# OneUpAction International

Healing the Earth, one action at a time.



# RACIAL INEQUALITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

breaking down the intersectionality of social justice and climate justice

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### INTRODUCTION

2020 has marked a year of groundbreaking achievements, global difficulties, and multiple twists and turns. Citizens across the world have mobilized to unite and combat issues — Black Lives Matter movements, COVID-19 support, gender justice, environmental justice — and the momentum is still growing.

And the heart of many of these issues in the United States has lied in the pearly white structure and sealed papers: politics. With 38 million young people active in this election, and millions more older participating, much of the new generation has yet to completely grasp an understanding of the local and national political systems. During an era of mobilization and direct action, it is imperative that we educate, incentivize, and act.

This guidebook is split into two parts. First, we will be discussing racial inequality with a focus on the United States and how it is directly related to the climate crisis via environmental racism and healthcare. Second, we will be discussing women's rights with a focus on the United States, its global impact, and next steps within the climate movement.



(Mat Reding)

### race

/rās/

A way of grouping human beings based on their heritage or physical appearance.

The exact history of how racial inequality evolved in every society is varied. However, most countries can trace their current inequalities back to colonialism and slavery, when the idea of "race" became widespread.

This word, race, did not gain its modern meaning very widely until the 18th century. By then, Europe was colonizing the "New World" using slave labor; between 1525 and 1866, 12.5 million people were kidnapped from Africa and sent to the Americas.

Race was then used to rank the different peoples in the New World: the free Europeans, the indigenous people, and the enslaved Africans. Race divisions became stronger and more rigid as chattel slavery was written into law in the English colonies.

The racial worldview, the idea that Europeans are "white" and superior to "black" Africans, as well as "savage, dark" indigenous people, was created. It became so strong by the 1800's that Europeans applied race ideology to Asia, Africa, and Australia, classifying different peoples into different races as they spread their colonial empires. Today, we live with the consequences of that artificial grouping of people into races.

# slavery

Slavery in America did not end until June 19, 1865, or Juneteenth, two years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. It wouldn't be until 1886 that slavery ended in Cuba, and 1888 until it finally ended in Brazil. Yet racial inequality did not end there.

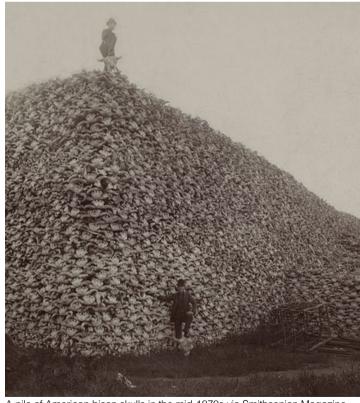
In the U.S., Black people in the South were forced into a system known as "sharecropping," in which Black workers rented farmland from former white plantation owners and worked for low wages. Violence from white people and imprisonment for Black people was common, and white and Black Americans were segregated. This was known as the "Jim Crow" era, which lasted for nearly a century until the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 helped "end" segregation. In 1968, President Lyndon B Johnson convened a group called the Kerner Commission to analyze racial unrest in America. The Kerner report found "bad policing practices, a flawed justice system, unscrupulous consumer credit practices, poor or inadequate housing, high unemployment, voter suppression and other culturally embedded forms of racial discrimination all converged to propel violent upheaval".

#### 50 years later, in 2018, it was found that conditions had actually gotten worse.

In 2017, Black unemployment was higher than in 1968, as was the rate of Black incarceration. The wealth gap between Black and white people has also increased. The last surviving member of the 1968 Kerner Commission, Fred Harris, said in 2018, "We are resegregating our cities and our schools, condemning millions of kids to inferior education and taking away their real possibility of getting out of poverty",

There is a direct link between the enslavement of Africans to work on plantations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean islands, the racialized colonization of the New World, and climate change today. It led to the "taming" of the North American continent, which meant violently forcing Native people out of their lands, destroying ecosystems and killing entire species to further the genocide of Native and Black people, and dramatically changing the environment to create farmland and plantations.<sup>10</sup>

An example of this took place in 1800, when the U.S. ordered the mass killing of buffalo in an effort to destroy the livelihood of the Native Plains tribes. During the later decades of the 20th century, the ancestral lands of the Western Shoshone became the location of over 1,000 atomic explosions; to this day, they fight to keep their sacred Yucca Mountain from becoming a nuclear waste site. Racism and environmental destruction are, and always have been, intertwined.



A pile of American bison skulls in the mid-1870s via Smithsonian Magazine, 2012.



Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Depository via Wikipedia.

# racial injustice

### domestic impact + influence

Empowered to raise awareness on the incidents of police brutality and racially motivated violence that Black people faced across the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement was founded in 2013. Although it is largely based in the United States, it has international presence everywhere and attempts to advocate and protest against anti-black racism and anti-black violence, in all its forms, across the world.

Over the summer of 2020, both the United States and the world have faced a unique reckoning with racism after the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others. But systems of racial injustice go even further beyond American police brutality; they are visible worldwide when examining who has access to jobs, healthcare, homeownership, and safety.

In America, systemic racism persists to this day; in fact, it has actually gotten worse since the 1960's. The median Black family owns one tenth of the wealth a median white family owns, a disparity that comes as the result of a long history of enslavement, economic discrimination, and white supremacy. In addition, Black, Brown, and low-income communities are more likely to live near coal plants and other polluters, and more likely to breathe polluted air, get fatal or chronic illnesses from the harmful exposure, and often go even more into poverty or declining health due to the lack of care towards Black people and access to healthcare. Climate change affects and will continue to affect Americans of color the hardest.

But this issue is not exclusive to the United States. Though sometimes less discussed, racial inequality is present globally, manifesting in hostility towards ethnic minorities and immigrants in Europe and Oceanic countries, or higher rates of discrimination and police brutality against Black and Indigenous Latin Americans.

# racial injustice

### domestic impact + inlfuence

Indigenous peoples in North America, South America, and across the globe have also faced a history of violent white supremacy, which led to the mass loss of their Native land, culture, history, language, and ancestral knowledge to European invaders who stole, looted, or killed the various elements of their life. Indigenous ownership over their own land has historically protected plant-life and biodiversity. Indigenous activists have taken leading roles in fighting for their rights to keep their land and protect the environment. However, many face danger and possible death as a result of their activism, particularly in South America.

Finally, racial inequality expands beyond the borders of one single country. Though wealthy, developed nations like the U.S. emit larger amounts of pollutants per capita, it is developing nations who will experience the worst effects of climate change, such as extreme heat in Sub-Saharan Africa and typhoons and floods in Southeast Asia. The United States, and various other dominantly white Western countries, have been knowing for dumping trash and harmful materials in Africa and Southeast Asia as well.



(Alex Wong)

### statistics

#### racial inequality in North America

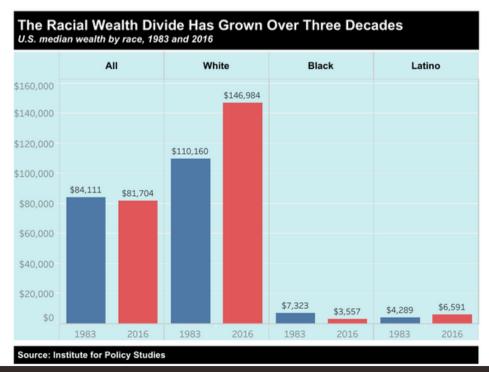
The median Black family, with just over \$3,500, owns 2% of the wealth of the median white family, which is nearly \$147,000. The median Latina/o family, with just over \$6,500, owns 4% of the wealth of the median White family.<sup>12</sup>

 Rather than improving, the situation has only been getting worse. Since 2000, the wage gap between blacks and non-Hispanic whites has grown significantly, even when educational attainment is factored in. Black workers' wages did not exceed 2000 and 2007 levels until 2019.<sup>13</sup>

The typical Black household has accumulated about one-tenth the wealth of a typical White family. That gap stems in part from lower rates of home ownership and smaller inheritances among Black people.

In 2016, 72% of American White families owned their home, compared to just 44% of Black families and 45% of Latin families.<sup>12</sup>

 For Black Americans, this comes as the result of decades of "red-lining" policies preventing racial minorities from owning homes in certain areas, until the Fair Housing Act of 1968.



