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## The Year 2014: A Banner Year for Institutional Racism

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The *Ralph Bunche Journal of Public Affairs* is dedicating this special issue to the profound and pervasive effects of institutional racism that were prominent in 2014. The year 2014 might be viewed as a remarkable year for institutional racism. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Section IV of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is no longer necessary. Many states enacted voter ID laws. In 2014, scores of minorities in the United States were killed by law enforcement officers and those law enforcement officials who killed them were not punished, calling into question the objectivity and integrity of the police, prosecutors, grand juries, and the broken windows policy. Law enforcement utilized tactics that are considered to be in violation of human rights and unconstitutional to quell subsequent protests. Several states refused to expand Medicaid as a part of the Affordable Care Act to extend health insurance to the uninsured. A large number of states reduced funding for public education. Numerous school districts adopted policies that led to a disproportionate number of minority students receiving punishment at a greater frequency and more severity. States and communities moved to curb the ability of immigrants to gain citizenship as well as to enter the country and enjoy the benefits of residing in the United States. The aforementioned decisions, practices, procedures, and policies continue the subjugation of minorities and widen inequality between minorities and whites. With four articles presented in this issue, the *Journal* hopes to expand the understanding and the meaning of institutional racism with a particular focus on its more contemporary forms.

We begin this scholarly discourse with “Do #BlackLivesMatter? Implicit Bias, Institutional Racism and Fear of Black Body” by Reshawna Chapple, Tameca Harris-Jackson, George Jacinto and Michelle Vance. Focusing on the implicit bias and fear of black body, Chapple and her colleagues deploy cultural analytical framework in reviewing racial strains and injustices that paved the way for the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. They argue that the killing of African American men and women such as Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, among others, are examples of cases in which implicit bias and institutional racism result in mischievous and racially framed discriminatory actions. The articles concludes that Black Lives Matter movement emerged out of a historical racial unrest for African Americans around social justice issues which can be projected into All Lives Matter spectrum that requires a change in public policy that not only addresses multiple levels of implicit bias deeply engraved in the American society but also deconstructs centuries old practices of the objectification of the people of African descent.

The second article, “Examining the Impact of Institutional Racism in Black Residentially Segregated Communities,” by Brandi Blessett and Vanessa Littleton uses a contextual analysis of Ferguson, Missouri, to spotlight the killing of Michael Brown—an unarmed African American—by a police officer. Based on the authors’ argument, the vulnerability of African Americans in the city is a function of socioeconomic, environmental, cultural and political factors, which can be remedied through substantial public policy in these areas. Since the poor quality of life in racially segregated communities requires meaningful infrastructural development, Blessett and Littleton conclude that a multisectoral approach need to be deployed in solving the problems that African Americans experience in such jurisdictions.

In the third article, “When Perceptions are Deadly: Policing in Ferguson, Missouri, and Other Stories,” Camille Gibson and her colleagues use a content analysis of news reports to assess media influence in the construction of public perceptions on African American dangerousness as they pertain to law enforcement interactions. In describing local policy-community contexts where such interactions seem feasible, these authors conclude that the news media should take deliberate actions in counteracting their role in sustaining implicit race bias in their work.

The fourth article, “Race and Justice Outcomes,” by Jason Williams argues that the extant literature fail to effectively assess the intersectoral aim of modern criminal justice process and race. He uses the Department of Justice’s report on Ferguson, Missouri, to articulate his argument, and concludes that there needs to be a paradigm shift among criminologists to enable them study and understand the impact of white supremacy on justice outcomes as depicted in Ferguson and other marginalized communities in the United States.

In conclusion, we appreciate our reviewers and editorial staff for their service, and extend our thanks to all the authors in this volume for their contributions. We hope that all the thought provoking concerns and questions raised in this special issue will generate additional studies on institutional racism and offer potential public policy solutions to eliminate such divisive, emotional contentious problem in our society.