

**Are Black Americans Facing Genocide?  
A Study of Policing Practices in the United States**

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**Abstract**

Police brutality in the United States has sparked a national outcry, as this year again far too many black people have fallen victim to police shootings. Though activists have been advocating for change and scholars have examined the current flawed system, they have not studied the black struggle from a contemporary genocide lens. This thesis examines American policing practices in lights of genocide, and it offers a brief history of policing practices and slavery, as well as discusses the various findings of African American Studies scholar. This thesis shows how after decades of slavery there are still genocidal tendencies in the police force, which is analysed through Stanton's stages of genocide, as well as notions of indirect genocide. The findings indicate that policing practices pass the first six stages of Stanton, classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation and polarisation. Though fortunately, not all stages have been realised, this thesis wishes to elucidate the deeply entrenched racial biases that are causing unbearable living situations for black Americans and to listen to those who have been silenced over the years.

**Keywords:** genocide; race; policy; police practices; Stanton; state violence.

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### *List of Acronyms*

<b>ACAB</b>	All Cops Are Bastards
<b>BLM</b>	Black Lives Matter
<b>CRT</b>	Critical Race Theory
<b>IR</b>	International Relations
<b>US</b>	United States

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Lastly, I want to thank my parents for believing in me and supporting me throughout this entire process.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*“The culture of hate against Black people in America was not recently developed, instead the heightened use of smart phones in the 21st century has helped to create more awareness, consciousness, and exposure of the cruelty and brutality by the American police for centuries”*

-Williams C. Itheme<sup>1</sup>

Even though the world is globalising and international relations are being strengthened, national tensions are seemingly on the rise.<sup>2</sup> This trend can be described as ethnic nationalism, and one of the consequences of this phenomenon is the politicisation of the dichotomy between the national group, the “us”, and the “foreign” group, the “Other.”<sup>3</sup> However, distinctions between ethnic groups have been drawn since colonial times and have arguably fractured society so deeply that it is still noticeable today. One clear modern-day example of such a division of society is the United States (US) society. The polarisation of the US society has become even more evident and significant with the uprising of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) and its discourse. Since June 2020, the BLM movement has seen an increase in support and activity as a response to the murder of George Floyd on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>4</sup> George Floyd, a black man, was reported to the police as the employee of a store that he was buying cigarettes at suspected him of paying with counterfeit money. Following the report, the police showed up and handcuffed him; as they tried to put him in the police car, Officer Chauvin pushed Mr Floyd, which caused him to fall and consequently, Mr Chauvin decided to place his knee between the head and neck of Mr Floyd.<sup>5</sup> The police officer stayed in this position for approximately eight minutes, and by the time he removes his knee Mr Floyd had passed away. What had started as a suspicion, ended in police brutality and eventually the murder of a black man. Unfortunately, this was not the first time that a black person was murdered without law and order, and certainly, it was not the last. The BLM movement was created in 2013, as a response to the acquittal of the murder of Trayvon Martin, as the person who shot the 17-year old boy who was walking down the street, was found not guilty.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Itheme, “Systemic Racism, Police Brutality of Black People, and the Use of Violence in Quelling Peaceful Protests in America,” 228.

<sup>2</sup> Rose, *Racial and Ethnic Relations in the United State*.

<sup>3</sup> Muller, “Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism,” 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Cheung, “George Floyd Death: Why US Protests Are so Powerful This Time - BBC News.”

<sup>5</sup> News, “George Floyd: What Happened in the Final Moments of His Life - BBC News.”

<sup>6</sup> “About. - Black Lives Matter”

Since 2013, many innocent black people have been killed and though not all of them were the victims of police brutality. Statistics show that between 2017 and 2020, 859 black people have been shot to death by police officers.<sup>7</sup> Considering the fact that the US as we know it today is built upon the backs of black slaves and indigenous people, it is almost unsurprising that this traumatic and racist history has been and remains the red thread throughout time.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, even if not killed, black people suffer from systematic racism and discrimination, which essentially shapes their lives to a great extent.<sup>9</sup> Talks of systematic racism have been brought up by activists, especially recently amidst the BLM movement. Though scholars, as well as activists, have shed light on this issue, they have remained quite subtle in their approach, and have not gone to the extent of framing systematic racism as something more detrimental. This thesis might be considered controversial, but highly essential, as it aims to answer the following broad question: are black Americans facing genocide? If so, how? To answer this question the following research question has been established:

**Are the policing practices towards African Americans in the United States an act of genocide, and if so how?**

Debates regarding race and social structures are already taking place in the realm of (African) American Studies and Critical Race Theory,<sup>10</sup> and this research question aims to add on to this dialogue and discover whether the phenomenon of racism should be rethought in the case of the US. American Studies programs focus their discourse on history, politics and social construction of the US, and though this study might seem impractical, its student and scholars have been able to point out flaws in the American system that have at the least been food for thought for insiders as well as outsiders.<sup>11</sup> One example of a person who taught American Studies and left a mark in this world is Maya Angelou, whose work is still being read by academics as well as activists, and enthusiasts.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the research question will engage with the literature in the field of International Relations (IR), and it will do so by providing new insights and a refreshed and

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<sup>7</sup> “People Shot to Death by U.S. Police, by Race 2020 | Statista.”

<sup>8</sup> Graff, “The Intergenerational Trauma of Slavery and Its Aftermath,” 185-189.

<sup>9</sup> Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Johnson and Leighton, “Black Genocide? Preliminary Thoughts on the Plight of America’s Poor Black Men,”; Vargas, *Never Meant to Survive: Genocide and Utopias in Black Diaspora Communities*, and Turner and Darity, “Fears of Genocide among Black Americans as Related to Age, Sex, and Region.”

<sup>11</sup> Farrell, “What Are American Studies For? Some Practical Perspectives,” 187.

<sup>12</sup> Gillespie, Butler, and Long, *Maya Angelou*.



contemporary take on genocide. The role of IR in regards to genocide has been responsive, meaning that IR scholars broadly speaking have focused on responses to genocide rather than studying the origin of the genocide, and why it occurred in the first place. The reason for this is rooted in the fact that genocide is regarded as a domestic issue and the only role of IR is to examine the response of international actors to such domestic affairs.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the field of IR is seen as constraining of genocide rather than enabling, as countries might be less likely to commit genocide when they are closely tied to other countries, making it seemingly less relevant to IR.<sup>14</sup> What is especially interesting is that this constraining responsive role has been assigned to IR due to the idea of American supremacy and overarching peacekeeper: “it is an article of faith among American elites that the United States has a moral responsibility to shut down virtually any mass political violence, but especially to stop genocides in the making’.”<sup>15</sup> Hence, this research question poses a critical eye towards the US and its political agenda, and thus criticises mainstream IR for normalising the idea of the US being a pioneer for world peace and stability. This is especially significant considering that US power has arguably declined under the Trump administration; both in the department of economics as well as the exceptionalism narrative.<sup>16</sup> The US was proclaimed as hegemon for reasons such as, enforcing human rights, and general freedom, nevertheless: “Trump administration’s policy rhetoric has undermined US moral exceptionalism through blatant sexist, racist, discriminatory, and exclusionary tirades that have consistently proliferated domestic and international media.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, this thesis aims to provide a contemporary and inclusive approach to genocide, as the idea of genocide as we know it is out-dated and solely recognising mass murder as genocide is both dangerous and naïve, because this exclusive notion has ruled out groups of people who have experienced violence to the extent of genocide.<sup>18</sup> The field of IR needs to recognise and realise that human suffering cannot be reduced to statistics of how many people have been killed. Instead, we as IR scholars should also reflect upon how tampering with the daily lives of minorities can and is causing harm beyond imagination. Lastly, it also aims to demonstrate the applicability of Stanton’s stages of genocide.

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<sup>13</sup> Shaw, *Genocide and International Relations*, 43.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Regilme, “The Decline of American Power and Donald Trump: Reflections on Human Rights, Neoliberalism, and the World Order,” 159.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Lingaas, “Imagined Identities: Defining the Racial Group in the Crime of Genocide,” 93.

