

A Dream Deferred? The Situation of African Americans since the 1960s

Dr. Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, Amerika-Institut der LMU

45 years after his famous “I have a Dream Speech” of Martin Luther King, Jr. many aspects of this dream seem to have come true: The Black Community has made great progress in almost all areas of public life – including social recognition, economic opportunity, and political representation – and there are signs – last but not least “Obamania” – that the racial climate in the United States has improved significantly. On the other hand, racial inequalities and discrimination continue to present a severe problem in many areas, e.g. housing and education, criminal justice, health care and employment. Despite the progress of the black middle class, 25% of African Americans still live below the poverty line, and opinion polls show that the relationship between most black and white Americans is still almost as marred by mistrust, fear and lack of understanding as it was in the 1960s. This lecture offers a brief survey of the history and present day situation of African Americans as well as the opportunity to discuss current US race relations and their potential future development.