

Sociology 125
Contemporary American Society
Lectures 16
November 1, 2006

Race in America, II

New Times & places for Film #3,

“Why We Fight”

Film #3 will be shown on
Tuesday, November 14, in 210 Social Science &
Wednesday, November 15, in B130 Van Vleck

**Claim from previous lecture:
Racism hurts whites, not just racial minorities**

Clarification #1

Why is the case that white workers earn *lower* wages in those cities in which racial differences in earnings are *largest*?

Answer:

The wages of both black and white workers depend in part on the levels of solidarity and cooperation among all workers. Where unions are stronger, workers are able to collectively bargain for higher wages. Where racial divisions are strong, such solidarity is reduced, and this reduces the ability of workers in general to bargain for higher wages.

Large differences in wages between black and white workers reflect strong racial divisions, and this in turn contributes to lower white earnings.

Clarification #2 from last lecture

Why does racism contribute to a *politics of fear*?

Answer:

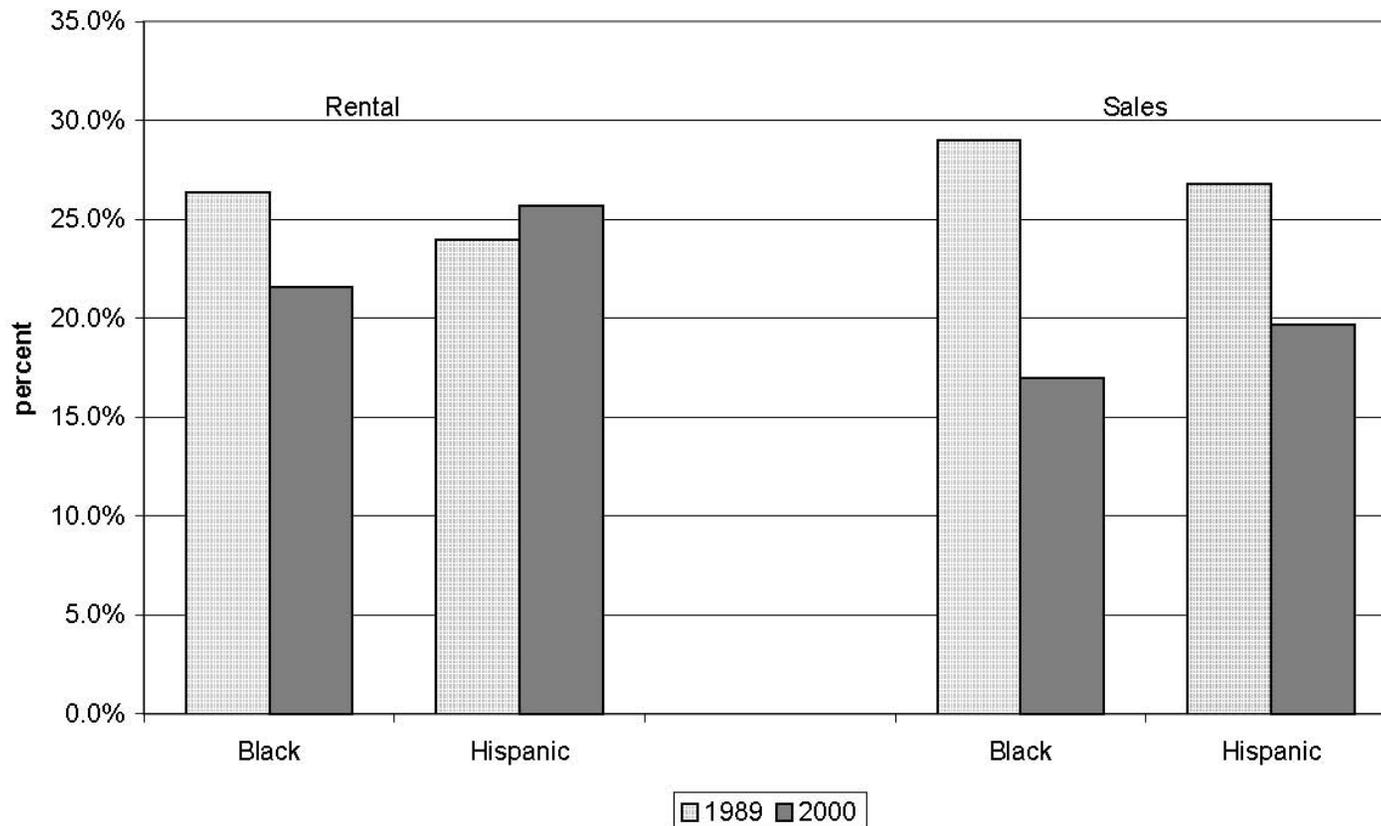
One of the central components of racism is the stereotyped belief that a disadvantaged racial group is *dangerous and threatening*. Sometimes this focuses on a threat to one's economic well being or "way of life" – as in the fear that property values will decline if blacks move into a previously all white neighborhood.. Sometimes this focuses on crime. For a given level of crime, the level of fear people have is increased when crime is believed to be linked to race. Racism therefore tends to fuel a politics oriented to personal security and exclusion.

