

The past few weeks in America have been turbulent, as riots and protests sparked by the unjust death of George Floyd broke out. His death served as the tipping point of injustice towards the black population in America. Some argue that it does not exist, but systemic racism has been and still is a large part of American society. It influences perceptions and creates an implicit bias that affects the daily lives of black people living in America. A jarring example of the effects of implicit bias is the perpetual police brutality towards black people that usually presents itself in unwarranted violence and shootings of unarmed black individuals by police. The revolutionary atmosphere we find ourselves in makes it obvious that change is necessary; however, this isn't so simple, as it's difficult to completely eradicate systemic racism and implicit bias, but there are measures that can be taken to prevent the lives of black people being put in danger unnecessarily by law enforcement.

George Floyd's death was horrific, and essentially served as the breaking point for the people angry at the constant injustice and violence that black individuals suffer at the hands of cops. He was apprehended after an employee at a convenience store suspected that he used a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy his cigarettes and called the police. One of the officers who responded, Derek Chauvin, pinned him to the ground and placed his knee on Floyd's neck, ignoring Floyd's pleas for him to stop, as he could not breathe. Chauvin kept his knee pressed on Floyd's neck for approximately 8 minutes and 46 seconds, enough to kill him. The entire ordeal was recorded and posted online and inspired outrage. Some argue that while Floyd's death was tragic and unjust, the type of racially charged police brutality that was being protested didn't exist. However, this is untrue. There have been recurring cases of unnecessary police brutality against black 'suspects' who are innocent and unarmed. Breonna Taylor, a 26 year old African American woman, was shot 8 times in her apartment by law enforcement, who entered her home by force without identifying themselves as law enforcement, claiming that her apartment was involved in a drug investigation that in actuality took place far from her residence. There was no body camera footage of this incident. Elijah McClain, a 23 year

old black man, was put into a deadly chokehold by police when he was reported as being 'sketchy' while walking home from a convenience store while dancing and wearing a ski mask and was then injected with ketamine, and he died a few days later. The police immediately restrained him, despite the fact that he had not committed a crime, and put him into a chokehold that has been banned from use by law enforcement. There is no bodycam footage of the incident, as the police claimed that their cameras fell. These are simply three of hundreds of cases. In all these cases, there are common factors: a blatant abuse of power combined with judgements founded on implicit bias. The police saw these individuals as 'threatening', simply because they were black, and their use of extensive force against these individuals led to their deaths, which they justify under the guise of natural reaction or reaction to noncompliance.

This issue is somewhat heavily prevalent in large cities, such as Chicago. As stated by an article by NBC News, many young African American people, such as those in the youth-led anti-violence organization, see themselves in Floyd's position, as many of them have faced violence at the hands of the police. Police brutality is common in Chicago, and many of the cases go unnoticed due to the normalization and justification of violence against black individuals as a result of implicit bias. A 2017 Justice Department report referenced in the article found that police officers were ten times more likely to use force with black suspects than they would with white suspects. The report also states that "unreasonable force fell heavily on predominantly black and Latino neighborhoods". This can be likened to most cities in the nation, due to systemic racism that pervades our society.

Racism has always been a huge part of America's history, but systemic racism took root mainly in the early 1900s. Social security, which aided the elderly, often excluded black individuals or families. Further, according to an article by Time, black families were often denied loans to purchase houses due to the fact that "the very presence of a black resident in a neighborhood reduced the value of the houses there." Because of this, most

of the black population was left 'economically vulnerable' and far poorer than their white counterparts. The heavy presence of racism in that era resulted in more black Americans being prosecuted for petty crimes and serving extremely long sentences, while white Americans who would commit the same crimes were given more leeway. This remained static as time progressed, and we see the same unjust prosecution and implicit bias today throughout the nation.

In response to the protests and the slogan 'Black Lives Matter', some instead stand behind a contrasting slogan, 'All Lives Matter', and claim that there is no issue of disproportionate police brutality against black individuals. Trump made a statement that racist cops are "a few bad apples", and insinuates that this is not a common problem. However, this is incorrect, as shown through national statistics from a report by Mapping Police Violence. The report asserts that black people have made up 28% of all people killed by police since 2013, which should be taken as alarming given that black people only make 13% of the population in America. Further, it has been found that black people are 1.3 times more likely to be killed by police while unarmed than white people.

Such statistics makes it glaringly obvious that there needs to be reform. It would be nearly impossible to eradicate racism completely, as there is no foolproof way to be rid of implicit bias against black individuals on a national level. The most beneficial type of reform would be to law enforcement. Given how many shootings of unarmed black individuals occur due to racism and implicit bias, it would be in our best interest to guarantee that racist individuals cannot enter the police force and obtain the power that would allow them to interfere with others lives. This would mean a more intense and strictly enforced background check of each prospective member of the police force, as well as interviews with friends and families in order to check for a racist background. Further, police training needs to be extended. Currently, most training courses for prospective police have a length of around 300- 1000 hours. Chicago requires 900 hours

of training. This is less than the training course for prospective hairdressers. The training course for prospective police is far too short to properly equip and prepare ordinary citizens to wield higher power properly. This is why we often see abuses of power within law enforcement. Training programs should be extended, and there should be a strictly enforced race and bias unit. Granted, some precincts already have this in place. However, according to a report done by CBS News, approximately 69% of the 155 precincts they surveyed confirmed that they have bias training and 90% of those confirm that it is mandatory. Nonetheless, this needs to be refined. Most of the precincts surveyed who claimed to have mandatory training require very small numbers of hours of bias training from their officers. Minneapolis, where Floyd was murdered, has mandatory implicit bias training, but only requires 8 hours of training per year. This needs to be extended, and implicit bias training needs to be made available and mandatory for all precincts.

The subject of racism and implicit bias has become a charged subject in the past few weeks. Floyd's death captured the nation's attention and is forcing us to examine the flaws in our nation's system regarding the effects of systematic racism and police brutality, which has gone by unnoticed for too long. In the current revolutionary atmosphere, the people are pressing for change, which begs the question: how can this be fixed? Again, given America's horrifying history with the treatment of black citizens and how systematic racism came to form, it would be nearly impossible to completely rid the nation of racism. There is no simple way to purge bias from the minds of citizens, who learn racism from their families and environment. We cannot change the nation's past, but we can change the future and prevent racist individuals from obtaining a higher power that would allow them to end the lives of others based simply on judgments made off of implicit bias.