

# ARE THE ROHINGYAS GEORGE FLOYDS OF ASIA? - CHALLENGES OF PRACTICING CULTURE AS A PERSECUTED ETHNICITY

**Dilruba Sharmin<sup>1</sup>**  
**Md. Saifullah Akon<sup>2</sup>**  
**Fouzia Reza<sup>3</sup>**

## **Abstract**

The objective of this research is to find out the relationship between Rohingya minorities of Myanmar and black communities in the USA from the lens of systemic racism. The Rohingya have been tortured for their ethnic identity just as the black communities are being persecuted outside of Asia. The black movement of America increase on May 25, 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic when black man George Floyd died by the physical torture of policemen. In the same way, the Rohingya people saw various military armed insurrections in their whole lifetime yielding unlimited pain and unacceptable experience for the community. From the 1940s, they have been persecuted by their own government till the huge influx in 2017 which forced the majority to take shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. More than 1 million Rohingya people are now living in these largest camps for displaced persons in the world. Despite the growing systemic racism in these two communities in the two parts of the world, few literatures focused on the co-relations between them and hardly defined these crises from the systemic racism lens. We largely based our arguments on the challenges of practicing Rohingya culture based on secondary source analysis. However, the research finds comparative analysis between the Asian communities has become an urgent need for further research.

**Keywords:** Rohingya, refugee, Bangladesh, Ethnicity, George Floyd, Myanmar, Racism, America

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<sup>1</sup> **Dilruba Sharmin**, Associate Professor, Department of Japanese Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Email: dsharmin.jsc@du.ac.bd

<sup>2</sup> **Md. Saifullah Akon**, Assistant Professor, Department of Japanese Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Email: saifullah.djs@du.ac.bd

<sup>3</sup> **Fouzia Reza**, MEXT Research Student, Nagoya University, Japan. Email: fouzia.reza10@gmail.com

## Introduction

The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority who were based in Rakhine State, Myanmar, and have been victims of racial and cultural discrimination in their own country. They are the descendants of the Arakanese people though the Myanmar government recognizes them as colonial and post-colonial migrants from the Chattogram region of southern Bangladesh. The government-imposed restrictions have been a day-to-day phenomenon for every Rohingya since 1948 (Cheesman, 2017). From registering a marriage to rice farming, Rohingya life was constricted by rules and regulations that undermined their freedom, dignity, and personal choices. On the other hand, the murder of Black US Citizen George Floyd on May 25, 2020 brought up the issue of racism, which also occurs in the Asian culture.

How do the conditions of the Rohingya people compare with the incident of racism experienced by George Floyd? We approach this question by speaking of equal rights for all human beings on earth, with equal respect, and from a sovereign position. But is it working in our actual society? We can give the example of Rohingya people whose whole life history is written only as a story of deprivation. There are stories of ethnic oppression, there is religious and cultural oppression, and there is the story of being oppressed from one's homeland by political oppression. Similarly, the recent tragic death of George Floyd is a testament to how the fate of Black people in America continues to face oppression (Samayeen, Wong, and McCarthy, 2020). Rohingya crisis in Myanmar is a present crucial issue in South and Southeast Asia which involves the whole world naturally.

The study connects the cultural discrimination faced by Rohingya people with the George Floyd incident in the US through the systemic racism lens. George Floyd's murder has ignited the centuries-long racial discrimination in America (Russell-Brown, 2021) whereas the Rohingya crisis exhibits the ethnic and cultural discrimination in the Asian region (Ullah & Chattoraj, 2018). The detrimental effects of institutional racism, which are ignited by the own government, are being felt by both communities: Rohingya in Asia and the Black community in America.

However, our study finds that, though the form and level of discrimination are different, the result is the same. Both parties are being persecuted by the state-imposed systemic restriction and have faced mass casualties. The current study comments on intra-Asian and inter-Asian racism, and the areas academics need to emphasize in the coming days of a decolonized Asian

Studies. The paper is constructed in four major sectors. The first section briefly discusses the theoretical understanding of systemic racism. The second section focuses on the historical roots and cultural discrimination of the Rohingyas. The third section analyses the century old racial segregation and inequality in American Black Community. Finally, the fourth section explores the relationship between the George Floyd incident and cultural discrimination of the Rohingyas through the systemic racism theory.

