Racism in American Society

I. The Problem of Race in America
   A. No Racism
      1. National Opinion Research Center Survey
         a. no racism in America
         b. lazy and prefer to live on welfare
      2. US Supreme Court
         a. Affirmative Action is unconstitutional
         b. violates basis of American society
            "equality is the law of the land"
      3. President Clinton
         a. apologized for slavery
         b. only glitch in race relations in America
   B. Race as a social category
      1. racism emerged as a category of thought with late colonialism and neo-colonialism
         a. colonial pseudo-scientists used biased criteria to invent the idea of race
            i. shared physical characteristics that are deemed significant
            ii. common biological/genetic heritage
         b. concept of race and racial ideology is tied to power - justification for oppression and exploitation
      2. Race as social category
         a. using shared trait
            i. significance - who decides?
            ii. characteristics - crosses so-called racial lines, Tutsis and Hutus, Aborigines, Haitian
         b. using biological criteria, depending on criteria chosen, 3 to 200+ races
         c. recent genetic studies show that so called races share 95-99% of all genetic material relative to race
         d. no pure races
            i. intermarrying
            ii. countries define race
               I. Brazil: "some" White ancestry is classified as White
               II. LA: 1/32 black is black
      3. Justification of colonialism
      4. Ethnicity is another way of categorizing or classifying peoples
         a. shared language, religion, and social and cultural practices

    b. ethnocentrism
    c. ethnic cleansing
5. Both racism and ethnocentrism are ideologies that define the "other" , the group or person who is different as less than human as less than human which justifies his oppression

C. The Constellation of racism
1. racial hatred and violence, personal and group
2. racial discrimination in housing, jobs, and healthcare
3. institutionalized racism, embedded in the society's very structures
    a. place in economy
    b. education and health
4. walls of institutional racism are virtually invisible

D. Institutionalized racism in America in the 21st Century
1. poverty and class - income
    a. disproportionately represented in the poor
    b. Blacks and Hispanics make more or less 60% of what whites make, since mid 1960s
    c. college education is not equal playing field
2. poverty and class - wealth
    a. The wealth of the avg black family is $4000 compared to that of the avg white family which is $40,000
3. education is tied to class
    a. US schools are highly segregated
    b. depended on local taxes
4. health and health care
    a. is a commodity
    b. blacks without health care or inferior health care
        i. infant mortality
        ii. birth defects, low birth rate
    c. even with health coverage blacks receive less treatment and less life saving treatment
    d. lower life expectancy
5. poor nutrition
6. living conditions -- from substandard housing (electricity, plumbing, lead paint) to heating
7. urban renewal, gentrification, warehousing and slumlording
8. loss of jobs because of deindustrialization and globalization, or minimum wage jobs
9. decaying infrastructure and transportation systems
   federal abandonment, revenue to suburbs

10. no economic growth, disinvestment and redlining by insurance companies and banks
11. environmental racism

II. Blacks in American Society - three systems of institutionalized racism: slavery, segregation, modern urban ghetto

A. Slavery
1. Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Washington were slave owners, as were half the signers of the Declaration of Independence
a. Jefferson and Henry knew it was wrong
b. Jefferson not a reluctant slave owner
i. whipped his slaves
ii. separated families
iii. only freed 5, his blood relatives
2. Declaration of Independence
3. legally sanctioned in Constitution, Article 4 Sec 2
4. only part of Fifth Amendment applied to slaves
5. not just in south, Mass was first colony to legalize slavery
6. First slaves as early 1526 with Spanish, settlement perished, slaves joined Native Americans

B. Between 1790 and 1860: from 500,000 to 4,000,000

C. The condition of the slave - complete oppression and dehumanization
1. no political or legal rights
a. no autonomy
b. no constraints on abuses
2. no economic rights
3. no moral standing
a. inferior - uncivilized then race
b. ignorant, lazy, insensitive to pain
4. confederate flag - symbol of a social system based on the total oppression of type of persons

