

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The goal of the criminal justice system is to arrest, detain, and punish people who break the law. But in an attempt to protect society, can justice-seeking sometimes lead to injustice?

Consider the case of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed teenager who was shot and killed by a neighborhood watch coordinator because he “looked suspicious.” Martin was African American, and wearing a hooded sweatshirt. This was enough for a jury to find the shooter, George Zimmerman, not guilty.

Black men (and boys) are more likely than other ethnic groups and women to be treated unfairly in an encounter with law enforcement.

For those who are found guilty, study after study demonstrates that prison sentencing is unequal, with Black and Latino men being given longer sentences than White men who commit similar crimes. However, once released, all former convicts face an uphill battle to reintegrate into society – with many job opportunities and even the right to vote being closed to them.



CALL TO ACTION

“I think my activism in the purest sense of activism was really triggered my first year of law school, when the Trayvon Martin murder occurred, and George Zimmerman was not arrested. He went home that day, after he shot and killed Trayvon Martin, and so that led to nationwide protests. And actually, I participated in protests, and that was the first time I was like, ‘Oh, wow. So, you really have to yell and scream and protest injustices.’ This did not end after the civil rights movement. You have to do it as long as you want to have the rights that you’re guaranteed. Not only as under the U.S. constitution, but as a human being. You have to constantly voice your displeasure with oppressive forces.” — Funmi

“One gentleman [I defended] I had 22 years after the crime occurred. He no longer lived in Redlands [where the crime occurred]. He was a professor at a University in Arizona. And he was literally ripped out of there and brought back to this county, where he spent two years in county jail before it was factually proven he had nothing to do with that murder 22 years ago. At the time he was arrested and charged, it was huge news. When they dismissed it, there wasn’t one reporter in the courtroom. Project Innocence here in California, they have statistics about the number of people who are wrong fully convicted.” — Suzanne

CONSIDER THIS *Consider the following questions. Challenge yourself to think of answers from multiple perspectives, & to understand what might bias your response. Discuss these topics with someone else in your class.*

Does the law protect everyone equally? Does the law punish everyone equally? What obstacles does a formerly incarcerated person face when trying to turn his or her life around?

Several In|Dignity participants describe encounters with the police where they felt mistreated, harassed, and discriminated against because of their race or ethnicity. If the majority of people arrested are racial/ethnic minorities, is profiling a useful tool for law enforcement?

Should employment opportunities be closed to formerly incarcerated individuals? Would you hire a former convict? Why or why not?



DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination refers to unequal treatment based on a person's group membership, which can include – but is not limited to – race, sex, age, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and disability status.

Discrimination can occur at the individual level, such as when one person or a small group discriminates. Examples of individual discrimination include giving preferential treatment to people who share your identity, writing a racial slur on someone's front door, or refusing to interact with members of a particular group.

Discrimination can also occur at the institutional level, such as when an entire system (e.g., educational, legal, political) discriminates against a group of people. Examples include banks approving fewer home loans for racial/ethnic minorities and at higher interest rates, or targeting Middle Eastern travelers for in-depth airport screenings.

Sometimes people discriminate because they hold prejudiced views towards a group. Other times, people discriminate even if they hold no personal bias towards a group.



CONSIDER THIS

Consider the following prompts. Challenge yourself to think of answers from multiple perspectives, & to understand what might bias your response. Discuss these topics with someone else in your class.

Describe instances of individual and institutional discrimination.

Some In|Dignity participants have had a difficult time getting or maintaining a job due to their race or ethnicity. Can you recall similar experiences while on the job market?

How has your race or ethnicity affected your life opportunities?

How can you confront discrimination in your own life?

CALL TO ACTION

“I would advise others to slow down. To stop for a second. And I'm guilty of this, you know, of the go, go, go go, go. But just stop for a second, and really be grateful and... make an effort to maybe even (think)...what if these were your children? What if it was your brother, your sister, your aunt, your uncle, your mother, your father? What if it was somebody you loved and cared about that was out there? Would you treat them that way? And maybe just taking a moment just to think, what if it was you? Would you want to be treated less than? I would try to put your feet in their shoes.” — Samantha

“We have to treat people like they're people and we need to create a system that is equitable versus equal, because everyone thinks, oh, everyone should have equal treatment. Well, no, because if your child wears glasses and another child doesn't, equal treatment is both those children wearing glasses or both of them do not. You need equitable treatment that levels the playing field for whoever's involved in it, we need an education system that hasn't been intentionally damaged, and we need a system that values the work that people do and that pays them a living wage.” — Amelia



IDENTITY



What words would you use to describe yourself, if asked to complete the following sentence: “I am...?” The words you list may reveal important parts of your identity.