# Black American men and boys face the highest lifetime risk of being killed by police.

• Black men are about 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white men, and Black women are about 1.4 times more likely to be killed than white women. Indigenous men are between 1.2 and 1.7 times more likely to be killed by police than white men, and Indigenous women are between 1.1 and 2.1 times more likely. Latino men are between 1.3 and 1.4 times more likely to be killed by police than are white men, but Latina women are between 12% and 23% less likely to be killed by police than are white women. <sup>15</sup>

Indigenous people living on reservations in America face higher poverty rates. Native communities have an overall 28.4% poverty rate (36% for families with children) on reservations, compared with 15.3% nationally. Some reservations have over 60% poverty rates, with Pine Ridge Reservation having the lowest per capita income in the U.S. at \$1,535 per year. <sup>16</sup>

The rate of murder against Indigenous women is ten times the USA's national average. In Canada, Indigenous women make up 5% of the population, yet 25% of Canada's murdered women.<sup>17</sup>



(Matt M. McKnight, 2018)

# COVID-19s impact on Americans of colour

The breakout of COVID-19, or the coronavirus, has disrupted many of our lives, flooded hospitals and care centers, left cities and communities in worry, and devastated much more. In the United States, Americans of colour faced the impact of this virus at shocking and dreadful levels.

Workers rights have been in constant threat for people of colour, causing overlapping injustices for healthcare, climate justice, and social justice. After pandemic lockdowns, Black and Latina/o workers were much more likely to lose their jobs than White workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The unemployment rate was highest among Black Americans, at 12.1%, compared to 7.0% among White workers? However, people of color make up a disproportionate share of essential workers who had to remain on the job. This may be because only 19.7% of Black and 16.2% of Latina/o people work in jobs where they can work remotely from home using the internet, compared to 29.9% of White and 37.0% of Asian workers, based on statistics from 2017-2018.<sup>12</sup>

Even before the COVID-19 Pandemic, Black workers are 60% more likely to lack health insurance than white workers. That means that, without access to health insurance, the physical and mental wellbeing of Black workers was and still is in threat. Limited or no access equals the development of diseases and illnesses to possible fatal endings, it equals harm to themselves and the people around them, it equals danger for their community, family, friends, and many other groups. And this is clearly demonstrated in the death tolls of COVID-19 which have been unequal. For every 100,000 Americans of their respective group, about 133 Indigenous people and 124 Black people, 52 Asians, 90 Pacific Islanders and 87 Latina/o people have died from the coronavirus, compared to 76 Whites, as of December 8, 2020. December 8, 2020.

# global impact of racial inequality Europe

Racial inequality, of course, is not limited to the United States or Canada. It is a global issue and, to tackle it, we must view the way that people of colour are treated across the globe and not just in NA-specific communities.

To begin, we'd like to look at racial inequality and its role across Europe. It is important to note that European nations often do not gather data along racial or ethnic lines in the same manner that American censuses do. This is a result of taboos around discussions of race as well the hesitance of some ethnic minorities towards being racially categorized. As such, what we know about racial inequality in these areas is limited.<sup>18</sup>

First, Europeans of Black and Asian descent have faced disproportionate impacts from COVID-19. For example, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) in France found that, among coronavirus victims in March and April, mortality for those born in sub-Saharan Africa increased 114% compared with 22% for French-born residents.

Not only is medical racism occurring in Europe, but racism in the workplace, similar to the United States, is rampant across the continent. It has been found that migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe are more likely to hold jobs further down the hierarchy and with lower wages, even with high rates of over-qualification, and are more likely to be unemployed. The question must be addressed here: what makes these candidates inferior even with the right qualifications? What makes them worthy of these unlivable wages? What makes any human worthy of this blatant disrespect and horrible treatment?

# global impact of racial inequality

#### Latin America

This region includes South America and the Caribbean Islands. Despite being a place of predominantly people of colour, there is still widespread discrimination—anti-black racism, colourism—that stems from colonialism and other white hegemonic structures here. Indigenous people and Black people are most often the victims of this discrimination, and these statistics are proof of that.

It has been found that Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in Latin America represent 40% of the total population, yet they are disproportionately in poverty. In Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay, over 60% of Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants are poor. In Panama, 90% of Indigenous peoples live below the poverty line and 69.5% live in extreme poverty, compared to 30% of the non-Indigenous population. In Peru, 34% of Afro-descendants live below the poverty line, compared to only 23 percent of Mestizos. In Brazil, per capita monthly incomes for Brazilians of European descent are more than twice those of Afro-descendants. Similar poverty and income gaps can be found in countries throughout the region. In Peru, 2000.

Continuing, in Mexico, Indigenous people receive lower-quality health care service regardless of their personal income level. Just as seen in Europe, one's culture, identity, and skin colour is blatantly depriving them of their basic human rights to healthcare, liberty, and life. Racism and these types of discrimination have gone on far too long to be left unaddressed by communities, politicians, and governments as a whole. The climate movement is here to provide justice in the necessary forms.

### importance

Racial inequality is deeply embedded in societies around the world, whether it be the United States, South America, or Europe, and anywhere else. The effects of structural racism are higher rates of poverty, pollution, and police violence in communities of color, as well as lower rates of health insurance or employment despite qualifications.

