Reinventing Racism: Covert Racism in Ronald Reagan's Political Rhetoric During the 1980s War on Drugs

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Contents

Introduction

> People who shut their eyes to reality simply invite their own destruction, and anyone who insists on remaining in a state of innocence long after that innocence is dead turns himself into a monster. – James Baldwin[1]

After the turbulent years of the 1960s, in which the Civil Rights Movement seemed to have succeeded in destructing the system of overt institutionalized racism, the United States entered a supposedly "post-racial" era.[2] However, racism was far from being completely eradicated. The shattered racist foundations, on which the nation had relied for so long, created a crisis of identity for many whites and it initiated a longing for a new social order, similar to the one before. Especially the conservatives played into this nostalgic sentiment for past societal structures, and Republican politicians started to craft new ways to maintain the past racial system, and continue the enforcement of restrictive policies based on race. As overt racism was no longer socially acceptable, a new type of racism was constructed: "covert racism." This system interpreted social issues through a framework of coded language, symbols, images and other means that implied hidden racial meanings.[3] In *Covert Racism*, sociologist Rodney D. Coates defines it as:

> Racism which is hidden; secret; private; covered; disguised; insidious; or concealed…The most pervasive qualities associated with covert racism are that it serves to subvert, distort, restrict, and deny rewards, privileges, access and benefits to racial minorities… Covert racism operates as a boundary keeping mechanism whose primary purpose is to maintain social distance between racial groups.[4]

The most concrete form of covert racism were the so-called "dog whistle politics." This was a convenient form of political speech with which one could talk about race, without actually

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[1]James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village," *Harper's Magazine* (1953) as quoted in Teju Cole, "Black Body: Rereading James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village,"" *The New Yorker,* August 19, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/black-body-re-reading-james-baldwins-stranger-village.
[2]Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 48.
[3]Joe R. Feagin, Hernán Vera, and Pinar Batur, *White Racism* (New York: Routlegde, 2001), 1-33.
[4]Rodney D. Coates, "Covert Racism: An Introduction," in *Covert Racism: Theories, Institutions, and Experiences,* ed. Rodney D. Coates (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011), 1-2.

mentioning race, and this thus fitted the new "post-racial" times.[5] Covert racism, and dog-whistles in particular, made racism ever persistent, if not even worse, as it was now "invisible."

One specifically efficient way of covert racism was crime control. Starting with the "law and order" politics of Barry Goldwater in 1964, then Richard Nixon's initiation of the War on Drugs in the 1970s, and Ronald Reagan's expansion of the War on Drugs in the 1980s, Republican politicians continuously "employed racially coded politics of crime control to appeal to disenchanted white voters."[6] Crime control, especially in the form of the War on Drugs, became the perfect "dog whistle" for taking care of racial issues and facilitating racial and social control, especially by criminalizing blackness.[7] As Teju Cole responds to James Baldwin's quote, in an article form The New Yorker: "There is a vivid performance of innocence, but there's no actual innocence left."[8] This quote exactly points out the problem of covert racism: politicians upheld the post-racial façade for the public, while actively taking care of racial issues underneath. This aspect of "plausible deniability," as Coates calls it, "benefits perpetrators by allowing them to deny responsibility and culpability while simultaneously undermining the victim's ability to claim damage."[9] This is where Reagan becomes important, as he had always actively denied any allegations of racism. However, when taking a closer look at his rhetoric other conclusions will most definitely follow. As argued by Ian Haney López in *Dog Whistle Politics*: "Reagan always denied any racism and emphasized he never mentioned race. He didn't need to, because he was blowing a dog whistle."[10] It is thus important to view

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[5]Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York 2014) 3-4. See also: Mariëlle Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," B.A. Thesis in History, University of Amsterdam (2017), 14.

[6]Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 7; Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* 54. See also: Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[7]Ibid.

[8]Teju Cole, "Black Body: Rereading James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village,"" *The New Yorker,* August 19, 2014, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/black-body-re-reading-james-baldwins-stranger-village.

[9]Coates, "Covert Racism: An Introduction," in *Covert Racism*, 1-2.

[10]Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics,* 4.

Reagan in line with the traditions of covert racism. No matter how much he claimed to be innocent of racism, his rhetoric was filled with it, though covertly, and Reagan cannot be seen outside of racial politics. He was very much part of it.

This thesis considers in what ways covert racism was constructed by American politicians, through their political rhetoric, post-Civil Rights. The main focus is on Reagan's presidential rhetoric in the 1980s, during the second half of the War on Drugs. His policies on drugs and mainly his rhetoric on the highly racialized themes of drugs, crime, welfare and family values are explored, and his contribution to the stigmatization and criminalization of blackness is examined.[11] This time period is chosen, because during Reagan's presidency dog whistle politics were actively used, many policy decision were made affecting African Americans, many stereotypes were carefully constructed or reinforced, and mass incarceration escalated. All happened under the denominator of Reagan's War on Drugs. It is therefore interesting to explore how Reagan's presidency contributed to the "reinvention" of racism, the transformation from overt to covert racism. The aim of this thesis is to show part of the process of the construction of race, through political rhetoric, and it hopes to add to the understanding of racism as a socially constructed "myth" as well as inform the readers on the origins of (modern) racism. Therefore, the thesis question is: in what ways does Ronald Reagan's political rhetoric demonstrate the use of covert racism, mainly in the form of dog whistles, during the 1980s' War on Drugs, and how did he hereby contribute to the reinvention of racism?

The thesis is structured according to three chapters. Chapter one focuses on the history of the "reinvention" of racism. It provides the context in which the shift from overt to covert racism took place. Chapter two examines the origins of the federal government's War on Drugs and explains how it was fused with covert racism and dog whistle politics. It first considers the start of "law and order" politics and the early use of dog whistle politics. It then focuses on the first half of the War on Drugs in the 1970s, analyzing president Nixon's "law and order" politics

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[11]Alexander, 48.

and his stake in the transition from overt to covert racism. In the last part of this chapter, the second half of the War on Drugs, during the 1980s, is discussed, where the focus is on president Reagan's policies, concerning drugs in particular. It also focuses on the escalation of the criminalization of blackness in this era, which was specifically visible in the increasing incarceration rates during his presidency.[12] Chapter three is the actual analysis of Reagan's rhetoric, and zooms in on his political rhetoric by analyzing several of his quotes and speeches in which the use of covert racism is prominent. Three important themes from Reagan's presidency, that were highly racialized, are analyzed, being drugs, welfare, and family values. On the basis of this structure the theme of the construction and use of covert racism by American politicians is explored.

Methodology

This thesis provides both a historical analysis of covert racism, establishing the context in which the arguments should be viewed, as well as a discourse analysis of Reagan's political rhetoric. It is interesting to look at political rhetoric, because of its influence on many other aspects, such as public opinion, which clearly happened during Reagan's War on Drugs with for instance the "crack crisis," on which chapter two touches briefly.[13] Also, "by analyzing the racial language utilized," one becomes "more apt to understand the mechanism by which race operates," as Coates argues.[14] The method of discourse analysis is very useful for researching Reagan's use of covert racism, especially dog whistles. As, in this method, according to linguistic scholars

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[12]Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime,* 3; Alexander, 48-49; Sarah Childress, "Michelle Alexander: A system of Racial and Social Control," PBS, April 29, 2014, https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/michelle-alexander-a-system-of-racial-and-social-control/, paragraph 6; Eli Hager and Bill Keller, "Everything You Think You Know About Mass Incarceration is Wrong," The Marshall Project, September 2, 2017, https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/02/09/everything-you-think-you-know-about-mass-incarceration-is-wrong, paragraph 1.
[13]Andrew B. Whitford and Jeff Yate, "Policy Signals and Executive Governance: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Drugs," *The Journal of Politics* 65, no. 4 (2003): 995-996.
[14]Coates, "Covert Racism: An Introduction," in *Covert Racism*, 5.

Gillian Brown and George Yule in their work *Discourse Analysis,* language is viewed as "an instrument of communication," used in a certain "context by a speaker/writer to express meanings and achieve intentions," and it "constitutes cues for the hearer/reader as to how the speaker/writer intends the discourse to be interpreted."[15] This fits with the definition of a "dog whistle," as argued by Haney López*,* and which is followed in this thesis, namely: "speaking in code" to a specific "target audience," using certain key words that only the aimed audience recognizes the true hidden meanings of.[16] It is basically "coded talk centered on race."[17]

The research is conducted through the use of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of political speeches and quotes, government documents and reports, newspaper articles, and laws concerning drug legislation. The primary sources, especially the speeches and quotes, are critically analyzed to identify the coded language used by several Republican politicians, most importantly Reagan. The secondary sources consist of mainly scholarly articles, (online) newspaper articles, and books, of which the most relevant for this thesis are Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow,* Elizabeth Hinton's overview work *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*, Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer's *Racial Domination, Racial Progress: The Sociology of Race,* and Dominic Sandbrook's *Mad as Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right.* The B.A. thesis, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," I wrote for the History Bachelor at the University of Amsterdam, as well as some essays written for the Master North American Studies, are also used as secondary sources, because some of the subjects researched there were overlapping with the content of this thesis, such as the criminalization of blackness, and the construction of race. Where this information is used it is of course indicated in the footnotes, as well as supported with other sources. Obviously, the particular sources used in this thesis do not form

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[15]Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 26, and 190.
[16]Haney López, ix, 3-4. See also: Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15 and 29.
[17]Ibid.

an entirely comprehensive point of view on the topic of covert racism and Reagan's political rhetoric. There are most likely many more arguments that would support or critique the arguments in this thesis, as well as other speeches of Reagan in which similar topics are treated. However, the sources selected were most useful in supporting the arguments made in this thesis and provided relevant information on the discussed topics.

Historiography

The topic of this thesis is concerned with the important debate on race, and more specifically the construction of race. This debate is very complex, driven by many diverging arguments, and is extensively written about in the academic literature. Early approaches justified the institutionalized unequal treatment of different races in the U.S., with "scientific racism." Social Darwinism was an important ideology in this, as biological concepts, such as survival of the fittest, were applied to society. This approach led to the "widespread habit of treating race and genetics as though interchangeable terms."[18] Frederick Ludwig Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, from 1896, is a great example of this. He argued that social problems are caused by certain "racial traits and tendencies."[19] According to him, African Americans failed in the struggle of life, due to a "lack of characteristics" that the white race did have and which made whites superior.[20] With this view "Americans wove racist concepts into a public language about inequality that made black the virtual equivalent of poor and lower class," as well as "criminal," because it was supposedly in their nature.[21]

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[18]Barbara J. Fields, and Karen E. Fields, *Race Craft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (New York: Verso, 2014), 8; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 17.
[19]Frederick L. Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (New York, 1896), v, 33-148, and 310; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 17.
[20]Hoffman, *Race Traits and Tendencies,* v-vi, 33-148, 310, 314, 329; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 17-18; Isabel Eaton, "Race Problem – Hoffman's *Race Traits of the American Negro,*" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 17, no. 1 (1901) 158-160. See also: Kelly Miller, "A Review of Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro,*" *The Academy* (1897), https://www.loc.gov/item/09024191/.
[21]Fields, and Fields, *Racecraft,* 11.

However, this argument was soon widely rejected, as other factors, such as economics, transcended the argument solely based on biology. William Julius Wilson, for instance, argued in 1987, in *The Truly Disadvantaged,* that as a consequence of economic circumstances, such as social isolation and unemployment, minorities possess certain negative traits.[22] He hereby distances himself from Hoffman, and the idea that "dysfunctional values" were the reason for the poor conditions of minorities.[23] Wilson argued that the economic structure of racism, in which racism is viewed as "an occupational hierarchy rooted in history and institutionalized in the labor market" was far more important than racial traits.[24]

The most important argument in the debate on race, that most recent scholars stand by, is the postmodern idea that race is a social construct. Sociologists Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer, in *Racial Domination, Racial Progress* argue that race is "actively created and recreated by human beings rather than pre-given."[25] They say: "Race is a well-founded fiction. It is a fiction because it has no natural bearing, but it is well-founded since most people in society provide race with a real existence and have come to see the world through its lens."[26] Karen E. Fields, and Barbara J. Fields also support this argument in their book *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life,* and explain the term "racism" as "the theory and the practice of applying a social, civic, or legal double standard based on ancestry," and claim that "racism is first and foremost a social practice, which means that it is an action and a rationale

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[22]William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 62, 137-138; Bernard R. Boxill, "Wilson on the Truly Disadvantaged." review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, by William Julius Wilson, *Ethics* 101, no. 3 (1991): 580; Mariëlle Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," essay Major Issues in American History and Culture, Leiden University (2018).
[23] Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged,* 62, 137-138; Boxill, "Wilson on the Truly Disadvantaged." review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 580.
[24]Wilson, 10-12, 30-33; Boxill, 580; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 7.
[25]Matthew Desmond and Mustafa Emirbayer, *Racial Domination, Racial Progress: The Sociology of Race in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 14-15.
[26]Desmond and Emirbayer, *Racial Domination*, 21.

for action."[27] They refer to the construction of race as "racecraft," and argue that it "originates not in nature but in human action and imagination."[28] According to them "racecraft" is "imagined, acted upon, and re-imagined. The outcome is a belief that presents itself to the mind and imagination as a vivid truth."[29] In *Critical Race Theory* by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic the argument is made that race is a structural issue, which is central to the laws and policies of the U.S.[30] They also comment on the social construction thesis, arguing that races are "products of social thought and relations," as well as "categories that society invents, manipulates or retires when convenient."[31] According to Delagado and Stefancic, "racism is embedded in thoughts, processes and social structures," and they attribute a great deal of the construction to "discourse."[32]

In *The New Jim Crow,* legal scholar Michelle Alexander, provides a great example of how race is socially constructed. She argues that "racism is highly adaptable," and therefore new tactics are created to adjust the rules of society and change the form of racism, mainly with new types of rhetoric.[33] According to Alexander, mass incarceration is the new American racial system of social control, that labels African Americans as "criminals," and functions under the dog whistle of crime control.[34] This new system is merely a continuation of past racial systems, and redesigned to be convenient to the time it is operating in, so that racial hierarchies can be preserved, without the overt reliance on race.[35]

In line with these arguments of race as a social construct, fits the thesis' topic of covert racism. Covert racism was the adapted version of overt racism in the post-Civil Rights era, that

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[27]Fields, and Fields, 17. See also: Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction,* eds. J. Morgan Kousser and James McPherson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143-77.
[28]Ibid., 18. See also: Karen E. Fields, "Political Contingencies of Witchcraft," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 16, no. 3 (1992): 567-593.
[29]Ibid., 19.
[30]Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), xvi.
[31]Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory,* 9.
[32]Ibid., 21 and 27.
[33]Alexander, 1 and 21.
[34]Ibid, 11-16; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 5-6.
[35]Ibid., 1, 11-16, 20; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 5-6.

made it possible to preserve racist structures, through a façade of crime control and drugs. Politics greatly influenced this construction, mainly through rhetoric. As Desmond and Emirbayer argue: "politics have influenced this culture of drugs immensely, and particularly the "dog whistle" strategies American politicians engaged in," and they specifically point to Reagan's alterations of laws, and "tough on crime" policies during his 1980s War on Drugs.[36]

Haney López also attributes a great deal of the "new racism" to Reagan, arguing that:

> The new racism rips through society, inaudible and also easily defended in so far as it fails to whoop in the tones of the old racism, yet booming in its racial meaning and provoking predictable responses among those who immediately hear the racial undertones of references. Campaigning for president, Ronald Reagan liked to tell stories of Cadillac-driving "welfare queens" and "strapping young bucks" buying T-bone steaks with food stamps.[37]

It is therefore highly important and interesting to look at Reagan, and in what ways his policies and rhetoric demonstrated the use of this new form of covert racism, as many effects of his contribution are still felt today.

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[36]Desmond and Emirbayer, 254; Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America* (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 2006), 42-43, 47. See also: Michael Tonry, *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime and Punishment in America* (New York 1995); Joseph Dillon Davey, *The Politics of Prison Expansion: Winning Elections by Waging War on Crime* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1998).

[37]Haney López, 3-4.

I

Towards a New Society

In order to understand in what ways Ronald Reagan's political rhetoric contributed to the reinvention of racism, it is important to first establish how and why this "reinvention" took place. Why did the American politicians move from its deeply embedded overt racist rhetoric to a new kind of racism, referred to as "covert" racism, that was concealed with code words and hidden behind a façade of drugs, crime, and poverty?

As argued by Alexander, "racism is adaptable," and each generation transforms it in order to achieve similar goals, in this context: a racist society.[38] She claims: "The arguments and rationalizations that have been trotted out in support of racial exclusion and discrimination in its various forms have changed and evolved, but the outcome has remained largely the same."[39] This "renewal" is justified with new types of rhetoric, language, and a different social consensus.[40] An example of such a "renewal," was with the coming of the Civil Rights Movement, who facilitated the adaption from overt racism, by publicly condemning it, to a more concealed racism in the political rhetoric, which was focused on the moral (dis)order of society and crime, specifically drug-related crimes. The association of crime and disorder with African Americans, created a prevailing consensus among the American public in which blackness became ultimately linked to immorality, disorder, criminality, and drugs.[41] In this way the social order of white privilege and racism, even though it was no longer overt, was

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[38] Alexander, 1 and 21.

[39] Ibid., 1-2.

[40] Ibid., 21.

[41] Ibid., 4, 13, 18 and 197; Desmond and Emirbayer, 23-26; Angela Davis, "Masked Racism: Reflections on The Prison Industrial Complex," Colorlines, September 10, 1998, https://www.colorlines.com/articles/masked-racism-reflections-prison-industrial-complex. See also: Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 5.

maintained. It is, as legal scholar Reva Siegel has labeled it a form of "preservation through transformation."[42]

The aim of this first chapter is to provide the context in which overt racism was transformed into covert racism, and thus contextualize the reinvention of racism. The 1970s are a crucial decade, in which numerous events happened that were decisive for the later course of history, and this era is of great significance for understanding Reagan's presidency in general, his rhetoric concerning crime and drugs, and the time period in which he was operating. In this way Reagan's political rhetoric becomes part of a bigger picture and is put in line with the traditions of earlier forms of white racist politics, conservative thought, and the ultimate form of covert racism: dog whistle politics.

