



Fair Trade and Racial Justice 101

Use these facts to educate yourself and others about racial justice issues and intersections with Fair Trade

Fast Facts

- Black people are **2.9 times** more likely to be killed by the police than white people¹.
- For every dollar white, non-Hispanic men earn, Black women earn about \$0.65.

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For every dollar White men earn, Black women earn \$0.62

FAIR TRADE CAMPAIGNS



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Black households have only 10 cents in wealth for every dollar held by white households

FAIR TRADE CAMPAIGNS



- According to recent Federal Reserve data, Black households have about 15 cents in wealth for every dollar held by white households².
- **Environmental racism** is the phenomenon by which Black people are more likely than white people to live, work and play near environmental hazards.
- These statistics illustrate the impacts of long-standing, institutional and structural racism within society.

¹ Mapping Police Violence. Mapping Police Violence. 2025. [Accessed 2026] <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org>

² Aladangady, Aditya, Andrew C. Chang, and Jacob Krimmel. “Greater Wealth, Greater Uncertainty: Changes in Racial Inequality in the Survey of Consumer Finances.” FEDS Notes. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2023 <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/greater-wealth-greater-uncertainty-changes-in-racial-inequality-in-the-survey-of-consumer-finances-20231018.html>

The Need for Fair Trade

In the typical model of global trade, farmers and workers are exploited for the sake of delivering profits to middlemen and larger companies^{3 4}.

- Many of our global trade systems are built upon centuries of exploitation of Black labor and Black lives – for example, according to the Fair World Project, the ways in which we grow and trade our food are shaped by centuries of slavery and colonization⁵.
- Producers in the Global South are often exploited for their resources and labor; they are overworked, underpaid, and often exposed to harmful chemicals⁶.

Fair Trade and Racial Justice

- The Fair Trade Movement is an alternative to conventional trade that encourages sustainable development by empowering producers in the Global South to invest in their communities and maintain sustainable livelihoods through the minimum-pricing safety net and additional Community Development funds producers receive for selling their products on Fair Trade terms^{7 8}.
- Fair Trade advocates for justice, equality, and non-discrimination for farmers and workers in the Global South, and the communities where products are produced and purchased by ensuring products are certified against rigorous standards including equal representation and non-discrimination⁹.
- The Fair Trade system exists to correct many of the inequalities and injustices that historically exist because of colonialism and the exploitation of small producers, often in the Global South – as such, Fair Trade is racial justice¹⁰.
- Considering that consumer spending accounts for 70% of the U.S. economy, Fair Trade

³ Oxfam International. Ripe for Change: Ending Human Suffering in Supermarket Supply Chains. 2018. <https://ifcsia.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/publications/Oxfam-report-Ripe-for-Change.pdf>

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). “Unfair Trading Practices in Agricultural Supply Chains.” n.d. <https://www.fao.org/markets-and-trade/areas-of-work/emerging-trends-challenges-and-opportunities/unfair-trading-practices/en>

⁵ Fair World Project. “No Food Justice Without Racial Justice.” [n.d.]. <https://fairworldproject.org/no-food-justice-without-racial-justice/>

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). “Human Trafficking for Forced Labour in Supply Chains: What You Need to Know.” May 2025. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2025/May/human-trafficking-for-forced-labour-in-supply-chains-what-you-need-to-know.html>

⁷ Fair Trade USA. “Fair Trade Community Development Funds: What Are They?” Accessed February 2026. <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/what-we-do/community-development-funds/>

⁸ Comunicaffe International. “Analysis of More Than 120 Studies Confirms Fairtrade’s Positive Effect.” May 27, 2025. <https://www.comunicaffe.com/analysis-of-more-than-120-studies-confirms-fairtrade-positive-effect/>

⁹ Stop Modern Day Slavery. “Fair Trade and Ethical Certifications.” October 2024. <https://stopmodernslavery.org/2024/10/fair-trade-and-ethical-certifications/>

¹⁰ World Fair Trade Organization. “Unpacking Fair Trade Practices: Economic Marginalisation.” 2024. <https://wfto.com/articles/unpacking-fair-trade-practices-economic-marginalisation/>

can play a role in supporting social justice by directing some of this spending power towards Black-owned businesses. Check out [this blog post](#) by The Honest Consumer for a list of 45+ sustainable, black-owned business you can support.

A Path Forward

- Despite the positive impacts it has on farmers and workers around the world, Fair Trade still has work to be done in terms of addressing racial justice.
- Fair Trade exists within our capitalist system, which is inherently racist. This system was born out of slavery, genocide, and colonization, and because institutions are slow to change, these legacies still impact our economic system today^{11 12}.
- Fair Trade was built on a vision of solidarity across borders, but its early model, centered on the Global North supporting the Global South, has at times unintentionally reinforced existing power dynamics¹³.
- Fair Trade needs to place more emphasis on confronting racism and discrimination in the communities where products are consumed.

For more on how to advocate for racial justice with Fair Trade Campaigns:

<https://fairtradecampaigns.org/resources/racial-justice/>

¹¹ Mobilizing for an Anti-Racist Economy. Vimeo video, 2020. (<https://vimeo.com/434253091>)

¹² United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Urgent Push Needed to Achieve Reparatory Justice for Africans and People of African Descent." September 2025. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/urgent-push-needed-achieve-reparatory-justice-africans-and-people-african>

¹³ Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Fair Trade: History, Criticism, & Facts." Accessed 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/money/fair-trade>