### **Methodology**

The study was carried out using the qualitative research approach. This study uses the qualitative technique (analytic and descriptive) to better comprehend the Rohingya situation as well as decades of racial discrimination in America. Books and journals were a source of the research, whereas newspapers, magazines, and websites were also provided sources for data. After reviewing the literature on the Rohingya and George Floyd cases, the study compares and contrasts the two instances using systemic racism theory. Later, after revising the literature, the study shows that the Rohingya and American black communities are being equally persecuted for being minority groups, despite being located on two different poles. However, this paper is context, theory, and case dictated.

### **Briefly Understanding Systemic Racism**

The phrase ‘systemic racism’ emphasizes how racism is not just a matter of one’s attitude; it is also more than just a single, hateful worldview held by one person (Cowper-Smith, 2020). It occurs when an organization as a whole fail to treat individuals with dignity and professionalism because of the people’s race, ethnicity, or culture. It can be observed in procedures, viewpoints, and conduct that disadvantage minority ethnic people via prejudice, ignorance, carelessness, and racist stereotyping. Due to the systemic ignorance of the authorities, peoples from minority groups get differential access to goods, services, and opportunities. Systemic racism can also lead to genocide. In fact, systemic discrimination based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin is acknowledged by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which is a part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). The Committee adopted a statement on the prevention of genocide in 2005, and it later recognized signs of widespread, systemic racial prejudice (Cowper-Smith, 2020).

The policies that exclude members of a group from political, economic, social, and cultural life are also referred to as systemic racism. State leaders have been known to encourage racial prejudice by individuals, communities, or organizations (UN, n.d.). In US, white superiority is always assumed in all aspects- individual, ideological and institutional. Even names might affect career possibilities in the workplace. According to Harvard research, candidates for jobs who ‘whitened’ their names were more likely to receive interviews (O’Dowd, 2020). O’Dowd (2020) shows that only 10% of black applicants received interview invitations when their ethnicity could be inferred from their applications, but 25% did so when their resumes were made to appear white. On the other hand, the government of Myanmar has long engaged in massive, systemic crimes that have disenfranchised the Rohingya people. Sixty years of military dictatorship paved the way for discriminatory policies against Rohingya people. However, Suu Kyi’s government also did nothing to promote the Rohingya people (Lee, 2014), instead, the last genocidal attempt was held during her tenure.

### **Historical Roots of the Rohingya People**

The land of Arakan is presently known as Rakhine state and located in the north-western part of Myanmar beside the south-eastern border of Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh (Figure 1). In the 1430s, Muslim settlers entered in the Arakan State and a small Muslim population was living there when Burmese Empire was conquered Arakan in 1748 (Chan, 2005). Afterward, other Muslims from Bengal entered Burma (present day Myanmar) as migrant workers, as a result Muslim population of Burma increased tripling in a 40-year period.

The Rohingya people are mostly Muslims, which constitute around 35% of the province’s current population, and the rest are mostly Buddhists. The etymological source of the word ‘Rohingya’ comes from ‘Rohang’ means ‘Arakan’ in the Rohingya dialect, and ‘gya’ means ‘from’. So, the word ‘Rohingya’ means ‘from Arakan’ (Ahmed, 2019). One of the earliest references of the term ‘Rohingya’ appeared in an article written by Dr. Francis Buchanan, entitled ‘A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burmah Empire’. He wrote: ‘The Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan.’ It is also noteworthy that by 1799, Buchanan describes the ‘Rooinga’ as having long settled in Arakan (Buchanan, 2002).

Bangladesh and Rakhine have had a long history of social and cultural interactions. Chattogram (previously Chittagong) was under Arakanese occupation from 1550 to 1666 CE (Ahmed, 2019). A tyrant and autocrat Burmese King Bodawpaya occupied Arakan in 1785, and many Rohingya Muslims and Buddhist Maghs fled Arakan from 1785-1794 to save their lives from Bodawpaya (Chan, 2005). Thousands of Rohingya arrival in the year of 1797 - 98 in Chattogram, and from that time they became the inhabitant of Chattogram, Bandarban, Barisal, Patuakhali etc. and remain as a part of Bangladeshi culture though they are originally Arakanese people (Ahmed, 2012).



