**Social Issues Affecting African-Americans**

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With a population of 40.1 million, African Americans are the second largest minority group, constituting 12.6% of the total population of the United States. Many of these African Americans go through massive challenges in many aspects of their lives with racism and discrimination being some of which they are constantly facing. There have been claims that genetically, they are predisposed to engage in problematic behavior, continue to suffer based on generational poverty, and lack the mental capacity to acquire the skills and competencies needed to realize the American dream. These claims are highly unfounded and were previously used propel injustice towards the African American race. This group continues to be the hardest-hit group concerning social issues facing the American people.

**Criminal victimization**

According to data from the US Department of Justice, African Americans have the highest number of victims both nonfatal violent crimes and homicides, with young African Americans from low income being the most susceptible. This is mainly attributed to the structural racism towards the African American community. Physical and sexual abuse, bullying, robbery, and assault among other forms are not an unknown phenomenon amongst the African American community, with far-reaching consequences both physically and emotionally, sometimes even loss of lives (Cohen et al., 1980). Victimization could have a huge emotional bearing that could manifest in many ways including shame, denial, humiliation, and guilt (DeLisi et al., 2014). In some cases, the consequences of the victimization are extreme to the point that the victims are unable to lead a normal life afterward as they are constantly reminded of the pain and suffering they have had to endure at the hands of another human being.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination against African Americans has been reported to be highest than any other domain. This has affected many aspects of daily living. Over the years, many African Americans have at some point experienced aggression and racial slurs being hurled at them, despite the numerous campaigns against this. Discrimination has played a major role in the hindrance of African Americans from seeking crucial services such as healthcare (Mays et al., 2007). Over the decades, it has also not been uncommon to find discrimination against this group in academic institutions causing them to lag in academic achievements. Furthermore, the majority of the working population of African Americans have reported being denied equal employment and promotion opportunities to their white counterparts, as well as discrimination in rates of remuneration. Unfair treatment by the police and criminal justice systems is another major issue faced by the African American community (Payne & Gainey, 2007). This lack of trust is not unfounded. African Americans constitute the highest number of police brutality cases, suspicion for crimes they did not commit, and wrongful prosecution.

**Chronic Unemployment**

African Americans have the highest rates of unemployment and earn the least than any other race living in the United States which is arguably due to systemic racism. There exists a long-standing argument that African Americans and other people of color are genetically inferior to Caucasians. With the Black community at the bottom of the hierarchy, it has been argued that they lack the mental capacity that would enable them to gain an education or skills that are relevant to attain the American dream. Historically, this is the belief that was used to castigate social injustices such as the slavery of black people. In modern times, statistics show that African Americans especially men have the least academic attainment and work experience, which consequently translates to low employment and low earnings for the members of this particular demographic group (Shapiro et al., 2013).

**Alcoholism and drug addiction**

There are numerous challenges faced by African Americans, some feel the need to turn to alcohol and substances as a means to cope (Gibbons et al., 2004). Normally, the use of alcohol is not considered a problem until the users develop dependency. Statistics suggest that African Americans have lower tendencies to engage in alcohol use, but those who do, are more likely to develop dependence and struggle with recovery than any other racial group. It has been reported that deaths due to liver cirrhosis are 10% higher than in any other racial group, despite the low number of users. On the other hand, the use of drugs in the African American community is not uncommon, with marijuana being the most commonly used drug followed closely by psychotherapeutic drugs, cocaine, and hallucinogens. Crack cocaine and opioids have particularly had a major effect on the African American community causing the highest number of overdoses and deaths. It is important to acknowledge that, drug and alcohol use not only endanger the lives of the users but also those around them (Bell, 2002). The abusers may fail to fulfill their obligations toward the people around them causing substantial damage to their society.

**Female-headed Households**

Towards the end of the 20th century, the percentage of female-headed households rose from 20.6% to 43.7%. This was attributed to the “instability of the blacks” and further, to racial oppression and slavery. According to recent estimates, these numbers have continuously grown close to 50% of African American households. Female-headed households are not only a result of divorce, but a myriad of factors including an increase in unemployment, high rates of incarceration, and increased mortality of black men (Conger et al., 2002). The combination of these factors has greatly reduced the pool of marriageable men among lower-class blacks. Avoidance of marriage is not only from a female perspective but from men as well. The state of economic uncertainty ultimately affects the ability to predict life decisions and consequently hinders their ability to plan for the future (Mandara et al., 2005). These circumstances prompt them to want to live a flexible life, without getting into lifelong commitments. Children born in female-headed households are forced into single-income households increasing the probability of poverty and consequently contributing to more social problems among their societies (Brewer, 1988).

**Policies to Address These Issues**

Mental health remains to be a major issue that the population is grappling with. Many of the social issues being faced by Africans have continually impacted negatively on the mental of the individuals. Emphasis should be put on creating awareness of ones surrounding, and providing the necessary support to the victims. There needs to be an adequate allocation of resources meant to support African Americans acquire proper mental health treatments

Setting a level ground would go a long way in promoting human dignity, protection of life, peace, and equality across all racial groups (Johnson & Staples, 2004). Discrimination against African Americans is not an isolated case. For slogans such as black lives matter to have gained popularity in the United States and across the world, it is a clear indication that African Americans have not had it easy. There is a need for active interventions to reduce, if not eliminate disparities between the treatment of African Americans and other racial groups. Reforms are needed in the relevant law enforcement agencies to ensure equal protection of the lives and the rights of African Americans.

Affirmative action must be adhered to ensure that African Americans get equal opportunities and promote diversity in education, employment, and accessibility of other services (Polite & Davis, 1999). Additionally, policies need to be put in place to dismantle racism and minimize the gap between African Americans and other groups.

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