# Racial Dynamics: An Explanation of the High Rates of Incarceration on Drug Charges for Men of Color in the United States

## Introduction

Illegal drug trafficking and drug abuse in the United States is considered one of the most perturbing public concern from the mid-1980s when the activity became overwhelming prevalent. The problem has increased at an unprecedented rate with over millions of people incarcerated and arrested on drug charges on a war on drugs (Fellner, 2013; Lassiter, 2015). About a decade ago, Mauer (2009) notes that over 500,000 people were arrested and convicted on drug charges as compared to about 40,000 people in 1980s. An evaluation of the cases incarceration over the years are noted to significantly lean on racial lines where Fellner (2013) points out that people of color primarily black Americans are three folds more vulnerable to be arrested and ten times prone to drug convictions as compared to their counterparts whites. This gap ensues significant questions; therefore, this study seeks to evaluate how racial dynamics and patterns influences and affects the war on drugs in the United States.

## Research Question

Why are the rates of incarcerations on drug charges higher for men of color compared to white men in the United States?

## Race and Drugs

From the time drug abuse and trafficking become prevalent in the United States, many scholars have conducted significant researches on the correlation between racial systems and the unprecedented rates of drugs. Most of the studies denote the systematic racial disparities primarily on rates of drug abuse but do not satisfactory evaluate the questions of how the racial dynamic’s such as beliefs, values, consumer demand, ethnic patterns, the focus of war on drug and war policies as well as economies of scale affect the war on drug. Fellner (2013) notes that the war on drugs is skewed to the men of color as compared to white men in an effort by the white community to maintain their dominance. He insinuates that the focus has been stereotypical to the men of color where many most efforts are directed toward the community hence the vast disparities. An analysis of the racial dynamics in imperative in the helping the criminal justice system to sustainably execute the war on drugs as well as enforcement of substance abuse policies and promotion of racial justice.

Fellner (2013), Lassiter (2015) and Mauer (2009) in their papers all note that historically criminalization on drugs has been used by the white community to exert and maintain their control over ethnic and racial minorities who are characterized with aggravation, anger, and troubles. Lassiter (2015) and Fellner (2013) further point out that the modern strategies to fight drug trafficking have resulted in millions of Americans locked up in jails. The rate of arrests is noted to have grown by 186% accounting for 542 arrests per 100,000 persons from 256 from 1980 to 2009. Over 70% of black compared to 61% of white men are incarcerated where blacks serve for an average of 34 months while most whites an average of 29 months. This has increased the number of men of color imprisoned on drug charges as compared to their colleagues.

Substance abuse is a significant problem for the American community. As long as the focus on drug abuse is skewed to the men of color, the efforts shall ever prove to be ineffective because stopping of a crime in one locations shifts it to another. Nonetheless, understandings of the implications of racial dynamics is imperative to enhance the war on drugs.

## References

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