Figure 1: Location of Rakhine state; Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>

After the Third Anglo-Burmese war (1885-86), the British had taken over control over all of Burma and ensured supportive laws as well as some land benefits for rehabilitated many Arakanese from Chattogram who fled away from Arakan previously. British rules and policy also inspired Bengali people to migrate to nearby Arakan. At that time Arakan was not too populated as well as an agriculturally fertile valley. As the East India Company combined the Arakan state with the Bengali administration, free movement between the two regions was not restricted. In the early 1900s, karge number of Arakanese people settled in Chattogram regions and at the same time thousands of Bengali people migrated to Arakan. The British census report of 1891 listed 58,255 Muslims in Arakan. In the

year 1911, the number had expanded to 178,647. The main cause of this migration wave was for cheap labour demand paddy field of Arakan. A prominent historian, Thant Myint (2007) writes that, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indians were arriving in Burma at the rate of quarter million per year (Rahman, 2015). The number was increased regularly until 1927, when around 480,000 immigrant people were living in Burma. That time Rangoon was considered as the world's greatest immigration port. The situation was such that most of the important cities in Burma- Rangoon (Yangon), Akyab (Sittwe), Bassein (Patheingyi), Moulmein, the Indian immigrants had been a majority of the population (Ghosh, 2016).

In 1942, Arakan saw a horrendous and widespread killing by the Japanese military along with Burmese nationalist forces, an event known as 'the 1942 massacre' or 'genocide' (Leider, 2017). More than 100,000 Rohingya were killed and at least 500,000 Rohingya took shelter in the Chattogram region of Bangladesh. These Rohingya also took shelter in Malay, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. After Independence in 1948, the Myanmar government excluded the Rohingya from the country's constitution as well as passed a citizenship law in 1982 (Haque, 2017) from which Rohingya were excluded. More persecution and discrimination were waiting for the Rohingya. In 1962, Myanmar became a military state and the authority start the 'Operation King Dragon' (Akins, 2018). The Burmese military force accused the Rohingya of human rights abuse including rape, destruction of houses and villages. Mass arrest and horrible torture forced the Rohingya people to flee to nearby Bangladesh. The Myanmar authority embarked upon another political campaign called 'Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation', during which another 20,000 Rohingya were pushed off into Bangladesh. The 'Operation Clean and Beautiful nation' was a military operation conducted by Myanmar Armed force. The operation took place between 1991 to 1992 under the military junta of the state Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (Lintner, n.d).

In 1964, Myanmar military junta banned numerous Rohingya socio-cultural organizations. In 1965, a program was stopped which was broadcast in the Rohingya language. Not only were these but all private newspapers were also banned from 1966. In 1978, the military junta killed 10,000 Rohingya during the operation 'Naga Min' or 'King Dragon'. As a result, more than 250,000 shelter seekers fled to nearby Bangladesh. About 40,000 Rohingya women, children and elderly people died during that journey (Ahmed, 2019).

The Citizenship Act of 1948 had already been repealed when another new law was passed after the military junta seized power in 1972 to completely deny

the Rohingya people. In the early 1990s, Myanmar's Military junta granted a temporary residence permit called a 'white card' that did not actually imply citizenship. In 2014, the government conducted an UN-backed national census. Initially, the Rohingya people had the opportunity to identify themselves as 'Rohingya', but after Buddhist nationalists threatened to boycott the census, the authorities instructed the Rohingyas to register as 'Bengalis'. When the 'white card' of Rohingyas was cancelled in 2015, their right to vote was cancelled (Ahsan Ullah, 2016). Rohingya people were being tortured in every single way.