Identity is made up of many things including sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious orientation, abilities and disabilities, personality characteristics, accomplishments, and roles (e.g., parent, sibling, spouse, friend, or student).

Sometimes the qualities that come to mind first when describing ourselves, are those that someone used against us, like our race or sex. We think of those qualities first because when we experience a lack of power, it causes us to feel pain, and those experiences stand out to us. But our identities are not always associated with being treated unfairly. They may also be sources of our strength and pride in who we are.

While others’ perceptions are often based on qualities that show on the outside, such as skin tone and hair texture, our own perceptions are influenced by much more.

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The manner in which we see ourselves may differ from how others’ perceive us. How does the way the world sees people differ from the ways they see themselves? When have you experienced this kind of mismatch? How did it become noticeable? Did it impact your identity?

Imagine a person of color who identifies strongly with her or his ethnic heritage, but who appears White to the outside world. What implications might this have for their identity, experiences, and life?



“My husband and I had that conversation about who are we really? Where did we come from? Where are our people from? Because we don’t know. The only thing that we know is that at some point we obviously descended from slaves to be here. But what does that mean? And so we did our DNA. We laughed because his came back that he was primarily Irish. So, he had a bigger Irish chunk of the pie than anything else. And he found out that the little sliver of African in his blood was from Mozambique. And so, he started researching, ‘Well, what’s Mozambique about?’ For me, I know there was a big chunk that was from Yoruba culture in Nigeria, and then a whole smattering of stuff from everywhere else. And so, it was just interesting to find out all of these little pieces. And what does it mean? Who are we? I can’t say that I’m an African American. That’s not the only place that my people came from.” — Andree

“If we are not easily identifiable, there’s some innate need for people to know what you are. But what’s scary about that is like, okay, now that you know what I am, what do you plan to do with that information? Are you gonna use it to stereotype me or are you just idly curious? Are you idly curious up to the point where I do something wrong and then you go, ‘Oh, that’s just like a Mexican.’ You know what I’m saying? So, it feels like a loaded question, but it’s one that you can’t get away from cause people are insistent. They really are.” — Lisa

CALL TO ACTION

IMMIGRATION



The United States is a multiethnic nation. Aside from Native Americans, everyone is an immigrant. Each year, approximately 700,000 to 1 million documented immigrants and 300,000 undocumented immigrants enter the U.S. The primary motivation is economic opportunity but other reasons include political stability, safety, and freedom.

Some people value our country's diversity and view it as a defining feature and strength. Other people dislike it and believe immigrants are threatening the American way of life.

Xenophobia refers to a fear of people from other countries. Often, the degree of xenophobia varies depending on economic conditions and labor demands. When people feel like their livelihood is at risk, they are more likely to fear foreigners and be against immigration.

CONSIDER THIS

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Look at the picture to the left. What information in this infographic surprises you the most?

Many immigrants want to vote, work, get an education, and contribute to society. Yet, research demonstrates their options are limited. Should immigrants have the same opportunities as native-born Americans? If yes, how can we make this happen?

Do you think the U.S. is strengthened or harmed by immigrants? Should some groups be welcomed into the U.S. more than others? If yes, which groups and why?

How do you define the American way of life?

Data: https://www.advancingjustice-alc.org/news_and_media/new-americans-in-california-the-s-on-our-growing-numbers/

"[People think] that we were all getting freebies, we wanted our free stuff. I was like, 'No, I don't want free stuff, I just want my job and I'll work for my stuff.' We just want a piece of the pie, we don't want the crumbs anymore. And that's what they don't wanna give us. It really bothers them that we want that, even though they're not willing to do the same kinds of things that a lot of minorities are willing to do in order to survive. You know, all this stuff, deporting all these people and create more room for American jobs. Really? Are you gonna stand out there and pick strawberries all day, in the sun? Are you gonna go down to the Imperial Valley in the summer and pick lettuce, when it's like 110 degrees, and like barely any shade? They had to fight to try to make sure that farmers provided shade for workers. Which is like, it's almost inhumane. And yet, that really is freeing up American jobs." — Lisa