3. Continuing realities of active discrimination

- **Petty harassment: taxis, surveillance in stores, etc.**
- **Housing**
- **Criminal justice system: prison sentencing**
- **Lending**
- **Employment: the problem of “statistical discrimination”**
- **Education: Central city schools**

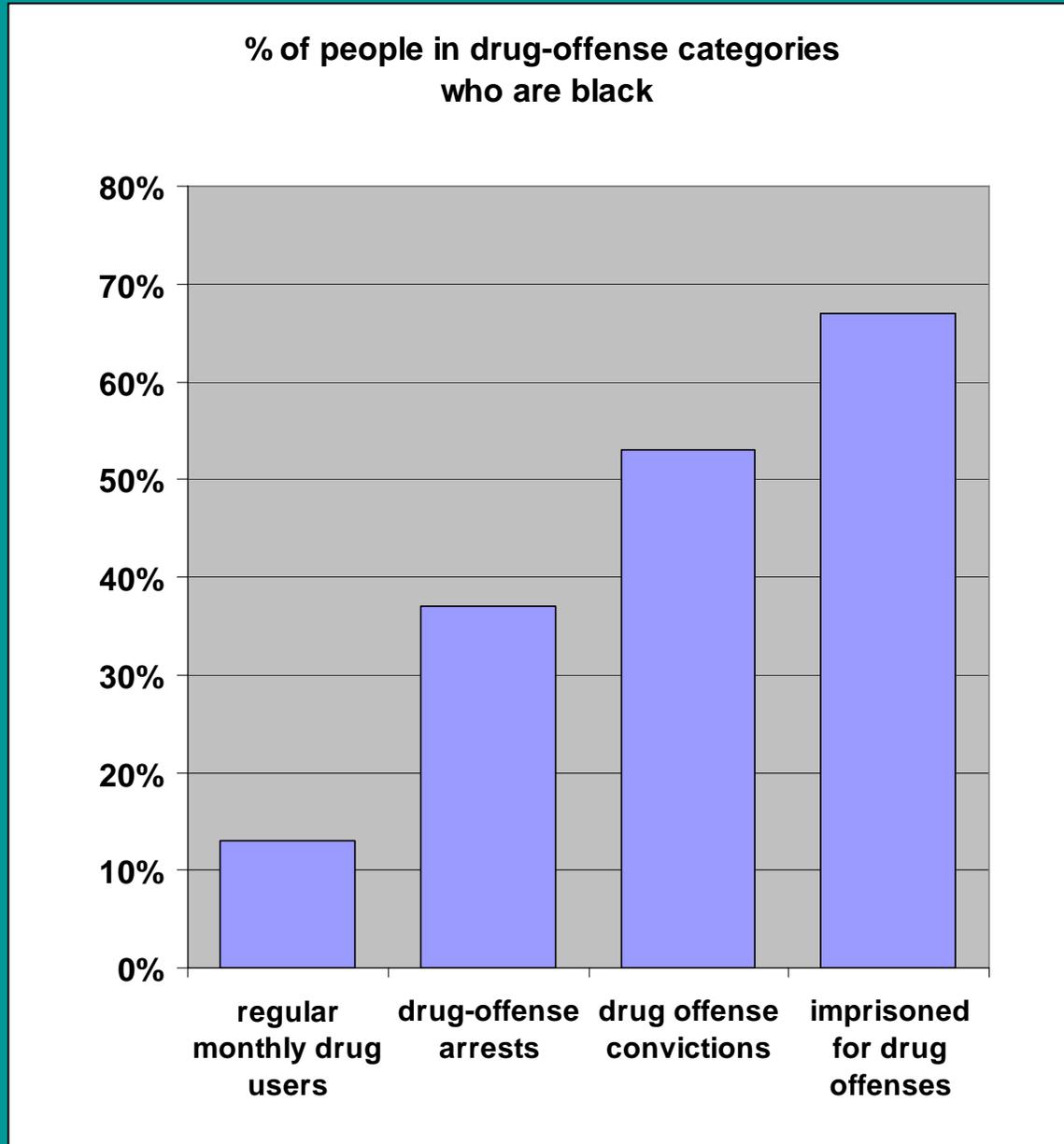