Post-1960s Social Order: Shifting Racial Power Structures

The turbulent 1960s shattered the racist foundations and principles of white privilege on which American society had relied for most of its existence. The efforts of the Civil Rights Movement succeeded in dismantling the system of overt institutionalized racism, and it challenged the general notion of freedom in the United States.[43] The Civil Rights Movement's demand for social change and equal rights, was undoubtedly successful, with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the official ending of legalized segregation.[44] However, in hindsight, these victories did not overcome the entire culture of racism. It were merely "myths of racial progress," meaning that on paper it looked as if blacks had gained more rights, when in reality these rights were often not executed.[45] Surely the successes were of immense

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[42]Ibid., 21. See also: Reva Siegel, "Why Equal Protection No Longer Protects: The Evolving Forms of Status-Enforcing Action," *Stanford Law Review* 49 (1997); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 84-91.

[43]Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 973.

[44]Foner, *Give Me Liberty!* 362, 976, 981-982, 983, 985-986, 990 and 1006; "Civil Rights Movement," HISTORY, August 28, 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement, paragraph 10 and 12.

[45]Alexander, 15.

proportions, but the persistence of racist sentiments were far from eradicated, especially in political spheres. Since the familiar structures of society had fallen apart, Americans had to come to terms with the new order post-Civil Rights, which was particularly hard for those in power.[46]

The change in racial dynamics asked for a restoration of societal structures and a reconstruction of power. An example illustrating how such a re-structuring of society comes about is the transition from slavery to abolition, when social structures were similarly destabilized. As explained in Grace Elizabeth Hale's *Making Whiteness,* before the Civil War hierarchies were based on the categories of "slaves" and "citizens," which contributed to a perception of identity.[47] So when slavery was abolished, and these identities were lost, whites reacted with "fear, violent reprisals, and state legislation."[48] However, soon a new hierarchy was created, that would redefine racial identities, and, as Hale argues, this came in the form of "racial segregation."[49]

This example underscores Alexander's point that racism is adaptable. According to Hale this was the "product of human choice and decision, of power and fear."[50] Whereas Hale calls this process "racial making," Alexander refers to is as "adaption," and both scholars hereby share and confirm the idea that race is a social construct and is thus susceptible for man-made changes.[51] This idea of race as a "social construction," is even more clearly defined by Desmond and Emirbayer:

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[46]Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263.

[47]Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Random House Vintage, 1998), 5-6, 17 and 21; Brent J. Aucoin, review of *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940,* by Grace Elizabeth Hale, *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2001): 115-116; Mariëlle Doornekamp, "Racial Sexual Stereotypes: Establishing and Challenging the Myth, 1890s-1920s," Essay African American Freedom Struggles, Leiden University (2018), 7.

[48]Hale, *Making Whiteness,* 6-7, 21 and 24; Doornekamp, "Racial Sexual Stereotypes: Establishing and Challenging the Myth, 1890s-1920s," 8; Desmond and Emirbayer, *Racial Domination,* 127, 401-404, and 446.

[49]Ibid., 5-6, 17 and 21-22; Aucoin, 115-116; Doornekamp, "Racial Sexual Stereotypes: Establishing and Challenging the Myth, 1890s-1920s," 7.

[50]Hale, xi; Doornekamp, "Racial Sexual Stereotypes: Establishing and Challenging the Myth, 1890s-1920s," 6.

[51]Ibid., xi; Alexander, 21; Desmond and Emirbayer, 14-15 and 21.

> Race is a symbolic category, based on phenotype or ancestry and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts, that is misrecognized as a natural category… A symbolic category belongs to the realm of ideas, meaning-making, and language, as opposed to the realm of nature and biology. It is something that is actively created and recreated by human beings rather than pre-given.[52]

The concept of reality as socially constructed is postmodern, where reality is viewed as "only perceivable through the particular interests represented by particular language or discourse, and not as something eternal an objectively knowable."[53] This matches the idea that politics and especially political rhetoric have an enormous effect on "racial making." As James Baldwin said: "color is not a human or personal reality; it is a political reality."[54]

In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, when the U.S. reached a supposedly "post-racial" era, the societal order and the power structures within the country had to be redefined again. Due to the changed sense of equality, as well as international criticism on American racial structures, the U.S. was unable to return to its former openly racist ways.[55] This is where the structure of "covert" racism came into place. This adapted "modern" form of racism was the consequence of the 1960s' events, and fitted the new zeitgeist of the 1970s, where it could restore the racial social order.[56]

Consequently, the American government started crafting new rules and policies to ensure the continuation of restrictive policies based on race. From now on social issues were interpreted through a framework of coded language, symbols, and other methods covering up the implicit racial meanings.[57] These so-called "dog whistle politics," were a convenient form of political speech with which one was able to talk about race "covertly."[58] This is discussed more extensively in chapter two. In other words, what was different at the end of the 1960s,

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[52]Desmond and Emirbayer, 14-15.

[53]Thomas Borstelmann, *The 1970s: A New Global History From Civil Rights to Economic Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 11.

[54]Desmond and Emirbayer, 14; James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage, 1993 [1962]), 104.

[55]Alexander, 11-12, 22; Borstelmann, *The 1970s,* 18.

[56]Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David Dietrich, "The New Racism: the Racial Regime of Post-Civil Rights America," in *Covert Racism: Theories, Institutions, and Experiences,* ed. Rodney D. Coates (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011), 41-68.

[57]Feagin, Vera, and Batur, *White Racism*, 1-33.

[58]Haney López, ix, 3; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15 and 29.

after the collapse of institutionalized segregation, is the language that was used to justify it. Since racism was no longer openly acceptable and the label "black" no longer sufficed to argue for discriminatory treatment, American society needed a new label that would be similarly restrictive. The "new language," as Alexander calls it, that was used to form this new social hierarchy, with blacks at the bottom of society, was focused disproportionately on "crime," and especially on blackness in relation to criminality.[59]

In order to control society, a system had to be put in place that was enforceable. This came in the form of "crime control," where a class system was created with a focus on "dangerous" individuals, who were part of an "underclass" that was "unskilled, uneducated, immoral and biologically inferior."[60] These, predominantly black, groups, were isolated, depicted as "dangerous," and "criminals," which led to a construction comparable to race, that reinforced and redefined the boundaries between black and white.[61]

But why did "crime" become the new base for discriminatory policies? Was crime really as great an issue in the 1970s as politicians made it seem to be? As is shown in the graph below, the crime rate increased after the 1960s and into the early 1970s.[62] These statistics have their origins in the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement was viewed as a threat to the social and legal order.[63] During this time the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) started reporting "dramatic increases in the rate of national crime."[64]

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[59]Alexander, 21; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15.

[60]Gary Potter, "The History of Policing in the United States," Eastern Kentucky University Police Studies Online, June 25, 2013, http://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-2; Desmond and Emirbayer, 23-26; Alexander, 4, 13, 18; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15.

[61]Ibid.

[62]*Crime and Justice Atlas 2000,* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice: Justice Research and Statistics Association, 2000) chapter "United States Index Crime Rate, 1933-1998," 35-37.

[63]Haney López, 24.

[64]Alexander, 41. See also: Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 32; Marc Mauer, "Two-Tiered Justice: Race, Class and Crime Policy," in *The Integration Debate: Competing Futures for American Cities,* ed. Chester Hartman and Gregory Squires (New York: Routledge, 2005), 171.

Violent Crime In The U.S. (1960-2013)
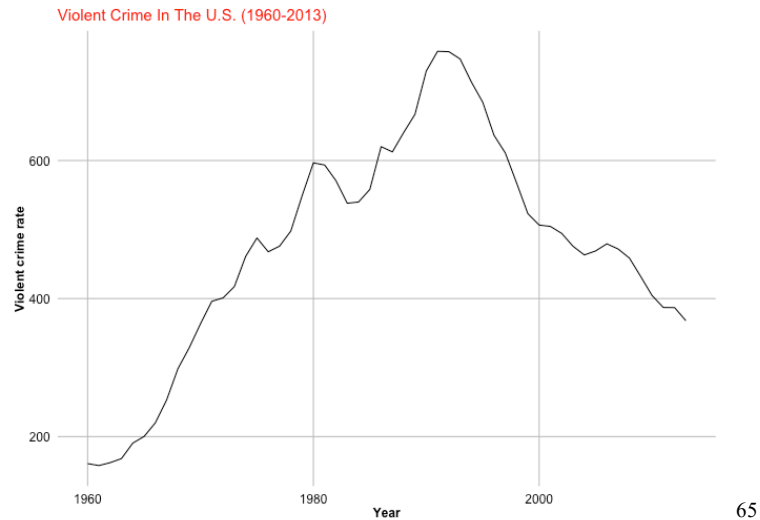
However, the F.B.I. data was not always reliable. Crime reports were "sensationalized" in order to function as evidence of "the breakdown in lawfulness, morality, and social stability in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement," as Alexander explains.[66] The inaccurate statistics also exaggerated the issue of crime in predominantly African American neighborhoods, and in this way misrepresented American crime in general.[67] An example of this, illustrated by Hinton, is the Uniform Crime Report of the F.B.I. This report only indicated arrests, and formed no account for actual convictions. African Americans were mostly arrested for crimes such as rape, murder, and robbery in the 1970s. However, suspects of these crimes, were also least likely to face an actual prosecution.[68] Thus, by only using data considering arrest, a disproportionate amount of crimes seemed to be committed by African Americans.[69] Although many scholars have agreed that crime during the 1960s and 1970s was indeed rising, the reasons for this rise

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[65]Lauren-Brooke Eisen, "America's Faulty Perception of Crime Rates," Brennan Center for Justice, March 16, 2015, https://www.brennancenter.org/blog/americas-faulty-perception-crime-rates.
[66]Alexander, 41; Beckett, *Making Crime Pay,* 32 and Mauer, "Two-Tiered Justice," 171.
[67]Hinton, 24.
[68]Ibid. Hinton illustrates her example: "If police arrested a group of black teenagers for stealing a car, even if they were released without charges, their encounter with the criminal justice system factored into the national measurement of crime and the subsequent policy decisions." See also: Gwynne Pierson, "Institutional Racism and Crime Clearance," in *Black Perspectives on Crime and the Criminal Justice System,* ed. Robert L. Woodson (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1977), 110.
[69]Ibid.

were attributed to other more complex factors, such as economic changes, that were ignored by the F.B.I., politicians, and the media.[70]

Crime was especially an issue in the "deteriorating" urban inner-cities, that became known in the 1970s as "dangerous" and "crime-ridden" places.[71] Living in these isolated high-poverty parts of the inner-cities, also referred to as "ghettos," were mainly African Americans, that migrated North during the Great Migration in order to find better lives and jobs in the industrial cities.[72] The term "ghetto" is explained by Desmond and Emirbayer as a: "racial institution marked by social isolation and economic vulnerability," that is characterized by "the severe spatial and social segregation of the ghetto's residents, marked by their amputation from America's economic prosperity, national security, collective imagination and memory, and welfare state services."[73] Reasons for this rapid deterioration of the inner-cities were analyzed by Wilson in *The Truly Disadvantaged,* where he mostly considers social and economic changes to be the main causes.[74] Bernard R. Boxill argues in a review of Wilson's work: "Wilson locates the main cause of the underclass in deep changes in the economy which caused prolonged joblessness in certain segments of the black population."[75] Wilson himself argued:

> Urban minorities have been particularly vulnerable to structural economic changes, such as the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries, the increasing polarization of the labor market into low-wage and high-wage sectors, technological innovations, and the relocation of manufacturing industries out of the central cities.[76]

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[70]Alexander, 41. See also: Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*.

[71]Ingrid Gould Ellen and Katherine O'Regan, "Crime and U.S. Cities: Recent Patterns and Implications," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 626 (2009): 22-38.

[72]Desmond and Emirbayer, 230; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 1. See also: Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, Inc. 2010).

[73]Ibid.

[74]Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged,* viii-ix. See also: William Julius Wilson, "The Declining Significance of Race," *Daedalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences* 140, no. 2 (2011): 55-69; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 3, 9; Nicholas J. Anastasiow, "Send This Book to Capitol Hill," review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, by William Julius Wilson, *The Phi Delta Kappan* 62, no. 10 (1988): 774.

[75]Bernard R. Boxill, "Wilson on the Truly Disadvantaged." review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, by William Julius Wilson, *Ethics* 101, no. 3 (1991): 579; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 5-6.

[76]Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 39.

Especially the last example of this quote is important for the deterioration of inner-cities. Due to deindustrialization the cities transformed, and as Wilson explained, "urban centers are undergoing an irreversible structural transformation from centers of production and distribution of material goods to centers of administration, information exchange, and higher-order service provision," causing high unemployment for those working in the former inner-city industries.[77] A striking example was the car industry of Detroit, which due to the economic troubles lost many jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars. The industries and "innovations that had made the Motor City great, that had been the symbol of American affluence, had now become an emblem of decline."[78] The city now became a "symbol of urban decay, rampant crime and racial division," with enormous unemployment rates of about 80 percent among young African American men.[79] For these poor blacks the 1970s became an era in which "the ladder had been kicked away."[80]

With factories moving away, and the process of automation replacing manual labor, African Americans living in the inner-cities were deeply affected, and without secure jobs and steady incomes, a lot of young black men found their solace in the underground economy, turning to crime and drugs, explaining the rising crime rates.[81] Due to the appalling levels of criminal offenses, family breakdown, drug addiction, and overall urban decay, "crime became the inner-cities' main concern."[82]

What further added to this were demographic changes in the inner-city make-up. Firstly, there was a population explosion among minority youth that occurred simultaneously with the

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[77]Ibid. See also: John D. Kasarda, "Urban Change and Minority Opportunities," in *The New Urban Reality,* ed. Paul E. Peterson (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 33.

[78]Dominic Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Populist Right* (New York: Random House, 2011), 381.

[79]Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell,* 380. See also: Theodore H. White, "America in Search of Itself," *Time* (1980): 312-313.

[80]Ibid., 244-245.

[81]Ibid.; Alexander, 50-51.

[82]Ibid., 125 and 128. See also: Ann Dryden Witte, "Urban Crime: Issues and Policies," *Housing Policy Debate* 7, no. 4 (1996): 731.

changing economy, posing many problems for unskilled individuals.[83] Alexander connects this to the rising crime in the 1970s, claiming that: "The surge of young men in the population was occurring at precisely the same time that unemployment rates for black men were rising sharply," and this "baby-boom generation," consisting of mainly young men, were those responsible for most crimes.[84]

A second demographic change was the result of certain groups leaving the inner-cities.[85] Boxill explains Wilson's argument on this, saying that:

> The departure of the black middle and working classes from black neighborhoods where they had previously been confined by de jure residential segregation. Wilson argues that this removed an important "social buffer" that could have prevented black joblessness from leading to the underclass.[86]

Besides the black middle classes leaving the inner-cities, there was also the greater issue of "white flight." The term "white flight" indicates the "residential relocation" of whites from central cities and urban neighborhoods, predominantly inhabited by minorities, into the suburbs.[87] Mainly white, middle-class households left these areas and fueled suburbanization.[88] The main reasons for whites leaving neighborhoods after more blacks moved in were prejudice and discrimination, as well as concerns about "legitimate "nonracial" problems related to crime, schools, services, and property values that often coincide with racial change."[89] As sociologist Rachael A. Woldoff argues in *White Flight/Black Flight*: "white flight is a persistent obstacle to racial and economic integration," and explains that "when white urban residents move away and new white families fail to replace them, neighborhoods undergo racial turnover, often called

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[83]Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged,* 39.

[84]Alexander, 41. See also: Beckett, 32 and Mauer, 171.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Boxill, "Wilson on the Truly Disadvantaged." review of *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 579; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 5-6.

[87]Robert L. Green and Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Urban Desegregation and White Flight: A Response to Coleman," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 57, no. 6 (1976): 399-402; Sandbrook, 108 and 127; "White Flight," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed February 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/white%20flight.

[88]Ellen and O'Regan, "Crime and U.S. Cities," 22-38.

[89]Rachel A. Woldoff, *White Flight/Black Flight: The Dynamics of Racial Change in an American Neighborhood* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 13.

racial transition, tipping, or succession."[90] With the continuance of "urban dwellers" moving to the suburbs, cities became almost completely "re-segregated," and as historian Kevin Kruse argues: "in cities such as Atlanta since the 1950s, as public spaces became desegregated, most whites who could afford to do so headed to the suburbs…They abandoned what became an increasingly black public sphere of the city for a mostly white private sphere of the suburbs."[91] As a result, the residents that stayed in the inner-city "ghettos" faced social isolation, crime, drugs, and violence, which created an environment that was very hard to escape from, and which was often referred to as "a prison without walls."[92]

The changing economy in the 1970s, especially the transformation of the urban inner-cities, due to deindustrialization and demographic changes, contributed to a rapid deterioration of the American inner-cities. The urban decay in these predominantly black urban areas became intertwined with a narrative of crime. The worsening conditions of the inner-cities proved perfectly suitable for reinforcing the new social order of covert racism that had to be constructed due to the changing dynamics in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement. By criminalizing and isolating the predominantly African American residents of the inner-cities, a new "undercaste" was created, that preserved white dominance and superiority.[93] With new laws and policies, which are discussed in the next chapter, the racial hierarchy was maintained, and an effective system of white social control was set up that suited the newly constructed framework of covert racism.[94]

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[90]Woldoff, *White Flight/Black Flight,* 13.
[91]Borstelmann, *The 1970s,* 49.
[92]"In Me I Trust," NOS, October 10, 2016, https://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2137455-in-me-i-trust-het-amerikaanse-ghetto-door-de-lens-van-devin.html; Doornekamp, "Ghettoization: the Debate on the Deterioration and Social Structures of the Black Inner-city Underclass," 1; Woldoff, 13; Ellen and O'Regan, 22-38; Hinton, 179.
[93]Alexander, 4, 13 and 18. Alexander explains "undercaste" as: "a lower caste of individuals who are permanently barred by law and custom from mainstream society"; Doornekamp, "The Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15.
[94]Ibid.

