

Forum: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee (SOCHUM)

Issue #1: Addressing the issue of the rise in racial discrimination amid COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

The global pandemic has impacted everyone around the world, and has caused a huge change in the way the people react and view different problems. One of the consequences of the pandemic was the increase in racial discrimination, particularly against people of color. This harassment extended from physical to verbal, in which countries around the world have created an unsafe environment for these groups of people. This rise in discrimination due to COVID-19 demands our attention, and our help. COVID-19 was a virus outbreak that started in 2020, and made everyone, in all different countries, quarantine, wear masks, and take precautions. It is important to understand the root of this problem, the various actions taken by each country, and how to eliminate this problem, once and for all.

Definition of Key Terms

Racial discrimination: Racial discrimination is any discrimination against any individual in regards to their skin color, racial, or ethnic origin. These discriminations can include the refusal to do business, socialize with, or share resources with people of a certain group.

Anti-racism: The practice of actively identifying and opposing racism through

changing policies, behaviors, and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions.

Implicit bias: Subconscious bias that occurs unintentionally and automatically, in which a person associates stereotypes with a certain group.

Explicit bias: Conscious bias in which individuals are aware of the prejudices and their attitudes towards a certain group.

Exceptionalism: A racist view of successful, educated Black Americans, as exceptions to the rule, such as Oprah and Barack Obama.

Black Lives Matter: An international social movement, formed in the United States in 2013, that is dedicated to fighting racism and anti-Black violence, more specifically in the form of police brutality.

White supremacy: The belief that white people are superior to people of other races and thus should be dominant over them.

General Overview

Reasons for racial discrimination

Racial discrimination involves treating someone unjustly due to their race or personal characteristics associated with the race, such as skin color, certain facial features, etc. Racial discrimination is a notorious issue in which no country can claim to be free of it. Racism is a global concern and tackling it will require a universal effort (UN). Various factors induce racial discrimination, one of the most common being prejudice and stereotypes. Prejudice is a preconceived opinion about a particular group of people and stereotypes are a form of prejudice where people hold oversimplified ideas about a group of people based on the behavior of a few individuals. Both of these factors contribute to racial discrimination. Another imperative factor leading to racial discrimination is

power dynamics. Certain races or cultures hold more power and privilege than others. This hierarchy can lead to discrimination against those who are seen as weak and less privileged.

Repercussions associated with racial discrimination

Extensive consequences follow racial discrimination which can negatively impact an individual, group, or society. One of the main consequences resulting from racial discrimination is the psychological impact on the victim. Researches have shown that as a result of being victimized in such acts, individuals experience emotional distress (such as feelings of humiliation and worthlessness) and consequently develop psychiatric disorders. Hate crimes against Asian American people surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a 2021 study found that these discriminations were linked with a greater risk of depression, anxiety, self-harm, binge drinking, and suicidal ideation among Asian American students (Medical News Today). Alongside the mental disorders that arise from the acts of discrimination, a 2018 research paper recognized that the fear of racism itself can undermine good mental health characteristics, such as resilience, hope, and motivation (Medical News Today).

Examples of racial discrimination throughout history

One major example of racial discrimination throughout history is slavery. Between 1525 and 1866, 12.5 million people were taken away from their homes from Africa and forced into slavery to the Americas through the transatlantic slave trade (Smithsonian). Another prime example is the Japanese Internment camps during WWII. With the policy established in 1942, the U.S. government stated that people of Japanese descent, including U.S. citizens, would be incarcerated in isolated camps (History Channel). In result, approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly put into concentration camps, a

place in which persecuted minorities are forcibly imprisoned under harsh conditions; merely due to their ethnicity or race.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

The USA has always had multiple controversies in the topic of racism, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic with the BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM) protest. BLM is a movement that started in the last years, but became very popular during the pandemic, due to several deaths that made this protest so big. George Floyd's death gathered around 15 to 26 million people around the United States that protested against racism. President Joe Biden addressed this issue in his first days in office. He wanted to urgently and quickly advance equity by creating a set of laws in which he believes will lower these statistics.

United Kingdom

According to *stophateuk* there has been a rise of 19% of racially aggravated offences in the country throughout 2021-2022. Multiple people have suffered with a higher rate of discrimination during the pandemic and the offense numbers have also increased. The country has been active to create changes to include and lower these racist acts. They have spoken out multiple times in various speeches, and have made public announcements in ways that the population can help solve this issue.

Brazil

During the pandemic multiple Afro-Brazilian groups and groups of people of color spoke out about the increase of racism during the last few months.

According to CNN there were more reports of racist attacks and racial discrimination during the months of January to April 2022 than the whole year of 2021. The population of Brazil is made up of almost 50% of people of color, in which every one in eight of those people have been in some way racially discriminated. Brazil has not made any new plans to solve this problem. During the pandemic the government was brutally criticized by their responses to the pandemic in relation to the increase of racism.