III. Current Situation: Housing

Exhibit ES-1: Consistent Adverse Treatment Against Blacks and Hispanics, 1989 and 2000



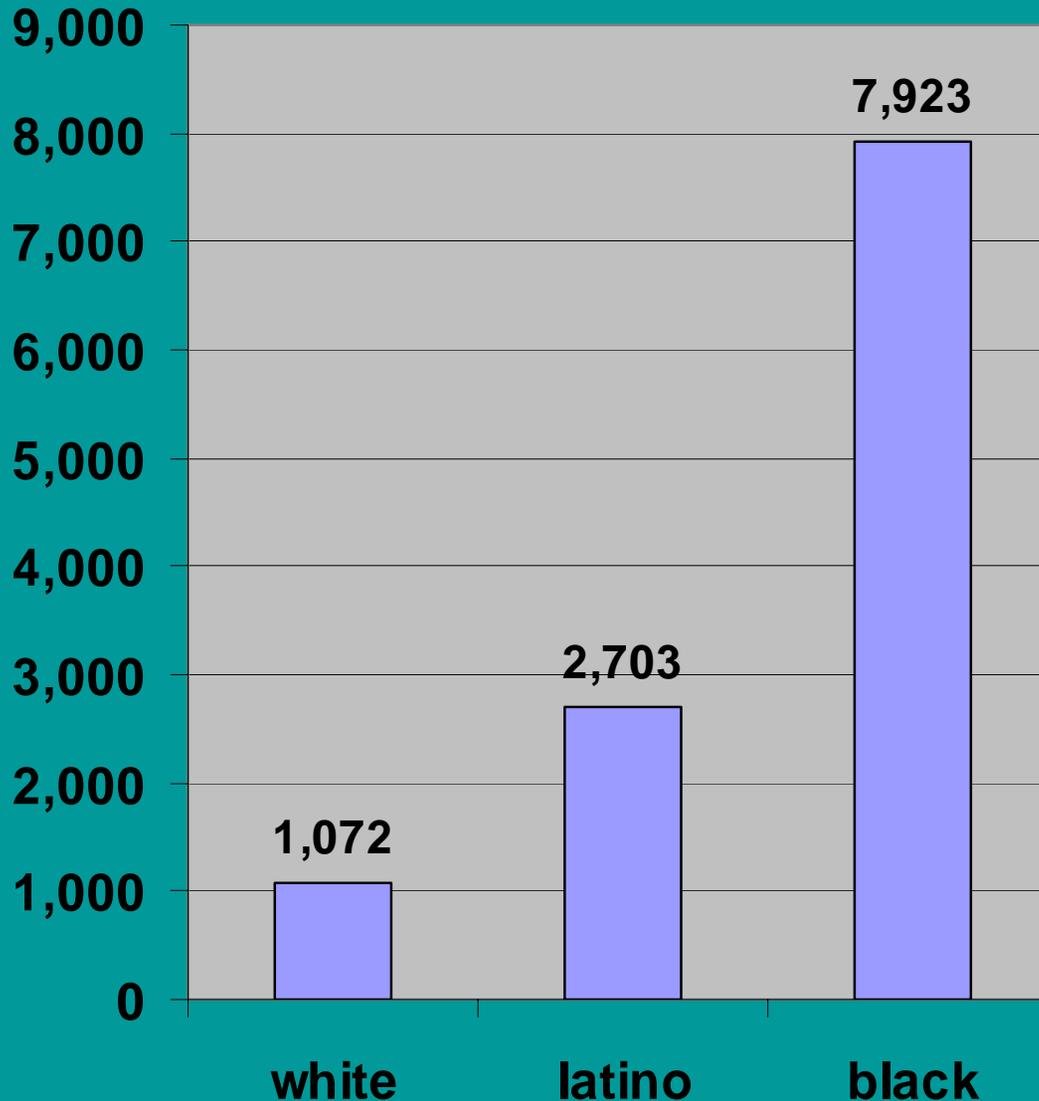
Data are from a “housing audit” study in which black and white couples acted as “testers” seeking rentals and home purchases.

