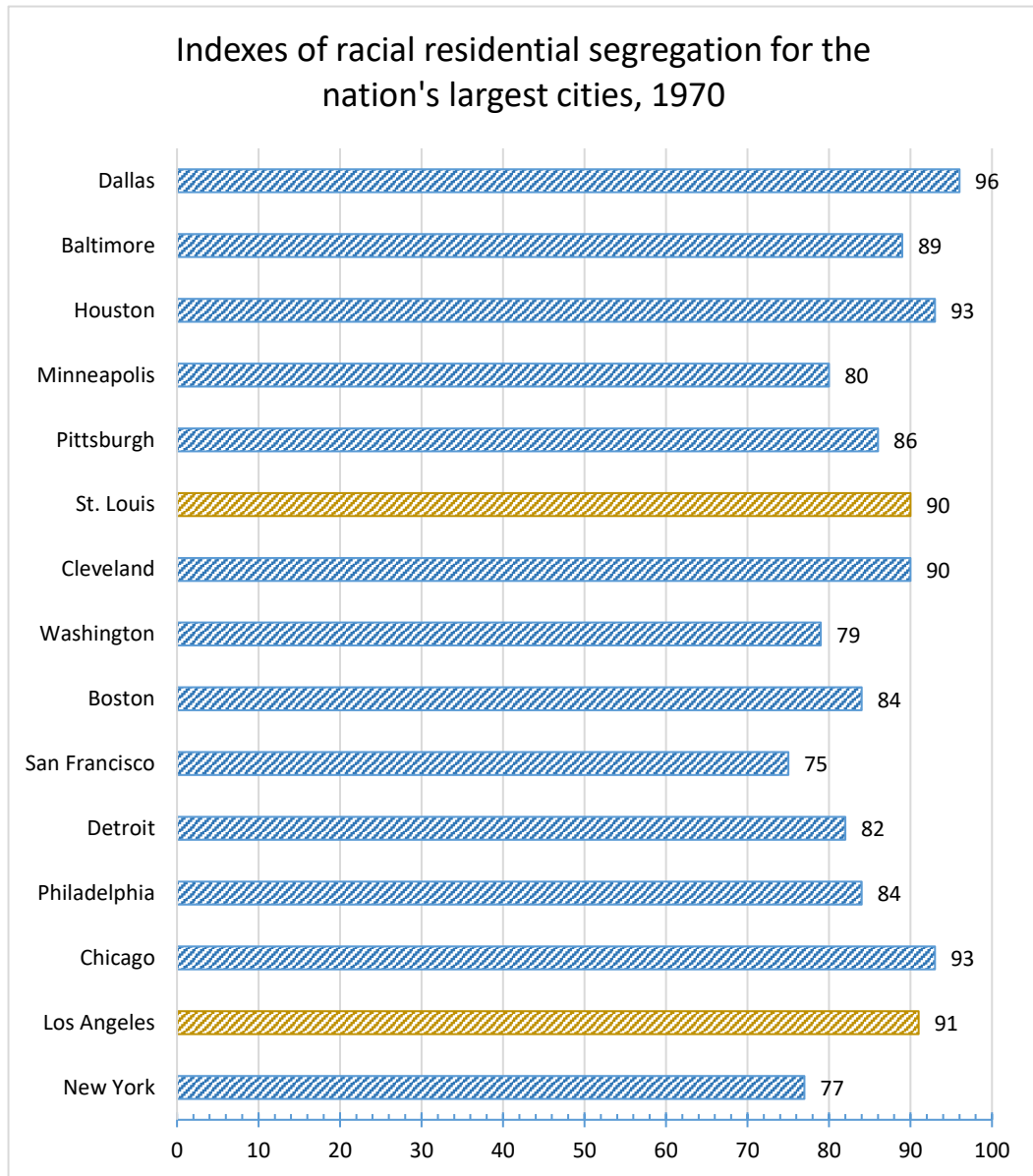
A change for the better came in 1968 with the Fair Housing Act signed by president Lyndon B. Johnson, who had also signed the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act into law, which prohibited discrimination in housing and financial services based on race, nationality or creed. The Act extended on the previous acts and made using force, intimidation, injuring and interfering with anyone based on the same criteria a federal crime. However, the transition was not as fluent as one might think. It was the increasing violence associated with the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the protests against the Vietnam War that called for a unification of the American people and finally resulted in the Fair Housing Act, providing equality for the American people.<sup>15</sup> However, the process of desegregation is a dichotomous process. Table 1. shows the racial composition of residential areas of the largest US cities in 1970. This index was presented in a publication by professor Reynold Farley of the University of Chicago who refers to it as the "index of dissimilarity". The numbers indicate the number of black or white inhabitants, who would have to shift from one area to another to achieve complete integration in these cities. Therefore, the numerical information of a fully integrated city would be 0. Unfortunately, the results, shown in table 1., are quite high. Please note that the numbers for Los Angeles and St. Louis, marked with yellow color, which

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<sup>14</sup> Herbold, Hilary. "Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 6, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Goldzwig, R. Steven. "LBJ, The Rhetoric Of Transcendence, And The Civil Rights Act Of 1968." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, vol 6, no. 1, 2003, pp. 25-53.

the thesis will discuss in the second chapter in connection to riots are among the highest ones presented in the graph.<sup>16</sup>



**Table 1. Indexes of racial residential segregation for the nation's largest cities (1970)**

Source: Sorensen, K. Taeuber, & L. Hollingsworth, Index of Racial Residential Segregation for 109 cities in the United States, 1940 to 1970, at 7 (studies in Racial Segregation No. 1, 1974)

<sup>16</sup> Farley, Reynolds. "Residential Segregation And Its Implications For School Integration." *Law And Contemporary Problems*, vol 39, no. 1, 1975.

## 1.2 Education

When the Jim Crow's laws came into effect at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, alike housing, transportation and every other public service, primary schools, colleges, and universities became segregated. While the white schools were receiving substantial financial as well as human resources, the black schools, whose budgets in most areas were about one fourth of those for white schools, did not improve at all leaving African-American students with a sharply declining quality of education. This had left students of color at a significant disadvantage in cases of both their future studies and their opportunities on the job market.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the attempts of many to deny African-Americans equal access to learning and knowledge, the segregation in the former slave states had led to the creation of Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) – institutions of higher education for people of color. These institutions embodied the African-American frustration and hopes of achieving higher education in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not only did the universities provide education to blacks, but they have also provided their students with political, social as well as religious leadership they needed so desperately. Among most notable institutions are the Fisk University, Spelman College, Morehouse College, Dillard University, Clark Atlanta, Hampton University and Tuskegee University.<sup>18</sup>

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 had improved lives of many GIs who came back from World War II. The Congress estimated that veterans, who used the benefits provided by the bill to complete a college degree or a training program had earned an average of 10,000 \$ to 15,000 \$ more annually, than the soldiers who did not. The Bill had educated 7,8 million servicemen and servicewomen after World War II. However black veterans had quickly learned that even though the specification of the Bill was not based on discrimination, the Bill itself was interpreted one way for

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<sup>17</sup> Herbold, Hilary. "Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 6, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, Walter Recharde, and Jewell. O. Joseph. "A Backward Glance Forward: Past, Present and Future Perspectives On Historically Black Colleges And Universities." *The Review Of Higher Education*, vol 25, no. 3, 2002. pp. 241-261.

black and another for whites. The Veteran Administration (VA) kept black veterans from benefiting from the GI Bill. Additionally, most of the black veterans simply could not afford to seek education when labor and income were needed at home. The ones who were still willing to fight for their right to receive promised education had met with few allies within the VA. A survey conducted in 1947 by scholar Howard Johnson shows that out of 1,700 veterans employed by the Veteran's Administration in one southern state, only seven of them were black, even though African-Americans comprised one-third of all southern veterans at the time.<sup>19</sup> Even if some were granted tuition from the government, it was of little help to the blacks who could not enter the college due to overcrowding at HBCUs or do the fact that they were simply not prepared for college-level work. Due to the low quality of primary and secondary public education of blacks, only a few of them had the academic qualifications for admission to overcrowded colleges.

Out of 100,000 African-American who had applied for the educational benefits by 1946, only one fifth was registered in college. Most of the ones not accepted had remained on the waiting list even if it meant waiting a year or longer before being admitted.<sup>20</sup> More ambitious blacks, who wished to enter the most exclusive institutions were often steered away from liberal arts education. Instead, highly qualified applicants for a degree were channeled into degree programs or colleges that were "more suitable" and often less prestigious. The Veteran's Administration, which had often collaborated with the universities to allocate students this way would often "put them in line" with threats of denial of benefits provided by the GI Bill.

