

SOCIAL ISSUES AFFECTING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RACE

SYSTEMIC RACISM: a major problem that has tenaciously affected the whole 'black' societal system as a whole for centuries now. Research shows that even African Americans with a high socioeconomic status don't completely escape the racial discrimination. It also shows that the African Americans who were well educated and incorporated to white society were the ones that felt the most emotional distress in the work place. The education system is also affected due to the discrimination of the African American students leading to mental stress and sense of underachievement hence poor performance and school dropouts. This lack of quality education hinders the affected students from acquiring better jobs in future, leading most of them to the alternative life of crime.

Policies to help with systemic racism include the introduction of comprehensive education programs that teach about systemic racism, its history and social justice, which will thus promote empathy not only in the current generation, but the future as well, include other races. The community should be well represented in the media as well, as it would help against stereotyping and perhaps help paint the unseen side of the African Americans to the public eye. Equal participation and representation in the various aspects of the American life will play a key factor as well, hence avoiding any feeling of marginalization.

HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES: there is a difference in health access by the African Americans compared to other races. The African Americans have access to standard medical access, evidenced by the recent COVID-19 pandemic which saw the hospitalization and death of African American population being higher than that of the white population. The mental health stigma affecting the African American community is made worse by their limited access to mental health services, which inevitably leads to untreated mental health conditions. Existence of barriers like food insecurity, poverty and family wealth also negatively affect the health of most of the African American population. According to the office of minority health, African Americans are generally at higher risk for heart diseases, stroke, cancer, asthma, influenza, diabetes and HIV/AIDS.

Policies to combat healthcare disparities include the improvement of medical facilities and infrastructure mostly attended to by the African Americans and helping assuring access to healthcare. There is also need to raise awareness on the many factors that lead to the occasional spread of diseases and infections, to the community and the government. This will help educate the community on the ways of preventing and controlling the diseases and infections. On the government's side, there is need to include the African Americans in healthcare forums, such as the provision of medical insurances.

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION: the African American race have limited access to housing due to discriminatory purposes. Stereotyped as a rather criminally oriented society, they lack the adequate freedom to coexist with other races in the same place. This discrimination forces the African Americans to cluster up in specific locations, often closer to highways and factories that have fewer trees, the larger amount of asphalt and cement contributing to the urban heat island effect which causes difference in temperature, leading to health complications and premature deaths. Poverty also plays a major role in the housing challenge, as some fail to afford better housing and accommodation, forcing them to live in poor housing facilities while some others end up living in the streets.

Policies to help with housing discrimination include the enforcing of laws that restrict one from refusal to sell or rent a house because of their race. There is also need for fair housing laws that prohibit discrimination of the African Americans from living in certain regions of the state. The construction of better houses and in better places that pose no threat to their wellbeing also will help settle the African Americans. An alternative to that is the investment in affordable housing initiatives and community developmental programs especially in marginalized neighborhoods. This will hence improve housing opportunities, hence better living conditions.

POLITICAL UNDERREPRESENTATION: the African American society is poorly represented in politics. This arises from the fact that their voice as a people is suppressed hindering any willing African American aspirant from entering and rising into political dominance. The few who make it into politics and seem to have a major voice often end up muted, either by assassination or some other forms. Such examples are the late Martin Luther King and Malcom X, both of whom fought for the African American rights. The few numbers of such figures in politics renders the African American race politically underrepresented, making their voices and grievances unheard. The African Americans realize that the blame behind the issue of political underrepresentation is on the political system, hence they tend to lose interest in democracy and government, discouraging any African American political aspirant from participating in politics.

Policies to help against political underrepresentation include the reformation of electoral system. The African Americans must be free to voting access, and any impediments such as strict voter ID has to be done away with, to ensure equal voting chances. Other reforms such as ranked-choice voting and proportional representation is more likely to enhance the election of minority candidates. There is also need of civic education in schools, where the African Americans can be duly educated about the political processes, which will encourage them to participate actively in politics, hence better representation in the future. Provision of security and fair campaigning for the candidates also serves as better policy.

POOR CAPITAL ACCESS: contrasted with other races, the African Americans have limited access to capital, which drastically affects their economical status, limiting

potential growth among many owned African American businesses. This leads to poor income access, constraining them from having access to better services hence an average or unstable lifestyle. The issue is also induced by their treatment in both major and minor work areas, as they are often mistrusted, and often hold lower positions in the work areas. Mistrust of many African Americans by other races also hinders them from accessing loans which also impedes them from acquiring capital to start or promote their businesses. Poor capital access therefore as a challenge poses a major threat on the smooth development of the African American society, which in some instances pushes some of them to indulge in dangerous alternatives of survival such as crime.

