

## **Abstract**

Liberal democracies sit on a foundation of popular sovereignty and the values of equality, liberty, and fairness. While some coercion by the state is necessary in order to maintain state sovereignty and provide a stable government, and excessive use of state coercion violates the liberty of its citizens. The harm and offense principles provide the boundaries of acceptable state coercion, but if these laws are unfairly enforced by police as the domestic arm of state authority, then the equality of liberty has been violated. United States' law enforcement has unfairly enforced just laws against black Americans, resulting in black Americans' overrepresentation in police brutality and killings. The implicit threat of police brutality against black Americans limits their liberty below that defined by the harm and offense principles. The unequal liberty between black and white Americans causes a potential lack of equal participation in political life, furthering an imbalance between races. Therefore American law enforcement should be considered a threatening obstacle to maintaining a healthy liberal democracy in the United States.

**Keywords:** liberal democracy, liberty, state coercion, police, United States

**Range of thesis:** 90,458 characters