The VA subscribed to the industrial philosophy of black education by Booker T. Washington. In his words: "I plead for industrial education and development for the Negro not because I want to cramp him, but because I want to free him."<sup>21</sup> Washington, who was a black himself, born a slave on a western Virginia farm believed that blacks should be trained for agricultural and technical work instead of liberal arts.

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<sup>19</sup> Herbold, Hilary. "Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 6, 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Herbold, Hilary. "Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill" *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 6, 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Meier, August. *Negro Thought in America*. Ann Arbor, Mich., Univ. Of Michigan Press., 1995. page 98.

This was the case in Alabama, in the Tuskegee University which was and still is a private HBCU and which was under Washington's leadership from 1881 to 1915.<sup>22</sup>

Although being one of the first and most influential black leaders, Washington's controversial ideas were later challenged by a new generation of African-American scholars in the early 20th century. This class of black intellectuals included pioneers such as mathematician and sociologist Kelly Miller, lawyer and author James Weldon Johnson, poet and novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar, lawyer and journalist Archibald H. Grimke and most notably W. E. B. Du Bois. The group was named The Talented Tenth, after an essay of the same name by W. E. B. Du Bois published in 1903. Du Bois, who was a historian and sociologist was the first African-American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. His essay *Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others* was a critical review of Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* and Washington's approach to black education. Unlike Washington, Du Bois argued that African-American education should not be limited to manual labor only. He believed that the only way to empower black population was by developing leadership skills in young African-Americans by including liberal arts in the university curriculum.<sup>23</sup>

Even though Washington and Du Bois had different perspectives on the issue of which path was the right one for future black intellectuals, it should be noted that they have both acknowledged the importance of education and have both contributed significantly to the overall fight for the education of black men and women in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As mentioned previously, most of the HBCUs were located in the former slave states, in the South of the US. These states, which had accounted for 79% of the black population, were facing a massive wave of incoming GIs seeking education. The estimates indicate that 95% of former black GIs who had applied for the benefits of the GI Bill after World War II were educated in the South. In his book, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges*, historian Keith Olson states that the increase in enrollment between 1940 and 1948 climbed to 75%. If we look at the figures for the year 1947 alone, the increase in enrollment at black universities was 50% while the enrollment at

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<sup>22</sup> Meier, August. *Negro Thought in America*. Ann Arbor, Mich., Univ. Of Michigan Press, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Talented Tenth*. New York, NY, James Pott And Co, 1903.



white institution grew only by 29,4%.<sup>24</sup> The lack of physical resources compared to the overwhelming number of applicants had forced the HBCUs to turn away 20,000 veterans in this year alone. The admitted veterans discovered vastly unequal education system. Olson further describes the conditions on HBCUs:

“Less than 5 percent of these colleges enjoyed accreditation by the Association of American Universities. No school had an accredited engineering department or a graduate program at the doctoral level, and seven states had no graduate programs at all. Half of the Negro colleges had fewer than 250. Southern Negro elementary and secondary schools, moreover, lacking adequate budgets, teachers, and support, generally sent to colleges students less prepared than the graduates of separate, unequal white schools.”<sup>25</sup>

A turning point for black education came in 1954 with the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Until the *Brown* case, individual states were able to choose to segregate facilities if the services provided were equal. It was due to this limitation that a third grader Linda Brown had to walk six blocks to a bus stop from which she would take a bus to Monroe Elementary, black school 1,6 kilometers away from the bus stop instead of walking to Sumner Elementary, a white institution just seven blocks away from her house. Even though the *Brown*'s family lived in an integrated neighborhood, Linda and another nineteen African-American children were refused enrollment in the fall of 1951. While the District Court had ruled in favor of the Board of Education, referring to the Supreme Court's decision from 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the case was taken by the Supreme Court and combined four other cases of segregated education from various states - *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County (Virginia)*, *Gebhart v. Belton (Delaware)*, *Briggs v. Elliott (South Carolina)* and *Bolling v. Sharpe (Washington D.C.)*. Despite the fact that in the case of Linda Brown both Monroe and Sumner elementary schools were indeed equal regarding equipment and teachers, the case had posed another important question.

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<sup>24</sup> Olson, W. Keith. *The G.I. Bill, The Veterans and The Colleges*. Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1974.

<sup>25</sup> Herbold, Hilary. “Never a Level Playing Field: Blacks and the GI Bill” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 6, 1994. Page 108.

Can schools be equal if the students are segregated merely on the basis of skin color?<sup>26</sup> The Court heard the arguments in spring 1953, but the justices were deeply divided, and the case was put on hold until the fall of the same year. While the case was on hold, the death of Chief Justice Fred M. Winston had led President Eisenhower to appoint the Governor of California, Earl Warren, who believed that segregation was unconstitutional, as the new Chief Justice. Understanding that many southern states would resist this decision, Warren had called for a unanimous decision to give the court ruling legitimacy. In his reading, instead of questioning the equality of black and white schools, he focused on the effect of segregation on the educational system and the society. The Court's decision was also influenced by an experiment called the Doll test, conducted by educational psychologist Mamie Philips Clark, who argued that segregation generates a feeling of inferiority.<sup>27</sup>

Drawing on this research, on May 17, 1957, the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal, depriving the plaintiffs of equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This decision had led to the gradual desegregation of educational institutions across the United States.

It is important to note how the educational benefits of the GI Bill transformed the structure of education itself, shifting the US society to a society with knowledge as the primary resource for people as well as for the economy with the benefits empowering a generation of working-class Americans to earn a college degree and enabling them to live an economically stable life. While the white middle class grew in numbers and prosperity, the black middle class failed to keep up with its white counterpart.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Patterson, T. James. *Brown V. Board of Education*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Patterson, T. James. *Brown V. Board of Education*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Olson, W. Keith. *The G.I. Bill, The Veterans and The Colleges*. Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1974.