Confusion and Conservatism

Besides the shifting racial relations and the uncertainties of a changing social order, the 1970s witnessed several more challenges that made this decade confusing for many Americans. It was a decade of international crises, such as losing the Vietnam War and the Iran hostage crisis.[95] Adding to this was the stressful situation within the U.S. itself, because of great racial fears and declining economic conditions. The 1970s became an "age of limits," in which "ordinary Americans doubted that tomorrow would be better than today," and pessimistic sentiments prevailed.[96] As historian Dominic Sandbrook puts it in *Mad as Hell:*

> This was a world in which traditional narratives were undermined by feminism, multiculturalism, and postmodernism, in which cherished notions of American virtue were challenged by Vietnam and Watergate, in which the boundless possibilities of the American Dream were denied by inflation, pollution, and unemployment.[97]

Many Americans no longer understood their place in the world, and saw the era as a "confused time."[98] The uncertain feeling, that the 1970s brought, was unusual for Americans, and this is the reason that, as Sandbrook argues, many Americans "returned to comforting nostalgia."[99] As a result of this, a new kind of "populist right" rose, that reacted to this nostalgic sentiment with conservative traditionalist ideas of white identity and nationalism.[100]

First, it is important to acknowledge the racial fears that pervaded American society in the 1970s and caused insecurities throughout the country. The establishment of blacks as a "dangerous" class, in which they were equated to criminality, as well as the race riots of the 1960s, provided a strong foundation for the racial fears of white Americans in the 1970s.[101] The majority of white Americans believed that the new legislation on Civil Rights had "fulfilled the

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[95]Borstelmann, 21-22; Sandbrook, x.

[96]Sandbrook, xii.

[97]Ibid., xii-xiii.

[98]Ibid., xi.

[99]Ibid., xiii.

[100]Ibid.

[101]Alexander, 197; Potter, "The History of Policing," http://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelook/history-policing-united-states-part-2; Alexander, 23-26. See also: Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15, 16 and 24.

nation's obligation to assure blacks equality before the law," however, African Americans demanded more action and changes.[102] This increased white fears, especially because, during the 1960s, Civil Rights protests had been depicted as criminal endeavors.[103] As Richard Nixon, claimed in 1966: "The increasing crime rate can be traced directly to the spread of the corrosive doctrine that every citizen possesses an inherent right to decide for himself which laws to obey and when to disobey them."[104] And as explained by Haney López: "By the mid-1960s, "law and order" had become a surrogate expression for concern about the Civil Rights Movement."[105] The intense, violent, race riots of the 1960s' "long hot summer," such as the 1965 Watts Riots in Los Angeles, were still fresh in the minds of white Americans at the beginning of the 1970s, and the intensified racial fears were taken into the new decade.[106]

Racial violence and protests continued in the 1970s, however, most were now initiated by white Americans. One example of this, was the issue of court-ordered school busing, which was a way through which students were transported to and from schools in order to ensure racial school integration.[107] The idea that busing could be used as an "integration tool," was decided in the Supreme Court ruling *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education.*[108] Due to this, some white children had to attend former all black schools, depending on the school district they lived in. This was a considerable cause for intense protest, fears, and backlash among white Americans.[109] The example of South Boston High School, where school busing led to major violent protests, illustrates this. Accounts from the school of white children who were "crying

[102]Foner, 989.
[103]Haney López, 24.
[104]Alexander, 41; Richard Nixon, "If Mob Rule Takes Hold in U.S.," *U.S. News and World Report,* August 15, 1966, 64.
[105]Haney López, 24.
[106]Foner, 989-990; "The Long, Hot Summers," U.S. History, accessed November 2019, http://www.ushistory.org/Us/54g.asp.
[107]Borstelmann, 49; Foner, 1024; Sandbrook, 105-106; Christina Zhao, "What is Busing? Joe Biden Forced to Defend Record on Segregation in Face of Kamala Harris Attacks," Newsweek, June 27, 2019, https://www.newsweek.com/what-busing-joe-biden-kamala-harris-1446429.
[108]Foner, 1024; Sandbrook, 105; Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education, 402 U.S. 1 (1971), https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/402/1. See also: Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954), https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/347/483.
[109]Ibid.

and screaming at the thought of the school," and "who had not eaten lunch all year because they were afraid to go into the cafeteria, a bear pit of insults and fights" fueled white parents' concerns, and at one point an angry mob even surrounded the school.[110] Another example of protest was in Louisville, Kentucky, where twenty-five thousand students were the subject of busing, after a federal decision.[111] The busing was met by whites with huge protests and racist chants, and a mob destroyed forty school buses. After this incident every school bus, especially those with black students, had to be protected by armed guards.[112] Numerous other cities experienced similar protests and violence throughout the decade. As Sandbrook explains: "The pattern of busing, boycotts, and violence was repeated in many other cities across the nation, with accounts from Pasadena, San Francisco, and San Diego in California, to Minneapolis, Chicago, and Cleveland in the Midwest."[113] These situations showed that racial fears persisted far into the 1970s and that the legacy of overt racism would not easily go away.[114]

Another decisive situation, adding to white Americans' insecurities, was the worsening economy from 1973 onwards. As Thomas Borstelmann explains in his book *The 1970s*: "rising unemployment, persistent high inflation, and the loss of manufacturing jobs through deindustrialization made the future uncertain," and it were these challenges to the economy that affected Americans most throughout the decade.[115] The economy was experiencing deep structural changes, with, as Sandbrook explains, "manufacturing fleeing the cities, car plants

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[110]Sandbrook, 112-113; Foner, 1025; Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1991) xii-xiii; J. Anthony Lukas, *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* (New York: Random House, 1985), 128. See also: Ione Malloy, *Southie Won't Go: A Teacher's Diary of the Desegregation of South Boston High School* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

[111]Ibid., 117-118; David Frum, *How We Got Here: The 70's, the Decade That Brought You Modern Life (for Better or Worse)* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 253-54; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 277-78, 316-17.

[112]Ibid.

[113]Ibid., 117.

[114]Ibid., 114.

[115]Borstelmann, 22; Jefferson Cowie, "Vigorously Left, Right, and Center: The Cross-currents of Working-class America in the 1970s," in *America in the Seventies,* ed. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 76; Sandbrook, 32 and 40. See also: Yanek Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the Challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 77, 129-130, 155.

and steelworks losing money, and automation causing millions of layoffs."[116] For example, about 100,000 workers lost their jobs in the steel industry in the mid-1970s, and finding new employment was a lost cause for many of them.[117] As a result, the future of the American working class became very insecure.[118]

Besides threats from the changing economy, there was also fear of the increasing black-middle class. After the Civil Rights Movement, when blacks had more rights and more possibilities to better their economic status, white workers felt especially threatened.[119] As the financial situation of some African Americans improved, they were able to move into better neighborhoods, most of which used to be all-white. The working-class whites who already lived in these areas, considered the new black inhabitants "competition for both housing and jobs."[120] The whites felt as if these "others" were "eroding what they had gained," as Sandbrook puts it.[121] Especially with the already existing threats to employment and the bad economy, the perception soon prevailed that "blacks are coming in and taking our jobs."[122]

This situation can, again, be compared to the period post-slavery, which, as Hale argues, was also afflicted with economic changes, and resulted in whites feeling economically threatened by former slaves.[123] African Americans in this time also formed a new black middle class, leading to changed racial hierarchies, and creating an identity crisis among white Americans.[124] Working-class whites, in the post-Civil Rights era, were experiencing

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[116]Sandbrook, 33.
[117]Ibid.
[118] Borstelmann, 53.
[119]Wilkerson, *Warmth of Other Suns,* 528.
[120]Sandbrook, 54-57; Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, 7. See also: Nathan Glazer, *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy*, (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 177-95; Frank F. Furstenberg, "Public Reaction to Crime in the Streets," *American Scholar* 40, no. 4 (1971): 601-610; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 267; Dan T carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 349.
[121]Ibid.
[122]Ibid.
[123]Hale, *Making Whiteness,* 6-7 and 21; Doornekamp, "Racial Sexual Stereotypes: Establishing and Challenging the Myth, 1890s-1920s," 7.
[124]Ibid.

comparable circumstances, that also led to a feeling of lost white identity. Lots of working-class whites started to look for a sense of tradition, and "perpetuated a new sense of identity based on suffering, hard work, and achievement."[125] In this way whites created a contrast with the "supposed laziness and criminality of their black neighbors," working against integration and creating once again a schism between black and white.[126] Something that related to this newly created schism was another economic issue for white workers, being the Great Society welfare programs of Lyndon B. Johnson.[127] Welfare felt as a "slap in the face," and as one worker described it: "these welfare people get as much as I do and I work my ass off and come home dead tired. They get up late and they can shack up all day long and watch the tube. With their welfare and food stamps, they come out better than me."[128] This intensified the dissatisfaction among white workers even further and contributed to the demonizing of black people on welfare, and in general.

A more general reason for insecurities among Americans were the national crises the country became involved in during the 1970s.[129] First of all, the defeat in the Vietnam War was disastrous for the U.S., as it challenged their global position of a "superpower."[130] Due to increasing numbers of casualties and decreasing support for the war, the Nixon administration decided on the withdrawal of American troops, in March 1973, which meant an "implicit admission of defeat."[131] The outcome of the Vietnam war had an enormous impact on American life. Especially the economy was seriously damaged by it. The war also added to the, already pervading, mistrust of government and politicians.[132] With the loss of this war, the American

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[125]Sandbrook, 59 and 62. See also: Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. 1 (1979): 1-20.
[126]Ibid., 62.
[127]Foner, 986-89.
[128]Sandbrook, 54, 60, and 108; Borstelmann, 21-22 and 53. See also: Steven M. Gillon, *Boomer Nation: The Largest and Richest Generation Ever and How it Changed America* (New York: Free Press, 2004)*;* James T Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)*.*
[129]Borstelmann, 22.
[130]Alan Rohn, "How Did the Vietnam War Affect America?" The Vietnam War, April 7, 2016, https://thevietnamwar.info/how-vietnam-war-affect-america/.
[131]Borstelmann, 23; Rohn, "How Did the Vietnam War Affect America."
[132]Rohn, "How Did the Vietnam War Affect America"; Foner, 995.

army was no longer invincible, and appeared unfit to protect the nation and the world. Because of this, the defeat was even more painful for Americans, and caused a sense of loss and confusion.[133] As Borstelmann describes it: "The discovery that the United States was perhaps not the unique, special, ever-victorious nation its citizens had tended to assume marked a watershed in modern American history, a crisis of identity."[134]

A second national crisis, that affected the American position in the world, was the Tehran hostage crisis of 1979. As Borstelmann explains, Iran was of interest to the U.S., because of its oil, and after access to this oil was threatened by Iran's nationalist leader Mohammed Mussadiq, the C.I.A. had organized a coup against him in 1953, and installed the Shah, Reza Pahlavi, as the new leader of Iran.[135] However, the Shah's rule, as well as American support for the Shah, faced strong opposition, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In 1979, the situation worsened when the American embassy in Tehran was taken over by supporters of Khomeini, holding several Americans hostage.[136] The situation made the U.S. feel completely powerless. A failed attempt to free the hostages, made the frustration and humiliation even greater, and, as Borstelmann argues, implied the further retreat of the U.S. from its "global empire of influence."[137]

All of the racial, economic, and global issues created uncertainty amongst Americans, and sparked a renewed interest in conservatism that led to the rise of the populist "New Right."[138] Many whites longed for a stable factor that would provide consistency and "comforting nostalgia," and conservatism was able to provide this.[139] The definition of conservatism itself already provides part of this stability, as it comes from the Latin word "conserve," meaning "to

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[133]Borstelmann, 27.
[134]Ibid.
[135]Ibid., 207. See also: Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[136]Ibid. 207-208; Foner, 1040.
[137]Ibid., 208.
[138]Sandbrook, xiii.
[139]Ibid.

keep intact" or "unchanged."[140] As the 1960s had knocked down some longstanding foundations of American society, and traditional black and white hierarchies were no longer the norm, the changing social structures and uncertain position of Americans required a new sense of white identity.[141] The New Right used this sentiment and combined it with conservative notions of traditionalism, such as hierarchies based on race and gender, in order to gain support from disaffected whites, and preserve the "supreme status of native-born white Americans."[142] They basically focused on all the concerns of white Americans in the 1970s.[143] It played an important role in the shift towards covert racism, and as Sandbrook argues: "As populism reawakened in the 1970s it became the most powerful political and cultural force in the nation," and Ronald Reagan made great use of these developments for his own political aspirations.[144]

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[140]Borstelmann, 47.

[141]Ibid., 21.

[142]Sandbrook, xiii; Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-wing Movements and Political Power in The United States* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995), 2, 6, 9, and 20.

[143]Sandbrook, xi, xiv and x.

[144]Ibid., xiii.

II

The War on Drugs: The Ultimate Dog Whistle

The great uncertainties and changing racial power structures dominating American society in the 1970s caused for a shift towards a more concealed form of racism, as explained in chapter one. Crime control was found to be a good way to facilitate social control, thus being a "dog whistle" for it.[145] One of the best examples of this is the War on Drugs. In the War on Drugs covert racism was shaped and enhanced by the federal government, and anchored in laws and policies that were filled with concealed racist implications. Through the façade of crime control the "War on Drugs" in its entirety became the ultimate dog whistle for social control of African Americans in the post-Civil Rights era.

This chapter examines the origins of the federal government's War on Drugs and explains how it was fused with covert racism and dog whistle politics. It first considers the start of the War on Drugs in the 1970s, analyzing president Nixon's "law and order" politics and his stake in the transition from overt to covert racism. In the other part of this chapter, the second half of the War on Drugs, during the 1980s, is discussed, focusing on president Reagan's policies concerning drugs in particular. It also focuses on the escalation of the criminalization of blackness in this era, which Reagan is mostly blamed for, and was specifically visible in the increasing incarceration rates.[146] It deserves mentioning that the War on Drugs is intertwined heavily with the issue of mass incarceration, which is in itself also a system of control maintaining racial hierarchy, and as Michelle Alexander argues: "operates a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the

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[145]Haney López, ix, and 3. See also: Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15 and 29.
[146]Alexander,48-49; Hinton, 3; Childress, "Michelle Alexander: A system of Racial and Social Control," paragraph 6; Hager and Keller, "Everything You Think You Know About Mass Incarceration is Wrong," paragraph 1; Doornekamp, "The Violence of Mass Incarceration," 26.

subordinate status of a group defined largely by race."[147] Discussing the War on Drugs, therefore, must also include a brief discussion of the problem of mass incarceration, which appears later in this chapter.

Paving the way in 1964-1965 : Goldwater versus the Democrats' War on Crime

The urban unrest of the 1960s, combined with the insecurities of the 1970s, as discussed in chapter one, forced the American federal government to confront its issues concerning the Civil Rights Movement.[148] It needed to reshape its domestic policies to maintain social order and minimize the threat of future disorder. However, the new laws concerning race and equality asked for, as Michelle Alexander calls it, "new race-neutral language," that fit with the alteration from overt to covert racism.[149] This way the policies still appealed to former racist sentiments and simultaneously succeeded in keeping blacks in a subordinate place. Alexander argues: "proponents of racial hierarchy found they could install a new racial caste system without violating the law or new limits of acceptable political discourse, by demanding law and order."[150]

Republicans played well into this new need for social order combined with new racially coded language. By using coded language it was possible to defend the white power structure, as argued by Desmond and Emirbayer.[151] The first to do so was, Arizona Senator, Barry Goldwater during his presidential campaign in 1964. Goldwater's introduced the "law and order" rhetoric, which became a foundational part of the political discourse of American

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[147]Alexander, 13.
[148]Hinton, 7.
[149]Alexander, 40.
[150]Ibid.; Desmond and Emirbayer, 121; Dan Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 6.
[151]Desmond and Emirbayer, 122.

conservatives.[152] The phrase "law and order" was Goldwater's central theme in his crime control politics, and was created to attract discontented southern white voters, who were troubled by the federal civil rights policies.[153] As Haney López argues: "Goldwater and his partisans had become convinced that the key to electoral success lay in gaining ground in the South, and that in turn required appealing to racist sentiments in white voters."[154] This "southern strategy" was thus a way to win voters, and "law and order" was the perfect way to do so.[155]

In 1964, at the Republican National Convention, Goldwater proclaimed that "there is violence in our streets…nothing prepares the way for tyranny more than the failure of public officials to keep the streets safe from bullies and marauders."[156] He declared that the preservation of "law and order" in the U.S. was one of government's "inherent responsibilities."[157] Goldwater turned the issue of crime into a primary concern for the American public and it became a central topic in his campaign. The following fragment reveals how he spoke about crime and law:

> It is on our streets that we see the final, terrible proof of a sickness…Crime grows faster than population, while those who break the law are accorded more consideration than those who try to enforce the law. Law breakers are defended…And in encouragement of even more abuse of the law, we have the appalling spectacle of this country's Ambassador to the United Nations actually telling an audience that "in the great struggle to advance civil human rights, even a jail sentence is no longer a dishonor but a proud achievement."…When men will seek political advantage by turning their eyes away from riots and violence, we can well understand why lawlessness grows even while we pass more laws…It is a responsibility of the national leadership, regardless of political

[152]Haney López, 18-22; Diamond, 84; Hinton, 7. See also: "President Forms Panel to Study Crime Problems," *The New York Times,* July 27, 1965; Brady Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," The Policy, July 18, 2016, https://thepolicy.us/the-return-of-law-and-order-in-america-ac7c2b6ae7e6.
[153]Ibid.; Diamond, 63; Alexander 54, and 191.
[154]Ibid., 18; Alexander 191.
[155]Diamond, 20; Haney López, 1.
[156]Barry Goldwater, "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech at the 28th Republican National Convention," July, 1964, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/may98/goldwaterspeech.htm; Desmond and Emirbayer, *Racial Domination,* 259; Katherine Beckett, and Theodore Sasson, *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America* (London: Sage Publications, 2004)*,* 49; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," The Policy, July 18, 2016.
[157]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," The Policy, July 18, 2016.

gain, political faction, or political popularity to encourage every community in this nation to enforce the law, not let it be abused and ignored.[158]

Goldwater's "law and order" rhetoric is thus a concrete form of dog whistle politics, since his words were aimed at one specific group of people: disconcerted white southerners. The name "dog whistle politics" comes from the comparison of the coded messages to an a real high-pitched dog whistle, which only dogs can hear, and in Goldwater's case, only disaffected whites were able to hear the messages, or "dog whistles" he conveyed.[159] As the passage shows, Goldwater used words as "riots," those who "abuse and ignore" the law, "a sickness," but he never explicitly mentioned who he meant by this. The audience at which his speech is aimed were able to "hear" these specific words and phrases and interpret them however they wanted. Goldwater's audience, the disaffected whites, would for instance link "those that disobey the laws" to African Americans and racial activists, and the "riots" to the upheavals of the Civil Rights Movement.[160] Goldwater's dog whistles were therefore highly effective, since his messages were conveyed to exactly those his speech was aimed at.