After all this, what has the international response been? In August 2018, UN investigations report was published which charged Myanmar's military to carrying out mass killing and rapes of innocent people (Rahman & Akon, 2019). On support of the dozens of Muslim countries, a case was lodged by a West African small nation of Gambia to International Court of Justice (ICJ) and ICJ called an emergency measure against the Myanmar military, known as 'Tatmadaw'. In December 2019, Aung San Suu Kyi (State Counsellor of Minister of Foreign Affairs) appeared at the court and rejected allegations of genocide. In January 2020, Myanmar was ordered by the court to take immediate measures to safeguard the Rohingya people from any persecution. Actually, the ICJ only rules on disputes between states; on the other hand, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has the authority to solve any problem related with individuals' segregation or crimes against humanity and ICC ratified a full inquiry in November. Myanmar is not a member of the ICC, but the ICC said that it had jurisdiction in the case because Bangladesh, where victims fled to, is a member of ICC (BBC News, 2020). More than half a million of Rohingya people still live in northern Rakhine province. UN investigators express deep fear of serious risk for more genocidal actions may occur. While an agreement was signed to return of Rohingya people in early 2018, none returned in Myanmar. Without the guarantee of citizenship, Rohingya people were unwilling to return to their own land (BBC News, 2020). However, Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh is now the address of the world's largest group of asylum seekers, where about 1.1 million Rohingya are currently receiving shelter. More than half of them are children. Many of the Rohingya people who were brutalized by the military junta continue living under conditions of great emotional duress, and many are still living in dire straits.

### *Cultural Discrimination of the Rohingya People*

*"We, Rohingya people, have our own culture, tradition. We are on the brink of losing all of them, unfortunately."* -Muhammed Rezuwan, Rohingya folklorist. Like Rezuwan, millions of Rohingya people express the same views who have been

persecuted by the Myanmar government. For years, Rohingya people have been subjected to various forms of institutionalized discrimination in practicing their culture and customs. The government has imposed strict restrictions on different aspects of the Rohingya people including their marriage, family, education, religious practice, freedom of expression and movement.

Traditionally, Rohingya people typically have maintained a strong sense of solidarity that comes from their religious faith. The Rohingyas are Myanmar's largest Muslim minority having multiple mosques and madrasahs where they practice their religious customs. Rohingya men used to visit the mosque where they pray together. But in 2012, the Myanmar government-imposed restrictions on gatherings of more than four people in the Muslim community made it difficult to worship their religion which has greatly diminished their traditional religious practices (Tay et al., 2018). Besides the religious restrictions, they have faced state-imposed obstacles in forming and adopting their own family plans. For decades, they have practiced a traditional polygamy system in family formation where they have been accustomed to living in extended families. But not only this polygamy system was prohibited by the Myanmar government but also, they need to seek permission from the authority to marry or for extending family. For example, in 2005 government imposed a strict two-child policy for Rohingya in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships and also strictly prohibits having children out of wedlock (Eleanor & Maizland, 2020).

Traditional customs of the Rohingya people, especially their dress, language, etc., which have been practiced for years, are on the verge of extinction today due to the various obstructive policies of the Myanmar government. Generally, the Rohingya women wore a traditional dress like *sarong*, while males wore 'bazu' (long-sleeved shirt) and 'longys' that covering down to the ankles. In addition, conservative women in rural areas in the northern townships of Rakhine State used to wear hijabs, burqas, and sometimes niqab outside their house or their workplace. But this custom of conservative values has rapidly changed in the Rohingya community, particularly since the encampment of internally displaced persons in 2012 in Myanmar (Tay et al., 2018).

Many of the cultural practices of the Rohingya people set them apart from the major Burmese ethnicities. Rohingya musicians needed to get permission from the government to play at their community programs, a theatre that organized historical drama on Rohingya origins was closed down, and Rohingya agricultural farming festivities were hindered by policing and



sabotage. These are a few examples that members of this persecuted ethnicity face in their daily lives of which there is little record. Partly, this silence is because Rohingya culture is mainly an oral one. There are more than four writing scripts in use, but very few written documents in Rohingya are available. Their cultural practices are held by memory, but they are facing extinction by the internal and external fires that put out the hopes of life in different periods of their persecuted life.

