

# UNTERRICHTS MATERIALIEN

## Englisch Sek. II



A divided country –  
inequality, racism and political polarization in the USA  
Akt. II / Materialien zur Spaltung der amerikanischen Gesellschaft

# Themenkreis „Society“

## A divided country – inequality, racism and political polarization in the USA

by Paul Jenkinson

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### Kompetenzprofil

- Niveaustufe: B2/C1 (Europäischer Referenzrahmen)
- Kompetenzbereiche: *Writing, speaking, reading, listening, mediation*
- Aufgabenformate: *working with texts, composition, working with a cartoon, discussion, working with a podcast, comment, mediation*
- Medien: Zeitungsartikel, Cartoon, Podcast, Bild, Statistiken
- fachübergreifende Aspekte: Gesellschaft, Politik, Wirtschaft, Geschichte

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## Survey of topics and methods

Main focus	Working with the text	Cartoon analysis	Comment/Composition	Discussion	Mediation	Working with the podcast	Further activities	Material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>White working-class disillusionment in the USA</li> </ul>	•	•	•					Topic 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newspaper article: "My travel in white America ..."</li> <li>Cartoon: "America Land of Opportunity"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ohio Indians find the baseball team's logo offensive – should it be removed?</li> <li>Mediation: American national identity</li> </ul>	•			•	•			Topic 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newspaper article: "Cleveland Indians to remove divisive Chief Wahoo logo"</li> <li>Image: Chief Wahoo logo</li> <li>Article: "Was heißt es, Amerikaner zu sein?"</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily racism endured by African Americans</li> <li>Preconceived attitudes</li> </ul>	•		•				•	Topic 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article: "Oppression in America ..."</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facts about poverty in the USA</li> <li>How Trump's policies are worsening the issue of poverty</li> <li>Comparison between the situation in the USA and in Germany</li> </ul>			•	•				Topic 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Article: "Trump policies 'punishing and imprisoning the poor' ..."</li> <li>Statistics: American society vs German society</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interview about the dangers of political polarization</li> </ul>			•			•	•	Topic 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Podcast: "Dangers Of Polarized Politics" </li> </ul>



## 'Everyday racism' in the USA

### Oppression in America: 'To root this out we need a movement against racist policies'

by Jamiles Lartey

Ever since a Starbucks in the Philadelphia area came under national scrutiny<sup>1</sup> for calling the police on two black men waiting for a business associate in one of the company's coffee shops, new attention has been focused on the long list of mundane<sup>2</sup> activities that black Americans can't comfortably engage in without being treated as suspicious or having the police called.

"It's just part of daily living. It's what you expect as a person of color when you head out the door in the morning," said Jeff Chang, the author of *Who We Be: A Cultural History of Race in Post-Civil Rights America*. A moment like this just sort of galvanized<sup>3</sup> folks to be able to express all the different ways in which they've been impacted by daily racism."

In many ways the newly emerging conversation parallels how Black Lives Matter emerged as an ideological clearinghouse for the problem of racialized police violence several years ago. Neither phenomenon was new, but in both cases a stream of high profile incidents managed to snowball into its own trope<sup>4</sup>, in part thanks to social media and smartphone videos. In this case that's the trope of "everyday racism".

For experts, the diagnosis is clear. While the US has ended the formal, legal codes of enslavement and segregation that stood for most of the nation's history, little has been done to change the minds of too many about the racist ideas that those structures rested on.

"There has not been a society-wide and intensive challenge to racist ideas in the US," said Graham Kendal, the director of the Miracis Research & Policy Center at American University. "You've had people saying we need to have 'national conversations', You've have people calling for 'healing', because in their minds it's just that people are hateful and they need to start



## Worksheet: 'Everyday racism' in the USA

### Pre-reading activity

- a) Name some stereotypes or preconceived notions that exist about certain people and nations.  
For example:
  - Americans are overweight.
  - Groups of teenagers hanging about on a street corner are up to no good.
- b) Why do we have preconceived thoughts regarding people and places? In your class, discuss how they may have come about.

### Working with the text – Use your own words as far as possible

2. Describe what racist behaviour black people in the USA must deal with on a regular basis and how this affects them in society.
3. Explain how elected presidents can affect racial divides.
4. Summarise the text in approximately 150 words.

### Comment

5. Choose one of the following tasks:
  - a) A critic of the police in London concerns their stop and search policy. Statistics show that black youths are far more likely to be stopped and searched than white ones. However, statistics also reveal black youths are more likely to carry weapons and drugs.  
Do you think it is justified that black youths are searched more often? Write a comment.
  - b) Phillip Atiba Goff stated: "You can't very well instruct your 911 operators to be like, 'Yeah Mrs Smith, I know you said there were gangbangers but we know you're probably just racist.'"  
Comment on whether emergency calls that appear to be motivated by racism should be taken less seriously by the police.

## The dangers of polarized politics

### Pre-listening activity

1. You may not be familiar with six words from the podcast. Before you start listening match each definition (a–f) with the correct term (1–6). You may use a dictionary if necessary.

Term	Definition
1. homogeneous	a) someone who has an official position
2. (to) veer	b) to understand another person's views or feelings towards something
3. (to) redistrict	c) a room where a speaker often created; ( <i>here: figuratively</i> ) certain beliefs are reinforced by repetition
4. incumbent	d) to change
5. echo chamber	e) all being the same and undistinguishable from each other
6. (to) empathize	f) to alter boundaries to form new areas

1.		3.	4.	5.	6.

### Working with the podcast

#### Podcast: "Political Science Professor Warns of Dangers of Polarized Politics"



Link: [www.npr.org/2017/04/05/522756774/political-science-professor-warns-of-dangers-of-polarized-politics](http://www.npr.org/2017/04/05/522756774/political-science-professor-warns-of-dangers-of-polarized-politics)

Read the tasks (a–g) carefully before listening to the podcast about the dangers of polarized politics. The tasks are in listening order. While listening, mark the correct box. Listen a second time to check your answers and correct them where necessary.

- e) Depolarizing the political system could be achieved by ...
- allowing coalition governments to be formed.
  - remodelling constituencies without any political influence to create new ones.
  - reducing the number of people who can vote in each area.
- f) One problem regarding polarization is that ...
- people are scared of making wrong decisions.
  - voters never alter their political allegiances.
  - in spite of evidence to the contrary, people will not change their opinions.
- g) It is important ...
- to develop a more humanitarian approach.
  - that people try to understand the perspective of others.
  - to maintain one's beliefs.

### Comment

3. Write at least 300 words on one of the following topics:

- a) *“To make democracy work, we must be a nation of participants, not simply observers. One who does not vote has no right to complain.”*  
– Louis L'Amour, American author.

Do you agree with Lamour's views? Write a comment.

- b) The voting age in most countries is 18 years. There have been some discussions, however, about lowering it to 16. Comment on whether the voting age should be lowered in your opinion.

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