Another issue Goldwater's rhetoric focused on, which was one of the main pillars of conservatism and the New Right, was "moral traditionalism."[161] As Diamond explains: "traditionalists wary social change and are supportive of class, race and gender hierarchies, they have tended to oppose state initiatives to distribute civil rights and liberties among traditionally subordinate groups," they are also "opposed to racial integration," and "support the state as an enforcer of order."[162] They thus wanted to preserve a moral order of behavioral norms and hierarchy and firmly resisted any form of change that threatened these traditional relations or

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[158]"Text of Goldwater's Speech Formally Opening Presidential Campaign," *The New York Times,* September 4, 1964, https://www.nytimes.com/1964/09/04/archives/text-of-goldwaters-speech-formally-opening-presidential-campaign.html.

[159]Haney López, 3-5; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15 and 29.

[160]Alexander, 54; Haney López, 23-24. See also: Stephen Earl Bennett and Alfred J. Tuchfarber, "The Social Structural Sources of Cleavage on Law and Order Policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 19 (1975): 419-438; Sandra Browning and Liqun Cao, "The Impact of Race on Criminal Justice Ideology," *Justice Quarterly* 9 (1992): 685-699.

[161]Diamond, 7.

[162]Ibid., 9

redistributed power to groups that were considered "subordinate."[163] In Goldwater's speech the importance of traditionalism was very clear:

> The tide has been running against freedom…We must, and we shall, return to proven ways – not because they are old, but because they are true. And this party, with its every action, every word, every breath, and every heartbeat, has but a single resolve, and that is freedom - freedom made orderly for this nation by our constitutional government; freedom - balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the slavery of the prison cell; balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the license of the mob and of the jungle…I seek an American proud of its past, proud of its ways, and determined actively to proclaim them.[164]

He talked about returning to "proven ways" and took pride in the American past, meaning he rejected change and wanted to preserve the American "heritage." The phrase "heritage" is often linked to traditionalism and is defined as: "the history, traditions, and practices of a particular country or society that exist from the past and continue to be important."[165] As the past American society was based on racial hierarchies, Goldwater's words become inevitably linked to race and "white supremacy" as well.[166] He further spoke about the "lack of order," which corresponds with traditionalism's idea that hierarchy had to be preserved. Goldwater said: "it will not become the license of the mob," meaning that it had to be prevented that subordinate groups, in this case African Americans who were indicated with "the mob," would obtain more power and cause societal structures to change.[167] Goldwater wanted to keep the U.S. the way it was, thus, his rhetoric can be interpreted as traditionalist.

Even though Goldwater's presidential campaign failed, it signified a new start for the Republicans. By mobilizing disaffected white voters, who were anti-civil rights, Republicans wanted to increase their constituency and win the white house.[168] Goldwater's rhetoric was followed up quickly by other Republicans and he created the ideological framework for the

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[163]Ibid., 6 and 138.
[164]Goldwater, "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," 1964, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/may98/goldwaterspeech.htm.
[165]"Heritage," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed February 15, 2020, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/heritage.
[166]Desmond and Emirbayer, 121-122; Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 89-91.
[167] Goldwater, "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech."
[168]Diamond, 64-65.

coming conservatives.[169] From Goldwater's rhetoric a pattern becomes visible, that Nixon and Reagan, with their "War on Drugs," would also follow in later years: a pattern of dog whistles, covert racism, and moral traditionalism.[170] Goldwater was thus an important pioneer of renewed Republican rhetoric and his campaign year 1964 can be viewed as the initial turning point of overt racism to covert racism. He was the first to consistently use covert racism as a means of political rhetoric, which took concrete forms under Nixon, and became a fully established and effective political tool under Reagan.

The year 1964-1965 was thus pivotal. However, it was not only Republicans who opted for a tougher stand on crime issues and "law and order" during these years. The Democratic administration of president Lyndon B. Johnson was actually the first to speak of a "War on Crime."[171] Johnson addressed Congress in March 1965, saying: "the Federal Government will henceforth take a more meaningful role in meeting the whole spectrum of problems posed by crime," and called for a "thorough, intelligent, and effective war against crime."[172] He preceded the War on Crime with the so-called "War on Poverty," which formed the foundation for the intertwinement of anti-poverty and crime control measures.[173] Although it seemed as if the commitment of the federal government to provide aid to the poor and racial minorities stemmed from good intentions, it was actually, as Hinton argues, a response to "demographic transformations, gains of the Civil Rights Movement, and the persistent threat of urban rebellion."[174] The increasing numbers of African Americans in several cities, such as New Orleans, Detroit, and Philadelphia, in combination with rising joblessness, became a concern for the federal government. According to federal policymakers this combination of factors was

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[169]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."
[170]Desmond and Emirbayer, 259; Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America,* 60-61. See also: Joseph Dillon Davey, *The Politics of Prison Expansion: Winning Elections by Waging War on Crime* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1998).
[171]Hinton, 1 and 27.
[172]Ibid.; Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to Congress on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice," The American Presidency Project, March 8, 1965, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/special-message-the-congress-law-enforcement-and-the-administration-justice.
[173]Ibid., 3 and 32.
[174]Ibid., 11.

"social dynamite," and would lead to fear, chaos and disorder in urban African American communities.[175] The democratic response is thus actually quite similar to Goldwater's fear of disorder and call for "law and order," and as Hinton argues Johnson's War on Poverty and Crime "is best understood as a manifestation of fear."[176]

What is also important to consider when analyzing the response of the federal government is the "set of political and ideological assumptions about African Americans, crime, and poverty," which according to Hinton consisted of the consensus that "black urban poverty" was "pathological," and the "product of individual and cultural deficiencies."[177] She argues:

> This consensus distorted the aims of the War on Poverty and also shaped the rationale, legislation and programs of the War on Crime. The seemingly neutral statistical and sociological "truth" of black criminality concealed the racist thinking that guided the strategies federal policymakers developed for the War on Crime, first in the 1960s, then through the 1970s and beyond.[178]

She concludes that it caused for a "punitive turn" in the domestic policies of the U.S., saying "that the only way to manage the problems facing urban centers was to aid law enforcement authorities who were charged with the task of keeping segregated urban communities under control."[179] This led to many new laws concerned with preventing disorder, such as the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, which allowed the federal government to interfere directly with "local police operations, court systems, and state prisons."[180] Another important law was the Safe Streets Act of 1968, which increased the budget for the War on Crime with $400 million. To monitor the use of this money, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (L.E.A.A.)

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[175]Ibid., 29, and 32.
[176]Ibid.; Steven W. Thrasher, "From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime Review – Disturbing History," *The Guardian,* April 19, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/19/from-the-war-on-poverty-to-the-war-on-crime-review-elizabeth-hinton.
[177]Ibid., 3. See also: Matthew Lassiter, "Political History Beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *Journal of American History* 98 (2011): 760-764.
[178]Ibid., 31.
[179]Ibid., 31-32.
[180]Ibid., 1-2; Lyndon B. Johnson, "Statement of the President on Establishing the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice," *Public Papers of Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson,* 1965 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 382.

was formed, and its main responsibility was to increase "control in low-income urban communities," mainly populated by African Americans.[181] What is especially interesting with Johnson's Acts, as Hinton points out, is that most them were created at the time that the gains of the Civil Rights Movement were highest. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, and called the War on Poverty into action in the same year. Also, the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, was signed in 1965, right before the Voting Rights Act, and after the race riots of 1964.[182] Hinton thus argues, that "progressive social change" corresponded with increased "federal law enforcement" and national punitive measures that were primarily directed at African Americans living in urban areas with high crime rates.[183]

Even though Democrats had their fair share in the turn to crime control, political power started shifting more and more to the right in the 1970s. Especially when Richard Nixon was elected as president in 1968, he took an even tougher stand on crime issues, using Goldwater's phrase "law and order," and started the War on Drugs, which led to greater expansions of the American system of social control.[184]

Nixon's War on Drugs in the 1970s

When Richard Nixon became the next Republican president in 1968, his political rhetoric immediately followed Goldwater's pattern of consistently using covert racism in his political rhetoric. Under Nixon this particular rhetoric was forged into a more concrete form, and was

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[181]Ibid., 2-3. See also: Thomas E. Cronin, Tamia Z. Cronin, and Michael E. Millakovich, *U.S. v. Crime in the Streets* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981); Malcolm Feeley and Austin Sarat, *The Policy Dilemma: Federal Crime Policy and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 1968-1978* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[182]Ibid, 1, 2, 27.
[183]Ibid., 13-14 and 27; Alexander, 45.
[184]Alexander, 46-47.

thoroughly executed through his policies, especially with the use of the dog whistle "law and order."[185] So how exactly did Nixon incorporate covert racism into his political rhetoric?

First of all, similar to Goldwater, Nixon focused on one specific group of people to gain votes from, the ones that he called "the silent majority." What Nixon meant by this were the "forgotten" Americans, those who were less vocal in expressing their opinions and were thus often overlooked.[186] In his "Silent Majority" speech, in 1969, Nixon stated: "And so tonight – to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans – I ask for your support."[187] In this speech, Nixon referred to two groups of Americans. The first group was the "vocal minority," meaning the African Americans, who by protest, and going against the status quo, tried to achieve certain goals, and second, the "great silent majority," who were the white working middle class, and were those "not out in the streets."[188] The Silent Majority was, as Nixon said in his Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination, "another voice," it was "the quiet voice in the tumult and the shouting," and "the voice of the great majority of Americans, the forgotten Americans – the non-shouters; the non-demonstrators."[189] On this last group, Nixon focused his political campaign.[190]

The racial tensions of 1968, once again stressed the demand for order in society, to which Nixon responded with a renewed commitment to "law and order," using the turmoil to

[185]Haney López, 22-23.

[186]Sandbrook, xiv.

[187]Richard Nixon, "The Silent Majority Speech," November 3, 1969, https://watergate.info/1969/11/03/nixons-silent-majority-speech.html.

[188]"Nixon's Silent Majority Speech: The Day the 60s Died," PBS Learning Media, accessed February 9, 2020, https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/23784e9a-e7c1-4be2-a64c-80aaa6e52f6e/nixons-silent-majority-speech-the-day-the-60s-died/; Terence McArdle, "The "Law and Order" Campaign that Won Richard Nixon the White House 50 Years Ago, *The Washington Post,* November 5, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/05/law-order-campaign-that-won-richard-nixon-white-house-years-ago/; Richard Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago," July 28, 1960, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-accepting-the-presidential-nomination-the-republican-national-convention-chicago; Zachary Crockett, "Nixon's RNC Speech in 1968 Was Scary. Trump's Was Way Scarier," Vox, July 23, 2016, https://www.vox.com/2016/7/22/12254622/trump-rnc-speech-richard-nixon.

[189]Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination," 1960.

[190]Lance Selfa, "1968: The Nixon Backlash and the Silent Majority," Socialist Worker, November 8, 2018, http://socialistworker.org/2018/11/08/1968-the-nixon-backlash-and-the-silent-majority.

appeal to white voters, who "believed that change had gone too far," and Nixon became the "champion of the silent majority," as Foner puts it.[191] Together with his call to be "tough on crime" the "law and order" phrase became a cornerstone in his campaign rhetoric.[192] An explicit example that illustrates this is a political ad that was broadcasted on national television, where Nixon, over images of riots and violence, said:

> It is time for an honest look at the problem of order in the United States…There is no cause that justifies resort to violence. Let us recognize that the first civil right of every American is to be free from domestic violence. So I pledge to you, we shall have order in the United States.[193]

By taking this tough stance on order, Nixon also attempted to make the Democrats look "soft on crime," and unfit to manage social disorder.[194] Nixon's efforts were evidently successful as he won the presidency with 43.4% in 1968, and his victory proved that "running on a hard stance on crime and promising "law and order" was a winning ticket," and that, as political scientist Julia Azari confirms, "tactics of fear or appeals to restore the old social order are successful."[195]

In his "Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech," Nixon continued his "law and order" rhetoric, and focused on the deterioration of safety.[196] He claimed:

> As we look at America, we see cities enveloped in smoke and flame. We hear sirens in the night. We see Americans hating each other; fighting each other; killing each other at home. And as we see and hear these things, millions of Americans cry out in anguish.[197]

This quote shows his fear inducing way of speech. As a solution for this fear he referred to "order," stating: "The first requisite of progress is order. Now, there is no quarrel between

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[191]Foner, 1017.
[192]Ibid.
[193]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America." See on the website of this article the video of Nixon's political ad from 1968, called "The First Civil Right." https://thepolicy.us/the-return-of-law-and-order-in-america-ac7c2b6ae7e6.
[194]Ibid.
[195]McArdle, "The "Law and Order" Campaign that Won Richard Nixon the White House"; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."
[196]Nixon, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination," 1960; Crockett, "Nixon's RNC Speech in 1968 Was Scary."
[197]Ibid.

progress and order – because neither can exist without the other. So let us have order in America."[198] To provide this "order," Nixon promised action that would "crackdown crime, villainy, and civil unrest," and which would eventually become the War on Drugs.[199] He said: "I do promise action; a new policy for peace and progress and justice at home," and he proposed concrete ideas for such action, speaking in terms of war:

> I pledge to you that our new Attorney General will be directed by the President of the United States to launch a war against organized crime in this country…I pledge to you that the new Attorney General will open a new front against the filth peddlers and the narcotics peddlers who are corrupting the lives of the children of this country…Time is running out for the merchants of crime and corruption in American society.[200]

Nixon concluded his Acceptance Speech by saying: "Government can pass laws. But respect for law can come only from people who take the law into their hearts and their minds – not into their hands…I see a day when we will again have freedom from fear in America."[201] In this quote he clearly used dog whistles by once more stressing the importance of "law and order," if Americans wanted to live in a fearless society, or read behind the rhetoric's façade: a white society. He fully introduced his War on Crime and Drugs at the start of his presidency, claiming to protect the American people from those threatening the U.S., while actually building a system of social control, and targeting, not crime, but blacks.[202]

Nixon's manifestation of "law and order" started off with policies concerning crime in general but quickly moved towards drugs specifically. In 1970, Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act, which created regulations for particular drugs.[203] Another act from 1970 was the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act, which showed the punitive turn in legislation, and which according to Nixon, in his speech "Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," in 1971, provided:

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[198]Ibid.
[199]Ibid.
[200]Ibid.
[201]Ibid.
[202]Alexander, 44-48; Desmond and Emirbayer, 259; Western, 60-61; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America"; See also: Davey, *The Politics of Prison Expansion*.
[203]"War on Drugs," HISTORY, December 17, 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/crime/the-war-on-drugs.

a sound base for the attack on the problem of the availability of narcotics in America…The measure provides law enforcement with stronger and better tools. Equally important, the Act contains credible and proper penalties against violators of the drug law.[204]

In this same speech Nixon officially declared his "War on Drugs," and deemed the issue of drugs "a national emergency."[205] He stated: "America's public enemy number one is drug abuse. In order to defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive."[206]

The theoretical definition of the War on Drugs is a "government-led initiative that aims to stop illegal drug use, distribution and trade," and which is achieved by creating high penalties for offenders.[207] This is exactly what Nixon did when he launched his war. He implemented harsh penalties for crimes related to drugs, immensely increased the federal drug budget, and created many new drug agencies.[208] The most important new agency was the Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.), which was supposed to handle everything concerned with the War on Drugs.[209] When the D.E.A. was created in 1973, its budget was $75 million, but this increased enormously over the years, to a budget of $2.03 billion.[210] This fact shows that the "War on Drugs" Nixon initiated expanded massively under his successors.

The most important validation that Nixon's "law and order" policies and his War on Drugs were indeed forms of covert racism came from an interview in *Harper Magazine* in 1994, in which journalist Dan Baum interviewed Nixon's Assistant for Domestic Affairs, John

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[204]Richard Nixon, "Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," June 17, 1971, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-about-intensified-program-for-drug-abuse-prevention-and-control.

[205]Nixon, "Remarks About an Intensified Program for Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," 1971; Ed Vulliamy, "Nixon's "War on Drugs" Began 40 Years Ago, and the Battle is Still Raging," *The Guardian,* July 24, 2011,https://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/jul/24/war-on-drugs-40-years.

[206]Ibid.; Vulliamy, "Nixon's "War on Drugs," Began 40 Years Ago."

[207]"War on Drugs," HISTORY, December 17, 2019.

[208]Ibid.

[209]Ibid.; Hinton, 10, 184, 209. See also: David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Kathleen Frydl, *The Drug Wars in America, 1940-1973* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[210]Ibid.

Ehrlichman.[211] Baum asked him "how did the United States entangle itself in a policy of drug prohibition that has yielded so much misery and so few good results?" and was able to uncover the hidden intentions and motives of Nixon's War on Drugs.[212] In the interview Ehrlichman claimed that the Nixon administrations' public enemy number one was not drugs, but "the antiwar left and black people," and that the War on Drugs "was designed as an evil, deceptive and sinister policy to wage a war on those two groups."[213] Ehrlichman said:

> You want to know what this is really about? The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course, we did.[214]

Ehrlichman's insider information provided credible proof for Nixon's intentions, and for how advocating drug and crime control actually had racist ramifications. He also stated, in his own book *Witness to Power,* that the "appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon's statements and speeches."[215] This motivation behind Goldwater and Nixon's famous "law and order" rhetoric, was turned into active policy in the White House, and was used by consecutive presidents, such as Reagan, as an effective political tool.[216]

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[211]Vulliamy, "Nixon's "War on Drugs" Began 40 Years Ago," *The Guardian.* See also: Dan Baum, "Legalize It All: How to Win the War on Drugs," *Harper's Magazine,* April, 2016, https://harpers.org/archive/2016/04/legalize-it-all/; "War on Drugs," HISTORY, December 17, 2019.

[212]Ibid.

[213]Ibid.

[214]Ibid.; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."

[215]Alexander, 44; John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power: The Nixon Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970), 233.

[216]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America"; Mark J. Perry, "The Shocking Story Behind Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" that Targeted Blacks and Anti-war Activists," AEI, July 14, 2018, http://www.aei.org/publication/the-shocking-and-sickening-story-behind-nixons-war-on-drugs-that-targeted-blacks-and-anti-war-activists/.