III. Current Situation: criminal justice

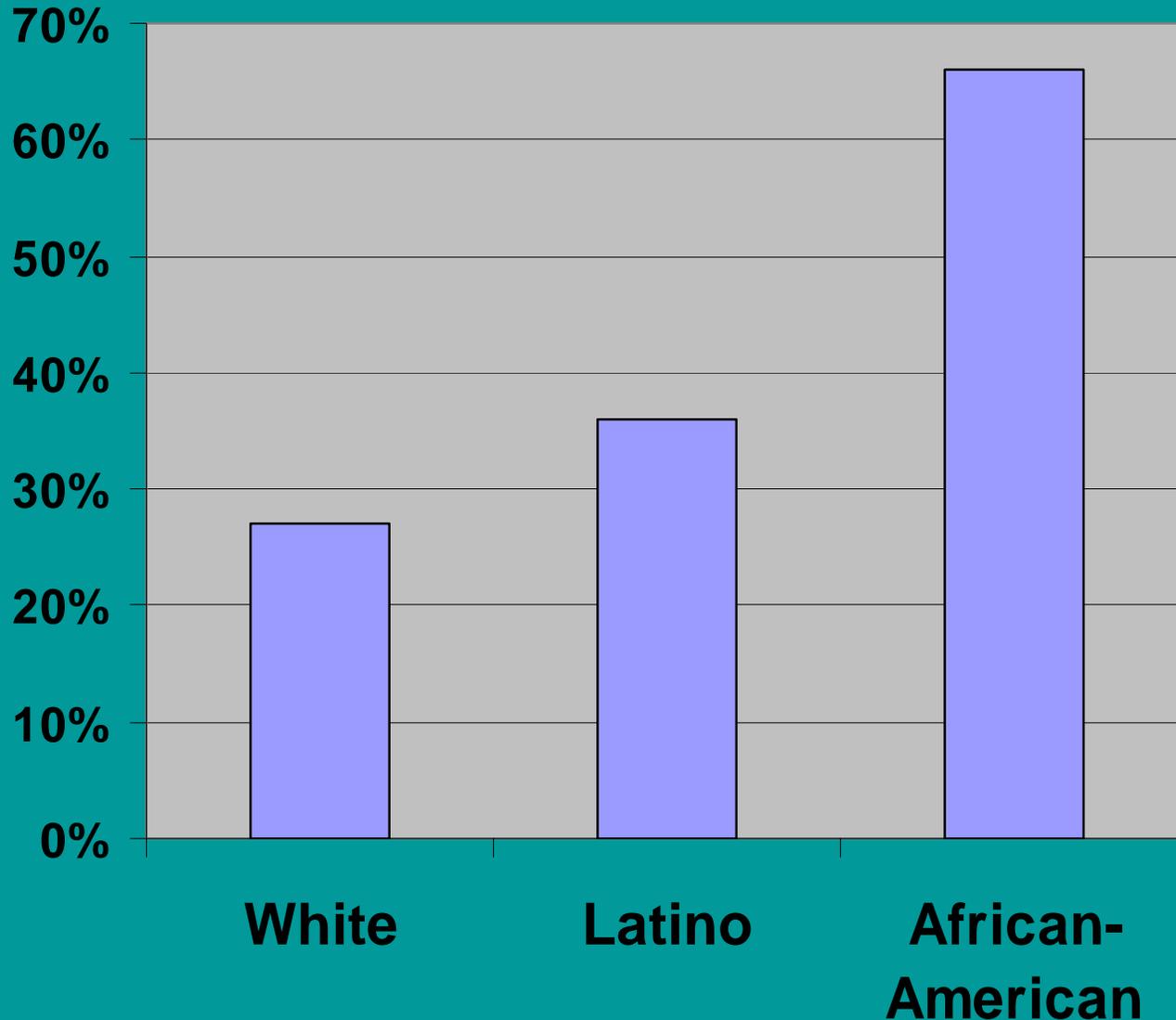


III. Current Situation: criminal justice

Incarceration rates by Race, per 100,000 adult residents, 2002



Denial Rate for Small Business Loans, 1993



“Statistical discrimination”:

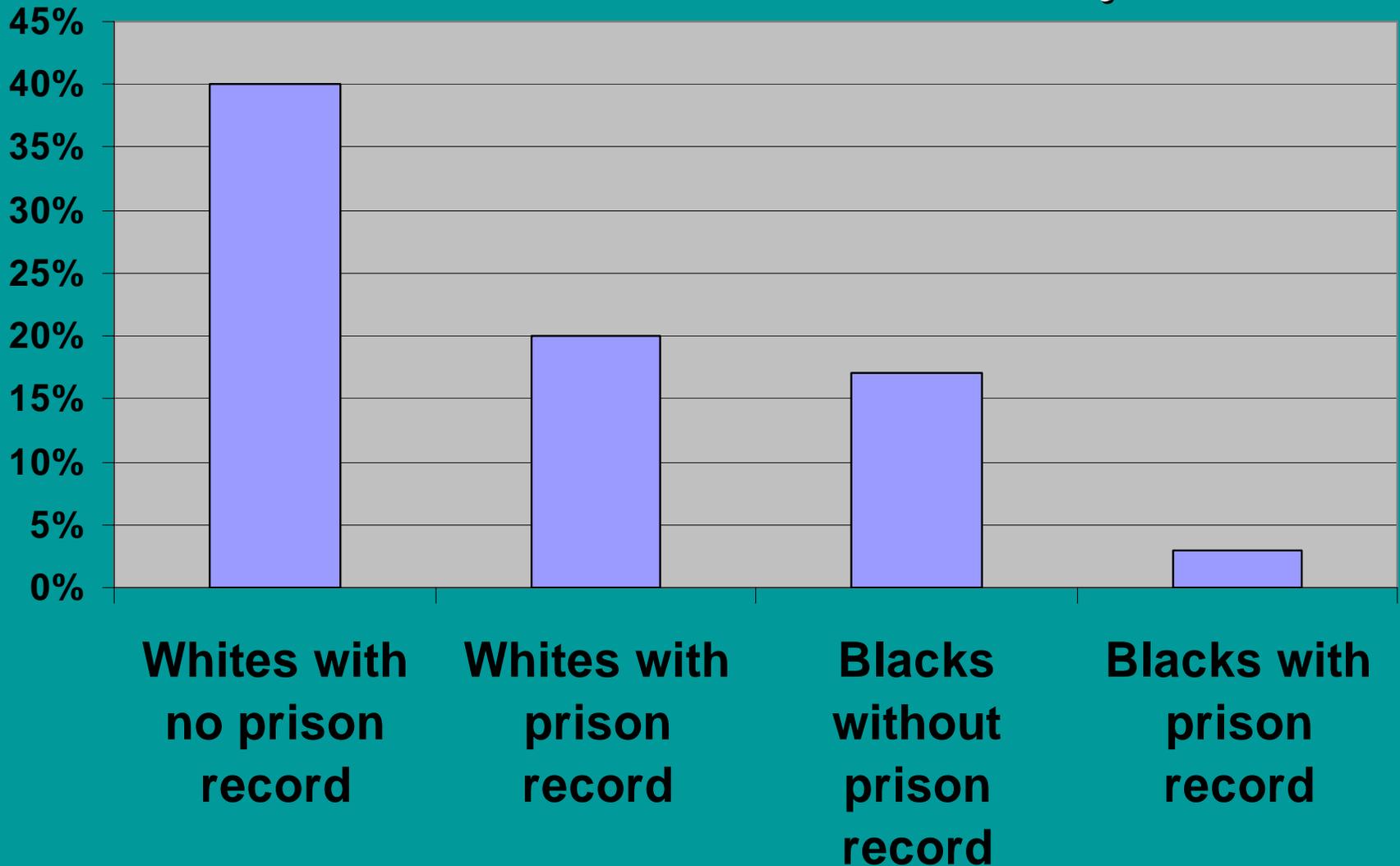
A situation in which an employer makes a hiring decision about an individual on the basis of beliefs about the average characteristics of a social category rather than the characteristics of the specific individual. Why? Because it is less costly to do so, not because of an dislike of people in that category.