Having said this, I will argue that the policing practices satisfy the -first six- stages of classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation and polarisation.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, I will also take into consideration Ervin Staub's definition that mentions indirect genocide,<sup>20</sup> and coin this with Stanton's stages of genocide. I believe that systematic targeting by the police has both directly lead to the killing of people of the group, as well as has indirectly created conditions that are leading to the potential destruction of this group. This study's analysis hopes to support the concerns raised by both scholars and activists that have placed the black experience in the genocide framework. It also aims to validate Stanton's stages in identifying early warning signs of genocide.<sup>21</sup> This thesis is written at a time when the BLM-movement is still on going and police brutality has not ended, causing reason to continue worry for the lives of black Americans, and to raise the alarms.

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<sup>19</sup> Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide."

<sup>20</sup> Staub defines genocide as: "[...] genocide is an attempt to exterminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or political group, either directly through murder or indirectly by creating conditions that lead to the group's destruction," Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> According to Stanton, there are 10 stages of genocide: classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination, and denial, this can be found in: Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide."

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to demonstrate the key arguments that constitute the foundation of my research question. Therefore, I will firstly define genocide and introduce the various scholars and streams within genocide studies. Secondly, I will go over relevant alternative streams of thought within the field, namely: political violence, settler colonialism, and black genocide. Thirdly, I will provide a brief history on policing in the US, as well as familiarise the reader with the contemporary activist debate regarding the perception of the police under the slogan of All Cops Are Bastards (ACAB). Lastly, I will analyse the IR angle, with a focus on the rule of race.

### 2.1 Genocide: Definitions & Debates

The term genocide was first coined by Raphael Lemkin, who was “born in 1900 into a Polish-speaking Jewish family of tenant farmers in Imperial Russia.”<sup>22</sup> Lemkin was familiar with anti-Semitism and violence, which is pivotal because his youth experience and trauma were what motivated him to study further and seek to comprehend why his group of people were being treated in this extremely poor manner. Lemkin was especially affected by the Holocaust and this became the foundation of his work and the creation of the term genocide, as well as the normative definition and assumption of what genocide entails. The term was first put on paper in 1944 in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*.<sup>23</sup> The word “genocide” was created by combining *genos*, which means race, and *cide*, which means killing.<sup>24</sup> Essentially, genocide constitutes the killing of a group. This definition was taken even further when the United Nations (UN) formed the Genocide Convention in 1948, and “proscribed it as an international crime.”<sup>25</sup> The definition under the Convention goes as follows: “Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, [...]”<sup>26</sup> The institutionalisation of genocide has on the one hand been beneficial, but on the other hand detrimental, as “the rise of the International Criminal Court, as one of the foremost institutions for transitional justice, facilitated the increasing focus on the “exceptional” nature of violence which includes acts of genocide.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Irvin-Erickson, “Genocide Discourses: American and Russian Strategic Narratives of Conflict in Iraq and Ukraine,” 17.

<sup>23</sup> Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Nations, “United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.”

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Regilme, “Genocide and Transitional Justice,” 113.

Consequently, many scholars have voiced their discontent with this conception of genocide. I have classified two categories of genocide scholars: 1) 'exclusivist' scholars (those that wish to restrict), and 2) 'inclusivist' scholars (those that wish to broaden). On the one hand, scholars such as Leo Kuper and William Schabas have been advocating for a more restricted definition of genocide, as they believe that broadening the term is counterproductive and potentially harmful. According to Dahlia Simangan, Kuper argues for "a more restricted or careful application of the term in order to prevent negative consequences for the adjudication of international crimes and to preserve analytical precision, among other reasons."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Schabas points out "[...] expansion reduced the historic onus on genocide to cover a much broader range of serious human rights violations than had been intended by the drafters of the Convention in 1948. To the extent that crimes against humanity and war crimes properly addressed the bulk of gross human rights violations, even in peacetime, the crime of genocide could be focused on its original, and relatively narrow, vocation."<sup>29</sup> Though Glanville does not seem to have a preference for the inclusion or exclusion of the term, he does propose that the word genocide has significantly lost its power over the years; the reason being that it has become dissociated from legal obligations and political expectations to "do something."<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, there is a myriad of scholars that argue for the opposite. Instead of opting for an exclusive application of genocide, they promote a more inclusive definition. Israel Charny's definition goes as follows: "The mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defencelessness and helplessness of the victim."<sup>31</sup> This definition escapes the flaw of the UN Convention by recognising victim groups that were not mentioned in the Convention and also does not emphasise the need for *intent*. This line of argument is supported and extended by other scholars such as Alexander Hinton, Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, Dirk Moses, Karin Björnson, Helen Fein and Hassan Kakar. According to Hinton: "Genocide Convention "should have been more broadly defined to include the destruction of any sort of group defined by the protagonists in the genocide."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Chalk and Jonassohn also attempt to redefine genocide as they wish to include groups excluded in the Convention. They have defined the group "[...] group and membership as are

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<sup>28</sup> Simangan, "Is the Philippine 'War on Drugs' an Act of Genocide?" 7.

<sup>29</sup> Schabas, "The International Legal Prohibition of Genocide Comes of Age," 47.

<sup>30</sup> Glanville, "Is 'Genocide' Still a Powerful Word?" 482.

<sup>31</sup> Charny, *Encyclopedia of Genocide [2 Volumes]*, page 7.

<sup>32</sup> Hinton, "Critical Genocide Studies," 9.

defined by the perpetrator, arguing that ultimately the group to be destroyed is defined by those targeting the group.”<sup>33</sup> This echoes Björnson’s definition, “Genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the group.”<sup>34</sup> Fein’s definition is slightly more specific, as she stresses all the ways in which a state is able to destroy a group. Hence, according to her “genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator [usually the state] to physically destroy a collectivity directly (through mass or selective murders and calculable physical destruction...) or through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members.”<sup>35</sup> As for Kakar, what are most important are a centralised authority, as well as pathological individuals and criminals.<sup>36</sup> Even though there are pre-conditions to genocide, in themselves they do not trigger genocide, ergo Kakar states: “[...] the perpetrators need a strong, centralized authority and bureaucratic organization as well as pathological individuals and criminals. Also required is a campaign of vilification and dehumanization of the victims by the perpetrators, [...]”<sup>37</sup> The attention to the special type of destruction by the state is also reiterated by Irving Louis Horowitz, as he believes that the state uses genocide as a mechanism for national harmony.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Moses would agree with the point raised about national harmony, as he argues for a somewhat distinct angle of genocide. Instead of focusing on race-hatred, Moses points out that genocide acts as a security measure and is governed by political logics, rather than race logics.<sup>39</sup>

Lastly, in order to get a complete overview of influential scholars in the field of Genocide Studies, it is imperative to examine Gregory Stanton’s *stages of genocide*, that exists of 10 stages: 1) classification; 2) symbolisation; 3) discrimination; 4) dehumanisation; 5) organisation; 6) polarisation; 7) preparation; 8) persecution; 9) extermination; 10) denial.<sup>40</sup> Stanton has introduced a mechanism to the field, which allows for observing early signs of genocide and introduces ways to prevent the stages from developing. This framework is extremely crucial, as it shows that genocide does not happen at once but rather is a process that can be reverted and possibly diminished. What is noteworthy here is the fact that genocide should not simply be reduced to statistics on how many people have been killed, or the mere fact that people are being killed. This is reflected in Benjamin Meiches’s argument

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<sup>33</sup> Charny, *Encyclopedia of Genocide [2 Volumes]*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> Jonassohn and Björnson, *Genocide and Gross Human Rights Violations in Comparative Perspective*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Fein, *Accounting for Genocide After 1945*, 81.

<sup>36</sup> Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*, 175.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Charny, *Encyclopedia of Genocide [2 Volumes]*, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Moses, “Revisiting a Founding Assumption of Genocide Studies,” 293.