Continuation of Covert Racism: Reagan's 1980s Drugs Policies

During the first half of the War on Drugs, Nixon had firmly integrated covert racism into executive political policies. While Nixon's motives were clearly deemed racist, as Ehrlichman had confirmed in 1994, Reagan's presidency is not often associated with "being racist."[217] However, in the second half of the War on Drugs, in the 1980s, Reagan's policies showed a continuation of Nixon's covert racist policies. Reagan reinforced and even expanded policies concerning the War on Drugs, and contributed enormously to the amount of incarcerations of African Americans for non-violent drug crimes.[218] Because of this "escalation" of the War on Drugs under Reagan, he is often "credited with spearheading the domestic policy shift toward confinement and urban surveillance," as Hinton argues, but crime control programs had been established since the 1960s, as seen with president Johnson, and Reagan's policies were merely a continuation of this trend of crime policies.[219]

In the 1980s, there was a rising concern about drugs, and Reagan and his administration played into this by making crime and especially drug-related crimes a priority in their policies. The cause of this public concern in the late 1980s was mainly due to disproportionate media attention of "crack" addicts.[220] However, from a poll taken in 1985 that asked the public whether they really saw drugs as the "number one problem in America," only two to six percent answered this question positively.[221] Nonetheless, the drastic drug policies remained and its consequences led to an escalation of the War on Drugs. So, when polled again in 1989, due to

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[217]Haney López, 4.

[218]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America"; "War on Drugs," HISTORY, December 17, 2019.

[219]Hinton, 3. Hinton explains that John F. Kennedy already had "anti-delinquency programs" to prevent crime in 1961.

[220]"A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020, http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/brief-history-drug-war.; Alexander, 5 and 50; Lotte Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs: A Policy Failure But A Political Success," Master Thesis, American History, Leiden University (2013), 20, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/21802/Ronald%20Reagan%27s%20War%20on%20Drugs-A%20Policy%20Failure%20But%20a%20Political%20Success.pdf?sequence=1.

[221]Ibid.

the elaborate media and political attention on the subject this figure increased massively during the 1980s, and about 64% saw drugs as an imminent problem.[222]

Reagan's policy changes caused, as argued by Hinton, for a "militaristic turn in domestic law enforcement."[223] At the start of his presidency, Reagan revised the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, that "prohibited military involvement in domestic crime control."[224] The revision of this act led to the passing of the Military Cooperation with Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies Act, which granted "local police forces access to weapons, intelligence, research, and military bases to improve drugs interdiction efforts," as Hinton explains.[225] By militarizing the War on Drugs it was as if the country was fighting an actual war, and the new, almost militaristic, controlling of society, mostly affected African Americans in the segregated and impoverished inner-cities.[226]

Reagan's policies mostly focused on law enforcement, and one of the first policies that showed this was Order 12368, signed in June 1982, which increased political control on the issue of drugs, and created the official function of "Director of the Drug Abuse Policy."[227] Reagan explained this position as: "the person responsible for overseeing all domestic and international drug functions."[228] In 1983, Reagan upgraded this function to "Special Assistant

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[222]Ibid.

[223]Hinton, 312.

[224]Ibid., 311; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 23. See also: Bruce Michael Bagley, "U.S. Foreign Policy and the War on Drugs: Analysis of a Policy Failure, *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 30, no. 2/3 (1988): 189-212.

[225]Ibid.

[226]Alexander, 50; Hinton, 310.

[227]Ibid., 7, 14, and 16; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 7, 17. See also: Ronald Reagan, *Executive Order 12368: Drug Abuse Policy Functions,* 47FR27843, 3CFR, Washington D.C., 1982, National Archives, https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12368.html; Office of Policy Development, *Federal Strategy for Prevention of Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking, 1982.* Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED234289.pdf; Ronald Reagan, *Selected Accomplishments: Prevention of Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking, January 1981 Through June 1982,* OA 16991, Washington D.C., 1982, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library: Digital Library Collections, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/digitallibrary/smof/drugabusepolicyoffice/williams/oa16991/40 -608-12013954-oa16991-002-2017.pdf.

[228]Ronald Reagan, "Remarks on Signing Executive Order 12368, Concerning Federal Drug Abuse Policy Functions," June 24, 1982, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/62482b.

to the President for Drug Abuse Policy," which stressed how significant the drug issue was during Reagan's presidency.[229]

Another important part of the War on Drugs in the early 1980s, was First Lady, Nancy Reagan's "Say No Campaign." In this campaign Nancy aimed to make children aware of the dangers that came with drugs, by encouraging them to "just say no" to drugs.[230] The name "Just Say No," came into existence in 1982, when Nancy visited an elementary school in California. A girl at the school asked what to do when offered drugs, and Nancy answered: "just say no."[231] Nancy travelled around the nation to advocate her campaign, and it received a lot of media attention, as she commonly appeared on television programs.[232] The campaign also contributed to thousands of Just Say No clubs and organizations in school curriculums, in which students pledged to not use drugs.[233] In chapter three, the "Just Say No" campaign is discussed more, analyzing some of Nancy's quotes to examine how her "political voice" was part of Reagan's rhetoric and contributed to his use of covert racism.

Another important program, from 1983, was the Drug Abuse Assistant Education program (D.A.R.E). Police officers and teachers had created the program together in order to discourage teenagers from using drugs, and other addictive substances, such as alcohol, and to form better relationships between the communities and local police.[234] Daryl Gates, who was a

[229]Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 16-17.
[230]Foner, 1054; "A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020; "War on Drugs." HISTORY, December 17, 2019. https://www.history.com/topics/crime/the-war-on-drugs.
[231]"Her Causes," Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, accessed March 2, 2020, https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/nancy-reagan/her-causes/; Pierre-Marie Loizeau, *Nancy Reagan: The Woman Behind the Man* (New York: Nova History Publications, 2004), 104-105; Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Nancy Reagan Drug Abuse Center Benefit Dinner in Los Angeles, California," January 4, 1989, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/010489a; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs, 25-26.
[232]Jake Rossen, "When Nancy Reagan Told Kids to Just Say No," Mental Floss, November 9, 2017, https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/512178/when-nancy-reagan-told-kids-'just-say-no'; "Just Say No," HISTORY, August 21, 2018, accessed February 14, 2020, https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/just-say-no; Reagan, *Prevention of Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking,* 1982, 1-2; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 26.
[233]"Her Causes," Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, accessed March 2, 2020; Hinton, 317; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 26.
[234]Amy Nordrum, "The New D.A.R.E. Program– This One Works," Scientific American, September 10, 2014, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-new-d-a-r-e-program-this-one-works/, paragraph 3; "A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020.

member of the Los Angeles Police Department, and helped establish D.A.R.E., claimed that "casual drug users should be taken out and shot."[235] Even though there was no substantial evidence that the program worked in the fight against drugs, almost 75% of schools throughout the nation adopted the program.[236] This local initiative was also significant on a federal level, as it influenced the "zero tolerance" approach to drugs.[237]

Another highly important step in Reagan's policymaking was the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, which was viewed by a member of his administration as "the most far-reaching and substantial reform of the criminal justice system in our history."[238] The Act was a revision of Nixon's Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, and made amendments that impacted the federal crime code. As Hinton explains, the act was "reinstating the federal death penalty, and obliterating the federal parole system," and it also "imposed many punitive strategies," such as pretrial detention which led to the authorization of judges "to indefinitely hold defendants deemed potential dangers to the community."[239] The Armed Career Criminal Act was also part of Reagan's new Crime Control Act, which created mandatory minimum sentences, and for three-strike offenders led to extremely long sentences, or even life in prison, and caused for an increase in the average prison sentence of 33 percent.[240] Reagan's amendments also profited the budgets of local police departments, as they were now allowed to seize money and property from drug offenders.[241] The profit made from this motivated mass arrests, causing a sharp increase of prisoners from 204,000 to 400,000, during the first term of Reagan's presidency.[242] This increase in prisoners posed an issue on itself as well, as more

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[235]"A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020, paragraph 12.
[236]Nordrum, "The New D.A.R.E. Program," paragraph 3.
[237]"A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020, paragraph 12.
[238]Hinton, 312; Westhoff, "Reagan's War on Drugs," 10, and 15. See also: Keith B. Richburg, "Congress Approves Major Overhaul of the Nation's Anticrime Statutes," *Washington Post,* October 12, 1984, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/10/12/congress-approves-major-overhaul-of-the-nations-anticrime-statutes/6699bb12-8118-49d6-93da-1a175e30deae/.
[239]Ibid.; "Excessive Pretrial Detention," Human Rights Watch, accessed February 18, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/legacy/advocacy/prisons/pretrial.htm.
[240]Ibid., 312.
[241]Ibid.
[242]Ibid., 312- 314

money was needed for prisons to hold such numbers, and the private prison system was set up as a solution.[243] This one Act had so many side effects, especially the expanding of the prison system and contributing to the problem of mass incarceration, and as Hinton argues:

> Reagan implemented some of the most draconian legislative proposals regarding domestic surveillance, the criminal code, and mandatory minimum sentences. He fought the War on Drugs by increasing the scale of the raids, stings, and tactical police units that had characterized the urban landscape from the Nixon administration onward.[244]

Probably the most crucial moment in Reagan's War on Drugs was the "crack" crisis in 1985, and Reagan's use of covert racism was prominent in the legislation on this specific drug.[245] The 1980s were troubled by unemployment, especially in the inner-cities, and this led to the increase of crack abuse among minority communities.[246] As crack was not that expensive, it was easily accessible for people with low incomes, and became associated with crime and poverty.[247] Instead of focusing on economic issues, Reagan emphasized the issue of crack, and established new punitive legislation, claiming that "American people want their government to get tough and go on the offensive."[248] In 1986, Reagan signed, as he himself said "with great pleasure," the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, also referred to as the "Drug Free America Act."[249] The Act focused on the dealing and ownership of crack cocaine, and established mandatory minimum sentences. These sentences were considerably higher than those for powder cocaine, despite the similarity of these drugs.[250] The only difference was the users associated with each drug, as crack was associated with blacks, and powder cocaine with whites.[251] These

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[243]Ibid.; Davis, "Masked Racism," Colorlines, 1998.

[244]Ibid., 309.

[245]Alexander, 5; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27.

[246]Ibid., 50; Hinton, 316-317.

[247]Desmond and Emirbayer, 277; Foner, 1054; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27; "Here are the Sentencing Disparities Between Crack and Cocaine," ATTN, September 9, 2015, https://www.attn.com/stories/3095/war-on-drugs-crack-cocaine?li_source=LI&li_medium=resourcelist-sidebar.

[248]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America"; Hinton, 316- 317; Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

[249]Ibid.; Alexander, 53; Hinton, 317; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 43; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27.

[250]Alexander, 53, and 87; Mauer, 35-37; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 20-22, 42; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27.

[251]Alexander, 53; "Here are the Sentencing Disparities Between Crack and Cocaine," ATTN, September 9, 2015; Doornekamp, "The Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27; Desmond and Emirbayer, 277.

associations resulted in the unfair sentencing and stigmatization of minorities, especially African Americans.[252]

What further added to this, was the disproportionate media attention the crack crisis received.[253] Magazines, like *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek*, framed it as the "issue of the year," and the "authentic national crisis."[254] The media extensively covered black "crackheads," "crack dealers," and "crack whores," while never mentioning whites as such.[255] This, as Hinton argues, "rationalized the racial discrepancies within the American criminal justice system."[256] The media stories also created massive public and political support for Reagan's Act, and it "painted a picture in the American public conscience that fulfilled the prophecy set before it: crack cocaine use skyrocketed."[257] This combination of harsher sentencing and massive media attention on crack, also contributed to the issue of mass incarceration, as black Americans became the largest group of incarcerated drug offenders.[258]

Escalation of Mass Incarceration

By the late 1980s, as a result of Reagan's expansion of the War on Drugs, and his punitive law enforcement measures, there was a tremendous increase in incarceration rates.[259] Especially due to the introduction of harsher punishments of non-violent crimes, such as using drugs and possessing drugs.[260] The people incarcerated for such offenses rose from about 50,000 in 1980,

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[252]Ibid.; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."
[253]Ibid., 5; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 20; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."
[254]Hinton, 317; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 41.
[255]Alexander, 5; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America,"; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 20.
[256]Hinton, 317-318; Alexander, 5, 54, 58, and 60; Western, 47. See also: Lawrence D. Bobo and Victor Thompson, "Racialized Mass Incarceration: Poverty, Prejudice, and Punishment," in *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century,* ed. Hazel R. Markus and Paula Moya (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), 322-355.
[257]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America"; Alexander, 5.
[258]Hinton, 317-318; Alexander, 54, 58, 60; Western, 47. See also: Bobo and Thompson, "Racialized Mass Incarceration: Poverty, Prejudice, and Punishment," in *Doing Race*, 322-355.
[259]Hinton, 4; Alexander, 189.
[260]Desmond and Emirbayer, 259; Western, 60-64; Alexander 87; See also: Davey, *The Politics of Prison Expansion*; Joan Petersilia, *When Prisoners Come Home: Parole and Prisoner Reentry* (New York: Oxford

to more than 400,000, and about 70 percent of the people in prison were colored.[261] As Hinton

argues:

> This staggering fact stemmed from the punitive transformation of domestic policy that
> was already in place, a socioeconomic and policy climate that Reagan stepped into and
> made even more destructive from the perspective of low-income urban Americans who
> were the policy's primary targets.[262]

Especially the Anti-Drug Abuse Act from 1986, that instituted harsh sentences for crack

cocaine, was highly racialized.[263] Laws like these made it more likely for blacks to be convicted

of a drug crime than whites, and contributed greatly to the discrimination of blacks in the legal

system, as well as to disproportionate incarceration rates.[264] Hinton argues:

> The Reagan administration took policymaker's shared set of assumptions about race
> and crime and ran with them. Reagan led Congress in criminalizing drug users,
> especially African American drug users…The pathological understanding of black
> poverty and crime shared by the bipartisan consensus promoted racial profiling, and
> prison overcrowding, during the 1980s that heightened the racial disparities within the
> American criminal justice system.[265]

As can be concluded from Hinton's quotes, Reagan's policies thus contributed strongly to the

issue of mass incarceration as well as the criminalization of blackness.

The racialization of criminality, and the federal surveillance of primarily African

American communities, led to the literal "removal" of certain groups of people into the system

of mass incarceration, as argued by political activist Angela Davis:

> The prison industrial complex has created a vicious cycle of punishment which only
> further impoverishes those whose impoverishment is supposedly "solved" by
> imprisonment…Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many
> of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty. These problems

University Press, 2003); Sascha Abrahamsky, *Hard Time Blues: How Politics Built a Prison Nation* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2002).

[261]Hinton 5, 310, and 314; "A Brief History of the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed February 12, 2020; Davis, "Masked Racism."

[262]Hinton 309-310, Beckett, *Making Crime Pay,* 3; David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 14; Perry, "The Shocking Story Behind Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" AEI, July 14, 2018. See also: Michael Tonry, *Malign Neglect: Race, Crime, and Punishment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[263]Ibid., 317; Doornekamp, "The Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27.

[264]"War on Drugs," HISTORY, December 17, 2019; Alexander, 93; Desmond and Emirbayer, 255-256; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 24-25; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."

[265]Hinton 309-310, Beckett, *Making Crime Pay,* 3; Garland, *The Culture of Control,* 14. See also: Tonry, *Malign Neglect.*

often are veiled by being conveniently grouped together under the category "crime" and by the automatic attribution of criminal behavior to people of color. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages. [266]

According to her, the federal government deliberately "solved" social problems by removing people, they viewed as "troubled," from society, and did this by establishing more and more laws concerning drugs and crime.[267] Reinforced by other laws, such as labor restrictions, many of those once incarcerated were still barred from "basic tenets of American life" after leaving prison, and in this way remained part of the "criminal undercaste," as Alexander calls it, and were unable to participate in society.[268]

From all of this, it can be concluded that Reagan's policies and his War on Drugs were a continuation of structures that were already in place, that were initiated by Goldwater, and implemented in American politics by Nixon, and that a state of "law and order" was created in the U.S., in which drugs were used as a political dog whistle to get rid of unwanted members of society, meaning African Americans, and force them into a system of mass incarceration.[269]

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[266]Davis, "Masked Racism."

[267]Davis, "Masked Racism"; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 27.

[268]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," paragraph 13; Alexander, 13; Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15.

[269]Hinton 309-310, Beckett, *Making Crime Pay,* 3; Garland, *The Culture of Control,* 14; Perry, "The Shocking Story Behind Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" AEI, July 14, 2018.

III

Analyzing Reagan's Rhetoric

The previous two chapters established the context in which Reagan's rhetoric should be analyzed and made it clear that Reagan's politics were part of a longer tradition of covert racism. Reagan merely followed in the footsteps of earlier politicians and continued the use of dog whistle politics to covertly convey racist messages. This final chapter zooms in on Reagan's political rhetoric by analyzing several of his quotes and speeches, in which the use of covert racism is prominent. The specific quotes and speeches are selected, because of their relation to race, and the other more specific themes of drugs, welfare, and family values, that are discussed in this chapter. It is analyzed according to discourse analysis, which is a particular useful method in Reagan's case, because of the way "language" in itself is viewed by this particular type of analysis. As explained by linguistic scholars Brown and Yule in *Discourse Analysis*:

> The discourse analyst treats his data as the record (text) of a dynamic process in which language was used as an instrument of communication in a context by a speaker / writer to express meanings and achieve intentions (discourse). Working from this data, the analyst seeks to describe regularities in the linguistic realizations used by people to communicate those meanings and intentions.[270]

They further explain that discourse analysis "explores the ways in which particular forms in English have come to be associated with a particular information status. These formal structures constitute cues for the hearer/reader as to how the speaker/writer intends the discourse to be interpreted."[271] This is exactly what dog whistle politics is about: a specific kind of rhetoric, with specific key words, that aims its messages to only a certain group of people who recognize the true hidden meanings in the language used. Reagan's rhetoric is filled with dog whistles

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[270]Brown and Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, 26.
[271]Ibid., 190.

and concealed racist implications, which is why discourse analysis is suitable for researching his speeches.