Policies that will help against poor capital access include the implementation of initiatives to promote economic opportunities and general financial inclusion. Such include the promotion of opportunities in small businesses, especially in marginalized areas, which also gives them the chance to participate in government contracts hence stable revenue flow. There is also need for financial literacy to the African Americans, as this will help educate them on managing their finances, investing in businesses of all scales, which will help them make informed financial decisions. Provision of loans to individuals and small businesses by the government or non-profit organizations will see the community boost their financial status. Equal job opportunities and deserved job positions without biasness needs also to be implemented.

MASS INCARCERATION: statistics have shown that many people of color are imprisoned, often due to harsh sentencing policies. It further shows that African Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at nearly five times the rate of the whites. This is mainly brought about by other races associating them with crimes, creating a stereotypical view for the community, which affects their normal living as they fall suspects to most acts of crime. Under the tough national judicial system, the African Americans often stand no chance in their proper defenses, culminating to imprisonment. Statistics shows that more than 1.1million African American men are imprisoned. The indirect contact of the African American men who are most likely to be the breadwinners of their families affects their women, since it makes it difficult for them to provide for their families. For children having incarcerated parents is associated with developmental, emotional and behavioral problems. Those who make it out of prisons frequently lose relationship with their partners or access to their children and are less likely to find employment due to their criminal record. The rest of the society are also affected as they live in fear to the iniquities from the judicial system.

Policies to help against mass incarceration must mainly focus on the criminal justice system, community support and rehabilitation. Such can be brought about through the reformation of sentencing laws; the justice department must consider the individual's circumstances and promote fair judgment, and must allow for the sufficient defense and evidence support on the accused side hence a fair trial. There must be investment in community policing as an effective strategy that will help build

trust between the law enforcers and the African American community. This will prevent police brutality, fear and unreasonable sentences, by building a better understanding of the community and their mores. For those coming out of prisons, they must be allowed a second and fair chance back in the community by allowing them to access jobs without the need of a criminal history record.

GENERATIONAL TRAUMA: the African American race has for ages now been subject to suppression and manipulation. The community has a history of slavery, starting as early as the 17th century and lasting for hundreds of years. While whether slavery did get abolished completely or not remains a question of discussion, it is obvious that the experience had a poignant impact to the whole African American race, causing trauma that is still felt in the current generation. Though slavery is a core factor in the generational trauma other factors like police harassment, violence exposure and poverty that have been experienced throughout the centuries contribute highly to cases of trauma. It is statistically proven that African American adults may develop post-traumatic stress disorder at higher rates than other races. This most likely arises from the knowledge they have of their bitter history and possible future. The general trauma experienced by the African Americans personally interferes with their mental peace, hence lowering their morale on performing their daily activities amidst other races.

Policies that will help handle generational trauma must focus on healing, education and support where need be, as the mental state is affected the most. There must be a historical education, accurate and inclusive, that acknowledges the experiences in the past, which is to foster understanding via empathy and the promise for a reformed society hence a better future. African Americans of all ages must be integrated, an action that will see the sharing of past experiences from the elders to the younger generation and the wisdom that comes with it. Should it be done correctly, it will paint a vivid and genuine picture, devoid of any propaganda, and from there a better plan for the future will be born. There is need for attention to those who are drastically affected, through the provision of therapy services and other healing strategies. Fostering unity and equality in all races will help efface the feeling of marginalization and manipulation, which in itself will serve as a better remedy to their trauma.

DIGITAL DIVIDE: in a society that largely depends on digital literacy and services to conducting essential activities, the African American community seem to be underprivileged, since they live in areas with available infrastructure but simply can't afford broadband services. This seriously impacts education opportunities as most studies in such first world countries require internet access. Their economical progression is also hindered, since they are out of reach of the many digitalized business contents. Virtual interactions, especially in social media platforms are

affected by the digital divide due to other races perception of the African Americans, an unfortunate stigmatization that makes the affected feel ostracized.

Policies that will help curb digital divide must focus on the equal access to digital resources. Investment in the expansion of internet infrastructure, especially in underserved areas occupied by the African Americans will help ensure widespread access to internet services. Internet access must be made cheap through subsidization to allow higher connectivity. Installation of public Wi-Fi in community centers, parks and other public spaces also serves the need. There is also need for digital literacy, where the disadvantaged in the African American community can be taught how to use digital devices and safe internet navigation. Strict laws against cybercrimes must also be implemented. Equal chances and socialization in social media through targeted education and public awareness will help prevent digital stigmatization.