For Indigenous people, structural racism comes in the form of oppressive poverty and pressure for larger nations or corporations to seize their lands. Racism goes far beyond simple prejudice against skin color—it actively threatens lives. Fighting for racial equality is important both for creating a safe and just society, and for dismantling corporations who disproportionately pollute areas where people of color live and industries that destroy native ecosystems.



(Mat Reding)

Many may wonder how any of the above statistics correlate with the climate crisis—after all, what does healthcare have to do with the environment? How does immigration impact biodiversity? But we must learn, repeat, and emphasize that the climate movement is more than those words—"biodiversity" and "animals"—that we don't always connect to. A large part of it is protecting ourselves, the human populations that we endanger and threaten, and preserving their history and land.

To begin, racial minorities and people in poverty in America are more likely to suffer the effects of climate change and pollution. For example, the EPA found that Black US residents are exposed to 1.54 times more fine particulate matter, a pollutant that has been linked to heart and lung diseases, compared to the average American. Hispanic US residents are exposed to 1.2 times more fine particulate matter, while people below the poverty line are exposed to 1.35 times more fine particulate matter. The NAACP reports that the oil and gas industry is more likely to build refineries in Black communities, causing over 138,000 asthma attacks among school children and over 100,000 missed school days each year.

Not only is the medical wellbeing of Black people and other minority groups at risk, but economic inequality also leaves communities of color less able to deal with climate crises, like Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico or Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana. Perhaps because of the unequal effects of climate change, Americans of color are considerably more likely to be concerned about it than white Americans. 69% of Latina/os and 57% of African Americans are at least concerned about global warming, compared to just 49% of Whites. 49%

Without the proper care, treatment, support, and acknowledgement, people have and will continue to die. Healthcare and economic equality IS climate justice.

Also, Indigenous people face great challenges. In Canada, Indigenous people are more likely to live near refineries and manufacturing facilities, while pipelines and proposed pipelines intersect their land. In the U.S., the Standing Rock Sioux gained national attention for speaking out against the Dakota Access Pipeline, an oil pipeline planned to run through their land and near their primary water source, the Missouri River. Greenpeace Associate Kaitlin Grable writes, "The Akwesasne Mohawk people have levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in their bodies twice as the national average due to the dumping of these legacy pollutants in Kaniatarowanenneh, the river that sustains them with fish. And mining has left over 160,000 abandoned mines in the western U.S., where the majority of present day 'Native American lands' are located":

Globally, Indigenous peoples' livelihoods are more disrupted by climate change than others as they rely on natural resources for their economic, cultural, and physical well-being. Though they only make up 5% of the world's population, their lands encompass 22% of Earth's surface and are home to 80% of its biodiversity. Corporations and governments are currently pressuring Indigenous people for their land in areas like Ecuador, where Native activists are fighting to hold Chevron accountable for the environmental degradation it has caused. These activists face danger and possibly death; the Sierra Club reports that 2019 was the deadliest year for environmental activists and over half of the murders took place in Columbia and the Philippines. Not only this, but Indigenous people are only 4.4% of Colombia's population, they make up half of the murdered activists.

Finally, although wealthy, developed nations like the U.S. emit larger amounts of GHG per capita, developing nations experience the worst effects of climate change relative to wealthier countries. An example of this is extreme heat in Sub-Saharan Africa and typhoons and floods in Southeast Asia. These nations have already been hit hard by the negative effects of colonization, leaving many with limited resources to adapt to climate disasters. If climate change is not stopped, then its negative effects—which are expected to contribute to about 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress as of 2030, according to the World Health Organization—can reverse the developmental gains these countries are currently making.



(Left: Prevention Web, 2020. Right: Mast Irham, 2018)

# fem·i·nism

### /'feməˌnizəm/

The belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes, in addition to redefining the social construct of femininity and breaking down traditional gender norms, not just for women.

The women's rights movements is a social transformation that brought and is continuing to bring rights and equality to women around the world. Through movements across the world, women have coined terms such as feminism to help unite themselves under an ideology and organize to take the necessary action needed under patriarchal and misogynistic communities and societies.

As the climate/environmental movement is intersectional, women's rights and the rights of people of all genders, sexualities, and identities is a direct concern for us. And the second part of this guidebook will detail that.



