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From slave to criminal

The Netflix film “13th: From Slave to Criminal With One Amendment” explores the factors that promote criminal attitudes in youth. The film uncovers the themes of racial inequality and how it is linked to mass incarnation. The term 13th in the film reflects the constitutions decision of abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude. The punishment and crime are associated with the mythology of black criminality and the reason behind mass incarnation. The film is the depiction of how American society portrayed black criminality for over 100 years. The white imagination of black slaves, rapists and savages have also influenced the lives of African Americans. Law and order exhibit racial inequality and black segregation. The film reflects America violated the Thirteenth Amendment, that claimed, "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime of which the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction” (Al-Faifi). Irrespective of the amendment American justice system treated blacks as second-class citizens.

The film starts with the scene when one of the four African-American men has to serve time in prison. The state's policies including Regan's war on drugs, Clinton's Three Strikes and mandatory sentencing laws have disadvantaged blacks only. The first theory that explains the criminal behavior in the film is social strain typology. The theory explains a person's motivation for adhering to the cultural goals and person's beliefs of attaining the goals. Strain theory states, “rebellion, an uncommon deviant alternative that rejects and actively substitutes the goals and means of society; ritualism, the means to legitimately guarantee that the cultural goals are respected even though the goals themselves are not realistic; and innovation, a form of acceptance of the goals but rejection of the means” (ZEMBROWSKI). According to the social strain typology of sociology, the personal experiences of the poor and deprived groups creates a situation of hopelessness. The negative attitudes and feelings are the result of individual encounters with these people with other subgroups and institutions. They are well aware of the resources they lack making them more eager to earning money. Their desires to improve their quality of life is another aspect of leading them to crimes and human trafficking. The theory of sociology explains that these people are unable to trust the society or the institutes and blame them for their deprivations. They believe that their sufferings and miseries are the product of social inequality and injustice. The behavioral capacities define the role taken by these people. The behavioral capacity defines their ability to adapt to the new culture and society becoming visible in their decisions of engaging them with negative activities. Their choices are their response to the social situation where opportunities for earning are limited (Turner).

The film highlight many historical cases of blacks who lost their lives due to mass incarnation. The death of the characters; Philando Castile, Tamir Rice, and Eric Garner, reveals the repercussions of mass incarnation. Philando was killed by a police officer who was driving with his girlfriend. The officer pulled him out of his car and killed him. This exhibits that the officer was motivated by his stereotypical attitude of treating the black guy as a criminal. The stereotypical attitude of the black officers reveals that black suffer the consequences of the unjust criminal system. Malcolm X the civil right activist perceives race as, "racism is a human problem and a crime that is absolutely so ghastly that a person who is fighting against racism is well within his rights to fight against it by any means necessary until it is eliminated" (Nickell). He recognizes race as a crime that deteriorates the life of the oppressed groups, depicting the need for its elimination. The civil right activist explains the negative consequences of race and its influence on society. According to the definition of the race, it is the responsibility of the people and society to fight against it that results in its elimination (Al-Faifi).

The feelings of the black prison in the film indicate that they are encouraged to commit crimes for attaining their goals. Due to their financial incapacity and poverty they are encouraged to commit offenses. Rebellion is also seen as a protest against social-economic and political differences. This indicates that they are under strain of changing their futures and lives. The film by showing black offenders transmits the philosophy that Africans are victim of circumstances and social injustice (Turner). Another theory that explains the criminal behavior of blacks is Differential Association Theory. It explains that criminal behavior is the product of differential social disorganization. This means that the prevalence of disorganization in society promote crimes because one group is more disadvantaged compared to the other. This is confirmed in the film as crime rates are high in black neighborhoods compared to the white neighborhood. It explains “deviance was the result of socialization and learning values of a Sociological Theories of Crime and Delinquency 245 subculture that supports attitudes and behaviors that the mainstream culture rejects” (ZEMBROSKI). The theory explains that development of criminal behaviors is the result of one’s interaction with values, attitudes and behaviors of others. The offensive behaviors are motivated by one’s perspectives about society. This suggests that people who belong to deprived background are more likely to commit crimes. Poverty is a common factor identified by this theory because it holds the power of motivating people towards crime. The theory claims that people are independent and capable of taking their own decisions. People receiving negative behavior and experiencing rejection are more likely to become criminals. Childhood also has a significant impact on the adoption of certain behaviors. Destructive childhood also promotes criminal attitude. Childcare arrangements for poor children are different from non- poor children. Inadequate child care facility for poor children is ineffective and unable to resolve child-related issues. The children in the US and all across the world that belong to poor backgrounds are disadvantaged children as they suffer the consequences' of unequal services. Better childcare services lead to better behaviors that improve the adaptation of children to different environments (Nickell).

Blacks in America are the most disadvantaged group due to black segregation. The film shows that African-Americans are treated unfairly in America appeared in the Jim Crow laws. The reasons for this deprivation has been racial stereotypes that advantaged the whites only. The main reason is that white had high socio-economic power that caused adversities for the blacks. The film represent blacks as the unflavored population due to the practical implications of mass incarnation and mandatory sentencing. These practices not only targeted black criminals but also innocent African-Americans. The culture of mass incarnation destructed the lives of black young people who spent many years in prison. The film has captured the realistic implications of black incarnation. The documentary show how life of black people looks in jails. Many are victim of the stereotypical judgments and serve in jails due to their blackness. Many blacks who commit crimes are motivated by the feelings of hatred. Their rebellion according to the Differential Association Theory is for changing the social order because they fail to find justice. Many children who lost their fathers in drug war or killed in police search operation develop negative emotions that promote attitude of violence and crime (Al-Faifi).

The topic has been overlooked for so long because blacks remained weaker in America due to socio-economic deprivations. The state continued to neglect the issues of Africans because they were considered as minorities. The history of America exhibits the prevalence of racism that discouraged whites from taking any prominent steps for eliminating black segregation and crimes. The race bias in America remains one of the oldest and critical social issue faced by blacks. Biases act positively for the whites who receive the benefits, and negatively for the Africans who suffer the consequences. The biased social parameters are discernible in the economic, social, political and financial aspects of human life. The notion of race bias relies on the belief that whites are dominant due to their better socio-economic position. These biases have adverse effects on the inferior race as it leads to their disadvantage. The evidence suggests that these biases have direct impacts on young Africans and kids. Little or no real attention was given to the issue of race while the whites continued to relate blackness with crimes (Al-Faifi).

In conclusion, America has failed to act according to the Thirteenth Amendment. The overall analysis of the film exhibits the reality of mass incarnation and the thirteenth amendment. America failed to eliminate slavery because after civil war blacks were treated as criminals. Strain theory and Differential Association Theory explains the behaviors of blacks. Many blacks were convicted for crimes like drugs abuse, theft, violence, and murders. The film portrays the shortcomings of the American justice system that did not provide an opportunity to blacks for becoming better citizens. Many innocent also became a victim of black segregation.

Work Cited

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