D. South developed powerful system of control backed by laws, courts, racial ideology and an armed force equal to 1/10th the population

E. Created animosity between poor whites and blacks by paying the whites as overseers -- divide and conquer

F. By 1808 importation was illegal but unenforced, majority of slave ships flew under US flag

G. Texas, cotton, and the war for independence 1835-6 from Mexico, which had outlawed slavery, glorified in the Alamo

H. Resistance of slaves
1. Nat Turner 1831

2. slow downs, sabotage, kill overseers and masters, burn buildings
3. by 1850s: 1000 slaves running away per month

I. Reason to remove Indians and establish new states as slaveholding
1. running to Indians
2. to Florida
3. to unsettled territories

III. The end of slavery -- not the political system -- but the result of popular movements

A. Abolitionist movement: early 1830s to the civil war
1. William Lloyd Garrison The Liberator - 25 to 100,000
2. Frederick Douglas North Star
3. John Brown
a. portrayed historically as insane
b. moved the boundary of acceptable thoughts and deeds regarding slavery
c. prior to Brown it was considered the extreme or radical to talk about ending slavery
d. after Brown, activism was no longer deviant (L174)

B. Underground railway - Harriet Tubman 19 trips, 300 slaves

C. "Inequality is the law of the land"
1. Dred Scott declared non-person and the Court declared that a negro had no rights that a white man was bound to respect
a. "property" rather than citizens
b. "beings of an inferior order
2. Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
a. blacks in north had to prove they were not escaped
b. slave owner needed only affidavit from friendly white, 300 returned

D. Popular reaction -- Civil disobedience
1. Vigilance committees to protect blacks
2. juries refused to convict

IV. Civil war and slavery

A. Lincoln -- the great Emancipator or the great equivocator
1. save the union
2. use resources of south for newly emerging industrializing economy

B. March 4th 1861: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." -- Inaugural Address

C. Greely to Lincoln -- you are not even following the laws

D. Lincoln -- if I could save the Union without freeing a single slave, I would do so

E. Emancipation Proclamation (Jan 1, 1863) freed the slaves in the south, but not the border states on the side of the Union, finally after popular uproar
F. 200,000 blacks fought in Civil War
    1. 38,000 died, worst duties, like WWII and Vietnam, paid less
    2. captured northern black soldiers were crucified and burned alive

V. Free at last: the Black Experience in the south and north after the war
A. Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery, but economic realities kept them in serfdom
    1. Blacks were free, but plantation owners and wealthy speculators from the north got the land they worked on for 250 years, system of "share wages"
    2. Sherman gave 40,000 ex-slaves land on the coast of Georgia; Andrew Johnson took it back
    3. at the mercy of the whites, tenant farmers, land contracts, or farm hands, legally free, but economically dependent, basically "share-cropping" (p45 contract, Who Built America?)
        a. cycle of debt -- had to buy seed, supplies, and food from landowner
        b. in addition to paying land owner about one-half had to pay for supplies
        c. affected the great majority of blacks, 90% of whom lived in the South and 80% of those were in rural areas
B. Fourteenth Amendment was passed in 1868 intended to keep states from discriminating against blacks
    1. not interpreted that way, Supreme court ruled that it did not do what it was supposed to do
        a. excluded from juries
    2. Supreme Court ruled that Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional
    3. violence directed at them, "lynching" became a practice in both the north and the south and was not a crime
    4. after Compromise of 1877 violence continued to increase with Ku Klux Klan, raids, beatings, lynching, burnings; D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation
        a. 6000 blacks lynched
        b. not a single member of KKK tried for lynching until 1980
        c. state of LA: 1,081 blacks and Republicans killed by Democrats in 1868
        d. during Reconstruction in one county in Miss Hinds, 1 black killed per day
        e. burned black churches, schools, flogged and murdered teachers
C. Fifteenth Amendment
    1. Jim Crow laws

2. from 1879-1965 no branch of representative govt did anything to enforce the right to vote