India

India has seen a rise in racial discrimination during the pandemic in a different way than other countries. The rise of racial discrimination in this country was targeting the muslim community. Rumors around the country surfaced spreading the idea that these muslim people are the ones spreading the COVID-19 virus. The government has spoken about this issue and they have created different ways to help these people, but it still has not been enough.

Canada

Even a country that portrays themselves as welcoming and diverse has seen a rise in hate crimes towards people of color in the last 3 years. "Canada has witnessed a 72 percent jump in its hate crime rate between 2019 and 2022." (Statistics Canada). Minority groups have urged the government to pass an anti-racist law, in which the government has spoken publicly about and is in an ongoing process to create a plan to stop racism.

Timeline of Events

November 2019	First known COVID-19 outbreak in mainland China.
January-February 2020	COVID-19 started spreading around different countries. Xenophobia towards the Asian population starts to take place around the world.
March-April 2020	Lockdown started to become implemented in more than half of the world.
May 2020	George Floyd was an African American man who was murdered by a police officer during an arrest. He influenced the BLM movement to become even more popular.
July 2020	The Black Lives Matter movement gains popularity, with ongoing protests and demonstrations against racism and police brutality. Some people begin to draw connections between the racism faced by Asian communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the racism faced by Black communities throughout history.
End of 2020	The United Nations released a report talking about the alarming impact that COVID-19 had on human rights, especially towards racism.
April 2021	The United Nations addressed the situation with a statement calling for action to solve the rise of racism and discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic, including efforts to protect the human rights of all people.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on April 1st 2022 called “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief”. Adopted by the UN General Assembly, this resolution was recorded as A/HRC/RES/49/31. Additionally, the UN General Assembly resolution 2106 (XX) adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) on December 21st 1965, in which it defines and prohibits racial discrimination in all sectors of private and public life. In regards to movements associated with racial discrimination, one of the most prominent events would be the Black Lives Matter movement. BLM took place on July 13, 2013 and was a decentralized political/social movement that highlighted racial discrimination against black people. It was mainly motivated from incidents of police brutality and violence rooting from racial discrimination against people of color.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

This problem has been ongoing over the last few years and it was at its peak during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, three years later this problem still exists but it has outgrown its popularity in social media. The UN has been a part of the solution to this issue, by advocating and speaking out against racism and the impact COVID-19 had on this problem. Some of the previous attempts to resolve this issue have been worldwide campaigns and protests of people gathering in the streets and speaking out about this issue. This solution was very efficient because it became very popular in social media and gained a lot of attention. This helped spread awareness of this issue where many people started becoming involved and concerned about this topic. Another solution to this

problem has been legal actions. Some countries around the world have created laws and introduced different legislation that prohibited racism of any sort. This has also helped this issue in a way that the rate of these countries' racism statistics have lowered drastically. These are a few of the solutions to this problem, in which they have played an important role to minimize this issue globally.

Possible Solutions

Despite the UN's efforts to suppress the issue of racial discrimination worldwide, it has been shown that past efforts were not enough. The root cause of racial discrimination is representation through the media. Even though this has been an issue for several centuries, with the issues of slavery, white supremacy, this is a new perspective to the problem with the involvement of social media. This is not a new issue, and has always been present in the world, but slowly people are trying to solve it. While the media can spread cultures and customs, it can also shape cultures and instill implicit racial bias and beliefs. For example, black people are often over represented through the media regarding poverty, therefore, shaping the society's perception of black people and their welfare. By combatting the cause of this issue, we can combat the issue as a whole. Implementing non-profit organizations similar to Factcheck.org or Snopes can help us identify false and misleading claims that are made through the media to influence the public.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This issue falls under the SDG of reduced inequality. This is because the answer to this problem is reducing inequality among race, ethnicity, etc. COVID-19 was a huge factor in the increase of racial discrimination, and achieving this SDG would help reduce and stop this ongoing problem once and for all.

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Appendix

- I. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf
 - A. Link showing a detailed description regarding racial discrimination amid the COVID-19 crisis and recommended actions to be taken on behalf of this issue. It also further expands on the subfactors related to racial discrimination and how those were affected by the pandemic as well.
- II. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Racism/NAPA_RD.pdf
 - A. Website discussing a specific protocol regarding the issue of racial discrimination called "National Action Plan Against Racial Discrimination".
- III. <https://gspp.berkeley.edu/assets/uploads/research/pdf/GlaserSpencerCh>

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- A. Research article that explores the psychology behind the implicit and explicit racial bias, prejudice and stereotypes that can affect governments and the public.
- IV. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>
- A. Official resolution adopted by the UN in the General Assembly that emphasizes the establishment of The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
- V. <https://www.britannica.com/event/American-civil-rights-movement>
- A. Research article that gives a general overview of an example of a movement against racial segregation that took place in history, more specifically, the American civil rights movement.