

Racism and discrimination against immigrants and minorities in the United States . Paul Chehade:.

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Racism in the United States has been a major issue since the colonial era. Heavy burdens of racism in the country have fallen upon Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, American Jews, Italian Americans, Arab Americans, and some other immigrant groups and their descendants. Major racially structured institutions include slavery, Native American reservations, segregation, residential schools (for Native Americans), internment camps, and affirmative action. Racial stratification has occurred in employment, housing, education and government. Formal racial discrimination was largely banned in the mid-20th century, and it came to be perceived as socially unacceptable and/or morally repugnant as well, yet racial politics remain a major phenomenon.

Racist attitudes, or prejudice, are held by a substantial portion of the U.S. population.

Discrimination against African Americans, Latin Americans, and Muslims is widely acknowledged. Members of every major American ethnic minority have perceived racism in their dealings with other minority groups.

It is difficult to describe the sensation I felt when Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed SB1070. I felt an emotional maelstrom of disgust, despair and utter cynicism over Gov. Brewer's decision to implement the most draconian and most starkly racist immigration law in the last 50 years, and now in Florida we are in the same way.

SB1070, appropriately dubbed the "Papers, Please" bill by its detractors, forces all law enforcement agencies in Arizona to ask for proof of legal residency or citizenship if an officer feels "reasonable suspicion" that a person is an illegal immigrant. In addition, SB1070 makes it illegal to "give shelter to illegal immigrants" whether knowingly or by "recklessly" disregarding a person's immigration status.

The United States has struggled historically when it comes to race. Slavery and the conquering of North America from the indigenous populations are two examples of how the wealth and prosperity of this country came at the expense of so many others. In both instances, the 'others' were people of color.

With immigration coming to the forefront of discussion in the coming year, it is a good time to remember the values this country has always taken pride in: equality, democracy, freedom and rights for all people. While we have yet to see such values come to full fruition, the fight to strive for them has made the United States a starship of civil rights.

Always I remember the poem by Dr. Martin Niemoller, a protestant clergyman who was active in the resistance movement against Hitler.

When the Nazis arrested CommunistI kept silentBecause I was not a Communist.

When they rounded up Social DemocratsI Kept silentBecause I was not a Social Democrats.

When they picked up CatholicsI did not protestBecause I was not a Catholic.

When they arrested meThere was nobody leftTo protest.

I can only hope that such obviously racist laws spur the federal government to finally take on comprehensive immigration reform and allow the millions of immigrants across the country to come out of the shadows.

Virtue ethics is a broad term for theories that emphasize the role of character and virtue in moral philosophy rather than either doing one's duty or acting in order to bring about good

consequences. A virtue ethicist is likely to give you this kind of moral advice: "Act as a virtuous person would act in your situation."

Ethical Junction Making Choices Easy.

Paul Chohade:.

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