"Given the rhetoric of politics now, it is easy for people to [think] illegals are taking our jobs, they're using our resources and stuff. I guess if you just don't know anyone, I can see how that can play a role, but I think hopefully getting to know someone, with my [undocumented immigrant] status can open their eyes to the fact that I've paid taxes every year since I started working. I mean, our president hasn't even paid taxes. I've paid more taxes than our current president. It baffles me and it's just so frustrating to think about that. I don't think, I know anyone in my family that uses welfare, or that has used services like that. Or that are in unemployment. Everyone that I know pays taxes, it's just something that you do. You have a social security, you use it, and you pay taxes on it. We are contributing to this country." — Juzlia

CALL TO ACTION

INTERSECTIONALITY

Every person has a mix of identities that include their sex/gender, race, sexual orientation, and class. Intersectionality refers to how these identities overlap and influence each other.

Certain aspects of your identity are associated with greater power than others. Power refers to how members of a given group are doing, on average, in a given society with respect to things like educational attainment, wealth, and political influence. Some academics argue that identities with power are dominant or privileged, whereas those with less power are minority.

Although a person may have power or privilege when it comes to some of their identities (e.g. White, heterosexual man), they may experience discrimination based on other parts of themselves (e.g. working class, disabilities). That is why it's important to consider the person as a whole and how their identities intersect.



“My own personal identity, I identify as a bisexual woman. I identify myself as pagan. I identify myself as a very uncultured Latina. Brown woman is pretty much my favorite label for me, because it just seems to fit. I’m brown. And brown has a lot of different qualities, and I’m okay with that....I’ve never been in any one particular box, and it felt like so much of me was wrong. And then, coming to realize that there are so many other humans who think that so much of them are wrong. Just to hear my expression of the things that I perceived were wrong. To realize that they’re just part of my independent human experience. And this is the kind of flavors that I have, and they’re not good, bad, they’re just indifferent, they’re mine. And some of them are to be celebrated. Some of them I cringe at. But none the less, they’re all part of that experience.”

— Paola

CALL TO ACTION

CONSIDER THIS

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Challenge yourself to think of answers

from multiple perspectives, & to understand what might bias your response.

Discuss these topics with someone else in your class.

How do you identify yourself to others? Which of your identities are privileged? Which are not?

Come of our identities are more visible to the outside world than others. Which of your identities are hidden? How do you decide what to tell people about those parts of yourself?

“The conservative leaning culture of being Nigerian, versus the very Western culture that I grew up in. Those tend to clash, meaning, for my generation, for Nigerian women who either grew up in the UK or in the United States, our parents kind of don't always understand that in addition to wanting to settle down and get married, we're also very passionate about the world we live in, and pursuing careers. And a lot of times the culture doesn't really recognize that.”

- Funmi



In 2017, #MeToo went viral as millions of people shared their personal stories of sexual harassment and assault via social media.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), sexual assault refers to sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim and includes attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, or penetration of the victim's body.

RAINN estimates that 1 American is sexually assaulted every 98 seconds, and EEOC surveys show that at least 25% of women report having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. However, women are not the only victims of sexual harassment and assault.

CONSIDER THIS

Consider the following questions. Challenge yourself to think of answers from multiple perspectives, & to understand what might bias your response. Discuss these topics with someone else in your class.

Why do victims of sexual assault or harassment keep silent, rather than telling family members, friends, or authorities?

Why might they be unwilling to press charges?

Why might the #MeToo movement prompt people who have been silent to tell their

Many people believe that sex in a relationship can never be considered assault or abuse. Where might they have learned this idea? When does sex in a relationship become abusive?

How does society "blame the victim"?



"For any woman especially, with the kind of rape culture and things that are going on, I know like on campuses, even just in life, I know women are scared. They don't want to come forward. Or if they do, they're afraid to do it alone. But I would tell them, 'Do it anyway.' It's gonna hurt. It's gonna be the scariest however many years of your life, and the person may very well get away with it. It's like one of those things where you have to build a case, you have to show, and if you say this happened, and they sadly get away with it, they're gonna probably do it again. And that's something that's gonna follow them. And that's gonna be something that can be used against them eventually ... I mean, it's even to the point, I thought about advertising and putting it out there - If there's any woman that needs someone to go with them to court, to fight it, if they're scared, it's like, 'I'm here.' I know what that's like, to go through it alone. But I don't want someone to think that's the reason they can't come forward and say something. Cause it has to stop." — KC

CALL TO ACTION

"I've never talked to anyone, male or female who was molested as a child who wasn't affected by it one way or another. One girl I know has the best attitude I've ever seen. She said 'yeah it happened but it's not part of me.' And she learned about bullying from it, because that kind of abuse is not- it's physically sexual but it isn't sexual from the standpoint of what the person wants to do. It's violent and it's punishing and it is a form of bullying and she's pretty much put it behind her and she recognizes that all the good things in her life have happened because of that, because she was working to overcome what damage was done, and had a lot of good things come out of it. And I think we all have to look at it that way." — Alice

MICROAGGRESSION

Telling people you “don’t see color,” asking “what are you?” and making assumptions about someone’s citizenship or immigration status without knowing anything about them are examples of microaggressions.