It is important to acknowledge that due to Reagan's acting career he was very good at conveying a message, and was viewed as a "great communicator."[272] As argued by journalist Lou Cannon: "He was not believable because he was a great communicator. He was a great communicator because he was believable."[273] This talent of communication contributed greatly to the impact of his rhetoric. Reagan's looks and way of speech fit with the general idea of what a president should be like, and his "easy charm" created a strong bond with the American public, mainly through national television.[274] Because of Reagan's effectiveness on television, his speeches were formulated, as argued by Michael Schaller in *Reckoning with Reagan,* "to appeal to the emotions of television viewers, instead of the intellect of concerned citizens," with an "emphasis on ephemeral soothing words and images of renewal."[275]

A thematic approach organizes the chapter according to three themes that are returning issues throughout Reagan's presidency and thus his speeches. The first theme is "drugs," and when discussing this theme, there is also a part assigned to Nancy Reagan. She is very important when discussing the rhetoric of Reagan since she functioned as a spokesperson of Reagan's rhetoric, through the "Just Say No" campaign. It is worth mentioning how she contributed to conveying her husband's political rhetoric. Besides this, there are two other highly racialized themes in Reagan's rhetoric, being "welfare," in which the term "welfare queens" is an important dog whistle, and "family values," which portrays Reagan's idea of the ideal (white) family in contrast to the black family. All themes ultimately show in what ways Reagan used covert racism, mainly through dog whistle politics. With the discourse analysis of several of his speeches this chapter finally aims to answer the main question of this thesis: in what ways does

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[272]Michael Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan: America and its President in the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 51; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 12.
[273]Ibid. See also: Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000).
[274]Schaller, 51, 52, 56, and 58.
[275]Ibid., 51-52.

Ronald Reagan's political rhetoric demonstrate the use of covert racism, mainly in the form of dog whistles, during the 1980s' War on Drugs, and did he hereby contribute to the reinvention of racism?

Before Reagan's Presidency

In the early stages of his political career Reagan already had a complicated relationship with race. First of all, he was heavily involved with the presidential campaign of Goldwater in 1964. Reagan had just joined the Republican Party, and helped Goldwater with his campaign.[276] Before this political involvement Reagan was mostly known for his Hollywood career, but he received national political attention through his speeches for Goldwater. His most famous speech was "A Time for Choosing."[277] In this speech, in October 1964, Reagan gave a first impression of his political ideas and ideological motivations, by strongly attacking liberalism, Democrats, and Johnson's Great Society. He also gave an insight on his ideas about welfare, even providing an anecdote which can be seen as a predecessor of his infamous phrase "welfare queens," which is discussed later in this chapter.[278] In the most famous quote from this speech Reagan stressed the importance of "law and order," which he proceeded to emphasize during his own political career. He claimed:

> You and I are told increasingly we have to choose between a left or right. Well, I'd like to suggest there is no such thing as a left or right. There's only an up or down – [up] man's old – old-aged dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism.[279]

[276]Steven Hayward, "Why Ronald Reagan's 'A Time For Choosing' Endures After All This Time," *Washington Post,* Los Angeles, October 23, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-ronald-reagans-a-time-for-choosing-endures-after-all-this-time/2014/10/23/d833c49e-587a-11e4-bd61-346aee66ba29_story.html.
[277]Ronald Reagan, "A Time For Choosing," October 27, 1964, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/a-time-for-choosing-speech; Diamond, 62-63. See also: Raymond Tatalovich and Byron W. Daynes, *Moral Controversies in American Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 172 and Ellen Reid Gold, "Ronald Reagan and the oral tradition," *Communication Studies: Central States Speech Journal* 39, no. 3-4 (1988):159–175; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," paragraph 7.
[278]Ibid.
[279]Hayward, "Why Ronald Reagan's 'A Time For Choosing' Endures After All This Time," https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-ronald-reagans-a-time-for-choosing-endures-after-all-this-

In this quote he posed two outcomes: "individual freedom" through "law and order" or "totalitarianism." The fact that "law and order" is a known dog whistle, combined with the knowledge that this speech was given in 1964, the highpoint of the Civil Rights Movement, it is significant that Reagan linked "law and order" to "freedom." Since the struggle for black freedom was perceived as unlawful, Reagan's call for "law and order" aimed to provide "freedom" only for whites.[280] Even though Reagan's words did not save Goldwater's presidential campaign, his "A Time for Choosing" speech established a support base for his own entry into national politics in 1966.[281]

Secondly, during Reagan's campaign for Governor of California in 1966 his problematic relation to race became clearly visible in some of his quotes and anecdotes.[282] In North Carolina, for instance, at a press conference on March 23, 1966, Reagan was asked "whether he had approved of Martin Luther King's civil disobedience tactics," and he responded: "No, there can never be any justification for breaking the law."[283] From what is established in the foregoing chapters, the word "law" in relation to "order" is a dog whistle, especially in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and their "unlawfulness." Breaking the law is perceived as causing disorder in society, which was definitely unwanted by the established order. Thus, by saying that the Civil Rights Movement had no justification for

time/2014/10/23/d833c49e-587a-11e4-bd61-346aee66ba29_story.html and Reagan, "A Time For Choosing," https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/a-time-for-choosing-speech.

[280]Haney López, 23-24.

[281]Steven Hayward, "Why Ronald Reagan's 'A Time For Choosing' Endures After All This Time," *Washington Post,* Los Angeles, October 23, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-ronald-reagans-a-time-for-choosing-endures-after-all-this-time/2014/10/23/d833c49e-587a-11e4-bd61-346aee66ba29_story.html.

[281]Ronald Reagan, "A Time For Choosing," October 27, 1964, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/a-time-for-choosing-speech. See also: Raymond Tatalovich and Byron W. Daynes, *Moral Controversies in American Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 172 and Ellen Reid Gold, "Ronald Reagan and the oral tradition," *Communication Studies: Central States Speech Journal* 39, no. 3-4 (1988):159–175.

[282]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America," paragraph 2.

[283]Rick Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and The Rise of Reagan* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks), 552.

breaking the law, and giving preference to law and order instead of civil rights, Reagan showed an aversion of it.[284]

In the same press conference another person asked: "Then how could blacks have ever gained their civil rights in places like North Carolina?" At this question he responded more defensively, claiming: "I am just incapable of prejudice."[285] As said, with the obvious irony, by Rick Perlstein in his book *The Invisible Bridge:*

> Raised by a Protestant mother who married his Catholic father in an anti-Catholic age; having played side by side with black boys; having been raised in a church that preached racial brotherhood, his mother having taken in released prisoners, black and white – how could he be racist? He just disliked civil rights laws. He'd said the 1964 Act outlawing discrimination in public accommodation was a "bad piece of legislation," an unwarranted intrusion of federal power into the lives of individuals."[286]

Perlstein's quote underlines the fact that Reagan dismissed his objection of civil right laws as an issue of "federal power." This gives away the dog whistle of "states' rights." For Americans from southern states such a comment was a "clear call-back to what many viewed as an illegitimate federal imposition: the civil rights agenda and desegregation."[287] When politicians talked about "states' rights" to southern whites they basically said "when it comes down to you and the blacks, we're with you."[288] However, Reagan kept up his front of not being racist, when a delegate of the National Negro Republican Assembly referred to this particular quote saying: "it grieves me when a leading Republican Candidate says the Civil Rights Act is a bad piece of legislation."[289] At this Reagan lost his temper: "I resent the implication that there is any bigotry in my nature. Don't anyone ever imply I lack integrity," and he stormed out.[290]

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[284]Haney López, 23. Racial activists were viewed as "lawbreakers."

[285]Perlstein, *Invisible Bridge,* 552.

[286]Ibid.

[287]Alex Hern, "Top Five Racist Republican Dog-whistles," NewStatesmen, 27 July, 2012, https://www.newstatesman.com/world/2012/07/top-five-racist-republican-dog-whistles.

[288]Ibid.

[289]Perlstein, 553.

[290]Ibid.

At the start of Reagan's presidential campaign, he made similar statements about "state's rights." At the Neshoba County Fair in Mississippi he said: " I believe in state rights."[291] He continued his speech promising "to restore to states and local governments the power that properly belonged to them."[292] This sure sounds like a dog whistle, especially considering that Mississippi was a southern city, where in 1964 several civil rights activist were killed. Liberal critics of Reagan claimed that, as Michelle Alexander explains, "he was signaling a racial message to his audience, suggesting allegiance with those who resisted desegregation," but as Reagan continued to deny this, it was "forcing liberals into a position of arguing that something is racist but finding it impossible to prove in the absence of explicit racist language."[293] This is thus another obvious example of covert racism and Reagan's use of dog whistle politics.

Thirdly, as argued by Perlstein, Reagan had very "creative visions of innocence."[294] By this Perlstein means that Reagan portrayed himself as "unprejudiced" and "non-racist" by playing innocent and telling stories of his "racial enlightenment."[295] An example of such a story was when Reagan told about a visiting sports team that was unable to find a place to stay, because of two black players on the team. Thus, the Reagan family invited them in. As Perlstein argues: "It was precisely such magnanimous gestures on the part of individual whites that could solve any lingering racial problem; and, since Americans were magnanimous, it *would* solve the problem."[296] The most peculiar story Reagan liked to tell was about his career as a sports announcer. During a nationally broadcasted debate with Robert Kennedy in 1967, Reagan told the story:

> I have often stated publicly that the great tragedy was then that we didn't even know that we had a racial problem. It wasn't even recognized. But our generation, and I take great pride in this, were the ones who first of all recognized and then began doing something about it…I have called attention to the fact that when I was a sports

[291] Alexander, 48. See also: Bob Herbert, "Righting Reagan's Wrongs?" *The New York Times,* November 13, 2007; Paul Krugman, "Republicans and Race," *The New York Times,* November 19, 2007.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Perlstein, 552.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Ibid., 553.

announcer, broadcasting major-league baseball, most Americans had forgotten that at the time the opening lines of the official baseball guide read, "Baseball is a game for Caucasian gentlemen," and in organized baseball no one but Caucasians were allowed. Well, there were many of us when I was broadcasting, sportswriters, sportscasters, myself included, who began editorializing about what a ridiculous thing this was and why it should be changed. And in one day it was changed.[297]

However, as pointed out by Perlstein, the story makes no sense, considering the fact that the "official" baseball guide did not have any line in it claiming baseball to only be a game for "Caucasian gentlemen." What really takes down his story is the fact that Reagan stopped being a sports announcer in 1937, and the sport was not integrated until 1947. Nonetheless, Reagan "was still telling the story in the White House nine years later," as part of his "vision of innocence."[298]

Fourthly, Reagan used the common made notion of "black progress," as a confirmation that racism was in decline, or even completely gone.[299] Speaking in 1973, Reagan "marveled at those who claimed America was still marred by racism: "hadn't Los Angeles just elected a Negro mayor?" "[300] This is however, as Alexander calls it, a "myth of racial progress."[301] Even though it was great that Los Angeles elected an African American mayor, it did not mean that racism was no more, and with his quote Reagan contributed to keeping this myth alive.

Lastly, Reagan also used overt racism. The University of Virginia's Miller Center began the Presidential Recordings Program in 1998, in which they made secret White House tapes publicly accessible.[302] Several important political figures are on these tapes, including Reagan. In October 1971, Reagan who was at this time Governor of California, was recorded making overtly racist remarks during a conversation with Nixon. Reagan said, while President Nixon laughed: "See those, those monkeys from those African countries, damn them. They're still

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[297]Ibid., 553-554.
[298]Ibid.
[299]Alexander, 11 and 15.
[300]Perlstein, 553.
[301]Alexander, 15.
[302]"Secret White House Tapes," The Miller Center, accessed February 28, 2020, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/secret-white-house-tapes/research-the-tapes. See also: https://millercenter.org/about/who-we-are: "The Miller Center is a nonpartisan affiliate of the University of Virginia and specializes in presidential scholarship, public policy, and political history."

uncomfortable wearing shoes!"[303] This is obviously a form of overt racism, but as they figured

no one would hear their conversation, Reagan could still uphold his innocent act to the outside.

All of these quotes and stories from Reagan's early political career, prior to his

presidency, provide more context on Reagan, and should be taken into account when further

examining his political rhetoric from his time as president, specifically on racial issues. The

"vision of innocence" is an important part of how Reagan portrayed himself, and helped to

frame policies as non-racist while yet being racist covertly. As Michelle Alexander argues:

> In his campaign for the presidency, Reagan mastered the excision of the language of
> race from conservative public discourse and thus built on the success of earlier
> conservatives who developed a strategy of exploiting racial hostility or resentment for
> political gain without making explicit reference to race. Condemning welfare queens
> and criminal predators, he rode into office with the strong support of disaffected whites
> who felt betrayed by the Democratic Party's embrace of the civil rights agenda. Reagan
> echoed white frustration in race neutral terms through implicit racial appeals.[304]

He continued this "colorblind rhetoric," which was "clearly understood by whites as having a

racial dimension," throughout the rest of his presidency, which was clearly visible in his

rhetoric on drugs, welfare, and family values.[305]

President Reagan's War on Drugs Rhetoric

Perhaps Reagan's most evident use of covert racism is found in his rhetoric on drugs. As is

established in the foregoing chapter, the War on Drugs on itself was used as a dog whistle, in

order to facilitate social control of minorities through a façade of crime control, which

especially targeted African Americans.[306] Reagan followed in this tradition by declaring his

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[303]"Reagan, Nixon and Race," The Miller Center, accessed February 28, 2020, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/educational-resources/reagan-nixon-and-race, paragraph 6.

[304]Alexander, 48. See also: Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1992), 148; Jeremy Mayer, *Running on Race* (New York: Random House, 2002), 71; Bob Herbert, "Righting Reagan's Wrongs?" *The New York Times,* November 12, 2007 and Paul Krugman, "Republicans and Race." *The New York Times,* November 19, 2007.

[305]Ibid.

[306]Haney López, ix, and 3. See also: Doornekamp, "The Racial Violence of Mass Incarceration," 15 and 29.

own War on Drugs in October 1982.[307] During his "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," on October 2, 1982, Reagan referred to drugs as a "vicious virus of crime," and vowed again for the tough, almost military, stand on law enforcement, claiming that: "Drugs reach deeply into our social structure, so we must mobilize all our forces to stop it… We're taking down the surrender flag that has flown over so many drug efforts; we're running up a battle flag. We can fight the drug problem, and we can win."[308] Reagan's War on Drugs, as well as his rhetoric on it, is a continuation of the earlier American "wars" against drugs, where covert racism in the form of dog whistles, such as "law and order," and "tough on crime" were commonly used. With the knowledge of what the War on Drugs really meant, Reagan made a conscious choice to pursue his own War on Drugs, therefore, he followed and contributed to the tradition of covert racism.[309]

The War on Drugs in general was targeted at minorities, mainly African Americans. This was clearly visible with the introduction of "law and order" by Goldwater during the years when the Civil Rights Movement was making progress after progress. Some scholars, such as Jimmie L. Reeves and Richard Campbell, in *Cracked Coverage,* have therefore defined the War on Drugs as a type of "backlash politics," arguing that "Reagan's War on Drugs was at the heart of a political spectacle that advanced the reactionary agenda of the New Right," and looked for the support of "single-issue constituencies," being whites.[310] During Reagan's War on Drugs,

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[307]Alexander, 49; "Watch: Ronald Reagan and his War on Drugs," Timeline, June 26, 2017, https://timeline.com/ronald-nancy-reagan-war-on-drugs-crack-baby-just-say-no-cia-communism-racial-injustice-fcfeadb3548d. See also: Arnold S. Trebach, *The Heroin Solution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982)
[308]Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy," October 2, 1982, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/100282a; Tess Owen, "Just Say No: How Nancy Reagan Helped America Lose the War on Drugs," Vice News, March 6, 2016, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3kw493/just-say-no-how-nancy-reagan-helped-america-lose-the-war-on-drugs; Whitford and Yate, "Policy Signals and Executive Governance," 995-996; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 14.
[309]Hinton, 4.
[310]Jimmie L. Reeves and Richard Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy* (London: Duke University Press, 1994), 3, 37-38; Alexander, 54.

this was clearly visible, as his drug policies mostly affected African Americans, making the War on Drugs "appear to be a war against minorities."[311]

But in what way does it become clear from Reagan's rhetoric that his War on Drugs targeted blacks as well? He never speaks directly of black people in any of his speeches. However, it is acknowledged by scholars that he targeted them covertly. For instance, William N. Elwood argues, in his work *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs*, that both Reagan and other presidents involved in the War on Drugs "remark that illegal drugs constitute a national problem; strategically, their examples limit the War on Drugs to the illegal substances, children, and the urban poor who predominantly are African Americans," thus, hereby stigmatizing those specific groups of people consistently.[312] An example where Reagan did this and identified the group concerned with drugs was in his "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime," on October 14, 1982. He said: "The perception is growing that the crime problem stems from the emergence of a new class in America, a class of repeat offenders and career criminals who think they have a right to victimize their fellow citizens with virtual impunity."[313] The fact that Reagan uses the term "class" is interesting, as this "new class" of criminals, can be seen in line with the earlier mentioned arguments of Angela Davis and Michelle Alexander, who argue that the "new poor," mainly made up of African Americans, became defined along racial and criminal lines, creating a "criminal undercaste" that was highly racialized.[314] Therefore, the "new class" Reagan talked about were poor African Americans, whose blackness was criminalized.

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[311]William N. Elwood, "Declaring War on the Home Front: Metaphor, Presidents, and the War on Drugs," *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10, no. 2 (1995): 93-114. Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 41, 45-46.

[312]William N. Elwood, *Rhetoric In the War on Drugs: The Triumphs and Tragedies of Public Relations* (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 130.

[313]Ronald Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime," October 14, 1982, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-announcing-federal-initiatives-against-drug-trafficking-and-organized-crime, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/101482c.

[314]Alexander, 13, 197; Davis, "Masked Racism"; Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."

Another example, from the same speech, also shows who Reagan indicated as the targets of his War on Drugs. He said:

> At the root of this philosophy lies utopian presumptions about human nature that see man as primarily a creature of his material environment…In much the same way, individual wrongdoing is seen as the result of poor socioeconomic conditions or an underprivileged background…A new political consensus among the American people utterly rejects this point of view. The increase in citizen involvement of the crime problem and the tough new State Statutes directed at repeat offenders make it clear that the American people are reasserting certain enduring truths – the belief that right and wrong do matter, that individuals are responsible for their actions, that evil is frequently a conscious choice.[315]

In this quote Reagan rejected the idea of how socioeconomic environment affects criminal behavior. However, according to Reagan the turn to crime, or "evil" as he called it, is a "conscious choice." In *Cracked Coverage,* Reeves and Campbell argue that Reagan "dismissed the social problems grounded in economic devastation as individual moral problems that could simply be remedied by just saying no."[316] Obviously, those who lived in "poor socioeconomic" conditions were minorities, mostly African Americans, living in urban inner-cities or ghettos. These were the areas where the issues of crime and drugs were most pressing, and underground economies were established on the basis of drugs.[317] Reagan linked the word "evil" to those living in poor socioeconomic environments and hereby further strengthened the association between minorities and criminality.