The Myanmar government has also imposed various restrictions on Rohingyas' food and agriculture. Habitually, the Rohingya people have rice as the central dish of every meal. Chicken, beef, dried fish, fresh fish, green chili, and vegetables are the preferred side dishes to go along with steamed rice. Desserts include *semai* (milk vermicelli), *modu baat* (sweet rice porridge), rice cakes- all usually sweetened with concentrated sugarcane juice or sugarcane jaggery, known in Rohingya as *mitha*. It is, therefore, common for the Rohingya people to cultivate rice throughout the year for their own families in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. The only major demand for crops is for the sweetness, which comes from sugar cane- the community awaits the sweet delicacies on every occasion like the two Eid festivals, the Fatiha celebration, the day of the first harvest, etc. Although ingrained within the Rohingya culture, one Rohingya teacher of a Burmese school notes that sugarcane farming was restricted for Rohingya farmers for years. He notes that the surplus rice is often paid as tax, or confiscated by the local authorities, the NaSaKa for consumption. Rights to planting *kussol* or sugarcane in one's own field is denied.

### **Century Old Racial Segregation and Inequality in American Black Community**

The term 'racial segregation' can be interpreted as the practice of restricting people for certain facilities. Black American people have seen and continue to experience centuries of racial segregation. Racial segregation can also state a means for the economic benefit of politically influential groups and the maintenance of higher social status. Ethnic segregation involves the practice of restricting people.

Racial segregation is found in many parts of the world where there are multi-ethnic communities. Usually, social inequality can be there, but legal isolation is not acceptable. From the late 19th century to the 1950s, there were legal segregations in the rights of the people in the southern United States. In the 1950s and 60s, Black people in US began a movement to break the stereotype of ethnic division. The movement open the pathway of the 'Civil Rights Act' of 1964, which included

provisions against inequality and discrimination in voting, education and access to public services. The 'Civil Rights Act' of 1964 covered procurements to justify the voting rights of Black people in the South, but these Acts were comparably fragile to prevent the practices. Furthermore, in their pursuits civil rights activists met with the powerful opposition and enmity of Southern white segregationists to increase the registration of black voter. President Johnson delivered a nationwide speech on March 15, 1965, in which he stated that "all Americans must have the privileges of citizenship regardless of race." President Lyndon Johnson announced that he has already sent a new bill for voting rights to Congress and urged to Congress for permit the provided bill into law. After the compilation by Congress, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on August 6, 1965. Robert C. Weaver, the first black cabinet member, was appointed by President Johnson, who was the head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (Weisbord, 1973). In 1967, the president appointed Thurgood Marshall as the first African American justice of the Supreme Court (Greene, 1989).

The beginning of slavery in America is started first in 1619, from the arrival of the first enslaved to the Jamestown Colony in Virginia. But scholars view said that enslaved Africans had arrived in North America in the first half of 1500s (Horn, 2018). Because of leasing in the African slave trade, after 1680, the flow of indentured servants sharply declined. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, slavery could be found in all 13 colonies, specially was at the core of the Southern colony's agricultural economy. The English importers alone had brought some 3 million captive Africans to America by the time of the American Revolution. It is said that, approximately 12 million Black Africans had been shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas by 1865, and more than one million had died from health issues during the journey. In addition, an unknown number of Africans died in wars and forced marches directly as the result of Western Hemisphere's demand for enslaved people. However, after the American Revolution (1765-83), many colonialists began to speak out on behalf of Black people (Bradly, 2002).

The demand for slave increased with the growth of the cotton industry in the last decade of the 18th century, and the possibility of slave revolts also increased. In places like Haiti and Saint Domingue can be recall. Black slave revolt broke out on 21-22 August in 1791 in Haiti, enslaved people killed their masters, and set fire to plantation buildings. A separate rebellion started in the west of Saint Domingue at the same time. This is the starting point of 13-years event, known as 'Haitian Revolution' (1791-1804), that abolished slavery throughout the colony (Popkin, 2003).

In 31 January of 1865, slavery of United States was abolished, and Constitutional amendments were approved to grant African American legal status: 1) the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished slavery ('13th Amendment', Legal Information Institute. Cornell University Law School, 2012), 2) the 14<sup>th</sup> provided citizenship, 3) the 15<sup>th</sup> guaranteed the right to vote. Between 1873 and 1883 the Supreme Court handed down a series of decisions that virtually nullified the work of Congress during Reconstruction. Many citizens regarded the black people as second-class citizens, and supported those blacks were separated from whites by law and by private action. So, in transportation, public accommodations, recreational facilities, prisons, armed forces, and schools in both Northern and Southern states, black people's life faces crucial deprivation. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) founded in the year of 1909. They waged a long struggle to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation from American life (*The Library of Congress*).