<sup>40</sup> “10 Stages of Genocide.”

as well, since he points out that there are problems with defining the act of mass killing as the priority in studying genocide. He argues that firstly, by focusing on mass killings, a gap arises as there is little attention aimed at the conditions that foster these killings.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, by centralising mass killings other notions of destruction are rejected.<sup>42</sup> Lastly, this perception disguises the “creative dimension of destructive processes.”<sup>43</sup> Finally, Ervin Staub’s definition introduces the difference between a direct and indirect genocide. According to Staub: “[...] genocide is an attempt to exterminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or political group, either directly through murder or indirectly by creating conditions that lead to the group's destruction.”<sup>44</sup> This is of extreme importance, because it highlights the early stages of genocide as mentioned by Stanton by allowing for an understanding of genocide through studying the conditions that make life insufferable.

What can be concluded is that genocide is a highly contested term, and most scholars in the field have skewed its definition. Both the restriction and broadening of the term have advantages and disadvantages. Its restriction might make it more possible for the UN to actually do something about it, whilst the broadening helps people get justice for crimes that are being underestimated by scholars as well as politicians. In the following section, I will address three relevant scholarly alternative ideas of genocide.

## ***2.2 Alternative Genocides: Political Violence, Settler Colonialism, and Black Genocide***

Political violence and settler colonialism are good examples of features often used as, or compared to genocide. Both ideas are extremely substantial to the case study of this thesis, seeing that one might argue that black Americans are facing political violence rather than genocide and the issue at hand is rooted in settler colonialism, and will therefore be examined further. Besides these two alternatives, black genocide will also be discussed, for this literature is essential to understanding the reason for this research question and study.

### *Political Violence*

Strauss places genocide within the broader study of political violence, considering that generally speaking the two studies have been considered as individual strands of studies rather than considering genocide to be a form of political violence. The most exceptional feature of genocide that differs from regular political violence is the element of group-selectivity.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, another distinguishing feature of genocide is power-asymmetry, as

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<sup>41</sup> Meiches, *The Politics of Annihilation*, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Meiches, *The Politics of Annihilation*, 109..

<sup>44</sup> Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

the perpetrator is the dominant force of power and therefore the victims are subordinates.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, Strauss mentions a striking notion, namely that violence in genocide is the ends to the mean, in contrast to for example terrorism and civil war where violence is “communicative.”<sup>47</sup> More importantly, he argues that group destruction is chosen, instead of for instance negotiated, as the dominant group fears destruction from the subordinate group. Hence, this goes along with the belief of ideology as the dominant group views their position within society is ideologically justified.<sup>48</sup> Having said this, Strauss concludes that in order for Genocide Studies to develop, it needs to recognise genocide as an important form of political violence. In addition, in order for the field of Genocide Studies to grasp the theory in more depth, it is required for the study to stop isolating itself from other studies.<sup>49</sup>

### *Settler Colonialism*

Shaw introduces settler colonialism, as he is curious about the alternative approaches to genocide and the role of the international community. Manus Midlarsky is introduced as he states that “[...] the 'international context' can be 'critical in either promoting or abetting genocide, or preventing it altogether ... Events occurring within a single country are not sufficient for genocide to occur ... It is the regional or international context that is crucial.”<sup>50</sup> Mark Levene is another great contributor to the debates surrounding the role of IR and according to him “the “system” of nation-states and competition is the root cause of modern genocide.”<sup>51</sup> Yet, Strauss centralises the argument by stating: “The problem of the international relations of genocide is best encapsulated, therefore, not by abstract 'system' analysis, but by theorizing specific types of genocidal context in the context of constantly mutating international politics.”<sup>52</sup> Settler colonialism can be observed as the beginning of modern genocide. Even Lemkin himself ““hints that genocide is *intrinsically* colonial and that therefore settler colonialism is *intrinsically genocidal*.”<sup>53</sup> Examining colonial genocide and settler colonialism allows for a broader understanding of genocide, because it questions not only the “specific relations between genocides, but also the wider complexes of social and international relations in which these are embedded.”<sup>54</sup> Perhaps, the most fascinating conclusion that one can draw from these debates is that genocide and its key aspects, such as

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<sup>46</sup> Straus, ““Destroy Them to Save Us”: Theories of Genocide and the Logics of Political Violence,” 552.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 554.

<sup>48</sup> Straus, ““Destroy Them to Save Us”: Theories of Genocide and the Logics of Political Violence,” 555.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 558.

<sup>50</sup> Shaw, *Genocide and International Relations*, 49.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 59.

‘ethnic group’, ‘nation’, and ‘international’, are rather fluid and therefore each example of genocide or potential genocide should be researched with much detail to the circumstances and the context.

### *Black Genocide*

The topic of black genocide is highly charged as well as controversial. This debate legally dates back to 1951, when activist William Patterson presented the UN with a petition with the title *We Charge Genocide*.<sup>55</sup> The petition, consisting of over 250 documents, accused the US government of committing genocide against black people.<sup>56</sup> Even though it could be argued that there are other groups of people that are targeted by the US government,<sup>57</sup> hierarchically speaking black people face the worst conditions and this can be traced back to *eugenics*.<sup>58</sup> Francis Galton first coined this term in 1883, and he defined the term as such: “the study of all agencies under human control which can improve or impair the racial quality of future generations.”<sup>59</sup> Essentially, eugenics can be used as a tool to justify power imbalances and the killing of the group that has been labelled “undesirable.” It is a very powerful tool to stimulate national ideologies and defend racism. As eugenics became popular, American scientist started conducting research and comparing black Americans to white Americans, and concluding: “blacks as a group are inferior to whites in intellect.”<sup>60</sup> Moreover, by adopting this notion, scientists developed the idea that genetic factors decide human behaviour and ergo the entire black race is lesser than both the yellow and white race.<sup>61</sup>

The era of slavery was occurred prior to the eugenics theory, and it could be argued that eugenics is the continuation of the ideology of slavery. Slavery itself has set the tone and built the foundation for the genocide debates, as lynching and segregation can be regarded as genocidal acts.<sup>62</sup> The most influential scholars amongst those studying this topic are Ann Curthoys, John Decker, Pero Dagbovie, and Adam Jones. All these scholars agree that the African-American struggle has been neglected in Genocide Studies, and make compelling arguments as to why historical events, such as slavery, should be considered genocide. Both Curthoys and Decker have made comparative analyses between Nazi’s in Germany and White Supremacists in the US.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, Jones has made compelling arguments stating that

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<sup>55</sup> Helps, “‘We Charge Genocide’: Revisiting Black Radicals’ Appeals to the World Community 1,” 2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> For example, indigenous people, which has been argued for in by Hinton in *Annihilating Difference*.

<sup>58</sup> Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, 8-10.

<sup>59</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race*, 438.

<sup>60</sup> Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Austin, “Review Essay: Explanation and Responsibility: Agency and Motive in Lynching and Genocide.”

<sup>63</sup> Curthoys and Docker, “The Historiography of the Holocaust,” 17.



slavery and lynching in itself should be considered genocide.<sup>64</sup> Lastly, Dagbovie specifically mentions that Genocide Studies has been wrongfully turning a blind-eye towards the African-American struggle, and this is problematic as an entire groups experience is being brushed over instead of thoroughly examined.<sup>65</sup> Though this is a good basis, I will further elaborate on the lack of studying the black experience in the Theories & Methods section.