Microaggressions refer to verbal and nonverbal communications that indirectly, and often without much thought, devalue a person.

Microaggressions can happen to anybody, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability level, or social standing. Although microaggressions may seem like a small offense, they can build up over time and cause harm to the targets.



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Have you personally experienced microaggressions? Can you think of a time that you may have perpetuated them?

Several In|Dignity participants discuss their experiences with microaggressions. What other examples of microaggressions can you think of? How would you respond to the types of remarks made in the picture above?

Microaggressions often target people from minority groups. Are microaggressions directed toward dominant group members different or the same in content, intent, and outcomes?



“Understand yourself and forgive yourself. I think so much judgment comes from how we perceive ourselves, and how much we bully ourselves, and berate ourselves for things that we do or don’t do. So, that when we see these actions in others, it’s so easy to say, ‘Oh my gosh, I can’t believe this woman brought her child out without shoes.’ Well, you don’t know their story. And chances are, that’s something that’s within you, that you don’t want to exhibit. So, be kind to yourself, and forgive yourself, and accept yourself.” — Paola

“Most people deserve to be taught a lesson. And if you can do that without punching them in the face, it makes a big difference. My words are powerful. There’s times when people want to make you feel stupid about something you’re very smart at. I like that. You can challenge all you want to. But you’re not gonna break me down. What I’m gonna do is show you something else. How about that? Let me show you something else. Let me show you that I don’t have to [punch you in the face].” — D-Skyy

CALL TO ACTION

STEREOTYPES

Say you're driving down the highway and a silver sedan cuts you off. The driver makes eye contact in their rear-view mirror and signals an apology. In your mind, as that scene unfolded, did you assume the other driver was a woman? Why did you think that?

Many people's thoughts are guided by stereotypes which are beliefs about the characteristics, behaviors, and attributes of a group and its members. These beliefs are learned through interaction with our family, peers, and from the mass media.

Whether stereotypes are positive (e.g., Asians are smart) or negative (e.g., women are bad drivers), they are an exaggeration used to draw conclusions about entire groups of people. Any experiences that disconfirm them are disregarded, while those that support them are retained and serve to strengthen the belief.



"I have more respect for the bigot who stands up there, shows their face, says I'm a bigot, than the person who walks by. I have less respect for that person. Because at least — right or wrong, whether I agree or not, with what they're saying, or how despicable it is — they've had the guts to put their face on that. And so much of the bigotry and prejudice and fear of immigrants is hidden. We don't want to admit it. So as long as it stays hidden it's never dealt with. So people need to say, I am afraid of those people. I'm afraid of them. Well, why? Because it's the unknown. Go up and say hi. They're no longer gonna be unknown to you." — Suzanne

CALL TO ACTION

"[We should] realize that the world is a bigger place than we're used to. Step outside of your daily routine, and do something that you might not have thought before. Like volunteer at a LGBT community center. Or, you know, visit museums. Like the Museum of Tolerance. Or participate in Black History Month. And try to do something or try to teach your kids something that maybe you didn't know. So, just stepping outside of your daily routine and doing something that is new to you, is very grounding, it just helps you grow as a person, and I think we need to do that more often." — Juzlia

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Often stereotypes are used to guide the questions that we ask. What stereotypes guide questions asked of In|Dignity participants? How might questions asked in a different manner change the conversation?

The dictionary definition of terrorism is "causing extreme fear as a means of coercion," but the FBI defines terrorism as "violence with a goal of political or social change." How do you define "terrorist"? How do stereotypes guide our use of this term?

As you walk through the exhibition and learn about the experiences of others, think about which of your current beliefs may be rooted in stereotypes. Why is applying a stereotypes detrimental, even if the stereotype has a kernel of truth?

What stereotypes have you heard about people based on their hair, clothing, jewelry, tattoos, or other features?