The Movement for Black Lives (BLM)' in the United States gained a critical moment in its history the last week of May, 2020. George Floyd, 46, was handcuffed and strangled to death by police officer Derek Chauvin. Floyd's murder was followed by at least two more high-profile killings in 2020. Ahmaud Arbery, 25, was killed on February 23, 2020. 26-year-old EMT Breonna Taylor; was shot eight times and killed on March 13, after police broke down the door to her apartment while executing a night-time warrant. On May 26, 2020, the day after Floyd's death, protesters took to the streets in Minneapolis, police cars were set on fire and police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd. Protests were spread throughout the country.

Repugnant racial discrimination against Black Americans is established in almost all fields including education, jobs, health, banking, and even voting. Though the American Federal laws prohibit all forms of discrimination based on race, the colour-blind system does not help to uproot the deeply entrenched racial biases as it has already shaped all the sectors from institutions of the state to the judiciary, media, and civil society. Such discrimination is often embedded in the country's political, economic, and social structure. Due to this centuries-long racial imparity, black Americans are lagging behind both physically and economically.

American history exhibits the discrimination against the black American from the early stage when they were forced to enter as a slave in America. States had passed the slave codes to give complete dominance to owners over the black slave. Like Rohingyas in Myanmar, some states also prohibited black Americans from gathering in groups and curtailed their freedom of expression and movement.

Some states also legislated ‘sun-down laws’ to control their movement and forced them to leave the town by sunset. Even due to the control of the birth rate, a white genocidal conspiracy was also directed against black Americans during the 1960s and 1970s (Wesbord, 1973). Almost all black people have ignored instilling the birth control policy with a ‘strength in numbers’ argument while the black Muslims termed it as a ‘death plan’. On the other hand, the black Americans had also faced a shockingly unfair systematic structure in agriculture. A New York Times article notes, ‘Farms run by African Americans make up less than 2 percent of all of the nation’s farms today, down from 14 percent in 1920, because of decades of racial violence and unfair lending and land ownership policies.’

However, the country’s century-long unjust racial order still exists with different forms and issues. Each year, hundreds of black Americans are shot at and subjected to disproportionate by police resulting in death. Since 2014, at least 100 black Americans were killed by police officers in America. Furthermore, the Washington Post police shootings database shows that having less than 14% of the total population, black Americans have accounted for nearly 24% of fatal police shootings since 2015. On the other hand, due to the lack of access to quality health care, black women are four times as likely as whites to die in childbirth. In searching for a job, they are facing systematic racism across all institutions resulting in nearly 17% unemployed black Americans. Even the white Americans including law enforcement agencies often dishonour the black Americans during their conversation. A study of 2017 shows that American police officers speak with inferior reverence toward the black community.

### **George Floyd’s Case and Rohingya Persecution: Theoretical standpoint**

*“I can’t breathe. Please. Please. Please. I can’t breathe. Please, man”* - a 46 year George Floyd’s last word before this death, touches people around the world, particularly the other minority groups who are also persecuted by the oppressor. George Floyd was suffocated to death by a Minneapolis white police officer who held his knee on Floyd’s neck, termed as ‘the longest ongoing saga in American history by historian Carol Anderson. Floyd’s tragic death due to extra-judicial police brutality has resonated with many black Americans and exposed years of rotten grotesque racism in America. Besides, it reflects and questions the real scenario of racial discrimination in America where the black community is lynched historically. These black peoples undergo a disproportionate number of stops, arrests, and extrajudicial killings. Until the recent movement called ‘Black Lives Matter’ (BLM) following Floyd’s murder, American police officer’s torture

of the black people was mostly local and flurry of attention. According to the Equal Justice Initiative, more than 4,400 black people were lynched from 1877 to 1950 by white mobs (Brown, 2020). The assassination of George Floyd is the latest in line with similar persecution against the American black community, which has been going on for nearly 400 years. In the same way, Rohingya are considered as one of the most suppressed and deprived ethnic minorities who have been lost their citizenship in 1982 and cannot travel without official permission. Their property, marriage and reproductive rights are strictly restricted (Qureshi, 2017). Thousands of unusual incidents happening with Rohingya people which clearly indicates the state violence against a minority group.