Example:

Employers believe that on average a young black man will be a less reliable employee than a young white man with the same formal qualifications, and since it is difficult to get reliable information about individual reliability, the employer will rely on presumed group traits to make the choice.

III. Current Situation: employment

Rates of “call backs” in Employment discrimination audit study



III. Current Situation: education

Spending per pupil in rich suburbs and cities,
1988-1989 school year



4. Affirmative Action

Definition:

Any policy that takes into account membership in some historically discriminated group (eg. race or gender) to increase the likelihood of a person from that group getting a job or being admitted to a university.

Alternative procedures:

- (1) Specific quotas or looser “targets”
- (2) Tie-breaker rules
- (3) Intensive recruitment campaigns
- (4) “points” added to recruitment scores

4. Affirmative Action

What are the possible justifications for affirmative action policies?

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What are the possible justifications for affirmative action policies?

- (1) Redressing *past* injustices to a group**
- (2) Counteracting or neutralizing *current* discrimination**
- (3) Serving the needs of particular communities (eg. Minority doctors and lawyers for disadvantaged communities)**
- (4) Promoting valuable forms of diversity**

5. Reinforcement of racism by class inequality

Four crucial facts to remember:

- a. Most African-Americans are not poor**
- b. In actual numbers there are more poor white Americans than poor black Americans**
- c. But: African Americans (and Latinos) are greatly overrepresented among the poor, especially among the very poor. This gets a lot of media attention.**

This intersection of race and poverty and the accompanying link between race and crime fuels continuing racial stereotypes and racism.

6. Dilemmas of Politics for racial equality

Two basic choices in electoral politics:

- (1) Try to elect black candidates: this is facilitated by concentrating black voters in specific electoral districts so that they will have a majority of voters.**
- (2) Try to elect politicians who support racial justice whether they are black or white: this is facilitated by having black voters spread out across more districts so that they can influence more elections.**

Dilemma: if you adopt strategy (1) fewer elected representatives will support racial justice policies; if you adopt strategy (2) fewer black politicians will get elected.