### 1.3 Employment

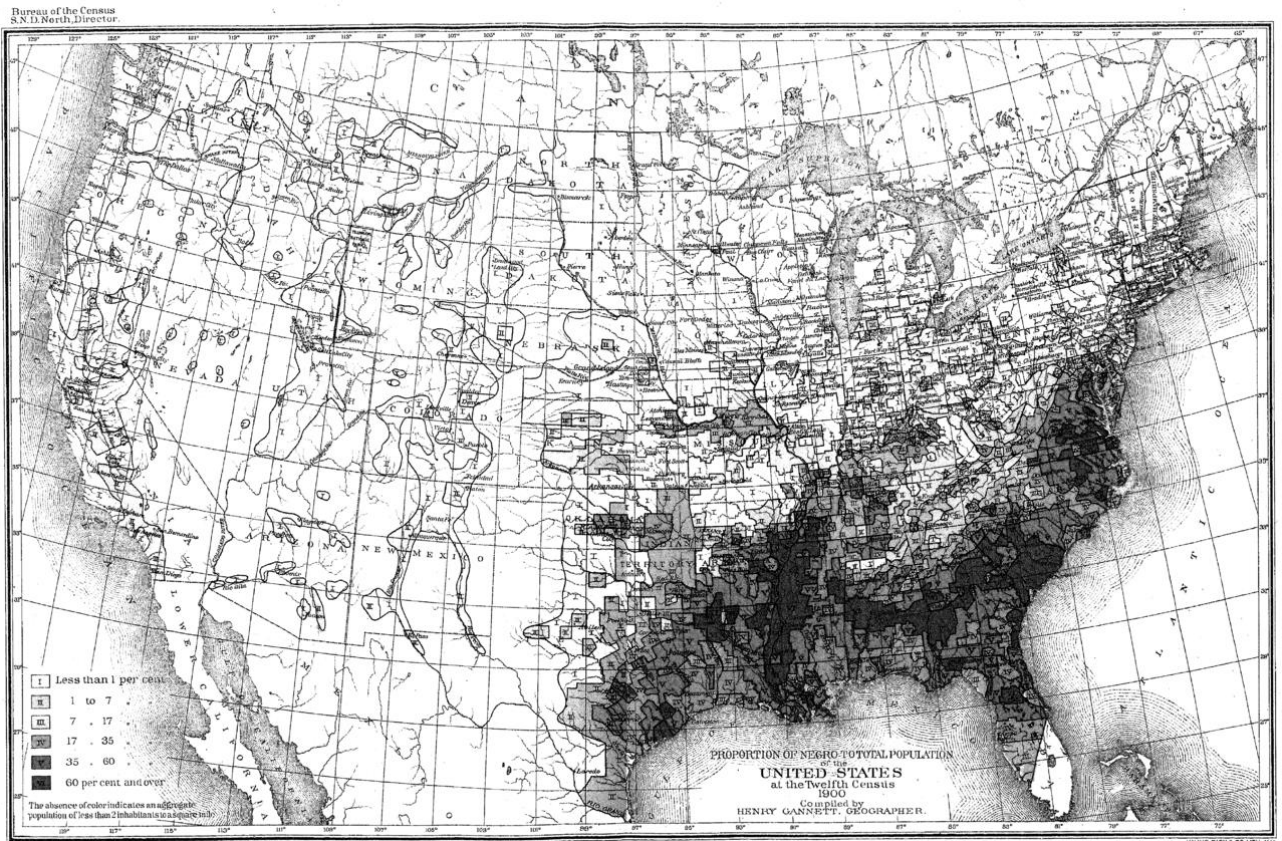
In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, out of 4,5 million African-Americans living in the US, around 90% of them lived in the Southern states of the United States – a figure that had not changed dramatically since the mid-1800s. Three-quarters of black households were located in rural areas, and only one fifth of the black families had owned their houses. About 50% of black men and 35% of black women were still working in the agricultural sector or an industry closely connected to agriculture, opposed to only one-third of white men and 8% of white women working in the same sector.<sup>29</sup> The concentration, as well as distribution of blacks at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is illustrated in Picture 2, a map provided in the 1900 US Census.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century had begun with the Great Migration of African-Americans. Although, while the most widely accepted concept of the migration is that the first wave of blacks migrating north consisted primarily of black men and women trying to escape their agricultural background, seeking new opportunities up North, some sociologists, like professor Carole Marks argue that the very first wave rather consisted of African-Americans living in southern towns and cities. The ideas presented in her book *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* was further supported by data presented by Trent J. Alexander who had used the marriage registrations for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, during the 1930s. The data suggest that rather than moving from rural areas, a substantial number of blacks had immigrated North from southern towns and cities.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century". *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

<sup>30</sup> Tolnay, Stewart E. "The African American "Great Migration" And Beyond." *Annual Review Of Sociology*, vol 29, no. 1, 2003, pp. 209-232.



**Picture 2. Map of Black share of population in the 1900 US Census**

Source: Frontispiece of *Negroes in the United States* (1904), Bulletin 8 of United States Bureau of

Many blacks fleeing North were trying to access to better-paid jobs, better education or simply to escape the segregation and hate channeled towards them in the South. Cities like New York, Chicago, St. Luis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Indianapolis became the primary destination of migrating blacks. The first wave occurred at the begging of World War I, with about 1 million blacks seeking employment in sectors like the automobile industry, building new railroads or filling the gaps of white men who had left for the war. <sup>31</sup>

Even though blacks did gain access to new jobs, they were limited to a particular set of blue-collar jobs. The employers often used the desperate blacks for unpleasant, dangerous manual jobs like slaughter houses or previously mentioned automobile factories. Black workers were also used as strike breakers against the labor unions.

<sup>31</sup> Tolnay, Stewart E. "The African American "Great Migration" And Beyond." *Annual Review Of Sociology*, vol 29, no. 1, 2003, pp. 209-232.

When a strike occurred, the employer often hired African-Americans who were less likely to strike due to their financial situation. They were also less likely to become a member of these unions. The competition on the labor market, as well as the tension between Black and White communities, had led to deadly race riots in cities like St. Louis in 1917 and Chicago in 1919. The unions were eventually forced to accept black workers by the mid-1930s.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the 1920s, the number of black immigrants grew to over 2,5 million. The returning black soldiers who had fought for freedom during the WWI had set the foundations for the Civil Rights Movement after experiencing what life in an integrated society is like, compared to the still segregated United States.

“We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.”<sup>33</sup>

The economic boom had continued in the 1920s, and so did the immigration of blacks. One crucial factor was the Immigration Act of 1924, which had limited the number of immigrants the US would accept and therefore resulted in more native workers taking low-paid positions which were previously given to immigrants from Europe. However, the US economy had suffered a severe blow in the 1930s in the form of the Great Depression which had radically slowed down the movement of black masses from the South. African-Americans were the first ones to be laid off their jobs to be replaced by unemployed whites. This had left African-Americans with over 50% unemployment rate, twice the rate of white workers.<sup>34</sup>

Just like in the case of World War I, the preparations for World War II had once again sparked the need for manual workers. Many blacks still living in the South by the 1940s have had families and friends living up North who were able to provide

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<sup>32</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century". *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

<sup>33</sup> Du Bois, W. E. B. *Returning Soldiers*. New Haven, Gilder Lehrman Center, 2004. Page 13.

<sup>34</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century". *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

information required to move up North successfully. The Northern Black communities were considerably larger compared to the 1900s. The unemployment rate of black workers left behind by the Great Depression in the 1930s was still high due to the persisting trend to prioritize whites to blacks when hiring, compared to the unemployment rate of whites, which was about 15%. This had led President Roosevelt to create the Fair Employment Practice Committee in 1941 to ensure nondiscriminatory hiring by companies offering war-related work.<sup>35</sup> All these jobs, primarily blue-collar jobs in factories, building army vehicles, planes and weapons did not require higher education. This had contributed to increase in incomes of black workers, while the education gap remained the same.

The migration together with new job opportunities had increased the annual income for African-Americans which is shown in Table 2. The table presents the differences between incomes of black men and women in contrast to the incomes of whites in between 1939 and 1986. On the other hand, leaving steady, agriculture-based jobs in the South had led to a higher ratio of white to black unemployment. The ratio had risen from 1 in 1930 to 2 by 1960; it had remained the same until the end of 20th century.<sup>36</sup>

The situation for African-Americans in the 1960s South had not changed much from the early 1900s. Even though the taxes paid by blacks had been funding the government for years, only a few of them were able to find a job. The situation did not improve even after only 2% of blacks in cities like Selma, Alabama was allowed to register and vote.<sup>37</sup> Even with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the public facilities remained segregated. Over 3000 activists had participated in a 54-mile-long march that was violently suppressed by the police and supporters of white supremacy. This clash had accounted for multiple deaths. There were at least 26 civil rights activists murdered in between 1960 and 1965 with only one of the killers sentenced to life in prison. A crucial step forward for African-Americans across the nation was the signing

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<sup>35</sup> Collins, William "Race, Roosevelt, And Wartime Production." *American Economic Review*. 91. 1 (2001): 272-286. Web. 15 Mar. 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century". *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, H. Terry. *The sixties*. Pearson. 2011. Print

of Voting Rights Act of 1965 by President Johnson, peacefully allowing more than 50% of blacks in the South to register for the polls.<sup>38</sup>

Years	Male			Female		
	Black	White	Ratio	Black	White	Ratio
1939	\$537.45	\$1234.41	.44	\$331.32	\$771.69	.43
1949	1761.06	2984.96	.59	992.35	1781.96	.56
1959	2848.67	5157.65	.55	1412.16	2371.80	.59
1969	5341.64	8442.37	.63	3205.12	3786.45	.85
1979	11404.46	16703.67	.68	7810.66	7893.76	.99
1986	19417.03	28894.69	.67	15319.29	16135.65	.95

**Table 2. Mean Annual Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers Aged 20 and Over**

*Source:* Integrated Public Use Microdata Series Census samples for 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990. Includes only those with non-zero earnings who were not in school. All figures are in current (nominal) dollars.

The Black community had suffered a particularly hard blow in the mid-1970s that had dramatically increased the wage gap between blacks and whites. The progress of technology and fast-growing urban areas had pushed most of the blue-collar jobs out of the cities further to the suburbs and periphery areas. African-Americans, who originally migrated from the South to pursue these blue-collar jobs were left trapped surrounded by white-collar jobs requiring a college degree or even higher education. Even with rising levels of education, African-Americans were unable to compete with whites with only 11.3% of them having finished four or more years of college compared to 22% of whites.<sup>39</sup> The discrimination in the blue-collar sector was also supported by the zoning laws in the suburbs areas, preventing black families from moving closer to the jobs they needed desperately. African-Americans who were not

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, H. Terry. *The sixties*. Pearson. 2011. Print.