The assassination of George Floyd has clearly shown the roots of systemic racism in America where America has not yet come from the history of slavery, lynching, and brutality against the black minority groups. The racial attitudes of white police officers and the case of George Floyd bring the black community back to the old days of the history of police brutality, indescribable persecution, and violent racism in the 1960s (Wenwen, 2020).

Just as George Floyd was tortured for being a member of the black community in America, so are the Rohingya in Asia. For decades, they have faced institutionalized discrimination by the Myanmar government. They have been considered undesirable in their own country through the government's 1982 exclusionary Citizenship Laws, making them about 40,000 stateless. Even the Myanmar government has denied recognizing the label 'Rohingya' as their self-identifying term rather than regards them as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. In the recent exodus in 2017, the military mounted a brutal campaign against Rohingya people and destroyed hundreds of Rohingya villages while at least 6,700 Rohingya people were killed in the first month of attacks (Eleano & Maizland, 2020).

Like the Black Community in America, Rohingya people have no right to freedom of expression, association, or assembly. They have long faced discrimination and marginalization in Myanmar. Rohingya people who exercised their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were persecuted and imprisoned by the Myanmar government under its repressive laws. However, the murder of George Floyd in 2020 is a reflection of the years-long persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Although the background and extent of the incident are different, the Rohingya people, like George Floyd, are being persecuted only for being a minority and for the inhumane treatment of the government. In America, black people are assassinated just for being black whereas Rohingya is assassinated just

for being 'Rohingya' in Myanmar. The overt lack of respect for the Rohingya and Black people's community ultimately led to the assassination of George Floyd and other thousands of innocent Rohingyas.

However, there is a common unjust and unethical practice that the ethnic minority groups throughout the world are always subjected to persecution either by the government authority or nearby superior group. The people from Rohingya and American black community have also faced decades of systemic discrimination and targeted violence for being the minority groups, different colour, and different races. In Myanmar, government itself launched several military campaigns and targeted violence against the Rohingya community resulting thousands of deaths and millions of Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh after being uprooted from their homeland. Such discrimination makes living harder for minority people with dignity. George Floyd's murder has further revealed the racial discrimination in America and the whole world which was flurry of attention for a longer period of time. Regardless of ethnicity, identity as a person is the most important.

### **Conclusion**

In the modern world, cultural persecution has been accused as a crime against humanity. As culture is an integrated part of human life and acts as a social behaviour of a particular society, its values should not be ignored. The basic ideology of this research possesses a clear picture of racial discrimination against Rohingya people as well as black people of America where 'George Floyd' came as symbol of persecution. In this research article, historical background provides the roots for Rohingya people's ethnic discrimination in Myanmar and racism in black community of US. How Rohingya people bearing discrimination from own nation and why they have to fly neighbouring country for shelter has been clearly presented here. The brutal attitude of Myanmar government and military shows us the evident of ethnic discrimination where Rohingya people has accused as an outsider. In the same way, black people of America have been demanding their own rights for the past hundreds of years, though racism is still practicing its power with force. Here, a black US citizen, George Floyd, who died of police torture, has been symbolized as the name of dignity, power of sovereignty, as well as the soul of unity. Every Rohingya man or woman can be compared with George Floyd who lost his life to the racial segregation of white men. Racism is not an easy problem and nor do they have a simple idea to solve. When a nation is physically and emotionally oppressed, its rights are curtailed, it is not treated as a human being, and even its words are ignored, that is racism. As a whole, the movement for

racism and ethnic segregation should not be neglected or avoided anywhere. Every nation or ethnic group or race has the right to practice its own cultural pattern with full independence and without any oppression. This research is a small endeavour to sketch the real picture of the oppressed ethnicity of Asia with reference to the age-old racial problem of black American people.

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