### domestic history + impact

Roe v. Wade (1973) ruled that a woman can choose to have an abortion in the first 3 months of pregnancy without government restriction. However, in recent years this right has been tested by state and federal law. 44 has made significant changes to the Title X Family Planning Program by issuing a "gag rule" that prevents doctors from discussing abortion with patients. Planned Parenthood declined federal funds to avoid this rule. Various state legislatures have implemented rules that encroach on women's constitutional rights. Additionally, there have been calls to overturn Roe v. Wade, which could become reality if the Supreme Court gains a conservative super majority.

As of right now, the 2021 Georgia runoff election will determine the balance of power in the Senate and Executive Branch, and therefore influence reproductive rights for generations to come.

Reproductive rights are imperative to discussing women's rights in society and it directly correlates to other areas of their life—the right to unbiased education or education at all, the right to liberty and safety, the right to free speech and to assembly, equal rights in the workplace, and much more.

When we demand to control or limit a vulnerable, life-changing element of a women's life, we are telling them and everyone else in society that what a woman does and whatever body a woman has is not her own and should be controlled by others. Abortion, education, and peaceful demonstrations threaten no one's health or access to other sources or rights, and there is no reason why they should be controlled by a predominantly white, male body —the government.

### domestic history + impact

To prove that these rights are imperative to a women's life and her rights, here are some statistics that have been gathered by the government and other private bodies over the years.

According to research by the Guttmacher Institute that was published in the American Journal of Public Health, 24% of U.S women will have an abortion by age 45. 59% of women obtaining an abortion are mothers. Despite nearly 1 in 4 women in the United States requiring this, 21 states have laws that could be used to restrict the legal status of abortion.

- 9 states retain their unenforced, pre-Roe abortion bans.
- 10 states have post-Roe laws to ban all or nearly all abortions that would be triggered if Roe were overturned.
- 9 states have unconstitutional post-Roe restrictions that are currently blocked by courts but could be brought back into effect with a court order in Roe's absence.
- 7 states have laws that express the intent to restrict the right to legal abortion to the maximum extent permitted by the U.S. Supreme Court in the absence of Roe.

On the other hand,13 states and the District of Columbia have laws that protect the right to abortion.

- 2 states and the District of Columbia have codified the right to abortion throughout pregnancy without state interference.
- 11 states explicitly permit abortion prior to viability or when necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.

It is evident that, even with Roe v. Wade, there is still much to be done in the United States for the rights of women.

### global impact

From an international perspective, the women's rights movement has taken place across multiple regions at different points of time and at different levels of success. Studies have shown that there is a consensus that women's rights around the world have improved since 1991, yet there were very little improvements after the fall of communism in certain regions in terms of women's political and social rights.

PEW research claims that "47% of adults 60 and older in the Czech Republic prefer a marriage with more traditional gender roles, compared with only 23% of younger adults." Unfortunately, CNN reports that the World Bank infers women will not achieve full equality globally until 2073 and only currently Belgium, Denmark, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, and Sweden currently reach equality for women. In the Middle East, such as Afghanistan, they reserve 27% of legislative seats for women, which goes above the global average. There are still issues with helping women receive equality from a policy standpoint as specific reforms that impede women's ability to marry, register businesses, open bank accounts, and get jobs.



"Until dignity becomes custom" in Spanish. Photo by Luisa Gonzalez, 2018

There is clear evidence that the climate crisis is linked with gender equality as gender norms and societal stereotypes and expectations for women inherently determine how women and men deal with crises such as climate change. For example, the United Nations did a study on women in Sudan and Nepal where they found that climate change made men leave villages due to increased weather conditions to find work elsewhere which forces women into nontraditional roles while dealing with the effects of a degrading environment. There are other studies that link gender inequality and the climate crisis with each other as typically regions with one issue tend to also have the other.

In addition, women are inherently more affected by the effects of climate change as 70% of women live in poverty which disproportionately impacts their lives due to increased natural disasters that are caused by climate change.

To fix both the climate crisis and inequalities, the World Economic Forum declares that if "women play an identical role in labour markets to men, as much as \$28 trillion, or 26%, could be added to global annual GDP by 2025." This is essential as it closes the economic gap needed to pay to stop the exaggeration of the climate crisis which would cost \$894 billion by 2030.

From Bangladesh to Sudan and the United States, the rights of women, especially women of colour, are needed in our conversations about the climate crisis. Women and feminine-aligned people are vulnerable to these horrible impacts and they need the autonomy and equality to take action and protect themselves and their communities. Women need to be included when discussing action steps and international decisions.

The climate crisis needs all the right support, information, resources, and power from people in order to create change.

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