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Abstract

African Americans are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and known to experience disadvantages in society because of their race/ethnicity. In an effort to understand the barriers that hinder African Americans from equal opportunity; this study explores the possible factors that account for the disparities against the African American population in the criminal justice system and other areas in society. The current studies that exist utilize qualitative and quantitative interviews to collect the perceptions and experiences of African Americans with law enforcement. Findings revealed disparities particularly in the criminal justice system; the disparities are present in traffic stops, arrest, and sentencing. The disparities also exist in numerous areas in society such as academia and socioeconomic status. These disparities illustrate the systematic issues persons in African Americans community may face that prevent them from being fully functioning, adequate, and successful citizens. Implications for local, state, and federal changes are addressed.

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“The More Things Change the More They Remain the Same”

- Alphonse Karr

Abstract

African Americans are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and known to experience disadvantages in society because of their race/ethnicity. In an effort to understand the barriers that hinder African Americans from equal opportunity; this study explores the possible factors that account for the disparities against the African American population in the criminal justice system and other areas in society. The current studies that exist utilize qualitative and quantitative interviews to collect the perceptions and experiences of African Americans with law enforcement. Findings revealed disparities particularly in the criminal justice system; the disparities are present in traffic stops, arrest, and sentencing. The disparities also exist in numerous areas in society such as academia and socioeconomic status. These disparities illustrate the systematic issues persons in African Americans community may face that prevent them from being fully functioning, adequate, and successful citizens. Implications for local, state, and federal changes are addressed.

Introduction

What accounts for the racial disparities in the criminal justice system and other areas in society? The issue of racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system has been a long time and controversial research topic but has recently become more prevalent in society because of the use of media outlets and its focus on this issue. Studies have shown that African Americans receive harsher outcomes at every step in the criminal justice system compared to any other minority group and their white counterparts yet little is known about what accounts for these disparities (Kutateladze et al., 2014).

Over the past 14 years' imprisonment proportions have remained the same and if they continue to remain the same one in three African Americans males can expect to be incarcerated in his lifetime compared to one in seventeen white males (Garland & Spohn, 2008). Mass incarceration, now in its fourth era, has pressed classes to the borders of society toward societal segregation, building on the tradition of slavery, Jim Crow, and the dishonor of civilization (Westcott, 2015). African Americans make up 37 percent of prisoners confined in local prisons and 36 percent of inmates held in state and federal level prisons (Burch, 2015).

Racial/ethnic discrimination is only one of numerous reasons that can explain for the disparity in the criminal justice system. It is important to distinguish the difference between disparity and discrimination. Racial/ethnic discrimination is biased treatment to a particular group based on racial or ethnic makeup. In comparison, racial/ethnic disparity is simply the ratio and difference in numbers between racial and ethnic groups. Disparities

throughout the criminal justice system can arise through legitimate reasons such as illegal activity and criminal history.

The social issue of police mistreatment is largely important to social work practice because the field will likely work closely with minority populations being affected. The people being affected by mistreatment of police may very well be clients of many social service agencies or are in need of services. A social worker may have to assist persons prior to any involvement with law enforcement in ways that may decrease their chances of becoming involved with law enforcement. This may include helping persons seek employment or graduate high school.

Social workers deal largely with police system assistance when investigating child abuse, domestic violence, etc. and may then be viewed as an associated agency of the police force but this may be seen as a threat and individuals/communities may become defensive. Social workers may then have to play the role of advocate when assisting clients to respond to violations of human rights by the police force. It is important for social workers to intervene and assist clients first in any positive way.

Social workers expertise in trauma informed care may assist in the recovery of those suffering from the historical trauma of the police system. The close contact of social workers with families can contribute to addressing the experienced trauma and the needs of an individual. Overall, the impact of racial disparities in the criminal justice system greatly influences the family on numerous levels and it is crucial for social workers to be conscious of the oppression faced by this particular population.

The current study will differ from prior research in many aspects. It will take into consideration other characteristics of participants such as employment, socioeconomic status, and education attainment. The study will also evaluate all points of interaction in the criminal justice system instead of a single point. The study will build upon prior research by giving insight and providing a greater in depth understanding of the source of the disparity.

Literature Review

Socioeconomic Status

Racial disparities can be determined by other characteristics such as age, gender, and employment status of the individual (Spohn, 2000; Spohn and Holleran, 2000; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, and Kramer, 1998). The African American unemployment rate is more than double that of whites (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014). African Americans are poorer than whites; the average household earnings for African Americans are \$33,700 while non-Hispanic whites have average household earnings of more than \$57,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2013). However, this can be in part due to the systematic barriers that influence employment retainment and/or promotion.

