CGTN America Releases "Left Out: The Race Gap in the United States"

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Some say they lack access to a top-quality education, others, to equal protection under the law. One feels unsafe when walking American streets. One was indeed unsafe and unarmed – killed by U.S. law enforcement. What ties their experiences together is racism – a centuries-old fault line in the world’s oldest democracy.”

When America’s 18th-century colonial leaders chose independence from British imperial rule, they declared “All men are created equal.” For the next 245 years that hallowed ideal has been a benchmark by which Americans measure the quality of their governments. How effective is any U.S. administration at securing the fruits of liberty for all its citizens?

In episode one, “The Classroom,” two African American teenage girls, Maimouna and Roxanne, dream of going to medical school. Will their race also be their fate? U.S. statistics suggest that it might be. In the first quarter of 2020, U.S. Federal Reserve data showed White households owned 84 percent of American wealth, Black households held 4 percent, Hispanics 2.5 percent. As Fed research shows: “The relationship between education and income is strong.” Race affects income. Income affects education. Education affects income. It is a vicious circle.

The next two episodes “The Reservation” and “The Story of Brandon Lopez” – show race can lower life expectancy for Americans of color. At the Rapid City Indian School in South Dakota, a non-profit group has helped discover the remains of 215 bodies in an unmarked grave. How did these children die? “Could be diseases, we don’t know,” says former student Roberta Ecoffey. Were these crimes? “Could have just been outright murder,” she tells CGTN America.

In episode three, Brandon Lopez, a Hispanic man in his early 30s, sat in what police suspected was a stolen car. After a high-speed pursuit, the car got stuck on streetcar tracks in Santa Ana, California. Police fired tear gas into the vehicle. When Lopez got out, they gunned him down. The officers thought he had a gun. It was a water bottle. This outcome might have been predicted. A Washington Post database shows that Latinos and Blacks are killed by police at much higher rates than Whites.

The final episode, “The Attack,” Chinese American, Valerie Soe, says she was standing in front of a grocery store when a stranger started shouting obscenities at her. “You f*cking Asians. This is why we have to stand in line,” Soe recalls her screaming. “And she’s just ranting, ranting, ranting.” According to FBI statistics, hate crimes against Asians soared 73 percent in 2020.
As the United States convenes what it calls “The Summit for Democracy,” the Americans in this series might ask: ‘Democracy for whom, and for how many?’

After the Battle of Gettysburg, then President Abraham Lincoln called American democracy an “unfinished work.” It was still an aspiration in July 1863. Nearly 160 years later, many say democracy is still unfinished and imperiled. As these four stories show, for many Americans of color, the “Race Gap” remains a chasm.

Click on the series title to read more about “Left Out: The Race Gap in the United States.”

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