Racial Discrimination against African Americans Example

The criminal justice system has seen racial discrimination against African Americans, as far as the Rodney King riots in 1992 and maybe even before then. The Rodney King riots or L.A riots were a cause due to verdict in the case of use of extreme force by the Los Angeles Police Department. According to National Public Radio "It ignited a national conversation about racial and economic disparity and police use of force". Today, even though we have tried to reduce racial discrimination, we haven't been able to achieve complete elimination of racial discrimination. The Rodney King riots have not been the only major notable stories about racial discrimination within the criminal justice system. In 2015, the arrest of Sandra Bland caused controversy as well as anger when she was found dead in her cell three days after her arrest. There are many more from Trayvon Martin to Eric Garner even as close to us as the death of Quinten Thomas, a fourth year student at CSUN. The way racial discrimination is handled within our justice system has to change. There is no reason for our minorities to be treated this way by the very same people whose job it is to serve and protect the citizens. If racial discrimination keeps happening within our system, then we must ask ourselves what it is we are doing wrong. According to our text, Criminal Justice Ethics: Theory in Practice racial discrimination is morally wrong and is in violation of the principle of equality. This principle states "those who are equal to be treated equally based on similarities and that race not be a relevant consideration in that assessment" (Banks P.84) The key word here being equal, being
equal doesn't mean we should all be the same. It means we all should have the same opportunity, the same equal advantage in order to be successful. The Merriam Webster dictionary describes the word 'equal' as "like for each member of a group or society". The discriminator in this case would be the criminal justice system law enforcement officers as well as the corrections system and even the judicial system. It begins with the officers. They tend to use profiling to determine a cause to detain and inquire. This profiling is sometimes called criminal profiling. This criminal profiling has led to racial profiling because profiling alone includes protected categories according to Racial Profiling by Fredrickson and Siljander "criminal profiling is often confused with racial profiling...because criminal profile will include...race and/or national origin, or some other protected category". This racial discrimination can be traced back to once again the Rodney King riots. We can see that in 1992, it was still a time where white felt superior to those with a different color other than white. Our text says a quarter of the LAPD officers who were surveyed said "officers held a racial bias toward minorities...this could lead to the use of excessive force" (Banks P.100). Not only is there racial discrimination against those who are arrested but also against those who are African American and work for the system. Los Angeles Sentinel reported in 1991 John W. Hunter, a police officer for LAPD since 1968, became a Detective II in 1976 and has been denied promotions and pay grade advancements since then. The agency did an investigation and found that during a one year period 26.9 percent White officers were promoted and only 11.8 percent African American officers were promoted. LAPD seems to be a lot more diverse now according to Los Angeles Times, it resembles its demographics a lot more now. When it comes to demographics, our text says the drug arrests increased and blacks accounted for the majority of that proportion (Banks P. 119). It also mentions that resources were allocated to target black communities. This means the incarceration of the black male would increase. Often one thing leads to another. For these males, getting locked up only contributes to their collapse. Once they are incarcerated, they tend to get into more trouble, adding yet more years to their sentence, guaranteeing they stay there for a long time. The judicial part of the system discriminates in terms of not always being able to get a fit equal jury. A jury is to be composed of the equal peers as the defendant. For example O.J Simpson, the jury for his trial was determined for the lengthy process just like any other. The difference here was that there was always going to be a bias. Whether the jurors recognized it or not, there was always bias. Mr. Simpson was a wealthy, big time celebrity at the time. Would the jury as well as the trial have been the same if it would have been a regular, poor minority? Some might
say yes, and that maybe the jury wouldn't have had a difficult time determining a guilty verdict. The world may never know because he was acquitted. Even if new evidence was found, he could never face a criminal trial again. One victim we can look at is Marissa Alexander from Florida. She was arrested and charged with aggravated assault. Marissaalexander.org says she was arrested in 2010 after firing a warning shot after she was attacked by her then husband. Marissa had a background of domestic violence and abuse against her. Yet she was still sentenced to twenty years in 2012. Eventually her case was overturned but she still had to accept her plea agreement and serve some time in jail. This was an outrage due to the Zimmerman/Trayvon Martin case. In 2012, the same year Marissa Alexander was charged with aggravated assault, George Zimmerman was taken into custody and let go after claiming self defense, in the same state. He was eventually charged and tried in court but was acquitted. George Zimmerman who gave no real reason or explanation as to why he felt in fear of his life was let go and even acquitted. Walked out a free man. Unfortunately for Marissa, who was legitimately in fear for her life and had a background that would explain her actions on that day, had to serve time and accept a plea deal. She's free now, but all that time she spent serving time is time she will never get back. Another case is Sandra Bland, she was arrested by a trooper after a traffic stop. She was processed and left in a jail cell. The jail allegedly ignored her history of depression. They say this was her cause for her suicide in her jail cell. Conspiracy theorist, though not the most credible, have argued that Sandra Bland was killed by her jailers. Even if this were possible, what would the reason for this be? Can we trust that our correctional officers are doing their dutiful jobs and are ethically doing things when no one else is watching them? I believe we can't completely trust the system yet. Fear of the ones in higher position will always be great. Minorities have learned to not trust everyone and to question everything, even the justice system. They have started educating themselves about the injustices done to them by the system. The Black Lives Matter movement has generated a response from the black community as well as other minorities. Through social media they have create unity and have brought attention to the issues that need to be talked about in our society concerning the african american victims. A theory used in our text was conflict theory a theory which says society is a competition for limited resources. According to our text "conflict theorists perceive society as compromising groups with conflicting values, with the state organized to represent the interests of the...ruling class" (Banks P.118). In this theory the law is seen as a way to protect themselves and their interests. This then creates inequalities because the punishment is then based on "nonrational factors, including
race and social class" (Banks P. 118). This again is reason enough for minorities to feel angry and fearful. All these cases like Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, and Marissa Alexander should make us pay attention. This is why the black community is fearful. Two of the victims of racial discrimination mentioned above are dead. Trayvon was profiled by a neighborhood watch organizer. But his killer, if not for all the media attention, would not have gone to trial because he was let go by authorities after simply claiming self defense. Yet Sandra Bland was arrested and booked for no reason. Her arresting officer was found guilty of perjury after he said he took Ms. Bland out of her vehicle to conduct a safe investigation, but the grand jury believed he was angry she didn't put out her cigarette when asked according to On the Death of Sandra Bland: A Case of Anger and Indifference. These black communities see these and they see they are not equal to the rest of social classes. Even though we have come a long way from slavery and the Rodney King riots, the black communities will continue to view law enforcement as "racist and authoritarian" (Banks P 118). In order for our criminal justice system to be ethical and fair, it is going to have to go through a lot of trial and error. Just like we have seen with the death penalty aspect of our system. We have seen them convict innocent people and have them on death row for years only to discover they were innocent the whole time or find that their case was mishandled and it wasn't fair at all. I believe within time the future of our system will be more reliable and racial discrimination within the system will hopefully be reduced greatly.

References

5. Hayes, Floyd W., III. "Fuhrman Tapes Confirm LAPD's Racialized Tyranny. (Los Angeles Police Department


