

## Social issues affecting the African Americans

SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING AFRICAN AMERICAN RACE .

By :Lukoba Achieng Rhoda.



## Social issues affecting the African Americans

### Abstract

The author discusses various social problems that affect the African American race in general in the United States, including poverty, acculturation, education, housing, employment, social adjustment, and family difficulties. The potential impact of the African Americans on the U.S. society and economy is assessed, and government policy responses to their problems are considered.

The social problems of the African Americans include 1) poverty, 2) acculturation, 3) education, 4) housing, 5) employment, and 6) social functionality. Policy issues designed to address the needs of the African Americans must be heavily weighted in favor of local control and administration. One approach to solving African American issues may be to provide direct services through some form of education or intervention. Often the critical issues facing both the African Americans and the population which migrates are basic literacy and methods for achieving this goal in a constantly mobile population. Poverty among the African Americans continues to increase. Even though the new constitutional laws are intended to stabilize the conditions of African Americans in the US, in general, the social impact of a large and growing population of their families is negative. The author concludes that the US should 1) permit a flexible quota system which would be sensitive to the fluctuations in labor needs, 2) deemphasize the family reunification aspect of the immigration policy and redress occupational qualifications as important criteria for US entry, 3) look more carefully at the unique characteristics of the various African American groups and decide upon social needs accordingly, and 4) attend to social welfare issues.

### Introduction

Social issues :incarceration, single parent families, etc affect every race and ethnicity, but when those issues fall disproportionately on one group it becomes a problem. The Black community has a difficult legacy in the United States since the majority of people in that community have ancestors who came to the US as slaves. Thus, the attitude toward the Black population has always been problematic. Unfortunately, this attitude has led to contemporary issues that deserve an immediate solution.

It will be important for the masses to fully understand the challenges facing Black men specifically, in order to target policy appropriately. Black boys and Black men, in particular, run the gauntlet of a specific brand of racism, at the sharp intersection of race and gender.

Here, we provide some key facts on Black men's outcomes in eight important domains, compared to white women, and white men.



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### 1. Education

In 2019, 28% of Black men ages 25-29 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30% of Black women, over 40% of white men, and nearly half of white women, according to the National Center of Education Statistics in 2019. The gap is greater still at higher education levels: only half as many Black men have a Masters' degree (4%) as Black women (9%), white men (8%) and white women (13%):

### 2. Upward mobility

Black women and white women raised by low-income parents (those in the bottom 20% of the income distribution) have similar rates of upward intergenerational mobility, measured in terms of their individual income as adults. Black men, by contrast, are much less likely than white men to rise up the income ladder, according to Raj Chetty and his team at Opportunity Insights who have crunched the numbers on 20 million Americans in the 1978-1983 birth cohorts. A third of white men raised by low-income parents end up in the top 40% of the income distribution as adults, compared to only 19% of Black boys.

The figure below shows the probability of moving up the income ladder for children raised by low-income parents by race. The data shows that Black men raised by low-income parents face twice the risk of remaining stuck in intergenerational poverty (38%) as Black women (20%) in terms of their individual income. Note however that Black women fare worse in terms of household income than in individual income, especially compared to whites—itself a reflection, in part, of the worse outcomes for Black men.

### 3. Earnings

Black workers—regardless of gender—earn less than white workers, and white men have substantially out-earned white women and Black workers since 1980, according to Current Population Survey data. For both Black and white workers, men earn more; but the gender gap is much smaller for Black workers. The figure below shows the weekly earnings of full-time workers (hourly and non-hourly) for Black and white workers by gender since 1980. The results are striking: Black men earn \$378 less per week than white men and \$125 less than white



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women. Overall white women have seen the biggest increase in earnings, overtaking Black men in the 1990s.