### **2.3 Policing & ACAB**

Before analysing the policy area of policing in the US, I will go over the history of the police and most importantly the recent developments and contestations. Policing, economical welfare, and colonisation are closely linked considering that the system of policing has been reinforcing the dominant structures of the national powers.<sup>66</sup> Modern policing is especially rooted in the racial discrepancies that stem from colonial history. Historically, police enforcement was created in the name of maintaining order and stability in the growing cities. This was pivotal both for capitalism as well as slavery considering that police forces in the South were called “Slave Patrols” and were supposed to catch those fleeing and/or protesting the system.<sup>67</sup> As the police force developed over time and its definition became modernised, it became a preventative force rather than a responsive one; meaning that they act upon suspicions and little evidence, rather than act upon crimes where evidence is available.<sup>68</sup> Early American police forces were corrupt and brutal, as they were capitalising off of crime instead of fighting it. The question of whether the police should be armed or not was as controversial back in the day as it is now, and though most were against the elite won this battle.<sup>69</sup> Essentially, “From the beginning American policing has been intimately tied *not to the problem of crime*, but to exigencies and *demands of the American political economy*.”<sup>70</sup>

The recent rise of the BLM movement has sparked a conversation about defunding the police and prisons and people have started saying All Cops Are Bastards (ACAB) to voice their concerns regarding the current police enforcement. Taking into account the foundations of the police, there is legitimate reason to doubt the loyalties of the force, regardless of whether they have pleaded to protect the people or the state. If anything, modern police brutality reinforces the historical idea of what the police is in charge of, intimidating the minority in favour of the elite. The slogan of ACAB furthermore wishes to unveil that even if

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<sup>64</sup> Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Steinmetz, Schaefer, and Henderson, “Wicked Overseers: American Policing and Colonialism,” 76.

<sup>67</sup> Potter, “The History of Policing in the United States.”

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

there are such things as “good cops”, they are still operating in and for a flawed system and are therefore aiding said system. Thus, activists and influential scholars have been proposing to abolish the police and defund them. As follows, inject other sectors, such as education and healthcare, can be injected with the money that was normally granted to the police. Activists and scholars are sceptical of improvement in the current police enforcement; the system needs to be abolished for it to be transformed.<sup>71</sup> New systems can be created after the abolishment, for example, community policing, which could "improve relations between the police and the community and decentralize the police."<sup>72</sup> There is a vast body of academic literature that shows that policing has little to no impact on crime and does not provide a feeling of safety to those it promises to protect<sup>73</sup>, and the same goes for prisons, which are an extension of policing practices.<sup>74</sup> To summarise, the foundations of police practices are in need of major transformation.

#### ***2.4 International Relations and Race***

Finally, I will focus on IR and the topic of race. Branwen Gruffydd Jones’s article “Race in the Ontology of International Order” is a great source, as Jones notes that race has been unreasonably downplayed in the realm of IR. Mainstream IR tiptoes around the topic of race for a multitude of reasons, and not only is this naïve but it is also dangerous as it reinforces the hierarchical structures and normalises them by assuming that it is the natural state of IR.<sup>75</sup> Two reasons that stand out are the dominance of empiricism and the tendency to overlook history.<sup>76</sup> Leading-edge scholar Roxanne Doty, has gone beyond the notion of race as identity, which has been the normative discourse in mainstream IR, and argued that there is in fact a relationship between the international order and racialised identities.<sup>77</sup> Yet, she has not succeeded in going beyond the discursive realm and though this is relevant, it does not allow for a greater understanding of the persistence of racialised power and inequality. In order to gain a grasp of the latter, it is necessary to look at the material and structural forces at hand. Thus, instead of focusing on mainstream IR theories and ideologies, Jones pitches the realist theory of social ontology as the basis for examining the multifaceted qualities of racial oppression. This theory aligns with Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the extent that both

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<sup>71</sup> Kaba, “Opinion | Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police - The New York Times.”

<sup>72</sup> Potter, “The History of Policing in the United States.”

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Fox, “When Talking About Defunding the Police, Don’t Forget Prisons.”

<sup>75</sup> Geeta and Nair, “Introduction: Power in a Postcolonial World: Race, Gender, and Class in International Relations,” 2.

<sup>76</sup> Jones, “Race in the Ontology of International Order,” 909.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 910.

theories pay attention to the relationship between property and race.<sup>78</sup> Global capitalism is arguably the most influential actor in the creation of the system that we live in today. Though IR has discussed global capitalism and the international order, it has failed to realise the question of race and colonialism systematically.<sup>79</sup> Henceforth, Jones's article explains the following: "the current global inequalities in social power and satisfaction of needs ultimately rest on, and are routinely reproduced by, the global structure of property relations."<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, the global structure of social property relations functions as the root of the modern international order and is formally and legally, to a certain extent, reinforced and protected by powerful institutions. The complicated aspect of this is the fact that inequality is framed into the global social relations of capitalism.<sup>81</sup> Consequently, the global structure that has been created is inherently racist as the pattern of global uneven distribution of power was racially distributed, for that reason racism is inevitable or more precisely, purely implicit. This ties in with the desire to abolish the police, as the structures are inherently created to continue to cultivate hierarchical difference between the dominant and the subordinate, similar to the colonial era.

Lastly, I will turn to the role of discourse in justifying violence. I will follow Dr Salvador Regilme's conception of peace, which goes as follows: "peace is a flexible discursive tool that political actors use to rally and to mobilize support for a particular policy strategy, and in some cases, perhaps a broader revolutionary movement."<sup>82</sup> Political discourse is the formal exchange of views and beliefs in the public sphere -which refers to the non-fixed place where society, state, and market discuss their ideas- in order to advance a particular belief-system.<sup>83</sup> By constructing a discourse that justifies state-violence, governments are able to commit crimes in the name of the greater good. Even though Dr Regilme compares the cases of Colombia and the Philippines, parallels are noticeable in the US government. Similar to Colombia and the Philippines, peace is not guaranteed for the poor in the US, as the government criminalises them, thereby reinforcing an elitist view of peace.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Dr Regilme argues that "[...] it reorients the state apparatus as an instrument of violence not in the service of the state's human rights commitments to its citizens; rather, state violence exclusively reinforces the interest of incumbent presidential regime's consolidation of

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 918.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 919.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, "Race in the Ontology of International Order," 919.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 923.

<sup>82</sup> Regilme, "Visions of Peace Amidst a Human Rights Crisis: War on Drugs in Colombia and the Philippines," 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Gustafson, "The Criminalization of Poverty," 646-650.

authority, while bolstering the interests of its ruling wealthy elites.” This echoes the workings of the US police force, as it has been argued that the police force is in place to serve the state rather than protect the people.<sup>85</sup> Thus, discourse plays a pivotal role in the foundations of justifying state-violence, as it acts as an explanatory mechanism that makes it challenging for society and other nations to oppose the government’s decisions, and should be considered in the analyses of this study.

The collection of literature discussed will act as the base of this thesis and the following research methods chapter will further explain how this thesis aims to use these works and build upon them.

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<sup>85</sup> Potter, “The History of Policing in the United States.”

### Chapter 3. Theories & Methods

The main question this study aims to answer is: are the policing practices towards African Americans in the United States an act of genocide, and if so how? In response to this question, this thesis maintains two key arguments.

The first refers to Stanton’s stages of genocide, as this framework allows this thesis to study the factors that lead up to the further stages of extermination and eventually denial. I argue that the last 4 stages of genocide have not been reached yet, but there is empirical proof for the conduct of the first six, which will be analysed in the following chapter. Table 1 showcases the summary of the further analysis of the following chapter.<sup>86</sup>

**Table 1:** *Stages of Genocide*

Stage of Genocide	Definition/ Examples	Policing Practices
<b>1. Classification</b>	All cultures have categories to distinguish people into “us and them” by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality;	White vs. Black dichotomy which is perpetuated by the police; <sup>87</sup>
<b>2. Symbolisation</b>	We give names or other symbols to the classifications;	Police continue to refer to black people as the N-word, which has historical connotations of slavery; <sup>88</sup>
<b>3. Discrimination</b>	A dominant group uses law, custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups;	Institutional racism that affects black people the most; <sup>89</sup>
<b>4. Dehumanisation</b>	One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases.	“Being a young Black male is to be associated with criminality, deviousness, and violence and to be considered innately inferior, violent, and animalistic—a person who should be feared.” <sup>90</sup> Therefore black men are more likely to be killed by police officers;

<sup>86</sup> All the basic stages of, definitions, and examples of genocide have been accessed through Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>87</sup> Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 105.

<sup>88</sup> Carbado and Rock, “What Exposes African Americans to Police Violence,” 161-62.

<sup>89</sup> Carroll Massey, Vaughn Scott, and Dornbusch, “Racism without Racists: Institutional Racism in Urban Schools,” 19.

<sup>90</sup> Adedoyin et al., “The Dehumanization of Black Males by Police: Teaching Social Justice—Black Life Really Does Matter!” 115.

