Alexis Thornton

Research Paper Draft

After watching American History X, I felt as if I had a lot of questions that could not be answered. The movie was in fact quite an eye opener, and led me to question why racism continues to exist in our so claimed tolerant society. My purpose of this paper will be to inform, analyze, and educate my audience of the narrow views our society has today.

First, what is racism? Racism is having a negative behavior or attitude by those of the majority towards the opposing racial or ethnic minority. According to author Mageli’s article “Psychology of racism” the word “racism” is used worldwide, not only pertaining to black-white relations but as well as white Americans relations with other minorities. Although the majority of research done focused solely on white hatred on African Americans in the United States.

Racism would be easily considered the main topic of the movie “American History X’. The entire film reflected hatred towards numerous ethnicities and minorities. The relations used during this film would not be narrowed down to only black-white relations, but certainly all ethnicities involved.

According to social psychologists racism is not simply hatred, but more of an intense dark habit impossible to rid. Social Psychologist James M. Jones was able to separate racism into three different types. The first being individual racism, which is more of an anti-black attitude created by individual whites. Another type of racism according to Jones, is institutional racism. This includes oppression of blacks revolved around social, economic, and political patterns. Lastly is cultural racism, which is explained as white behaviors ignoring or even belittling characteristics of the black culture.

While watching “American History X” it was obvious that the hatred Derek possessed was nearly impossible to rid. Surprisingly enough, the habit was reversed due to unwanted attention during incarceration. Individual racism most likely contributed to Derek’s attitude during the beginning of his life while speaking with his father at the dinner table. Another scene that occurred was, when the whites were tired of not being able to play basketball because of the blacks constantly taking up the courts, they decided to play black men VS the white men; this then showed institutional racism.

Psychoanalyst Irwin Katz believes the white race views the African American race in a sympathetic manner. This possibly leading to negative reactions then after leading to less than positive action. Another suggested reason for racism is prejudice allows the majority to take action towards their frustration of the minority groups. Verbal abuse towards ethnic groups almost seem to come naturally, whether it be to fit in with a social group or to conform to your family’s already narrow views.

Verbal altercations happened often in “American History X”. There was not a scene where racial slurs were not used in the entire film. The abuse is more simply put as natural pertaining to the character’s actions in this film.

According to author Lenonik of “Ending Racism and Discrimination in the United States” racism in beginning to decline. It is difficult to get a reasonably close estimate of Americans prejudiced views considering the uncomfortable subject. The more organized racism is amongst the most common. Hearing of hate crimes or racial slurs shows the simplicity of inequality, and is more than ever institutional.

Racism has always been a recognized topic throughout the ages. More so recently, considering the numerous police brutality occurrences on African Americans alone. This word wide epidemic has brought this obscene hatred back into light. Whether or not a positive or negative view on these hate crimes, it directly questions all humanity. Whether or not you think it took too long or not long enough to arise in our society again, we are now facing the cold facts of racial hatred.