### 4. Labor force participation

The labor force participation rate for Black men aged 20 and over is 5.6 percentage points lower than for white men, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates (note that this excludes the incarcerated population). Many men and women face different considerations when deciding to participate in the labor force – so here for simplicity we compare Black and white men in terms of labor force participation:

### 5. Unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Black men have the highest unemployment rate of civilian non-institutionalized Black and white men and women over age 20, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. There was a large race gap in unemployment (independent of gender) even before COVID-19 swept the U.S.

Prior to March 2020, Black men consistently had among the highest unemployment rates of Black and white workers. Unemployment shot up for everyone in April, and Black women faced higher unemployment than Black men for two months. As unemployment began to fall for most in June, Black men's unemployment rose and remained high through September (the last month data is available). In September, 12.6% of Black men were unemployed, compared to 6.5% of white men.

### 6. Life expectancy

Women live longer than men, on average—but there are big race gaps, too. Life expectancy is lowest for Black men (among Black and white people), according the CDC National Center for Health Statistics, both at birth and at age 65. For white men, life expectancy at birth is about 6 years lower than at age 65. But for Black men, that gap is over 9 years—showing that Black men are more likely to die prematurely.



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### Criminal justice

Black men face a much higher chance of being incarcerated, according to Bureau of Justice data. The figure below shows the proportion of state and federal prisoners of each race and gender, compared to the shared of the U.S. adult population. Black men are overrepresented among prisoners by a factor of five (32% v. 6%).

### 8. Health

Access to adequate healthcare is a concern for many Blacks, especially those living in urban areas. This is due to inadequate funding resources and the degradation of hospitals in these areas. Many hospitals relocate to suburban areas which mean longer travel times to healthcare. Also, Blacks are disproportionately plagued with hypertension, stroke, HIV and heart disease.

### The case for action

These are hard facts but ones that have to be faced in order to respond to the once-in-a-generation moment of racial reckoning taking place in the U.S. right now. Policymakers should consider Black men's experience—and these select facts—through the lens of “intersectionality,” a framework pioneered by Kimberlé Crenshaw for examining how identities can combine to create specific nodes of disadvantage. Intersectionality points to the need to see individuals in the context of a wide range of identities, rather than in simple binary terms, such as male or female, Black or white or gay or straight. This can highlight the position of “multiply-burdened” groups, as Crenshaw puts it.

On many social and economic measures, Black men fare worse not only than white men, but white and Black women, as we show above. Part of the cause is that Black men are “uniquely stigmatized,” according to studies of implicit bias conducted by political scientists Ismail White and Corrine McConaughy: more than 40% of white respondents rank “many or almost all” Black men as “violent.” White men are less than half as likely to be described in this way, at about the same rates as for Black women, while white women are very unlikely to be labeled as violent. It's no surprise, then, that Black men are also more likely to be stopped by the police, more likely to be frisked, more likely to be arrested, more likely to be convicted, and more likely to be killed by law enforcement. As Rashawn Ray, a Rubenstein Fellow at Brookings argues, “Black men have a

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different social reality from their black female counterparts,” he writes. “The perceptions of others influence black men’s social interactions with co-workers and neighbors [and] structure a unique form of relative deprivation...In this regard, the intersectionality framework becomes useful for illuminating black men’s multiplicities and vulnerabilities.”

Given the weight of evidence on the specific, and unique plight of Black men, general policy recommendations will not suffice. Breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage for Black boys and men requires first a deeper understanding the gendering of their race—and the racialization of their gender—and second, a battery of specifically tailored policy interventions: a New Deal for Black Men, no less.

### Summary

African American people within the United States have seen some progress over the years, but significant contemporary issues remain. The 2015 census found that there are more than 40 million African Americans, for 14.3% of the population, but they still often receive substandard healthcare and lag behind in educational attainment. Blacks also are more likely to be headed by a single parent and have health issues such as heart disease, stroke and HIV. Black business owners are also gaining, but slowly. However, Black women entrepreneurs is the fastest growing business segment in the US.