<b>5. Organisation</b>	Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility.	Police officers joining white supremacist groups; <sup>91</sup>
<b>6. Polarisation</b>	Motivations for targeting a group are indoctrinated through mass media.	Macro-level politics and media that perpetuate racism and the normalisation of violence against black people. <sup>92</sup>

The second set of arguments follow the footsteps of Stanton’s stages of genocide, as it utilises Staub’s definition of genocide “[...] genocide is an attempt to exterminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or political group, either directly through murder or indirectly by creating conditions that lead to the group's destruction,”<sup>93</sup> and combines Stanton’s argument with the notion of indirect genocide. As the police force has not mass murdered black people to an extent that it can be compared to other legally recognised genocides, it is necessary to look at other ways in which it has created conditions that specifically target the black community. Taking into account the history of the police force, as mentioned in the literature review, I find this thesis and its case study to be considerably relevant, as the way in which black Americans are targeted by the police are unparalleled to the ways in which other minorities are affected by policing practices.

### 3.1 Theories

The theoretical framework for these arguments is drawn from constructivist and critical approaches. The reason for this selection is the fact that constructivism in IR allows for the possibility to look beyond the central biases about human nature as well as behaviour, and it does so by introducing the concept of social construction.<sup>94</sup> The idea of social constructivism is that the identity of a state is subjected to the social construction of actors in the realm of IR. Essential to the theory is the notion of the “Self” and the “Other,” as one is able to define the self only through the existence of the other.<sup>95</sup> Alexander Wendt opposes the critiques he has received from mainstream IR scholars in his article, “Constructing International Politics.” Whereas realists assume political outcomes to reflect the reality as we see it, constructivists argue that it is naïve to consider matters such as self-help as a natural structure, but rather

<sup>91</sup> Levin, “White Supremacists and Militias Have Infiltrated Police across US, Report Says | US Policing | The Guardian.”

<sup>92</sup> Littlefield, “The Media as a System of Racialization,” 676.

<sup>93</sup> Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, 8.

<sup>94</sup> Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” 71.

<sup>95</sup> Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” 396-397.

examine it is as an effect of practice.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly, Wendt argues, “Social structures are collective phenomena that confront individuals as externally existing social facts.”<sup>97</sup> To put it simply, individuals act due to the social conditions that have been constructed by other individuals. Ergo, the mainstream idea that humans act because it is inevitable for them to do otherwise, due to human nature and other factors in IR, is rejected by constructivism. Discourse is fundamental to this theory, and both Michael Foucault and Jürgen Habermas have elaborated on this notion. For Foucault, it is important to distinguish who is included and who is excluded from the discourse.<sup>98</sup> The other big factor is power, as Foucault believes that power and knowledge are causal as power “produces and defines knowledge.”<sup>99</sup> The term “Panopticon” is one that explains the mechanism of power very well, as it is the idea of a prison where all prisoners are under the impression that they are constantly being watched due to the construction of the building. By manipulating the prisoners into believing that they are always being observed, they are mentally stimulated to behave well to avoid further punishments.<sup>100</sup> One could argue that law enforcement works similarly, and even if officers themselves are not watching there might be others who can take matters into their own hands in order to safeguard the system.<sup>101</sup> For Habermas, “discourse is not only about what you say, however; it is also about to whom you say it in the process of policy construction and political communication in the “public sphere.”<sup>102</sup> He elaborates on this topic in his book *Theory of Communicative Action*.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, Dr Salvador Regilme has elaborated on the role of discourse in state violence. Discourse can be used as a tool to generate support for seemingly questionable policies, such as justifying violence against citizens and thereby reinforcing a belief-system.<sup>104</sup> Even though discourse might seem trivial, it has the power to shape political agendas in a very significant way, by for example relocating resources to forces that benefit the government.<sup>105</sup> Essentially, political discourse is crucial in the legitimisation process of violence, and it is very effective. Political actors can profit from discourse and they do so by “exploiting the inherent ambiguity of counterterror discourses by providing simplified and perhaps fabricated causal explanations, and in doing so, they attempted to legitimize dramatic

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<sup>96</sup> Wendt, “Constructing International Politics,” 74.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>98</sup> Stahl, “Whose Discourse? A Comparison of the Foucauldian and Habermasian Concepts of Discourse in Critical IS Research.” 4330.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Brunson, “‘Police Don’t Like Black People’: African-American Young Men’s Accumulated Police Experiences,” 73.

<sup>102</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse,” 7.

<sup>103</sup> Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

<sup>104</sup> Regilme, “Visions of Peace Amidst a Human Rights Crisis: War on Drugs in Colombia and the Philippines,” 3.

<sup>105</sup> Regilme, “Does US Foreign Aid Undermine Human Rights? The ‘Thaksinification’ of the War on Terror Discourses and the Human Rights Crisis in Thailand, 2001 to 2006,” 87.

policy shifts from the status quo.”<sup>106</sup> Though the counterterror discourse has been applied to cases relating to Colombia, the Philippines, and Thailand by Dr Regilme, it can also serve as a lens for this thesis. The criminalisation of black Americans can also be viewed in the counterterror framework,<sup>107</sup> and this thesis will further analyse this in the following chapter.

Discourse analysis has also been introduced in Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is a study that centres on the questions regarding race and reality. CRT originated in the 1970s, “from the work of lawyers, activists, and legal scholars as a new strategy for dealing with the emergence of a post-civil rights racial structure in the United States.”<sup>108</sup> This theory is valuable as it allows for a new framework to examine the world with. “As race relations continue to shape our lives in the new century—setting the stage for new tragedies and new hopes—critical race theory has become an indispensable tool for making sense of it all.”<sup>109</sup> This theory allows us to see and fundamentally understand racism, as it explains and points out how racism has become systemised, and how it impacts those who fall victim to this process. Moreover, CRT is interested in the relationship between race and oppression, and how this has been (socially) constructed.<sup>110</sup> Here discourse comes into play, as it allows for an understanding of how race has been constructed and weaponised. Another theory in CRT is Grounded Theory, which is created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss to “generate theory from real life experience.”<sup>111</sup> In their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss challenge normative standards of conducting research, and cultivate a theory that promotes methods stemming from lived experiences rather than “rigorous quantitative methods.”<sup>112</sup>

Discourse, CRT, and Grounded Theory theories can explain the dynamics of race and reality, as they can dig deeper and explain mechanisms in a way that differs from mainstream theories that only touch upon the surface of issues. The following section will discuss which methods will be implemented in this thesis

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<sup>106</sup> Regilme, “A Human Rights Tragedy: Strategic Localization of US Foreign Policy in Colombia,” 358.

<sup>107</sup> Dickey, *Securing the City: Inside America’s Best Counterterror Force--The NYPD*, 45-50.

<sup>108</sup> Malagon, Huber, and Velez, “Our Experiences, Our Methods: Using Grounded Theory to Inform a Critical Race Theory Methodology,” 255.

<sup>109</sup> Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, xxi.

<sup>110</sup> Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 277.

<sup>111</sup> Malagon, Huber, and Velez, “Our Experiences, Our Methods: Using Grounded Theory to Inform a Critical Race Theory Methodology,” 259.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 260.



### 3.2 Methods

This thesis elaborates on Stanton's stages of genocide, looking at the first six stages: classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation and polarisation. It also combines this with the definition of genocide by Straub, who explained indirect genocide, which is the idea of creating conditions set out to destroy a group. This thesis examines how policing practices have acted according to these stages of genocide. Each stage is subject to an individual discourse and CRT analysis. As this study wishes to emphasise both the role of discourse as well as the relevance of CRT, it employs discourse analysis as well as grounded theory analysis.

This study will turn in particular to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as introduced by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough's understanding of critical discourse, "The critical approach has its theoretical underpinnings in views of the relationship between 'micro' events (including verbal events) and 'macro' structures which see the latter as both the conditions for and the products of the former and which therefore reject rigid barriers between the study of the 'micro' (of which the study of discourse is a part) and the study of the 'macro',"<sup>113</sup> will serve as the starting point for this thesis in order to analyse how policing practices have been the weaponisation enforcement of racist discourse, ergo acting as the preparatory stages genocide.