<sup>39</sup> Maloney, Thomas. "African Americans In The Twentieth Century". *Eh.net*. N.p., 2017. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>

able to leave the urban areas to pursue more job opportunities were left in extreme poverty, unable to find a job. These Black communities were living in poor neighborhoods notorious for their criminality, street gangs, and drugs. The 1970s also marked the end of the Great Migration, with over 6 million African-Americans moved out of the rural South to American Northeast, Midwest, and West.<sup>40</sup>

## **2. Racial Riots**

The factors presented in chapter 1. had left the African-American community struggling to keep pace with the rest of the population. Poor living conditions, high rate of unemployment together with high criminal activity in previously segregated inner cities had driven the desperate blacks to take action. After years of segregation and racism, with racial profiling being a daily routine for many, many people in LA hoped for justice in the case of Rodney King's beating in 1992. After the Jury had found all defendants innocent, the masses took justice into their own hands. The following chapter will discuss the Los Angeles riots of 1992 and the Ferguson riots of 2014.

### **2.1 Riots in LA (1992)**

In the spring of 1992, the city of Los Angeles witnessed massive riots that spread rapidly to many parts of the city. The reason for this public outrage was an assault on Rodney King, an African-American, by a group of four white Los Angeles Police Department (L. A. P. D.) officers but mainly the trial which followed this incident. Since Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> of April until Monday 4<sup>th</sup> of May, the city has changed into a violent hell on earth, intensive rioting in the streets, assaults, series of arsons, looting and general chaos. After many attempts by the L. A. P. D. to control the situation, the California Army National Guard together with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine division and the 7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Gibson, Campbell, and Kay Jung. *Historical Census Statistics n Population Totals By Race, 1790 To 1990, And By Hispanic Origin, 1970 To 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, And States*. Washington, DC, 2002.



infantry division was called to act. The riots resulted in fifty-five people killed, over two thousand people were injured and property damage exceeding one billion USD.<sup>41</sup>

The incident that set the riots in motion, the beating of Rodney King, took place on March 3, 1991. Originally, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) attempted to stop King's vehicle after he was caught speeding. This quickly turned into a high-speed chase that ended at the corner of Osbourne and Foothill after King noticed the police helicopters circling his car. What followed would be lost forever, if it wasn't for an amateur photographer, George Holliday, who was woken up by the police sirens and started videotaping the scene from his apartment across the street. The scene had quickly turned violent after King shook off officers who were trying to handcuff him. King received two taser darts, and shocked fell on the ground.<sup>42</sup> Everything that followed is captured on Halliday's recording which later becomes crucial and iconic. The tape shows King trying to get back on his feet and run away, before he is stopped by a baton swung by an L. A. P. D. officer Laurence Powell, who was later charged with an assault with a deadly weapon and use of excessive force together with his fellow L. A. P. D. colleagues Stacey Koon, Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno. What followed was a series of baton hits and kicks by the four police officers, all that with more than twenty other officers standing by and watching this gruesome scene. The beating lasted for eighty-one seconds. Afterward, King was dragged to the side of the road, where he was left handcuffed, lying face down, gasping for air through all the blood running down his face.<sup>43</sup> The suspect was transferred to nearby Pacifica hospital. However, the suffered injuries were too severe to be treated there, and King was instead rushed the trauma unit at U.S.C. Medical Centre, after stopping at the Foothill police station to finish the reports on the incident. After arriving at U.S.C., it took three doctors and five hours to keep King alive due to the severity of his injuries.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Jaffe, Ina. "After L.A. Riots, a Failed Effort for a Broken City." NPR, 29 April. 2012. Web. 5 Dec. 2016. <http://www.npr.org/2012/04/29/151608071/after-l-a-riots-an-effort-to-rebuild-a-broken-city>.

<sup>42</sup> Testimony of LAPD Officer Rolando Solano, Mar. 1, 1993, *supra* note 33, at 226; Testimony of CHP Officer Melanie Singer, *supra* note 30, at 151-52, 160.

<sup>43</sup> Testimony of CHP Officer Melanie Singer, Mar. 29. 1993. at 39-40.

<sup>44</sup> Levenson, Laurie L. "The Beating." *UCLA Law Review*. Los Angeles: School of Law, U of California, Los Angeles, 1994. 519-520. Web.

Halliday decided not to hand his recording to the police; instead, he handed the recording to the media, which broadcasted the tape within hours, resulting in public outrage all around the world. The next significant milestone in the case of L.A. Riots was the court case of California versus Powell, Wind, Briseno, and Koon. The state case was initially assigned to an African-American Judge Bernard Kamins.<sup>45</sup> However, the defendants argued that they would not get a fair trial in LA due to the intense social controversy surrounding the case. After Judge Kamins had refused to grant a change of venue motion, the defendants appealed to the California Court of Appeal which granted the change of venue motion and the case was reassigned to a different court, that of Judge Stanley Weisberg.<sup>46</sup> In the search for the new venue, Judge Weisberg was given a recommendation from the Administrative Office of the Courts. Among the suggestions were Orange, Alameda or Riverside county. Nevertheless, Weisberg choose to ignore the suggestions and choose a venue himself – The Semi Valley courthouse in Ventura County.<sup>47</sup>

This change was a crucial factor in the result of the court case. If we compare the percentage of non-white residents of LA – 68% and the non-white residents of Semi Valley – 34%, we can see how convenient this change is for the defendants.<sup>48</sup> The jury was predominantly white and contained no African-American jurors.<sup>49</sup>

Due to the belief that the video provided enough evidence, the prosecution decided not to call Rodney King to testify. Also, due to the nature of the attack, they believed he was not able to provide any further evidence for the case. Apart from the video recording itself, the prosecution also provided various recordings of the communication between the officers and the dispatching that were especially disturbing. The defense used the videotape of the beating to their advantage. They have asked Sergeant Charles Duke who is an L. A. P. D. use-of-force expert to explain,

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<sup>45</sup> Timnick, Lois. "Judge Turns Down Request to Move King Beating Trial" *L.A. TIMES* 17 May. 1991. Web. 15 July. 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Serrano, A. Richard. "Prosecutors Won't Oppose Venue Change" *L.A. TIMES* 25 July. 1991.

<sup>47</sup> Berg, Martin. "D.A.'s Actions on King Venue are Questioned" *L.A. DAILY J* 7 May. 1992.

<sup>48</sup> "Population." Los Angeles Almanac. Web. 6. March 2017. <http://www.laalmanac.com/population/>

<sup>49</sup> Serrano, A. Richard & Lozano, V. Carlos. "Jury Picked for King Trial; No Blacks Chosen" *L.A. TIMES* 3 March. 1992.

frame by frame, looking at King's body language, why did his continuous aggressive behavior justify the beating.<sup>50</sup>

Except for Timothy Wind, who decided not to testify, all three officers described King as being under the influence of the drug PCP, also known as angel dust. PCP grants its user animal-like power, stamina and aggression. The officers testified that they based their action of continuous beating on the fear of "drugged" King. The drug test did prove that King was under the influence of alcohol at the time, no other substances were found in his blood meaning King was not under the influence of PCP during the incident. Although the drug test refuted the accusation of King being drugged, the fear of the black man that all three officers felt was very real. This fear was named the big black man syndrome by Lawrence Vogelmann and further described in his essay *The Big Black Man Syndrome: The Rodney King Trial and the Use of Racial Stereotypes in the Courtroom*. The author claims that the trial lawyers used stereotypes to obtain an emotional response from the jurors.<sup>51</sup> "Rodney King was portrayed as the prototypical 'Big Black Man.' He was portrayed as larger than life, with superhuman strength. It was in this context that jurors, while watching the video of King being brutally beaten, described him as being 'in control.' He had to be stopped."<sup>52</sup> Vogelmann further criticizes the choice of the prosecutors not to put King on the witness stand. He claims that not presenting him as a key witness had led to taking Rodney King, the person, out of the case, drawing a blue line between the L. A. P. D. officers and "them". "How is Los Angeles police trained to deal with 'them'? How do we as a community want the police to deal with 'them'? How can we, in the safety of our living room or jury room, second guess our police when they are dealing with the likes of 'them?' These were the questions that became the focal point of the trial."<sup>53</sup> This evidence suggests that the Rodney King case was unethically manipulated from

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<sup>50</sup> Serrano, A. Richard. "All 56 Blows to King Justified, Expert on Use of Force Testifies" *L.A. TIMES* 25 March 1992.

