Social Problem Analysis: *The 13th*

**Instructions:** In 3 pages minimum (please do not exceed 5 pages), answer the following questions in an essay format using APA or ASA format. Your **paper must include a title page, body (with in-text citations) and reference/works cited page.** **You must include at least 3 outside resources (scholarly article, book, newspaper, etc.) and some specific examples/moments from the film to highlight your answers and support your arguments.** I **DO NOT** want you to summarize the film! The main purpose of this assignment is for you to apply sociological concepts/ideologies/theory in critically analyzing the film’s content using your sociological imagination and personal insight. Your paper will be graded on the following:

* Proper formatting and grammar/sentence structure (12 point font, Times New Roman, and 1 inch margins, double spacing should all be used).
* The proper application of criminological concepts, ideas and theory along with specific examples/moments from the film to highlight arguments.
* Answering all the questions in an insightful/analytical manner properly applying the sociological imagination.

**Assignment worth 50 Points**

**Introduction**: Coming at a time when Black Lives Matter and police bias are being hotly debated, the *13th* sheds light on the ‘loophole’ in the 13th amendment-allowing forced labor for criminals- that enabled resentful white society to imprison black citizens on minor charges and put them to work. The film argues that through a variety of measures-from Jim Crow laws to President Nixon’s ‘war on drugs’ and President Clinton’s ‘three-strikes-laws’ have served to send increasingly large numbers of black men in prison. Several legal scholars and activists interviewed in the film suggest a profit motive at work, as well as racism, in which corporations have reaped profits off the privatization of prisons and prison labor; some prisoners have gotten paid as little as 12 cents an hour, doing work for corporations like Victoria’s Secret and Walmart. The film chars the explosive growth in America’s prison population; 1970 there were about 200,000 prisoners; today, the prison population is more than 2 million. Although the US has just 5% of the world’s population, it has about 25% of the world’s prison population and about one in three prisoners are black men. More than 60% of the people in US prisons are people of color. This film highly depicts the nuanced and often overt ways in which crime and criminality is developed, structured and enforced in our communities.

**Questions:**

1. Have you ever broken a rule, regulation, or a law (whether or not you were caught)? How did you rationalize what you did? How does your answer fit into one of theoretical approaches discussed in class and in your textbook?
2. Imagine that a friend of yours has just told you that he or she believes that mass incarceration stems from bad people making bad choices. Drawing from the evidence portrayed in the film, make a sociological/criminological argument that mass incarceration is the product of changes to our social institutions and social policies.
3. When substance users and other criminals are stigmatized by society and blamed for their own addicted state and the deplorable conditions they live in (their criminality), how are broader institutions (e.g., government, education, health care, economies, etc.) alleviated from responsibility? Explain your answer using race/ethnicity, gender, class, etc. and criminological theories of crime.
4. This film has been criticized as being a biased depiction of the criminal justice system, crime and the actual racial tensions/relationships that exist in the US. What are your thoughts on the film’s content? Use criminological theories to support your arguments.
5. What public policy and law changes do you think should be made to reduce the U.S. incarceration rate? Or do you believe that a system that promotes retribution rather than rehabilitation is a better deterrent of crime in general? Support your arguments.