Discourse comes in a variety of categories and has been used as a tool to argue for different causes.<sup>114</sup> Benjamin Meiches has also been a contributor to the racial discourse in genocide debate, and his examination of *We Charge Genocide* explains how genocide discourse has excluded racial hierarchy, and therefore "the possibility of black and indigenous genocide, and the exercise of forms of racist power in humanitarian institutions."<sup>115</sup> Moreover, his article highlights "the persistent rejection of claims about the formative impact of racism in mass violence in global politics."<sup>116</sup> This study aims to contribute to this debate, and therefore focuses on the diverse discourses, such as police reports, remarks, and personal encounters. The focus here is on analysing key patterns that fit according to Stanton's stages of genocide, and to use a method that aims "to be an agent of change, and does so in solidarity with those who need such change most."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse," 309.

<sup>115</sup> Meiches, "The Charge of Genocide: Racial Hierarchy, Political Discourse, and the Evolution of International Institutions," 22.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Dijk, *Discourse as Structure and Process*, 23.

Both primary and secondary sources serve as the foundation for this study. Interviews and opinion pieces will mainly be derived from news media outlets, as well as survey archives.<sup>118</sup> The media sources that will be examined are both written news media such as newspapers, for example, the New York Times, as well as news channel media, such as CNN and BBC. Besides the ‘traditional’ news media, social media websites, such as Twitter, will also be analysed as this thesis aims to include voices that might not be considered in mainstream IR papers. The reason for this is that this thesis wishes to shed light on an issue that has been discussed amongst individuals for a long period, but general IR scholars have neglected these views. Therefore I will use data triangulation, which allows this thesis to “involve the collection of data from different types of people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data.”<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, secondary sources and reflected writings will guide the analysis of the selected articles. As mentioned in the literature review, various scholars in the fields of (African) American studies and CRT have studied the case of historical black genocide, and their works and outcomes will be assumed as the underlying conditions for this analysis.

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<sup>118</sup> Lloyd, “For Black Americans, 41% of Police Encounters Not Positive.”; Gallup, Inc., “Blacks Divided on Whether Police Treat Minorities Fairly.”

<sup>119</sup> Carter et al., “The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research,” 545.

## **Chapter 4. Analysis: Stages of Genocide & Indirect Genocide US Context**

This chapter aims to analyse how policing practices fit the following six stages of genocide: classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation, and polarisation. Lastly, it will analyse how policing practices contribute to the indirect causes of genocide against black Americans.

### **4.1 Classification**

Classification is the first step of genocide. According to Stanton, classification occurs when the dominant power distinguishes between “us” and “them,” by race, religion, ethnicity, or nationality.<sup>120</sup> This dichotomy divides society and is predominantly prominent in polarised societies such as Rwanda, where the difference between Hutu and Tutsi was emphasised.<sup>121</sup> CRT has observed that in the US race remains significant, as black Americans continue to experience oppression at the hands of white people.<sup>122</sup> Even though American police officers have pledged to safeguard citizens regardless of race, they continue to perpetuate the racial divide by deeming black lives as worthless.<sup>123</sup> This is notable, as research has proven that police officers are more likely to shoot black people than white people.<sup>124</sup> This stems from the slavery era, as well as the Jim Crow laws, that segregated society and ranked black people as second-class citizens.<sup>125</sup> Even though Jim Crow laws have been abolished, Michelle Alexander argues that “we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.”<sup>126</sup>

### **4.2 Symbolisation**

The second stage, symbolisation, entails giving names or other symbols to the oppressed group.<sup>127</sup> “Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to dehumanization.”<sup>128</sup>

“Names have always been a problem for black people in America ... our names bespeak the tangles of American culture—miscegenation, issues of property and ownership, the peculiar violence of our past—in the same way our skins do.

—C. S. Giscombe, *Into and Out of Dislocation*, 2000”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>121</sup> Simangan, “Is the Philippine ‘War on Drugs’ an Act of Genocide?” 8.

<sup>122</sup> Yancy, *Black Bodies, White Gazes*, 105.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>124</sup> Correll et al., “The Police Officer’s Dilemma: A Decade of Research on Racial Bias in the Decision to Shoot,” 202.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander, “The New Jim Crow,” 8-10.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>127</sup> Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

In the case of black Americans, the name that is given to individuals in the group is the N-word that unsurprisingly stems from the slavery era,<sup>130</sup> as the white oppressor decided to label black people in a way that belittled them, and consequently reinforced white supremacy.<sup>131</sup> Black Americans have been able to take back the power of the word over the course of time, and therefore it has become problematic for non-black people to use this word.<sup>132</sup> However, police officers still maintain the use of this word when addressing black people. Rodney King's memoir, who unfortunately is known for his case of police brutality,<sup>133</sup> serves as a great example, as he recounts hearing police officers say: "Take this, [N-word]," as well as "[N-word] run, we're gonna kill you, [N-word] run[.]"<sup>134</sup> By still using this word, police officers choose to remain ignorant and racist, and choose to ignore the wishes of black people.

#### **4.3 Discrimination**

Stanton did not include this stage from the get-go, but he added discrimination later on and this stage focuses on "the dominant group uses law, custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups. The powerless group may not be accorded full civil rights, voting rights, or even citizenship."<sup>135</sup> Interestingly enough, the hot topic amongst activists has been systematic/institutional racism in the US. What does it mean for racism to be entrenched in the system and its institutions? For black Americans it means having to expect lower life expectancy,<sup>136</sup> fearing whether your children will make it home or whether they are the victims of police shootings,<sup>137</sup> not getting the job/ education because of your race and facing discrimination even if the desired place within the institution is obtained,<sup>138</sup> having difficulties with housing and healthcare,<sup>139</sup> to just name a few. Even though systematic racism has been denied and opposed by conservatives, the consequences of this system are indisputable, especially in the wake of Covid-19. Megan McArdle, a conservative columnist for The Washington Post, explains how black people are discriminated against in the labour market, causing them to have to work lower-wage physical jobs, where the corona-virus was able to

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<sup>129</sup> Asim, *The N Word: [Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why]*, 21.

<sup>130</sup> Considering the weight of the word, and the fact that I am not black myself I will not be typing the N-word out. For context, Asim does mention on page 23 of *The N Word: [Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why]*, that 'Most lexicographers trace both words to "niger," the Latin word for "black.'

<sup>131</sup> Asim, *The N Word: [Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why]*, 25-27.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 420-24.

<sup>133</sup> Davis, "Rodney King and the Decriminalization of Police Brutality in America," 276.

<sup>134</sup> Carbado and Rock, "What Exposes African Americans to Police Violence," 161-62.

<sup>135</sup> Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide."

<sup>136</sup> Bond and Herman, "Lagging Life Expectancy for Black Men: A Public Health Imperative."

<sup>137</sup> Meadows-Fernandez, "The Unbearable Grief of Black Mothers - Vox."

<sup>138</sup> West, "Five Black Voices on the Importance of Discussing Racism with International Students | NAFSA."

<sup>139</sup> Solomon, Maxwell, and Castro, "Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation - Center for American Progress."

spread more easily whereas white workers had the option to telecommute. She concludes that systematic racism is indeed deadly, and should not be underestimated by fellow conservatives. This example was chosen, as even some conservatives have started to realise that what is happening in the US should not be normalised.