<sup>51</sup> Vogelmann, Lawrence. "The Big Black Man Syndrome: The Rodney King Trial and the Use of Racial Stereotypes in the Courtroom." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. 20. 3 (1992). 571-578. Web. 10 Dec. 2016. Vogelmann, Lawrence. "The Big Black Man Syndrome: The Rodney King Trial and the Use of Racial Stereotypes in the Courtroom." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. 20. 3 (1992). 571-578. Web. 10 Dec. 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Vogelmann, Lawrence. "The Big Black Man Syndrome: The Rodney King Trial and the Use of Racial Stereotypes in the Courtroom." *Fordham Urban Law Journal*. 20. 3 (1992). 571-578. Web. 10 Dec. 2016.

the begging, allocating the venue to Semi Valley, to “pulling emotional strings” of the jurors.

The jury reached their verdict on April 29, 1992. All four officers were pleaded not guilty.<sup>54</sup> This decision had left most of the public including the president George H.W. Bush in disbelief, the black community outraged.

It took only five minutes after the verdict for the angry mob to gather at Parker Center Police Headquarters to protest. However, it was the intersection of Florence and Normandy that was the center point of the riots. At first, people started breaking into liquor stores and fast food places. The media were covering the outbreak live from helicopters, broadcasting the terrifying news and people were instructed not to enter the area. As more people joined the looters, the growing crowd started targeting bigger stores, super markets, stealing everything from groceries and electronics to furniture. The people who were unfortunate enough to be passing through the intersection of Florence and Normandy on that day were attacked by the rioters armed with bricks, pipes and glass bottles targeting pedestrians as well as drivers who were not African American. People dragged out of their vehicles, robbed of their belongings and their cars being set on fire. This is what Los Angeles looked like just a few hours after the verdict.<sup>55</sup> Picture 3 below portrays what the chaos on Florence and Normandy looked like during the first hours of the riots.

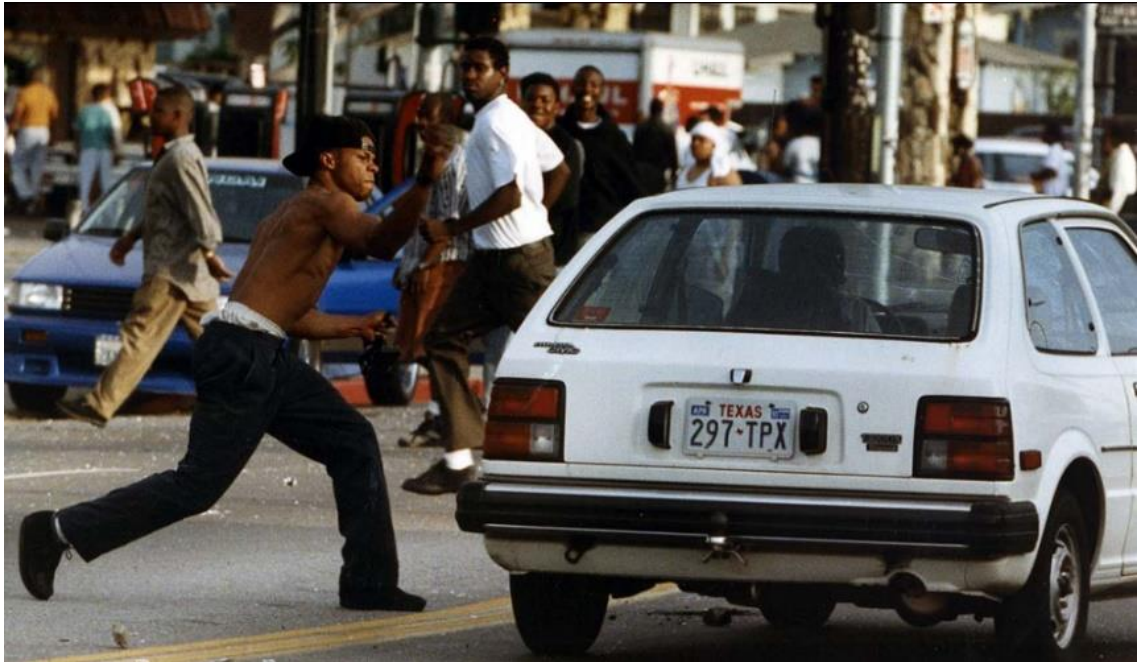
One of the notoriously iconic cases of violence during the Los Angeles Riots was the beating of Reginald O. Denny, a truck driver who was crossing the intersection when the angry mob attacked his car and dragged him out. He was severely beaten by four men, one of them wielding a hammer and eventually struck in the back of his head by brick. Left alone and with only minutes left alive.<sup>56</sup> His life was saved by a fellow African American truck driver Bobby Green, who drove Denny to the hospital after seeing the beating on live TV. The whole gruesome scene was being broadcasted

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<sup>54</sup> Mydans, Seth, “THE POLICE VERDICT; Los Angeles Policemen Acquitted in Taped Beating” *The New York Times* 30 April. 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Abu-Lughod, L. Janet. *Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press. 2012. Print. page 246-7.

<sup>56</sup> Harris, Mary. “2002 Interview: Reginald Denny Looks Back on the LA Riots, Get-Well Cards”, *NBC Los Angeles* 27 April. 2012.



**Picture 3. A rioter attacking a car at the Florence and Normandy**

Source: Picture from Mirk Mckoy, "Photos: the 1992 Los Angeles riots," *LA Times* 29 April 1992

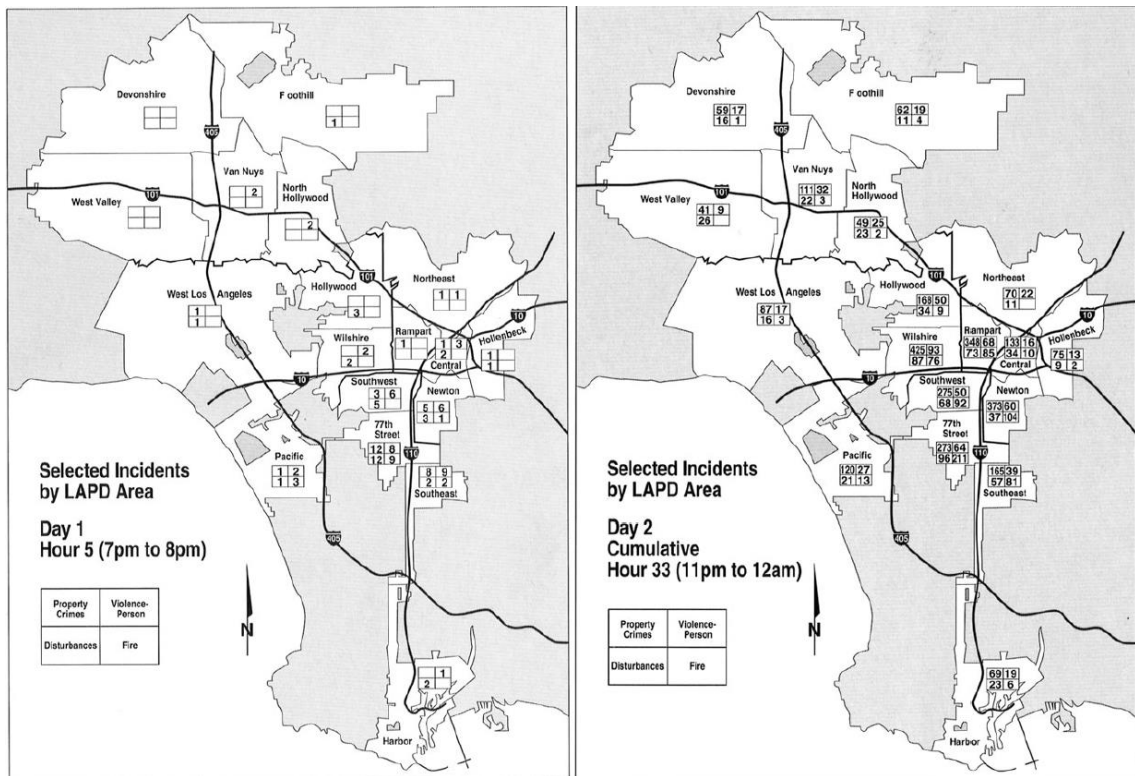
live from the News helicopter. Many, like Janet L. Abu-Lughod criticize the coverage of the LA riots. In her book *Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles* she states that the media had portrayed Denny's beating as an equivalent to King's, presenting the riots as what some might interpret as a "race war".<sup>57</sup>

Cases of arson in the center of the riots soon followed looting and ongoing violence. The policemen were unable to help the firemen trying to put out the flames which would later consume over 1000 buildings. You can compare the numbers of reported crimes like arson, disturbance, property crimes and violence in the first two days of riots in picture 4. below. Previously mentioned protest on Parker Center turned into a riot with people charging the policemen in full riot gears, flipping their cars, setting them afire. The L. A. P. D. officers were forced to retreat together with the firemen, who were being shot at.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Abu-Lughod, L. Janet. *Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press. 2012. Print.

