**Title: Social Issues Affecting the African American Race:**

**Analysis and Policy Recommendations.**

ABSTRACT:

This article aims to identify and analyze the social issues that impact the African American race in the United States. African American is a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The African American group is diverse and consists of people with varied racial and ethnic identities and also experiences. The United States Black or African American includes those who say their race is black, either alone or in combination with other racial background. It also includes Hispanies or Latino’s who say their race is Black. Blacks are disproportionately represented among Americans experiencing academic failure, teenage pregnancy, female headed-families, chronic unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, drug addiction and criminal victimation. Having empirical evidence and existing literature this article identifies key social issues affecting African American: Educational disparities, biased Criminal justice system, Health care disparities, Economic inequality, and Systematic racism. Though social problems affect a wide variety of people from all races, classes, and cultures, minorities, specifically African Americans, encounter social problems on a multi-dimensional basis. Poverty, employment rates, discrimination, and other social problems strike African Americans in such a way that it is nearly impossible to separate them; each individual has different background, socially and physically, that would determine in which order his or her social problems need to be solved. Impoverished blacks in the inner city may have difficulty finding or keeping jobs, while others may have jobs, but face troubles with work discrimination that prevent them from moving upward. Furthermore, this article explores policy proposals that exhibit potential to address these issues effectively.

Introduction:

Black history in the United States is a rich and varied chronicle of slavery and liberty, oppression and progress, segregation and achievement. Though captive and free Africans were likely present in the Americas by the 1400s, In order to satisfy the labor needs of the rapidly growing United States they kidnapped men, women and children from Africa who were sold first to European colonists in 1619, and later to American citizens, became symbolic of the early years of Black history in the United States. This helps in gaining knowledge and an understanding of the past and present situation of African-descended people in the United States. Additionally, this aids to understand the historical, social, political, and cultural development of Africans and African-descended people in the Diaspora.

Educational disparities.

As compared to Black women, white men, and white women, Black men have lower levels of educational attainment. Comparatively, Black men have fewer opportunities to receive higher education with a felony record, which face limited access to federal student loan. Moreover, many of the service providers within the educational system do not cultivate the full potential of Black male students. This includes grading biases, higher suspension and expulsion rates, higher rates of in-school arrests, lack of Black male role models within the school, and other forms of overt and covert racism. To improve the economic outcomes for Black men, there needs to be a policy response. First, federal student loan should be made available to those with a felony conviction because it will provide many Black males with the opportunity to further their education. Second, the infrastructure of the education system should be improved to better support Black male students so that they can achieve their full academic potential.

Biased Criminal justice system.

To truly address the social issues problems affecting Black boys and men, there must be significant reform to the criminal justice system. Black men are drastically overrepresented in the prison population. This reality has multiplicative effects on the life chances of Black men. They face barriers in finding employment and housing, many lose the right to vote, and many lack access to social services, including federal student aid. All of this taken together reduces the economic opportunities available to Black men and hinders their role in social and family life. To address these obstacles, criminal justice reform must be made a policy priority. The objective should be first, to reduce the number of Black men behind bars and second, to improve re-entry conditions.

Economic inequality.

On average, Black men experience higher unemployment rate, lower labor force participation, and lower earning than their white male counterparts. These trends are not only indicative of lower economic power, but also lower access to quality healthcare, and fewer social connections. Dr. Rashawn Ray noted that there are about 1.5 million Black men missing from social life entirely. To address this, policy should promote better employment opportunities for Black men. As a starting place, improving educational outcomes for Black boys and men will consequently improve their chances in the labor market. However, beyond that, policy should aim to match unemployed Black men with gaps in the labor market. Most prominently, there is rapid growth within the HEAL sectors (health, education, administration, and literacy) and a lack of Black men in these roles. Policy should respond by providing scholarships and other incentives to encourage more Black men to become nurses, health aides, teachers, social workers, and other similar professions.

Systemic Racism.

The final policy area suggested during the panel discussion were reparations to be paid to American descendants of slavery. The racial gaps present in wealth, income, housing value, educational attainment, health status, employment, incarceration rates, and more are all the result of deep racism within the U.S., stemming from the egregious act of slavery. Reparations can be used to correct this injustice and to reduce the disparities that remain pervasive in society. During the conversation, Dr. Rashawn Ray said that “reparations are the only way to deal with racism in America,” and that the country must “provide restitution for the centuries of the way that systemic racism has operated in our country.” While there is momentum on some national level reparation policies, Richard Reeves suggests that reparation payments at the local level are also viable. The policy of reparations—including how they are issued, how they are financed, and at what level—must be explored.

Conclusion:

The fundamental quest behind African-American social history has been the achievement of freedom. Over the centuries, "freedom" has meant different things to different generations. To the slaves, it literally meant the end of human bondage. For nearly 250 years, African Americans were defined by law as property and not as human beings. Then for another century, we experienced Jim Crow segregation, lynching, and disenfranchisement, the burning down of our businesses and churches, and other forms of racial harassment. Today, with the election of Barack Obama, 44th President of the United States and the first African American to hold the office, many suggest that Americans have entered a "post-racial period." Some argue that it would be impossible to elect a person of color to the presidency if the old racial stereotypes and discrimination still existed. At a certain level, one part of this thesis is true. Legal segregation has been outlawed in the United States for nearly fifty years. It is no longer legal to deny African Americans access to restaurants, hotels, bathrooms, public buildings, elevators, or other public accommodations. In the 1960s, there existed only several hundred African-American elected officials; by the year 2000, there were over 10,000 Black elected officials throughout the United States. In 1964, there were five Black congressional representatives; today there are over forty, many of whom chair powerful committees in the House of Representatives, such as Charles Rangel, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. If all of the goods and services purchased by Blacks in the United States were calculated as the global economy of a country, Blacks would represent the ninth wealthiest nation on earth. Despite these gains, the struggle for freedom remains elusive. The Black unemployment rate remains nearly twice as high as white jobless rates. African Americans have significant shorter life expectancies than whites and overall, receive substandard health care. While White home ownership exceeds seventy percent, Black home ownership is below forty-five percent and falling rapidly due to the recession of 2008-2009. The typical Black household has less than one-tenth of the net wealth of the average White household. These statistics as well as many others, indicate that there is structural racism that is deeply imbedded in the American system. The great challenge to American democracy is to fulfill its principles of quality for the law and fairness regardless of race, gender, and class distinctions. The African-American freedom struggle has sought to make democracy real for all Americans. The Amistad Digital Resource has presented episodes of that history for students, teachers, and researchers. This resource has been designed primarily as a teaching tool to be used in the classrooms by teachers to bring history "to life." We sincerely hope that the concept of living history may assist a new generation of Americans to understand the history that all of us share and to better appreciate the Dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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