Now that it is established that Reagan targeted African Americans with his War on Drugs, it can be examined how he further stigmatized this group in his rhetoric by the use of covert racism. An important example for this is how he, like Nixon, used the "war metaphor" and turned drugs and especially those who used it into a national enemy. As argued by Elwood:

> Such rhetoric allows presidents to appear as strong leaders who are tough on crime and concerned about domestic issues and is strategically ambiguous to portray urban minorities as responsible for problems related to the drug war and for resolving such problems.[318]

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[315]Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime."
[316]Reeves and Campbell, *Cracked coverage,* 3, 37-38.
[317]Dryden Witte, "Urban Crime: Issues and Policies," 737; Alexander, 50-51, 209.
[318]Elwood, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs,* 3; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 40-41.

Elwood explained that in the "perspective of war to understand the drug problem, presidents emerge as popular commanders-in chief over a domestic issue and the human examples emerge as drug war enemies."[319] This rhetoric, portraying minorities as enemies, used prevailing notions of race, and reinforced them, which also becomes visible later in this chapter when looking at Reagan's rhetoric on welfare.[320] As in an actual war the enemy had to be defeated, and Reagan accomplished this with the huge numbers of African Americans incarcerated at the end of his presidency. The enemy was, thus, literally "taken out" of society into the system of mass incarceration.[321]

The language Reagan used was very stern and negative, which helped demonize the issue of drugs even more. In his 1982 speeches he used phrases, such as "fight the drug menace," and "eradicate the cancers of organized crime."[322] He also linked those involved with drugs to "terror," saying for example: "drugpushers are terrorizing Florida's citizens."[323] Another quote where he does this is: "those who are killing America and terrorizing it with slow but sure chemical destruction will see that they are up against the mightiest force for good that we know. They will have no dark alleyways to hide in."[324] He also referred to the drug problem as "this dark, evil enemy within," and said that "drug abuse is a repudiation of everything America is. The destructiveness and human wreckage mock our heritage."[325] In 1986, Reagan still phrased the drug problem in similar ways, saying: "Drugs are menacing our society, our values and our institutions…From the beginning of our administration, we've taken

[319]Ibid., 130.
[320]Kenneth Nunn, "Race, Crime, and the Pool of Surplus Criminality: Why the War on Drugs was a War on Blacks," *Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice,* (2002): 381-445; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 40, 46.
[321]Alexander, 6-7; "Race and the Drug War," Drug Policy, accessed April 28, 2020, https://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/race-and-drug-war.
[322]Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime."
[323]Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy."
[324]Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse," September 14, 1986, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-14-1986-speech-nation-campaign-against-drug-abuse.
[325]Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime"; Gerald M. Boyd, "Reagans Advocate "Crusade" on Drugs," *The New York Times,* September 15, 1986, https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/15/us/reagans-advocate-crusade-on-drugs.html.

strong steps to do something about this horror."[326] With this rhetoric Reagan created a very serious and frightening narrative on drugs by using such words as "menace," "cancer," "terror," "evil," and "horror," and with it he added to the increasing panic among the America public about drugs and its users. As argued by sociologist James E. Hawdon, policy rhetoric plays an important role in "creating, sustaining, and terminating moral panics…It is argued that moral panics begin when proactive and punitive statements are used in combination."[327] This is what Reagan does in his rhetoric, and with it he actively contributed to a public panic that created a strong foundation for his drugs narrative, and added deeply to the stigmatization of the group most concerned with drugs: inner-city blacks.[328]

In Reagan's rhetoric on drugs he also continued to make use of the dog whistle "law and order," which was obviously a form of covert racism. In 1982, in his "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime" he said:

> What kind of people are we if we continue to tolerate in our midst an invisible, lawless empire? The American people want the mob and its associates brought to justice and their power broken – not out of a sense of vengeance, but out of a sense of justice…for the sake of the law that is the protection of liberty.[329]

Reagan links the drug "criminals" to a "climate of lawlessness," which evidently formed a threat to the American society and was of great concern to Reagan.[330] In his 1986 Radio Address he made another reference to "law and order," when he opted for a "return" of "America to the days of respect for the law."[331] These are clear examples of Reagan's use of covert racism.

From all these quotes it can be concluded that Reagan heavily made use of covert racism and dog whistles in his rhetoric on drugs, and that it was not "drugs" itself that was "menacing" society, but it was a criminal underclass, those living in poor socioeconomic conditions: African

[326]Reagan and Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse."
[327]James E. Hawdon, "The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs," *Deviant Behavior* 22, no. 5 (2001): 419-445.
[328]Ibid.
[329]Reagan, "Remarks Announcing Federal Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime."
[330]Ibid.
[331]Ibid.

Americans. Reagan's War on Drugs, and his "tough" approach did not in any way decrease the selling and using of drugs in American society, and, as economist Ann Dryden Witte described, "actually the number of crimes committed by urban youth increased."[332] However, what his rhetoric did do, was create a national enemy, who was stigmatized, criminalized, and quite literally removed from society.

Nancy Reagan's Contribution to Covert Racism

Nancy Reagan's "Say No Campaign" was an effective part of the President's rhetoric.[333] It was part of the bigger narrative on drugs constructed by the Reagan administration. She merely functioned as a "spokesperson" of his rhetoric, and actively contributed to Reagan's use of covert racism. Her quotes must therefore be viewed as part of Reagan's rhetoric.

The very slogan of the campaign, "Just Say No," fits in with the ideals Reagan sold through his rhetoric. For instance, Reagan believed in a "simple truth."[334] The Say No Campaign's essence was very simple, and posed a basic juxtaposition of yes or no. If you did not want to use drugs, all you had to do was "say no." It was a simple as that. The slogan also fits in with the additional idea of this "simple truth," that according to Reagan was "embodied in the pre-urban, homogenous nation where hard work were all anyone needed."[335] The emphasis here is on "hard work," and how this contributes to a good life. This relates to the traditional notion of the "the American Dream." The American Dream provides the right for all Americans to improve their lives, take opportunities and reach their potential, and it

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[332]Dryden Witte, "Urban Crime: Issues and Policies," 732.
[333]Loizeau, *Nancy Reagan*, 104-105; "Her Causes," Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, accessed March 2, 2020.
[334]Schaller, 51.
[335]Ibid.

embodies the idea that upward mobility ensures national progress.[336] As historian James Truslow Adams described it in *Epic of America*:

> The American Dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement… a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.[337]

In historian Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* the American Dream is defined as "the charm of anticipated success."[338] This definition relates to the idea of "upward mobility," that one can improve their position in society by "working hard," and many Americans believed in this idea.[339]

The choice, posed by Nancy, to do drugs fits this, because of the effect it has on one's life: choose to say "yes" to drugs, and your life is lost, say "no" and you are all good. Drugs destroy the American Dream, as Nancy said: "Drugs steal away so much. They take and take, until finally every time a drug goes into a child, something else is forced out – like love and hope. Drugs take away the dream from every child's heart."[340] However, if everyone "just says no" this can be prevented. She continued: "To my young friends out there: life can be great, but not when you can't see it. So, open your eyes to life…to enjoy life to the fullest, and to make it count. Say yes to your life. And when it comes to drugs just say no."[341] By linking drugs to such a core ideal as the American Dream, and turning it into something that destroys that ideal, it almost creates an "enemy status" for drugs and everything related to it. This provides the people involved in drugs with a hostile label of being adversaries of American ideals. It was

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[336]Kimberly Amadeo, "What Is The American Dream? The History That Made It Possible," The Balance, accessed March 6, 2020, https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-the-american-dream-quotes-and-history-3306009.
[337]Ibid. See also: James Truslow Adams, *Epic of America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012 [1931]), xvi.
[338]Ibid. See also: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1835-1840]).
[339]Lawrence R. Samuel, The American Dream: A Cultural History (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 7; Sandra Hanson and John Zogby, " The Polls – Trends," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2010): 570-584.
[340]Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse," September 14, 1986, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-14-1986-speech-nation-campaign-against-drug-abuse. INKORTEN
[341]Ibid.

mostly minorities, and especially African Americans, involved in drugs, so they were the ones that became associated with this negative sentiment.[342]

Also, by targeting the matter of drugs as a "simple truth" all other factors concerned with the issue were ignored. Economic situations, the effects of nurture and environment are all disregarded in this view. Most African Americans were completely excluded from participating in this ideal of the American society anyhow, and specifically those considered part of the "underclass," living in urban ghettos, were denied opportunities to take part in this dream due to their intense social isolation from mainstream society and their economic vulnerability.[343] A simple choice of "yes or no" would not change that. For some, drugs, whether for socioeconomic reasons or to escape the situation mentally, were the only way out.[344] Whoopi Goldberg provided an insightful critique on the issue in 1988, based on this socioeconomic perspective, showing that sometimes, especially for black people, there was no "simple" choice:

> How do you tell an urban teenager who lives in the street, in the school systems of the real world, to "just say fucking no?" How do you justify that to a mother who maybe has six kids and 365 bucks a month from welfare and one of her kids is bringing home fifteen grand a week, "Just say no?" It's easy to just say no in the White House, but it doesn't realistically gel in the real world.[345]

The Just Say No campaign was an important part of Reagan's War on Drugs, wherein Nancy became the voice of the Reagan administration, telling emotional stories about how drugs destroy lives.[346] The "simple" choice of the campaign provided a "solution" for the issue of drugs, which was, according to Elwood, "nothing but an elegant rhetorical choice for an administration that spent as little as possible on domestic social programs."[347] In reality it did nothing for the actual issue of drugs. By making drugs a "simple" matter of "yes" or "no,"

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[342]Alexander, 51, 58, 102.

[343]Desmond and Emirbayer, *Racial Domination,* 230; Hinton, 179.

[344]Dryden Witte, 737; Alexander 50-55, 209.

[345]Elwood, *Rhetoric In the War on Drugs,* 142; Eleanor Blau, "Tv Notes," *The New York Times,* July 21, 1988, https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/21/arts/tv-notes.html. Whoopi Goldberg said this quote in the role of "streetwise urbanite" Fontaine.

[346]Owen, "Just Say No: How Nancy Reagan Helped America Lose the War on Drugs," Vice News, March 6, 2016.

[347]Elwood, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs*, 142.

important issues were ignored, especially socioeconomic ones.[348] It also "permitted power elites to provide acknowledgment of "the drug problem" and a directive for citizens to follow."[349] Nancy called upon the country to oppose drugs, saying: "There's no moral middle ground. Indifference is not an option. We want you to help us create an outspoken intolerance for drug use. For the sake of our children, I implore each of you to be unyielding and inflexible in your opposition to drugs."[350] Drugs thus became the enemy, as did the people who chose "yes" for drugs, and were not living up to the American Dream ideals, who were mainly African Americans. In this campaign, "drugs" is therefore the dog whistle, and by opposing drugs an opposition and stigmatization of blacks was created. Nancy's Just Say No campaign was thus part of the covertly racist aim of the Reagan administration to rally the American public behind the War on Drugs, while instead rallying them behind a war on blacks.[351]

Reagan's "Welfare Queen"

Another efficient type of covert racism, and one of the main themes in Reagan's political rhetoric, was "welfare." Already in 1964, in his "A Time For Choosing" speech, Reagan strongly attacked liberal welfare policies, especially those created in Johnson's Great Society. In this speech Reagan also introduced the stereotype that would become a recurring thread in his political rhetoric and what would later be known as the "welfare queen." Reagan said:

> Not too long ago, a judge called me here in Los Angeles. He told me of a young woman who'd come before him for a divorce. She had six children, was pregnant with her seventh. Under his questioning, she revealed her husband was a laborer earning 250 dollars a month. She wanted a divorce to get an 80 dollar rise. She's eligible 330 dollars

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[348]Ibid.

[349]Ibid.

[350]Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse," 1986; Owen, "Just Say No: How Nancy Reagan Helped America Lose the War on Drugs," https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3kw493/just-say-no-how-nancy-reagan-helped-america-lose-the-war-on-drugs.

[351]See: Nunn, "Race, Crime, and the Pool of Surplus Criminality: Why the War on Drugs was a War on Blacks," 381-445.

a month in the Aid to Dependent Children Program. She got the idea from two women in her neighborhood who'd already done that very thing.[352]

He expanded the focus on this supposed issue of people abusing welfare programs during his campaign for Governor of California in 1966, and made "sending the welfare bums back to work" a political priority.[353]

Stigmatizing people on welfare has a long racialized past of resentment towards those getting financial aid from the American government, so the "welfare queen" stereotype did not emerge out of nowhere.[354] During the 1960s, the media created a portrait of poverty in connection to race. Many magazines printed stories on poverty with photographs of African Americans. Approximately 27 percent of these stories showed African Americans in 1964, versus almost 72 percent in 1967.[355] These depictions linked blackness to welfare, and it helped set off a new wave of racialized backlash against welfare, as its receivers were labeled the "undeserving poor."[356]

In 1976, Reagan provided the "frauds" abusing the welfare system with an identity.[357] Reagan and his advisors searched for dramatic stories about "welfare cheats," which they could use to reinforce negative sentiments on welfare, undermine federal social programs, and implement reforms.[358] They eventually found a useable story, which Reagan repeated very

[352]Reagan, "A Time For Choosing," October 27, 1964, https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/a-time-for-choosing-speech; Gillian Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen. The Truth Was More Disturbing, a New Book Says," *The Washington Post,* May 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/05/21/she-was-stereotyped-welfare-queen-truth-was-more-disturbing-new-book-says/.
[353]Hummel, "The Return of Law and Order in America."
[354]Rachel Black and Aleta Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen," New America, September 22, 2016, https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/rise-and-reign-welfare-queen/.
[355]Black and Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen," New America, September 22, 2016.
[356]Ibid.
[357]Ibid.
[358]Hari Sreenivasan, "The True Story Behind the "Welfare Queen" Stereotype," PBS, June 1, 2019, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/the-true-story-behind-the-welfare-queen-stereotype; Kelly Faircloth, " The Long Shadow of the Welfare Queen," Jezebel, Ocotber 29, 2019, https://pictorial.jezebel.com/the-long-shadow-of-the-welfare-queen-1838856900; Josh Levin, "The Myth Was $150,000 in Fraud. The Real Story Is More Interesting," *The New York Times,* May 17, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/17/opinion/sunday/welfare-queen-myth-reagan.html.

often in his speeches to come, but he first told the anecdote during his presidential campaign in 1976:

> In Chicago, they found a woman who holds the record. She used 80 names, 30 addresses, 15 telephone numbers to collect food stamps, 12 Social Security cards, and is collecting veterans' benefits for four nonexistent deceased veterans husbands. Her tax-free cash income, alone, has been running $150,000 a year.[359]

This story functioned as the basis for the term "welfare queen," that became a "not-so-subtle code for lazy, greedy, black ghetto mother," who wore fur coats, drove Cadillacs, and got rich from the money of the American taxpayer.[360]

Reagan's story was based on an actual person.[361] Josh Levin's book *The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth* is about this person, Linda Taylor, who "went by many names, was accused of many crimes, and whose image as a Cadillac-driving welfare recipient has lived on."[362] Levin explains how she was involved in numerous crimes, but in newspapers she became known as the "welfare queen," due to a politically motivated focus on the fraud she committed with welfare.[363] Levin argues that: "Linda Taylor had as much in common with a typical welfare rule breaker as a bank robber does with someone who swipes a piece of penny candy."[364] Taylor's crimes were beside her race and financial status, she was just a criminal. However, her story gave, as Levin says, "credence to a slew of pernicious stereotypes about poor people and black women," and Reagan exploited this story to its fullest, even though it was just one exceptional example.[365]

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[359]Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen," *The Washington Post*; Black and Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen"; Alexander, 49; Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction,* 148: they quote from *The New York Times,*

[360]Alexander, 48-49; Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen," *The Washington Post*; Levin, "The Myth Was $150,000 in Fraud," *The New York Times*. See also: Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 148.

[361]Sreenivasan, "The True Story Behind the "Welfare Queen"," PBS.

[362]Ibid. See also: Josh Levin, *The Queen The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019).

[363]Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen," *The Washington Post;* "Welfare Queen Becomes Issue In Reagan Campaign," *The New York Times,* February 15, 1976, https://www.nytimes.com/1976/02/15/archives/welfare-queen-becomes-issue-in-reagan-campaign-hitting-a-nerve-now.html. See also: Levin, *The Queen.*

[364]Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen," *The Washington Post*. See also: Levin, *The Queen.*

[365]Ibid.

Yet, the "welfare queen" became a persistent stereotype, that racialized and demonized the concept of financial assistance to the poor, as well as its recipients.[366] The stereotype also heavily contributed to the criminalization of blackness, since it portrayed poor black women as frauds, and hereby reinforced the association between poverty and criminality.[367]

Reagan exploited the "welfare queen" as a racist dog whistle, to be able to introduce drastic welfare measures.[368] In 1987, during Reagan's "Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform," he proposed some of these reforms:

> Since that time, I've sent to Congress a carefully designed package of proposals that rejects the old Federal approach of sweeping solutions dictated from Washington. The central point of our new proposal – as outlined in our earlier study "Up From Dependency" and now embodied in our legislative proposal, the Low-Income Opportunity Improvement Act – is a provision that will allow States and localities to test new ideas for reducing welfare dependency. [369]

First of all, a second dog whistle is present in this quote: states' rights. Reagan talked about rejecting the federal approach, and allowing states to take measures against welfare. With the known meaning of this dog whistle it is a clear call to whites to restore their "state" power on this issue. Secondly, Reagan talked about the "dependency" of those on welfare, which he wanted to change. This fits in with the conservative view, where poverty is seen as a personal failure, and government efforts only worsen the situation, providing a "disincentive for individual effort," and thus dependency.[370] Further on in the speech, Reagan referred to the welfare system as a "poverty trap," claiming: "It's now common knowledge that our welfare system has itself become a poverty trap – a creator and reinforcer of dependency."[371] His measures tried to reverse this "counterproductive exemption," and make the poor "self-

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[366]Faircloth, "The Long Shadow of the Welfare Queen," Jezebel; Sreenivasan, "The True Story Behind the "Welfare Queen," PBS.

[367]Black and Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen," New America.

[368]Sreenivasan, "The True Story Behind the "Welfare Queen"," PBS.