<sup>58</sup> Gattis, Ryan. *All Involved*. 2nd ed., New York: Ecco Press, 2015.



**Picture 4. A map comparing the number of law violations during the first two days of the riots.**

Source: William Webster and Hubert Williams, *The City in Crisis*, vol. 2, appendices, section on maps. Copyright: Webster and Williams.

The violence and looting spread further in the next days of the riot. With the police being allocated to places like Beverly Hills and West Hollywood together with reinforcement in the form of only 2000 national guards. The store owners were forced to take the law into their own hands. The law enforcement abandoned Koreatown, desperate owners of the shop and their families started forming security teams to defend their shops armed with rifles, shotguns, and pistols on the roof of their stores ready to use deadly force to protect their properties.<sup>59</sup>

The following day is the day that Rodney King delivered his famous speech, addressing the looters.

<sup>59</sup> Taritrott, "Rodney King Beating and Riots – GNN Documentary" (video), March 6, 2011, 16:39, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWhYmb1sANM>.

“People, I just want to say, can we all get along? We’ll get our justice. They’ve won the battle, but they haven’t won the war. We are all stuck here for a while. Let’s try to work it out.”<sup>60</sup>

It took three more days, six in total, to restore order in disrupted L.A. California was forced to dispatch over 10000 national guards in full gear. The damage left behind the angry crowd was astonishing. Fifty-five lives were taken, there are over 7000 cases of arson recorded, the property damage is estimated around one billion USD. The L.A. Riots have shaped the race relations nationwide.<sup>61</sup>

The four officers were put on trial once again, this time in Down Town Los Angeles, with Rodney King taking the witness stand. The jury has found two of them, sergeant Stacey Koon and officer Lawrence Powell guilty and sentenced them to two and a half years in prison.<sup>62</sup>

## **2.2 Riots in Ferguson (2014)**

This chapter will, in contrast to the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, deal with one of the more recent incidents, the riots in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. Like in the case of the riots in 1992, the riots in Ferguson broke out after a case of use of excessive force went viral. However, unlike Rodney King in 1991, an 18 years old black man, Michael Brown was shot dead in broad daylight in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri by a white policeman Darren Wilson. Brown was crossing the street with his friend when a police car pulled over, and the men were told to get back on the sidewalk. The reports on what happened next vary, however, Brown was shot at least six times, including his forehead. His dead body was left uncovered on the ground for four and a half hours for everyone to see.<sup>63</sup> What followed was a very similar scenario to what happened in L.A.

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<sup>60</sup> Taritrott, “Rodney King Beating and Riots – GNN Documentary” (video), March 6, 2011, , 21:19, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWhYmb1sANM>.

<sup>61</sup> Abu-Lughod, L. Janet. *Race, Space and Riots in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press. 2012. Print. page 232, 236

<sup>62</sup> Mydans, Seth “Sympathetic Judge Gives Officers 2 ½ Years I Rodney King Beating” *The New York Times* 4 Aug. 1993.

<sup>63</sup> “Ferguson protests: What we know about Michael Brown's last minutes” *BBC news* 25 November 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-28841715>

in 1992. However, with modern technology, the internet and the speed information spread online through social media, people are able to unite like they never did before. This also thickens the blue line between the public and the police force, whose response to being recorded is often negative and aggressive.<sup>64</sup>

Michael Brown was an 18-year-old African-American who was shot dead on the street by Ferguson police officer Daren Wilson. Brown was walking down the street on August 9, 2014, Ferguson Missouri with his friend, Dorian Johnson. A robbery of a local convenience store had been reported just a few minutes before officers Wilson noticed the two men walking on the road with the stolen good – a package of Cigarillos cigars. The police car had stopped right next to the two men walking.<sup>65</sup> What followed is unclear. According to Johnson, who was standing next to Brown at the time of the shooting, after stopping the police car, the officer told them to “Get on the fucking sidewalk.”<sup>66</sup> The officer then tried to open the car door which had slammed into the men. Then, according to Johnson, the officer grabbed Brown by his collar. Brown fought back to release himself. What followed was a series of gunshots. According to eye witnesses, Brown started running away from the car, already shot. Officer Wilson got out of his car and kept shooting. Johnson testified that Brown was shot again, fell on the ground and surrendered with his hands raised up facing Wilson. Officer did not stop firing his gun. Instead, he continuously fired shots towards Brown, killing him on the spot.

After being shot, Brown’s lifeless body was left on the street for another four and a half hours. Crowds of mostly African-American residents of the area had gathered around the police tape, staring at the teen’s dead body in disbelief. There are several footages recorded after the shooting, showing Brown’s uncle rushing to his

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<sup>64</sup> Taylor, Dhyana. “Watch the Ferguson protest unfold on social media, again.” *The Huffington Post* 8 September 2015. Web. 14 April. 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ferguson-tweets\\_us\\_55c4bf72e4b0d9b743dbc93f](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/ferguson-tweets_us_55c4bf72e4b0d9b743dbc93f)

<sup>65</sup> McCarthy, J. Eli. “A Ferguson window: ‘Get the F off the street.’” *The Huffington Post* 30 November 2014. Web. 20 Feb. 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-s-mccarthy/a-ferguson-window-get-the\\_b\\_6242252.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-s-mccarthy/a-ferguson-window-get-the_b_6242252.html)

<sup>66</sup> McCarthy, J. Eli. “A Ferguson window: ‘Get the F off the street.’” *The Huffington Post* 30 November 2014. Web. 20 Feb. 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-s-mccarthy/a-ferguson-window-get-the\\_b\\_6242252.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-s-mccarthy/a-ferguson-window-get-the_b_6242252.html)



dead body. The angry crowd grew larger as collecting evidence took several hours. Nonetheless, there was no aggression from the crowd at the site of the shooting.

As soon as they were allowed to, the family, friends, and bystanders placed flowers and candles on the spot where Brown was shot. Shortly after, an unnamed police officer let the dog he was controlling urinate on the memorial. As soon as the police were done with their investigation, they drove their cars over the memorial back to the Ferguson Police department. This unthoughtful act certainly did not appeal to the crowd whose anger was already at its peak.<sup>67</sup>

A press conference was held the next day, on the August 10 at 10 am. St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar who was chairing this meeting tried to answer the question of the outraged public. However, not having enough evidence to confirm what exactly happened on the scene, he kept the press conference very brief and did not reveal the name of the police officer who shot Brown which had not satisfied the outraged masses.

People have gathered at the site of the shooting later that evening with signs saying, "We want answers, no justice, no peace". What had started peacefully had soon escalated into violence, looting, and arson. Unlike the L.A.P.D. in 1992, the Ferguson police came prepared for such scenario. The Police force had gathered around 150 officers in full riot gear, ready to strike if needed, barricading roads to prevent the crowd from accessing certain parts of the city. Some members of the crowd which grew in aggression started vandalizing and stealing from nearby businesses and destroying nearby cars. The violence had escalated into a series of arson in the area, a local gas station, as well as a local convenient store, were burnt down.<sup>68</sup> This had led to over 30 arrests according to *St. Luis Today*.<sup>69</sup> Tear gas was used to disperse the crowd gathered at the burnt convenient store the following

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<sup>67</sup> Terkel, Amanda. "Police officer accused of letting dog urinate on Michael Brown memorial in Ferguson." *The Huffington Post* 27 August 2014. Web. 16 Mar. 2017.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/27/michael-brown-memorial\\_n\\_5723864.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/27/michael-brown-memorial_n_5723864.html)

<sup>68</sup> "Protests near St. Louis continue for slain teen after riot, arrests" *Chicago Tribute* 11 August 2014

<sup>69</sup> Barker, Tim. "Ferguson-Area businesses cope with aftermath of weekend riot." *STL Today* 11 August 2014. Web. Mar. 3 2017. [http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/ferguson-area-businesses-cope-with-aftermath-of-weekend-riot/article\\_4a310ec3-94de-57dd-95f7-4e350f6a6fa2.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/ferguson-area-businesses-cope-with-aftermath-of-weekend-riot/article_4a310ec3-94de-57dd-95f7-4e350f6a6fa2.html)

morning. The public was encouraged to keep peacefully protesting by the Brown's family. Little did they know the unrest would continue for months to come.