The police force also has its own role in this system. Even though one might think that misconduct by police officers has to do with the individual rather than the system, Dr Robin Oakley argues that "[...] it is quite unrealistic that minority concerns about differentials in stop and search, about the police response to racial attacks, and police demeanour towards visible minorities generally, could be the result of actions solely of a small number of individuals. At the very least, they must be the result of tendencies among a much larger number of officers, if not the outcome of 'normal policing'."<sup>140</sup> Moreover, institutional racism manifests in three forms: official policies, routine practices, and informal culture.<sup>141</sup> The first form, official policies, suggests that the overarching organisation has implemented policies or advocates for normalising differentiating based on race.<sup>142</sup> Considering that the history of US police forces is rooted in racial differentiation, it is unsurprising that there are still remains of racial bias in the force. Secondly, routine practices are practices that might not be inherently racist, but there does appear to be a pattern as to who is chosen by the police to exercise such practices with; think of random-searches. Black people have notoriously fallen victim to random-searches.<sup>143</sup> Lastly, the final form builds on the second form, as informal culture allows for police officers to act on racial bias and suspicion. The informal culture might even function as a justifying mechanism, as black men are criminalised due to racial stereotypes and therefore police officers are more likely to act on their suspicions. Thus, "the presence of unconscious racial assumptions or stereotypes which "criminalize" young black people might also reduce the readiness, when a young black person is a victim of violence, for this to be considered by an attending police officer as a potential case of unprovoked racial attack."<sup>144</sup> Hence, there is a clear pattern that clearly shows that even though there might be unbiased and justice-seeking police officers, the system itself is flawed, ignorant, and partisan.

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<sup>140</sup> Oakley, "Institutional Racism and the Police Service," 286.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 290-91.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 291.

<sup>143</sup> Norris et al., "Black and Blue: An Analysis of the Influence of Race on Being Stopped by the Police," 208.

<sup>144</sup> Oakley, "Institutional Racism and the Police Service," 291.

#### **4.4 Dehumanisation**

According to Stanton, the previous stages are rather harmless unless they are coupled with dehumanisation. The reason for this is that the “out” group is equated with animals, which denies their humanity and therefore makes it easier for the “in” group to commit violent crimes against them.<sup>145</sup> At this point, it is quite predictable that the slavery era has played a major role in this stage. “Being a young Black male is to be associated with criminality, deviousness, and violence and to be considered innately inferior, violent, and animalistic—a person who should be feared.”<sup>146</sup> A common comparison that is bestowed upon black people is that of the similarity between blacks and apes.<sup>147</sup> This association is not solely based on physical features but also questions the IQ and cognitive assessment of black people.<sup>148</sup> Phillip Goff and colleagues conducted a research that even “[...] shows that the implicit Black-ape association leads to greater endorsement of police violence against Black suspects, and influences state decisions to execute Black convicts.”<sup>149</sup> Henceforth, the dehumanisation of black people has been entrenched in the system, and this discourse has negative consequences as it justifies inhumane behaviour against black people. The reason is that according to this dehumanised discourse, they are not worthy of the same treatment as white people as they are not considered to be part of the same group. Dehumanisation continues to fracture the possibility for black people to be fully recognised and accepted as a fellow human being, and it continues to corrupt the minds of white supremacists, which will be discussed next.

#### **4.5 Organisation**

“Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility.”<sup>150</sup> Police forces are part of the state-apparatus and are therefore funded and organised by the state.<sup>151</sup> Two elements of the larger debate are in need of investigation, the first being the debate regarding defunding the police,<sup>152</sup> and the second being the problem of white supremacy groups and individuals.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>146</sup> Adedoyin et al., “The Dehumanization of Black Males by Police: Teaching Social Justice—Black Life Really Does Matter!” 115.

<sup>147</sup> Owusu-Bempah, “Race and Policing in Historical Context: Dehumanization and the Policing of Black People in the 21st Century,” 28.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>151</sup> Beardall, “Abolish, Defund, and the Prospects of Citizen Oversight after George Floyd.”

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Levin, “White Supremacists and Militias Have Infiltrated Police across US, Report Says | US Policing | The Guardian.”

BLM activists have been advocating for defunding the police, which might sound unimaginable when hearing it at first, but once unpacked there is a logical line of thought to the argument. Police forces receive a great amount of taxpayer money, and the idea of defunding the police is to redirect this money to other government services such as healthcare and housing.<sup>154</sup> This would not only significantly improve the lives of numerous Americans; it would also fundamentally change the system of policing as the US knows it. By injecting communities and services with money, that they are currently lacking, the greater scheme of the idea is that policing becomes irrelevant, since aiding people rather than punishing people will solve the current problems of criminality.<sup>155</sup> Though it might sound naïve to think that a society without a policing force would function better, there is unprecedented support for this cause that has been shared and advocated for both in news media as well as social media.<sup>156</sup> Not only would defunding the police mean restructuring an out-dated institution that is rooted in racial inequality, but it also would cultivate a greater feeling of safeness for black people.<sup>157</sup> However, it is important to point out that as much as there is support, there is also opposition by ethnic minorities that fear a society without police and instead propose to work together with the police rather than cut them off.<sup>158</sup> The proposition of defunding the police is still a working progress, but if implemented it would considerably change American society, either for the better or as some think for the worse.

Another more daunting discussion is that of white militia and its connection to the police. It is a known fact to the FBI that there are ties between police officers and white supremacists that wish to act upon their racial biases.<sup>159</sup> “The government’s response to these known connections of law enforcement officers to violent racist and militant groups has been strikingly insufficient.”<sup>160</sup> By allowing far-right white supremacists to co-exist and work together with the police, I would argue that it encourages fellow white supremacists, those who are not part of the police force, to act upon their ideology and take matters into their own hands. An example of this is the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, who was jogging when two white men who passed him found Ahmaud to be suspicious and therefore took matters into their hands by shooting him three times.<sup>161</sup> It took “74 days following Facebook and Twitter

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<sup>154</sup> Beardall, “Abolish, Defund, and the Prospects of Citizen Oversight after George Floyd.”

<sup>155</sup> Andrew, “Defunding Police: What It Means and What It Could Look like - CNN.”

<sup>156</sup> Azar, “In The Fight to Defund, Social Media Is the Mobilizer.”

<sup>157</sup> Fernandez, “News & Commentary | American Civil Liberties Union.”

<sup>158</sup> McGregor, “‘Defund the Police’ Is a Slogan That Doesn’t Help Real People Who Need Safe Neighborhoods.”

<sup>159</sup> German, “Hidden in Plain Sight: Racism, White Supremacy, and Far-Right Militancy in Law Enforcement | Brennan Center for Justice.”

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> “Ahmaud Arbery: What Do We Know about the Case? - BBC News.”

outcries for the perpetrators to be arrested,”<sup>162</sup> and I think that reinforces and proves that the system was made by for white supremacy and privilege. By neglecting the FBI’s research that proves the existence of white supremacy in the force and looking the other way, it seems as though higher officials are indirectly sending out a message saying: it is not problematic to hate black people and to take on this racial bias them when deemed necessary, because there will be little repercussions, no matter if you are part of the police force or not.

#### **4.6 Polarisation**

The final stage for this paper and the sixth for Stanton, polarisation, focuses on “motivations for targeting a group that are indoctrinated through mass media.”<sup>163</sup> This further divides society, as well as allows for the perpetrators to “continue their activities amidst a lack of public consensus.”<sup>164</sup> This part will dissect both mass media, as well as the social media of former President Trump, as I consider his tweets as, if not more, powerful than social media in motivating and promoting the targeting of black Americans.

“One of the primary vehicles by which and through which racial identities are preserved is through the mass media.”<sup>165</sup> CRT further contends that media acts as “a hegemonic device communicating the racialized “black/white” hierarchy,”<sup>166</sup> and it does so by maintaining the social construction of race, and the prominence of whiteness as superior. Furthermore, it reinforces stereotypes, as black people are predominantly portrayed as “sexual aggressive athletes, thugs, or savages,”<sup>167</sup> and the darker a person is the more they are dehumanised.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, media preserves the idea that the system is not inherently flawed, rather when for example police officers are found guilty of misconduct, they are mere “isolated incidents.”<sup>169</sup> Yet, when minorities commit crimes, it becomes representative for every individual in the group that they belong to.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, the media is guilty of motivating racial bias and stereotypes, accordingly normalising violence against those considered to be the dangerous, animal-like “Other.”

Moreover, former President Trump's Twitter account has become the centre of attention, as he is notoriously known for his blatantly aggressive and racist tweets.<sup>171</sup> There

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<sup>162</sup> Itheme, “Systemic Racism, Police Brutality of Black People, and the Use of Violence in Quelling Peaceful Protests in America,” 239.