[369]Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform," The Reagan Foundation, August 1, 1987, https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/128766/welfare.pdf.

[370]Schaller, 78-79.

[371]Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Welfare Reform," 1987.

sufficient."[372] His rhetoric in this speech, was corresponding with the stereotype he had created of those dependent on federal, and thus taxpayers', money, making it an issue of public concern.

At the end of Reagan's presidency, in 1989, a little over 60 percent felt that "welfare benefits make poor people dependent and encourage them to stay poor," strengthening support for welfare reform.[373] It looked as if Reagan, by creating the toxic "welfare queen" stereotype, had reached his goal in reforming the social welfare system, and especially the public sentiment about it, with the help of covert racism.

Traditional Family Values

A theme that relates to the welfare issues of the 1980s, and which was heavily stressed by Reagan, are traditional family values. His rhetoric on family becomes especially interesting when viewed in contrast to the structure of black families, making it an important manifestation of covert racism. In a sense it is also a "dog whistle," since the family values suggest a certain way of living that is "correct," associated with whites, versus the "wrong" way, associated with poor blacks. This language of "traditional" and "alternative," and, as argued by Linda Nicholson in *Feminism and Family,* the "dichotomy of possibilities leads many of us to think that the way we make our domestic arrangements is somewhat unusual and other than what it should be," hereby legitimizing some types of families and stigmatizing others.[374]

The 1970s revival of the New Right's "moralistic conservatism" caused for a renewed focus on family values and the restoration of the "traditional family."[375] Traditional family

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[372]Ibid.

[373]Livia Gershon, "Why Welfare Reform Didn't End Welfare Stigma," JSTOR Daily, August 4, 2016, https://daily.jstor.org/why-welfare-reform-didnt-end-welfare-stigma/; Black and Sprague, "The Rise and Reign of the Welfare Queen," New America; Rachel Black and Aleta Sprague, "The Welfare Queen Is a Lie," The Atlantic, September 28, 2016, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/09/welfare-queen-myth/501470/?utm_source=atlfb.

[374]Linda Nicholson, "The Myth of the Traditional Family," in *Feminism and Families*, ed. Hilde Lindemann Nelson (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27; Hilde Lindemann Nelson, "Introduction," in *Feminism and Families*, 5.

[375]Nicholson, "The Myth of the Traditional Family," in *Feminism and Families,* 22.

values are part of the persistent conservative ideology of traditional morality, where changing traditional power structures are opposed, in this case gender roles.[376] Traditionalism, or as Sara Diamond calls it "moral traditionalism," in her book *Roads to Dominion* was one of the main pillars of the New Right and Conservatism.[377] Diamond explains:

> Traditionalists back the state as an enforcer of a moral order…At the same time, traditionalists, wary of social change and supportive of class, race and gender hierarchies, have tended to oppose state initiatives to distribute civil rights and liberties among traditionally subordinate groups.[378]

Reagan fits this description, because of his "dislike" of Civil Rights, as derived from some of his pre-presidential quotes, his strong support for the state to provide and enforce "order," and his belief in the "traditional" family.[379] He focused heavily on morality and traditional American values. So for conservatives, Reagan's presidential election was viewed as a "dream come true," as it was also their main concern to restore the traditional moral order of a "past lost world," and they looked to Reagan to do so.[380]

Conservatives understood the traditional family as a man and woman, united by marriage, functioning as a two-parent unit to provide for their children.[381] The family was structured through normative definitions of gender roles within a household, meaning that the husband had the "provider role," and was thus the breadwinner, and the wife had the "nurturing role," and was thus the caretaker of both children and household in general.[382] This structure is what formed the "nuclear family."[383] There was a belief of the "moral superiority" of families with two parents, and that "mothers should subordinate themselves to and be dependent on men,

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[376]Diamond, *Roads to Dominion,* 138.
[377]Ibid., 6-8, 127 and 205.
[378]Ibid., 9.
[379]Ibid., 6-8.
[380]Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell,* 187; Schaller, 14, 23, 26-27 and 51.
[381]H. N. Edwards, "Changing Family Structure and Youthful Well-being," *Journal of Family Issues* 8 (1987): 355–372.
[382]Maxine Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," *Signs: Common Grounds and Crossroads: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in Women's Lives* 14, no. 4 (1989): 873. See also: David Ellwood and Lawrence Summers, "Poverty in America: Is Welfare the Answer or the Problem?" in *Fighting Poverty*, ed. Sheldon H. Danziger and Daniel H. Weinberg (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 78-105; Mary Jo Bane, "Household Composition and Poverty," in *Fighting Poverty*, 209-231.
[383]Edwards, "Changing Family Structure," 355–372.

even if they would rather parent on their own, for the sake of nurturing the independence of their children."[384]

However, from the 1970s onwards, the fear rose that the "nuclear family" was in decline.[385] In the 1980s, during Reagan's presidency, this was still an ongoing issue and Reagan often commented on it. In his "Radio Address to the Nation on Family Values" in 1986 he said:

> It's more important than ever for our families to affirm an older and more lasting set of values… In recent decades the American family has come under attack…The family today remains the fundamental unit of American life… But statistics show that it has lost ground, and I don't believe there's much doubt that the American family could be, and should be, much, much stronger.[386]

What Reagan talked about was the trend going on in black households. The "black family" was made up for a large part of female-headed households, where a male father figure was missing. In the 1980s the number of children living in such households rose from 2.9% to about 7%, in 1983 almost 90% of pregnant black teenagers were unmarried, and by 1989 the number of out-of-wedlock births was 1 out of 4.[387] The majority of the poor in the 1980s were single minority mothers, who "were less likely to finish high school, or hold a paying job," causing poverty for next generations and creating a stigma in the form of feminization of poverty, which consequently also reinforced the earlier mentioned stereotype of the welfare queen.[388]

Conservatives explained the trend of the black family breakdown with the "cultural deficiencies structure," or the so-called "culture of poverty thesis."[389] This idea indicates, as illustrated by sociologist Maxine Baca Zinn, that "the poor have a different way of life than the rest of society and these cultural differences explain continued poverty."[390] Reagan warned

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[384]Nicholson, "The Myth of the Traditional Family," in *Feminism and Families,* 23; William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 544.
[385]Mary Midgley and Judith Hughes, "Are Families Out of Date?" in *Feminism and Families,* 55-68.
[386]Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Family Values," December 20, 1986, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/radio-address-the-nation-family-values.
[387]Schaller, 78; Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," 868.
[388]Ibid. 77; Baca Zinn, 861, 868.
[389]Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," 856.
[390]Ibid.

about these consequences of the breakdown of families by showing the importance of traditional values inside the family:

> Tonight America is stronger because of the values that we hold dear…Our progress began not in Washington, DC, but in the hearts of our families…New freedom in our lives has planted the rich seeds for future success: For an America of wisdom that honors the family, knowing that as the family goes, so goes our civilization.[391]

He claimed that if the "family" breaks down, so does "civilization." Family values are thus a core element for the success of the nation. So the increase in female-headed households in black communities was extremely threatening to the traditional America, according to Reagan.

As a solution to this, the conservatives opted for the "traditional family structure" as a way to stop racial poverty.[392] However, many scholars rallied against this, and proved that black family breakdown was the consequence of poverty instead of the cause.[393] William Julius Wilson, for instance, argued that the reason for so many black female-headed households has to do with the "index of marriageable males."[394] The number of suitable marriage partners in minority communities decreased, due to joblessness, unstable economic situations, and the immense amount of males in prison due to rising incarceration rates.[395] This continued "institutional decimation" of black males thus worsened the prospects of Wilson's "index," leading to more female-headed families. It also "reinforces the public patriarchy that controls black women through their increased dependence on welfare," and becomes a vicious cycle.[396]

Reagan's administration made the situation worse and refused to address these additional issues. They instead focused on the "dependency" of the poor on welfare, and implemented huge social welfare cuts.[397] Reagan said:

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[391]Ronald Reagan, "State of the Union Message to Congress," February 6, 1985, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/february-6-1985-state-union-address; "Ronald Reagan on Families and Children," On The Issues, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Ronald_Reagan_Families_+_Children.htm.
[392]Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," 872.
[393]Ibid., 868.
[394]Ibid.; Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged,* 28-29, 63-92.
[395]Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," 868.
[396]Ibid., 873.
[397]Schaller, 77-78

> As we work to make the American dream real for all, we must also look to the condition of America's families. In the welfare culture, the breakdown of the family, the most basic support system, has reached crisis proportions: female and child poverty, child abandonment, horrible crimes, and deteriorating schools. After hundreds of billions of dollars in poverty programs, the plight of the poor grows more painful.[398]

Reagan's defense was, as explained by Schaller, that "America had fought a war on poverty for nearly 20 years and poverty won."[399]

What makes Reagan's rhetoric and attitude towards traditional family values even more interesting is the way he portrayed himself together with his wife Nancy to the American public, which sharply contrasted with the non-traditional black family structure. The Reagans presented themselves as a united front, and as the conservative ideal of a traditional family.[400] They were an example of how it "should" be: a loving (white) two-parent household. How does this become visible through Reagan's rhetoric?

There are several speeches in which Nancy plays an active role and is involved by Reagan.[401] For instance in the "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse," in 1986, Reagan said: "I've asked someone very special to join me. Nancy and I are here in the West Hall of the White House, and around us are the rooms in which we live."[402] In this televised speech the Reagans were sitting in their private home inside the White House, making it more personal and presenting them as a unity. They firmly spoke to the nation as concerned "parents and grandparents" would to their children.[403] Reagan said:

> Nancy's joining me because the message this evening is not my message but ours. And we speak to you not simply as fellow citizens but as fellow parents and grandparents and as concerned neighbors. So tonight, from our family to yours, from our home to yours. Thank you for joining us.[404]

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[398]Ronald Reagan, "State of the Union Message to Congress," February 4, 1986, https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/sotu/reagan.html; "Ronald Reagan on Families and Children," On The Issues, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Ronald_Reagan_Families_+_Children.htm.

[399]Schaller, 77.

[400]Westhoff, "Reagan's War on Drugs," 12.

[401]Ronald Reagan, "State of the Union Address," January 25, 1988, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/january-25-1988-state-union-address.

[402]Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse."

[403]Ibid.; Westhoff, "Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs," 12-13.

[404]Reagan, "Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse."

Reagan and Nancy really made an effort to provide a visual representation of the ideal traditional family, built on strong foundations, and be an example to the nation, because according to Reagan "all great change in America begins at the dinner table."[405] Reagan viewed the family as the "essence of civilization," and said during his Radio Address to the Nation on Family Values:

> That last word, "family," is one that I'd like to consider for a moment…The philosopher-historians Will and Ariel Durant called the family "the nucleus of civilization." They understood that all those aspects of civilized life that we most deeply cherish—freedom, the rule of law, economic prosperity and opportunity—that all these depend upon the strength and integrity of the family.[406]

The "different way of life" of black families, as conservatives saw it, thus threatened civilization and caused for a disruption of society.[407] A return to the traditional family, as "the nucleus of society" could save this.

So how are "family values" a way of covert racism? The term can be seen as a dog whistle. When Reagan talked about "the breakdown of the family," he was actually talking about the breakdown of "black families," and by continuously talking about the matter he created the idea that family breakdown in minority communities were threatening the traditional social order of the U.S.

From the analyses in this chapter, of Reagan's political rhetoric, pre-presidency, as well as in the three themes, of drugs, welfare and family values, it can be concluded that his use of covert racism is poignantly present, and his "vision of innocence," and denial of racism no longer sustains.

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[405]"Ronald Reagan on Families and Children," On The Issues, accessed March 28, 2020, https://www.ontheissues.org/Celeb/Ronald_Reagan_Families_+_Children.htm.
[406]Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Family Values," 1986.
[407]Baca Zinn, 856.

Conclusion

From all of this it can be concluded that Reagan made great use of covert racism in his political rhetoric, mostly in the form of dog whistle politics, and hereby contributed heavily to the reinvention of racism, from overt to covert, during his presidency and his War on Drugs. The historical context of covert racism and conservative traditions of dog whistles, together with Reagan's policies on drugs, and the quotes of his racial rhetoric on drugs, welfare, and traditional family values provide the proof for this conclusion. His rhetoric contributed to the construction of covert racism, and even expanded and created racial stereotypes on poverty and criminality. Reagan, as Alexander argued, "mastered the excision of the language of race from conservative public discourse and thus built on the success of earlier conservatives who developed a strategy of exploiting racial hostility of resentment for political gain, without making explicit reference to race."[408]

First of all, it can be concluded that Reagan's politics and his rhetoric were part of a longer tradition of white racist policies, conservative thought and dog whistle politics. This became clear from the context of how the "reinvention of racism" took place, and why American politicians moved from overt racist rhetoric to the new covert form. Due to shifting racial power structures in the post-Civil Rights era, a new social system was set up, that was redefined through a language of crime control. By stigmatizing African Americans as "criminals," an effective system of control, was set in place that perfectly suited the newly constructed framework of covert racism. This system was taken into the new decade, and the challenges of the 1970s only reinforced this construction of covert racism through crime control. The economy was in decline, urban inner-cities were deteriorating, international crises caused for feelings of uncertainty and confusion, and racial fears were ever prevailing. Conservatives,

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[408]Alexander, 48. See also: Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction,* 4; Mayer, *Running on Race.*

specifically the populist New Right, used this confused sentiment among American whites to strengthen their political base, and presented themselves as a stable factor, promising a return to the "comforting nostalgia" of past (racist) times, and focusing on conservative traditionalist ideas.[409] Reagan followed into this conservative tradition with his own political ideologies and rhetoric.

Secondly, it is argued that Reagan's War on Drugs politics in the 1980s were a continuation of earlier forms of covertly racist politics on crime and drugs. Reagan merely followed into the footsteps of Barry Goldwater, who in 1964 introduced the phrase "law and order," and laid the foundation for the conservative rhetoric, and Richard Nixon, who in 1968 incorporated Goldwater's rhetoric into his politics more concretely, with a tougher stand on crime, a focus on disaffected whites, and the initiation of the War on Drugs. Reagan continued these efforts, by initiating his own War on Drugs in the 1980s, turning covert racism into a fully established and effective political tool. Reagan expanded drug policies, and created a punitive turn in law enforcement, which was most apparent in his legislation on crack, and the extremely high sentences on it that disproportionately targeted African Americans. As a result of Reagan's expansive policies on drugs, the numbers of incarceration increased massively. In this way, the War on Drugs in its entirety, became the ultimate dog whistle for social control of African Americans, in which the issue of drugs was exploited to get rid of unwanted members of society and force them into a system of mass incarceration.

Thirdly, the discourse analysis of Reagan's speeches and quotes, offered the final proof for his consistent use of covert racism in his political rhetoric. Reagan's rhetoric is filled with dog whistles and concealed racist implications, which has become visible from the analysis of the highly racialized themes in Reagan's rhetoric, of drugs, welfare, and family values. From quotes before his presidency it is concluded that he already had a complicated relationship with race, campaigning for Goldwater in 1964, and using the dog whistles in his own political

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[409]Sandbrook, xii, and xiii.

campaign of 1966. However, Reagan held on to "creative visions of innocence," and always portrayed himself as "non-racist," while being actively involved in different forms of covert racism, which became clear in the closer examination of the three themes in his rhetoric.[410]

In Reagan's quotes and speeches on drugs, covert racism becomes clearly visible. Reagan's negative and threatening language, linking drugs to phrases like "evil," and "horror," as well as his use of the "law and order" dog whistle, contributed to the further stigmatization of African Americans as the national enemy of the U.S. He reinforced the idea that it was not drugs that was "menacing" society, but a black criminal underclass. What further contributed to this was Nancy Reagan's "Say No Campaign," in which she functioned as a spokesperson of Reagan's rhetoric. Through her campaign his covertly racist rhetoric was further reinforced, as it stigmatized and demonized people who said "yes" to drugs, and viewed them in opposition to certain American core ideals, such as the American Dream. All of this together, turned the issue of drugs into a dog whistle in itself, and rallied the American public behind a war on blacks, instead of a War on Drugs.

Another efficient way of covert racism in Reagan's political rhetoric, was through the theme of welfare. Reagan had created a powerful stereotype, called the "welfare queen," that became coded language for a "lazy, greedy, black ghetto mother," that abused the system of welfare.[411] With the creation of this stereotype, and his persistent use of it in his speeches, he racialized and demonized the concept of financial assistance to the poor, and criminalized its black recipients. Reagan fully exploited the image of the "welfare queen" as a racist dog whistle, in order to implement changes in the welfare system.

The theme of traditional family values, was also an important manifestation of covert racism in Reagan's rhetoric. In his speeches on this topic, Reagan turned "traditional family values" into a dog whistle, because when he talked about the breakdown of the family, he was

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[410]Perlstein, 552.

[411]Alexander, 48-49; Brockell, "She Was Stereotyped as the Welfare Queen"; Levin, "The Myth Was $150,000 in Fraud"; Edsall and Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, 148.

actually talking about the breakdown of black families, and the increased numbers of black female-headed households. This trend in black families was in sharp contrast to what Reagan, and conservatives, envisioned as the "ideal" traditional family, and according to them this affected and threatened American society, as it led to "continued poverty and cultural changes."[412] Reagan presented his own family as an example of how it should be, by involving Nancy in several of his speeches, and presenting them together as a united front. By continuously stressing the importance of traditional family values, he created the idea that the traditional family was essential to society, and that the family breakdown in African American communities was threatening the traditional social order of the U.S.

Thus, all of this shows that Ronald Reagan actively used covert racism in his political rhetoric, following a pattern of dog whistles, and conservative ideas of traditionalism. In his Farewell address Reagan said: "I communicated great things."[413] This is very ironic, considering the fact that his communication efforts contributed massively to the reinvention of racism into a covert system of crime and drugs control, created persistent racial stereotypes, caused for a punitive transformation in law enforcement, and mass incarcerated African Americans, all of which are ever persistent problems today. If these issues will ever be resolved, a new reinvention of racism might be needed in society, and as Martin Luther King said:

> The black revolution is much more than a struggle for the rights of Negroes...It is exposing evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society and suggests that radical reconstruction of society is the real issue to be faced.[414]

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[412]Baca Zinn, "Family, Race, and Poverty in the Eighties," 856.
[413]Ronald Reagan, "Farewell Address to the Nation," January 11, 1989,
https://www.reaganfoundation.org/media/128652/farewell.pdf; Schaller, 179.
[414]Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263.

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