**Social Policies Affecting the African American Race and Policies for Addressing them**

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Due date

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The experiences of the African American race have greatly been shaped by the social policies in the United States on top of the fact that they have already been faced by political and economic challenges throughout centuries. The negative effects that have been faced by the African Americans are due to social policies such as poor education policies, criminal injustices, unfair housing policies, voting rights and healthcare policies has impeded the progress of African Americans. This has called for equality policies to be implemented to address these injustices, policies such as higher funding for schools in marginalized areas, criminal justice reform, Medicaid program and housing act. Here are some of these policies explained:

Education policies. These policies have led to African American students facing unequal education treatment (Skiba et al., 2011). Segregated schools were established for these students, with the schools often underfunded and lacked the necessary resources and infrastructure. The schools were often understaffed with few teachers. The students also faced discipline disparities in that for them, there were zero-tolerance policies in case they committed a mistake (Skiba et al., 2011). In the sector of advanced placement courses, they have been underrepresented in higher education yet some have the maximum qualifications needed for the placement. To countereffect these disparities there is need for education equity. Elementary and Secondary Education Act as a policy was established to provide equal access to quality education to all students, including African American students. Early childhood education aimed to narrow the achievement gap and will also deliver quality foundation essential for success in the future (Neitzel & Mead, 2023). Funding for schools can also be increased in the marginalized areas of the African Americans to come up with resources that aim to improve the education levels so that the schools in marginalized African American communities came at par with other developed schools. More teachers should also be employed to work in these schools to cater for low staff.

Criminal injustices. A policy, war on drugs, was initiated in the 1980s leading to disproportionately high detention rates for African Americans (Provine, 2011). The African American communities were intentionally targeted by the implementation of these laws amounting to perpetuation of inequalities in the system. They also experienced stricter drug laws and severe sentencing practices. This policy also advocated for mandatory minimum sentencing in disregard to the crime committed, crack cocaine sentencing disparities and drug law enforcement disparities (Provine, 2011). Calls for criminal justice reform and reconsideration of drug policies were campaigned for due to the negative consequences of these policies. To mitigate systemic biases, certain policies such as reducing mandatory minimum sentences, promoting alternatives to incarceration and reforming policies practices have been established (Provine, 2011). A police reform policy was also introduced to promote accountability, de-escalation training and community policing which would curb excessive use of force and racial profiling. The harsh sentences accorded to African Americans need to be revised to be fair in line with their counterparts.

Unfair housing policies. These policies meant that access to affordable housing loans and mortgages was systemically restricted to African American communities (Flournoy, 2021). This made it difficult for these communities to invest in property or even purchase homes. A wealth gap that was very wide came up due to these policies because all wealth was dominantly in the hands of the whites. The wealth gap also created a racial boundary in that there are some neighborhoods where African Americans were restricted to access. Policies such as prevention of discrimination in the housing market should be implemented. Refusing to rent, sell, or finance housing based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin be made illegal as these bars many African Americans from accessing houses easily. Housing providers also need to be given an affirmative duty to promote fair housing practices and avoid actions that led to discrimination (Massey, 2015). A sector for helping the discriminated individuals also needs to be established to provide assistance to discriminated individuals.

Healthcare policies affect the African Americans negatively (Iglesias & Malchuk, 2023). Lack of insurance has seen many African Americans denied access to healthcare services. Medicaid, a program aimed at increasing healthcare access for uninsured individuals has yet seen many African Americans yet to benefit from this program (Iglesias & Malchuk, 2023). Most African Americans also find it difficult to receive insurance, as they are either uninsured or underinsured because the insurance policies or providers prioritize whites over them. For these reasons, the African Americans experience higher rates of chronic diseases and reduced life expectancy. To improve on this, Medicaid coverage needs to be expanded to the African American community. The community health centers also need more funding. Health equity programs can also be established to address health disparities and promote culturally competent individuals who will address the unique healthcare need for African Americans (Iglesias & Malchuk, 2023).

Voting rights. African Americans have for long seen their right to exercise democratic voting neglected (Von Eschen, 2019). African Americans are also underrepresented in the authority seats hence end up being underrepresented in matters affecting them. More barriers have also come up such as discriminatory laws due to voting, unlawful practices and intentional violence aimed at suppressing their participation in the political scene. To actively deal with this, voter registration should be automated and made accessible to the African Americans. Laws could also be established that aims at dealing with those involved with voter discrimination and still protect against voter discrimination. Civic education should also be prioritized so that all individuals are aware of their voting rights and are encouraged to exercise their voting rights (Von Eschen, 2019). The electoral process also needs to be transparent and this should be made possible by an accountable election administration (Von Eschen, 2019). Voting Rights Act (VRA) needs to be protected and strengthened as it protects voting rights for the marginalized communities.

Economic inequality (Conley, 2010). For long, African Americans have faced economic inequalities. A substantial wealth gap has been created due to a history of slavery where they were seen as property rather than humans and segregation (Conley, 2010). Access to capital and credit to start their own businesses was limited to them. Employment opportunities were few, if not none for the African Americans. And to those who were lucky to get employed, they receive lower incomes compared to the white individuals. To curb these disparities, a fair and livable minimum wage needs to be implemented to uplift low-wage workers and bridge the gap for income inequality (Conley, 2010). Employment opportunities can also be enhanced through job training and skill development so that the trainees have the required qualifications for the jobs. For startups and small businesses, they should be prioritized through easier access to capital and low-interest loans and grants.

Social safety net. African Americans are faced with many negativities due to their color and race. These problems leave significant effects on individuals both physically and mentally (Conley, 2010). Policies such as social services and support aim at helping these individuals. Programs in this policy include counselling, management of cases, childcare assistance for the affected families and other essential services. These programs improve the lives of African Americans positively and help them tackle the problems they are experiencing.

It is important to note that while these policies have been implemented, challenges and inequities still persist. Continued attention and efforts are required to ensure the well-being and equal treatment of the African American community.

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