<sup>163</sup> Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide.”

<sup>164</sup> Simangan, “Is the Philippine ‘War on Drugs’ an Act of Genocide?” 11.

<sup>165</sup> Coates and Morrison, *Covert Racism*, 8.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>168</sup> Littlefield, “The Media as a System of Racialization,” 676.

<sup>169</sup> Coates and Morrison, *Covert Racism*, 51.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Boczkowski and Papacharissi, *Trump and the Media*, 30.



are loads of tweets to unpack, but I am mainly interested in whether Trump's tweets have helped justify violent policing practices, or whether they have helped the cause of BLM. Therefore, I will analyse two contested tweets regarding the BLM protests that were at their heights in May.

On May 29<sup>th</sup>, Trump tweeted "These **THUGS** are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd, and I won't let that happen. Just spoke to Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, **when the looting starts, the shooting starts**. Thank you!"<sup>172</sup> Two things stand out in this tweet; firstly Trump refers to the protesters, who are predominantly black, as thugs. By framing black people as peace-disturbers and criminals, Trump is able to justify the following statement that he makes, which is when the looting starts, the shooting starts. This phrase has a history of racism, as it was "being used before by a white police chief in response to civil unrest and a segregationist politician."<sup>173</sup> This is a clear example of how discourse is used as a tool to generate support and normalise violence against citizens, thereby reinforcing the racist-belief system,<sup>174</sup> and a micro-verbal event that has led to the macro-level racist genocidal policing practices.<sup>175</sup>

The following day, the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, Trump was glorifying violence once again, as he tweeted: "They let the "protesters" scream & rant as much as they wanted, but whenever someone got too frisky or out of line, **they would quickly come down on them, hard - didn't know what hit them**. [...] nobody came close to breaching the fence. If they had they would have been greeted with the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons, I have ever seen. That's when people would have been really badly hurt, at least. Many Secret Service agents just waiting for action. **"We put the young ones on the front line, sir, they love it, and good practice."**"<sup>176</sup> Not only does this tweet sensationalise violence, but it also shows that officers and agent are taught from to get-to that violence is the answer. The last line of the tweet amplifies this, as the "young ones" seem to be passionate about "coming down on them, hard."

Hitherto, the former president had a pivotal role in the polarisation of society, and his political discourse justified violence against black people, which he never addressed as his citizens, but rather used derogatory terms such as thugs and looters.

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<sup>172</sup> Trump, Twitter Post, May 2020, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266231100780744704>.

<sup>173</sup> González-Ramírez, "The Ever-Growing List of Trump's Most Racist Rants | by Andrea González-Ramírez | GEN."

<sup>174</sup> Regilme, "Visions of Peace Amidst a Human Rights Crisis: War on Drugs in Colombia and the Philippines," 3.

<sup>175</sup> Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 28.

<sup>176</sup> Trump, "Twitter Post," May 2020, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1266711224391213056>.

#### 4.7 Indirect Causes of Genocide

Lastly, I am going to turn to Staub's definition of genocide, "[...] genocide is an attempt to exterminate a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, or political group, either directly through murder or indirectly by creating conditions that lead to the group's destruction."<sup>177</sup> Even though black Americans are not directly going through the final stages of genocide: preparation, persecution, extermination, and denial,<sup>178</sup> I will briefly analyse how black Americans have been undergoing an indirect genocide at the hands of police for decades.

As mentioned in the analysis of Stanton's stages of genocide, black Americans face systematic oppression, which has led to detrimental consequences that go beyond the mere killing of people of the group. Black mental health is paramount in this discussion, as black people are far more likely to suffer from mental illness due to the racial oppression and police brutality they face.<sup>179</sup> Research has shown that not only those who come into direct contact with police end up suffering from PTSD, but also black people who are aware of this trend and ergo fear that they are next.<sup>180</sup> Fear has become normalised on both white and black ends, as black people cannot enjoy anything without fearing that a white person might fear them and call the police on them; whether it is a group of black people barbequing,<sup>181</sup> black people going for a jog,<sup>182</sup> or black children being at the wrong place at the wrong time,<sup>183</sup> to name a few examples.

Essentially, black people are fighting on a daily basis to overcome stereotypes in order to be able to get the job they want, to get the same education, healthcare and housing as their white counterparts, to not get shot by police officers, and to not be feared by white people. Though there is no direct mass killing that is causing the diminishment of black Americans, nor is there a clear preparation of one, various underlying systematic oppressive mechanisms have been functionalised since the era of slavery, thereby reducing the lives of black people to almost nothing, for the sake of maintaining the legacy of white supremacy. Of course, the numerous innocent black people who have been killed by the police must not be overlooked, as they were not able to live another day due to the system and its institutions.

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<sup>177</sup> Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, 8.

<sup>178</sup> See Stanton, "10 Stages of Genocide." These final stages are concerned with the rapid fear-mongering of the "Other," and in these stages strategies for mass killings are prepared and executed, with the final stage of denial.

<sup>179</sup> McLeod et al., "Police Interactions and the Mental Health of Black Americans: A Systematic Review," 10.

<sup>180</sup> Keating and Robertson, "Fear, Black People and Mental Illness: A Vicious Circle?" 440.

<sup>181</sup> Jerkins, "Why White Women Keep Calling the Cops on Black People - Rolling Stone."

<sup>182</sup> "Ahmaud Arbery: What Do We Know about the Case? - BBC News."

<sup>183</sup> Harris, "The Central Park Five: 'We Were Just Baby Boys' - The New York Times."

## **Chapter 5. Summary & Conclusion**

This thesis has analysed whether the policing practices towards African Americans in the United States are an act of genocide, and if so how, by scoping out existing news articles, scholarly literature, and available opinion pieces and framing this information within Stanton's stages of genocide and the idea of indirect genocide. This thesis found that the current policing practices fit the first six stages of genocide, namely: classification, symbolisation, discrimination, dehumanisation, organisation and polarisation. Black people have been criminalised and classified as the bad "Other," through verbal derogatory terms and by virtue of race. Moreover, comparisons have been drawn between animals such as monkeys and black people, not only based on physical appearance but also on claims of intelligence. Considering that the police force came into existence to oppress black people further during slavery, it is unsurprising that the state neglects the evidence of white supremacists being part of the force. This is especially important as it goes hand-in-hand with the polarisation of society both by mass media as well as social media. Violence is glorified and white people are motivated and supported in their abuses against black people, and former President Trump has been a great example of an individual who managed to criminalise the victims of police brutality, and justify state-violence, by use of racial political discourse.

The analysis of this thesis also reveals the overlap between Stanton's stages of genocide and indirect genocide. Systematic oppression has affected black lives in ways that differ from direct genocide by means of mass killing. Rather, it has made black people fearful for their lives and given them little hope to hold on. It has contributed to genocide studies, IR, African American studies, and CRT, as this thesis has opened a debate that has been disregarded by genocide studies and mainstream IR, and used African American Studies and CRT as the foundation for the analysis. This thesis has aimed to shed light on events related to and hopes to raise awareness for the state-sponsored crimes against black people in the US. It must be recognised that black Americans are facing unprecedented injustice, and considering the highly polarised society, now is the time to raise the alarms to prevent any further steps in the stages of genocide.

Finally, Devin Ortiz's poem sums up the experience of being black in America better than I, as a non-black person, ever could; these are the most eye-catching lines in regards to policing practices:

“To be black in America

Is to be told all the ways you don’t matter

It is to wonder daily if your family will be safe, if they will get to come home

It is to be to have people fear you, when you feel more threatened then they ever could

It is to be live in a world where 1 in 3 black men are in prison

It is to know that they have sentences longer than white counterparts

It is to know that the police which are a relief for some, are a nightmare for you

It is to know that you can do everything right and be killed by someone sworn to protect you

It is to know that you will be blamed for your death inspite of this

It is to have the life choked out of you and a man telling you, \*\*\*\* your breathe”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Ortiz, “To Be Black in America.”

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