D. 1890s to 1920s low point in race relations in US
   1. President Wilson was a white supremacist, when President of Princeton, the only major northern university that didn't admit blacks
      a. He segregated the federal government in 1913 and entered upon a policy to eliminate colored citizens representation in the federal government
      b. tried to curtail the civil rights of blacks but rejected by Congress
      c. vetoed clause on racial equality in Covenant of the League of Nations
      d. closed Democratic Party to blacks for two decades
      e. private White House showing of Birth of a Nation: "it is all so true"
   2. Reemergence of Ku Klux Klan
      a. dominated political parties in many southern states plus Indiana, Oklahoma, and Oregon
      b. blacks lynched as far north as Minnesota
      c. lynching is public crime- people posed for it
   3. Plessy v Ferguson 1896 defined blacks as inferior and whites as superior
   4. in the North, 1855-1905 blacks driven out of skilled occupations that were dominated by segregated unions
   5. white race riots: >100 during Wilson and Harding
      a. Harding initiated into Ku Klux Klan in ceremony at the White House
      b. 1919 Chicago riot, E. St. Louis
      c. 1921 Tulsa whites dropped dynamite from planes killing 75 and destroying over 1100 homes
      d. wiped out or terrorized towns, "sundown towns"
   6. in 1920s Supreme Court upheld forced sterilization of blacks in Virginia
   7. Cultural milieu
      a. writers described blacks as hyenas in a cage, reptiles, species of worm, a wild beast.
      b. D. W. Griffith Birth of a Nation, formerly The Clansmen
      c. minstrel shows
   8. As late a 1932 there were justifications of slavery as a necessary transition to become civilized
   9. blacks and the Spanish-American War

E. WWII and racism
   1. segregated

2. worst duties
3. Queen Mary

VI. The modern urban ghetto
   A. After WWII
      1. since turn of century blacks had been migrating to northern industrial cities for jobs
      2. improvement for blacks in industrial north
      3. however, more blacks out of work from automation of agriculture than could find jobs in the north
      4. unemployment and poverty and the emergence of the modern ghetto
   B. Post-war 50s policies both public and private were racist
      1. suburbanization directed resources away from city
      2. blacks excluded from the newly emerging suburbia
      3. left an urban ghetto with invisible walls
      4. few resources, education, health, jobs
      5. civil rights movement help lessen these problems, War on Poverty
   C. In the 70s and 80s deindustrialization and globalization hit black males the hardest
      1. in one period over 1/2 of all black males lost jobs in industrial America
      2. by 1986 the average wage of unskilled black male workers was 61% of what it had been in 1973
      3. Flint
      4. South Central LA
         a. one 4-year period 75,000 jobs lost, GM, Bethlehem Steel, Goodyear, Firestone
   D. Ghetto Infrastructure deteriorates
      1. roads, bridges, sewage
      2. hospitals and education
      3. stores, supermarkets, and banks
      4. slumlording
      5. environmental racism
   E. Invisible walls
      1. discrimination in jobs and housing
      2. no mass transit
      3. discrimination in education and health
   F. Cities put low income housing, prisons, homeless shelters, methadone clinics, battered women's shelters, and drug treatment cents in poor neighborhoods, "not in my back yard"

VII. Civil Rights, success and failure, a popular movement

A. Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka 1954, all "deliberate speed, 11 years later 75% of schools still segregated
    1. not like the supreme court all of a sudden saw the injustice
    2. WEB Dubois and the "Niagara movement:" from the beginning of the century
B. Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus boycott, city retaliated by arresting leaders
C. Lunch counter sit-ins, 1960: 4 college students, to 50,000; 3600 in jail, most desegregated by late 1960s
D. Voter registration drives, Freedom summer, Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Act of 1965, Mississippi Burning
E. No help from Justice Dept or President until violence was shown on TV
F. What the civil rights movement revealed
    1. de facto segregation in the north was a larger problem, and it has gotten worse < MLK on black urban violence
    2. political rights without economic rights are insignificant