As the riot continued for three straight days, Ferguson became a lure for the media. Journalists from all around the world had gathered to document the riots. The police did not seem comfortable with so many cameras recording every step they made and started targeting the journalists in the crowd, arresting them for failing to disperse. The police had also fired rubber bullets and tear gassed the crowds including journalists covering the whole situation. Eventually, reporters like Neil Munshi and Rob Crilly working for *The Telegraph* equipped themselves with gas masks and blue bulletproof vests with the word "PRESS" printed on them in case the officers replaced their rubber ammunition with real bullets. The peacefully protesting people had reported they were afraid of the journalist being taken away because they believed the police would start using greater force if the cameras shut down.

Next milestone in Ferguson was the revelation of the name of the officer who shot Brown, on August 15 during a press conference held by Ferguson Police chief Thomas Jackson. The police had also released footage from a surveillance camera of Brown apparently robbing a convenient store.

The protest that night was peaceful until a group of rioters broke into the alleged convenient store. The protesters and bystanders had gathered in front of the store to prevent further looting.<sup>70</sup> Governor Jay Nixon had declared curfews from midnight to 5 am the next morning as a reaction to these lootings. This, however, did not stop the looters and the National Guard was once again called to "help restore peace and order and to protect the citizens of Ferguson" on August 18, which led to one of the most violent clashes with the police in Ferguson. The mood of the protests rapidly changed when the police arrived in tanks, equipped with rifles, forcing the protesters armed with bricks and bottles to get off the streets.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Caulderwood, Kathleen. "Ferguson during Friday police standoff, protesters try to stop looters entering stores." *International Business Times* 16 August 2014. Web. 5 Mar. 2017. <http://www.ibtimes.com/ferguson-during-friday-police-standoff-protesters-try-stop-looters-entering-stores-1660418>

<sup>71</sup> Hartman, Margaret. "National guard deployed after chaotic, violent night in Ferguson." *New York* 18 August 2014. Web. 16 Apr 2016. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2014/08/national-guard-called-after-more-ferguson-chaos.html>



**Picture 5. A demonstrator sits in front of a street fire during a demonstration following the grand jury decision**

*Source:* Picture from Adam Withnall, “Ferguson riots: The most powerful images to emerge from protests over Michael Brown killing” *Independent* 25 November 2014

The National Guard was withdrawn from Ferguson on August 21 due to the improvement of the situation around the town.<sup>72</sup> It is important to note that the protests together with anger and violence were coming in “waves” due to the way information was spread online.

The National Guard was called once again on November 24, this time in advance. November 24 is the day the grand jury decided not to indict Wilson in the shooting of Brown, which was not received well by the Protesters who gathered in front of the Ferguson police department after the verdict. “Burn this bitch down!” were the words of Brown’s emotionally broken step-father in the front lines of the protesters. The angry mob had burnt down over 25 buildings as well as police and

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<sup>72</sup> Bosman, Julie. Apunzzo, Matt. Santora, Marc. “National guard is pulling out of Ferguson as tension ease.” *The New York Times* 21 August 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2017.  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/22/us/ferguson-missouri-protests.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/22/us/ferguson-missouri-protests.html?_r=0)

other cars in the area. There were 61 people arrested in the aftermath of the riots, mostly for looting, arson, and vandalism.<sup>73</sup>

There were several other annual demonstrations each year on the anniversary of the shooting. The community has still not recovered from the incident.

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<sup>73</sup> Li, K. David. "More national guard troops ordered into Ferguson." *New York Post* 25 November 2014. Web. 18 Apr. 2017. <http://nypost.com/2014/11/25/82-arrested-and-11-buildings-burn-in-ferguson-riots/>

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to analyze social and economic factors that have shaped the African-American community for decades. These factors have put blacks into disadvantageous position regarding living conditions, the education they received and the jobs they had qualified for after graduating. All these limitations together with the ongoing problem of racism and racial profiling by the police have eventually escalated into civil riots, mentioned in the second chapter.

The begging of the first chapter looked into the problem of housing segregation. After long lasting oppression in the South, African-Americans decided to escape Jim Crow laws and seek better lives in northern parts of the country. However, as the black communities in the north grew in number, the fear of these people grew in the hearts of white Americans. The National Housing Act of 1934, which had stimulated the economy during the Great Depression and gave birth to many suburban areas also contributed to the decrease in the housing quality and living standards of black Americans. The inability to access housing in newly built suburban areas combined with the introduction of redlining had left African-Americans stranded in slowly decaying inner cities. These areas were left with declining quality of public services such as schools, transportation, shops and medical facilities. These poor areas were notorious for its criminality rate and drug usage among the inhabitants. Not even the GI Bill, which many blacks considered to be “the golden ticket” out of redlined areas helped the desperate families. Instead, it deepened the wealth gap between blacks and whites, building new, flourishing suburban areas for white GIs and leaving the black ones in inner cities.

Later in the chapter, we move to the question of education. Since most of the public facilities were segregated with the black ones located in redlined areas, quality of education African-Americans received was incomparable with the quality in white schools. This had left people of color in a great disadvantage in cases of both their future studies and their opportunities on the job market. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 was a motivation for many people, including blacks, to join the army and fight for their country, expecting their country to help them in return.

This was not the case of black GIs, who met with discrimination from the Veteran Administration's side and found themselves in a position which made it almost impossible to be accepted at an HBCU. The ones that persisted and ensured their place in overcrowded black universities were still limited to a certain set of majors and had to follow a path that was carved for them. The chapter describes the struggle of black scholars like W. E. B. Du Bois, who fought hard to enable black students to study liberal arts, instead of limiting them to agriculture and technical majors. Finally, in 1957 with the court case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal and put an end to the segregation of education facilities in the US.

The last part of the chapter tackles the problem of employment of blacks. Many tried to escape racism and access better-paid jobs with the start of WWI. Lacking education, people of color were limited to only blue-collar jobs. They were working hard to slowly increasing their annual income. However, the Great Depression had left the black community with high rates of unemployment and radically slowed down the movement of black masses from the South. The events of WWII had once again boosted the American economy and helped create many job opportunities in heavy machinery and automobile industry. However, the fast progress of technology and shifting blue-collar jobs out of inner cities to suburban areas combined with the inability of blacks to purchase properties in these areas had left them unemployed, surrounded by white-collar jobs requiring a college degree or even higher education. The inner cities started declining once again, creating massive ghettos with high rates of criminal activity, gangs profiting from drug trafficking and poor living conditions.

All these factors that had contributed to the overall social and economic situation in which we find black people at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century combined with the outgoing problem of racism and race-profiling by the police had escalated into events described in the second chapter. Both cases of LA and Ferguson riots show that even after all the progress achieved by the Civil Rights Movement, the African-American community does not feel integrated, nor equal.

Although many people argue that since the end of segregation in the late 1970s African-Americans had more than enough equal opportunities to compete with whites

regarding education, housing and competition on the job market, this thesis had shown that the factors mentioned in the first chapter left the black community disadvantaged for decades to come. While the white community was free to develop and improve their social status as well as economic security, blacks only achieved the freedom to do so recently. Finally, racial profiling and fear of black bodies as described by Vogelmann in his essay is a problem that is not likely to disappear in the near future. However, with more people being aware of the problem and will to fight for the right cause, we can only expect more outrage from a wider range of people, in case of a new footage leaks onto the surface of the internet. While the footage of police brutality in the case of Rodney King might have shocked the world in 1992, the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have the capability to capture and share anything within seconds. People automatically pull out their phones and start recording when being approached by the police. The internet is flooded with new footages daily. The police also seem to be getting more agitated by the cameras as we have described in chapter two in the case of Ferguson riots. The lives of African-Americans will not improve unless we address the problem of prejudice and fear of African-Americans today. Even though geography and segregation had played a significant role in the lives of African-Americans through the history, it is the negative connotation tied with black bodies that fuels the innate hate towards people of color.

## RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce bylo analyzovat společenské a ekonomické faktory, které formovaly život afroamerické komunity po celá desetiletí. Tyto faktory uvrhly černošské obyvatelstvo do nevýhodného postavení v oblasti vzdělání, které získali, a práci, o kterou se mohly ucházet. Spolu s pokračujícím problémem rasismu a rasového profilování policií se všechna tato omezení nakonec vyhrotili do civilních povstání, zmíněných v druhé kapitole.

Začátek první kapitoly se zabývá problémem segregace v bydlení. Po dlouhotrvajícím útlaku na jihu se Afroameričané rozhodli uniknout zákonům Jima Crowa a hledat lepší život v severních částech Spojených států. Nicméně, s rostoucími černošskými komunitami na severu rostl i strach z Afroameričanů v srdcích bílých. Národní zákon o bydlení z roku 1934, který stimuloval hospodářství během Velké hospodářské krize a vytvořil mnoho předměstských oblastí, také přispěl k poklesu kvality bydlení a životní úrovně Afroameričanů. Bez možnosti zakoupení domů v nově postavených předměstích, společně s novým konceptem redliningu zanechala černošskou komunitu v pomalu upadajících vnitřních částech měst, s klesající kvalitou veřejných služeb, včetně škol, infrastruktury, obchodů a zdravotnických zařízení. Tyto chudé oblasti byly proslulé kriminalitou a užíváním drog mezi obyvateli. Dokonce ani G.I. Bill, který mnozí černoši považovali za únik z těchto oblastí, nepomohl zoufalým rodinám. Namísto toho prohloubil rozdíly v bohatství mezi černochoy a bílými, stavěl nové, rozkvétající předměstské oblasti pro bílé veterány a černé obyvatelstvo ponechal ve vnitřních částech měst.

První kapitola se dále věnuje otázce vzdělání. Vzhledem k tomu, že většina veřejných škol byla segregována, kvalita vzdělání Afroameričanů byla neporovnatelná s kvalitou v bílých školách. Segregace jim omezila možnost budoucích studií a uplatnění na trhu práce. G.I. Bill byl motivací připojit se k armádě a bojovat za svou zemi. Očekávali, že jejich země jim na oplátku pomůže. Nebyl to ale případ černých veteránů, kteří se setkali s diskriminací na straně veteránské správy a ocitli se v pozici, která jim téměř znemožnila přijetí na černošské univerzity. Ti, kteří se dostali na již přeplněné univerzity, byli stále omezeni studovat jen vybrané obory a museli následovat cestu,



kteřá jim byla předem vytesána. Tato kapitola dále popisuje aktivitu černošských učenců, jako je W. E. Du Bois, kteří tvrdě bojovali za možnost č studentů studovat i jiné obory mimo zemědělství a jiných technicky zaměřených oborů. Nejvyšší soud v roce 1957 v případě Brown v. Topeka rozhodl ukončit segregaci ve vzdělávacích zařízení po celé zemi.

Poslední část kapitoly se zabývá problémem zaměstnání černochoů. Se začátkem první světové války se mnoho z nich se pokusilo uniknout rasismu a získat lépe placená pracovní místa. Nedostatečné dosažené vzdělání omezilo Afroameričany uplatnit se jen v manuální práci. Postupně se snažili zvyšovat svůj roční příjem. Velká hospodářská krize mala však negativní dopad na zaměstnanost černošského obyvatelstva a radikálně zpomalila jich migraci z jihu. Události druhé světové války znovu podpořily americké hospodářství a pomohly vytvořit mnoho pracovních příležitostí v těžkém průmyslu. Nicméně stále rychleji se rozvíjející technologie společně s přesunem manuálních prací z městských částí na rychleji rostoucí bílá předměstí zanechala Afroamerickou komunitu nezaměstnanou, obklopenou pracemi ve službách a kancelářích. Tyto pozice často vyžadovali univerzitní, či vyšší vzdělání, které této komunitě chybělo. Vnitřní města opět upadali a vytvářeli se obrovská ghetta s vysokou kriminalitou a gangy, které profitovali z obchodu s drogami a ze špatných životních podmínek.

Všechny tyto faktory, které se podílely na celkové sociální a ekonomické situaci, ve které nacházíme černošskou komunitu na konci 20. a začátku 21. století společně s problémem přetrvávajícího rasizmu a rozřazování policií na základě rasy, vyústily v události, které popisuje druhá kapitola. Nepokoje v Los Angeles a Fergusonu ukazují, že ani po snaze Hnutí za občanská práva se afroamerická komunita necítí integrovaná a rovná.

Ačkoli mnozí lidé tvrdí, že od konce segregace v sedmdesátých letech Afroameričané měli více než dostatek rovných příležitostí konkurovat bílým v oblasti vzdělání, bydlení a uplatnění na trhu práce, tato práce ukázala, že faktory zmíněné v první kapitole zanechali afroamerickou komunitu znevýhodněnou po celé desetiletí. Zatímco bílá komunita mohla svobodně rozvíjet a zlepšovat svůj sociální status i ekonomickou bezpečnost, černoši dosáhli svých rovných prav jen nedávno.

Závěrem, rozřazování policí na základě rasy a strach z černých těl, popsán Vogelmannem v jeho eseji, je problém, jehož řešení je stále v nedohlednu. Nicméně, s více lidmi, kteří jsou si vědomi tohoto problému a kteří jsou ochotni bojovat za práva utlačovaných, můžeme předpokládat pobouření z širšího okruhu lidí v případě, že na internet uniknou další videa. Zatímco záběry policejní brutality v případě Rodneyho Kinga mohly šokovat svět v roce 1992, lidé 21. století mají schopnost zachytit a sdílet cokoli během několika vteřin. Internet je denně zaplaven novými záznamy policejní brutality. Život Afroameričanů se nezlepší, dokud nezačneme řešit předsudky a strach z jejich komunity již dnes. Přestože geografie a segregace hrály v historii významnou roli, vrozenou nenávist k černošskému obyvatelstvu poháněla převážně jejich negativní percepce.

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## LIST OF PICTURES

<b>Picture 1.</b> The map of Los Angeles showing the redlined neighborhood .....	11
<b>Picture 2.</b> Map of Black share of population in the 1900 US Census .....	20
<b>Picture 3.</b> A rioter attacking a car at the Florence and Normandy .....	29
<b>Picture 4.</b> A map comparing the number of law violations during the first two days of the riots .....	30
<b>Picture 5.</b> A demonstrator sits in front of a street fire during a demonstration following the grand jury decision .....	35

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1.</b> Indexes of racial residential segregation for the nation's largest cities .....	13
<b>Table 2.</b> Mean Annual Earnings of Wage and Salary Workers Aged 20 and Over .....	23



## **ANNOTATION**

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The aim of the thesis is to help the reader understand the roots of racism that led to the riots in LA in 1992 and the more recent riots in Ferguson in 2014. The first chapter introduces three factors that have contributed to the overall social and economic situation of African Americans – housing, education, and employment. The chapter describes the aspects of everyday lives of blacks that were directly influenced by the segregation and the way the black community was put in a disadvantageous position for decades to come. The second chapter will describe how did the problem of ongoing racism and inequality escalate into 1992 riots in Los Angeles and riots in Ferguson in 2014.

Key words: race riots, racism, Rodney King, Michael Brown, excessive force, African- American, segregation, redlining,

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Cílem této práce je pomoci čtenáři porozumět původu rasismu, který vedl k rozpoutání nepokojů v LA v roce 1992 a nedávným nepokojům ve Fergusonu v roce 2014. První kapitola představí tři klíčové faktory, jmenovitě bydlení, vzdělávání a zaměstnání, které přispěly k celkové sociální a ekonomické situaci Afro-Američanů. Kapitola popisuje aspekty každodenního života, které byly ovlivněny segregací a způsob, jakým byla černá komunita znevýhodněna po generace. Druhá kapitola popíše způsob, kterým přetrvávající problém rasismu a nerovnosti eskaloval v nepokoje v Los Angeles v roce 1992 a nepokoje ve Fergusonu v roce 2014.

Klíčová slova: rasové nepokoje, rasismus, Rodney King, Michael Brown, nepřiměřené užití síly, Afro-Američané, segregace, redlining