Socioeconomic status and attributes of the neighborhood such as unwed mother family units, poverty, and unemployment are linked with the police actions and treatment towards citizens and the perception of police from people (Reisig & Parks, 2000; Sampson & Jeglum-Bartusch, 1998; Schuck et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2009). Police are more likely to be assigned duties in low income and high crime areas (Klinger, 1997). Minority citizens

living in poor areas regularly interact with police in a hostile and resistant manner out of fear which in turn law enforcement are more likely to use violence and exhibit racial biases against minority citizens (Bitner, 1972; Holmes, 1998). Education of the individual correlates with the individual's employment status, income, occupation, and social class.

Academia

The high school educational completion rate for African Americans is at about a 90% success rate but they are a lot less likely to pursue post-secondary education. Education is often fundamental to upward mobility (e.g., Ford 1993; McClendon and Wigfield 1998). African American adolescents typically have white educators even in primarily African Americans schools, and educators in general rarely have obtained considerable training in inclusive instruction and cultural competence (Fords & Harris, 1996). African American adolescents report reduced grades and assessments from educators and other adults at school and/or stricter punishment due to race (Fisher, Wallace, & Fenton, 2000; Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006; Romero & Roberts, 1998).

Results indicate that school-based discrimination was related to lower levels of educational tenacity and those adolescences who considered education to be an investment had high academic performance. Repeated experiences of stereotype threat and racial stigma can become a learned helplessness in which individuals purposely reduce efforts of educational attainment. Young persons subjected to school based discrimination may sense that nonetheless of the academic attempt they put forth their hard work will not be awarded in a method alike to their non-African Americans peers. Young people spend a

bulk amount of their time in a k-12 academic setting and discrimination encounters can have a major effect on social functioning and persistence in all aspects of life (Butler; Chavous, 2013). Overall, the experience of African American adolescents and youth in an educational setting develops the pattern of oppression of the African American culture to conform to white culture. The early exposure of disparity in an academia setting establishes the particular atmosphere for interactions of African Americans in the criminal justice system.

Effects of Stereotypes

Racial and ethnic subgroups are disproportionately represented at all phases of the criminal justice system. Three times as many African Americans than whites assume police prejudice is very frequent throughout the US; nearly no whites (1%) recounted being treated unethically by law enforcement in their city particularly because of their race (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Views on racialized policing are now widely dependent on mass media. Recurrent subjection to media publications on police abuse is a firm predictor that law enforcement prejudice is prevalent and intolerable (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). Young African Americans males have been stereotyped as a crack dealer, unemployed, gang affiliated, gun toting, and a menace to society in the media such as films, television, and social media (Weatherspoon, 1998: 23). This negative imagery of African Americans tie to violent crimes in society that are viewed as disruption to social order such as the illegal drug trade and can determine guilt or innocence (Weatherspoon, 1998: 23). Due to the image portrayed through different spectrums in society individuals are no longer being

uniquely judged based on their individual qualities. The negative imagery of African American persons based on their ethnicity/race is becoming a leading basis for treatment in the criminal justice system.

Cognitive biasing and stereotyping are often unconscious and may be an ingrained belief that all minorities are regarded as having the same attributes as other minorities (Chapman, 1967; Hamilton et al., 1985; Smith et al., 2006). When decision makers such as jurors are confronted with inadequate evidence and the predictions that they are forced to make are unclear, offender attributes such as race and social class may be used as substitutes for accounting for dangerousness of individual (Kutateladze et al., 2014). This is called perceptual shorthand's which is a fast or condensed procedure by which persons observe and examine the features of their surroundings and based on those observations or perceptions, act accordingly.

Traffic Stops

Racial profiling has been most prominently shown and used in traffic stops and charges against minorities.

- African Americans account for 36 percent of the 1.5 million persons in prison yet this population of people only represent 12 percent of the national population (Burch, 2015).
- African Americans are treated more harshly in traffic stops, intake, detainment, pretrial, plea bargaining, and sentence type (Kutateladze et al., 2014).

- African Americans motorists may generally operate older or less reasonable condition vehicles than their white counterparts, which in turn allow law enforcement to use minor equipment violations as an excuse to stop African Americans drivers (Alpert, Dunham, & Smith, 2007).
- African Americans may be more susceptible for traffic stops by law enforcement because their skin color intensifies the visibility by law enforcement (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).
- Once pulled over, a law enforcement representative was 65% more likely to complete a background check of an African Americans driver compared to its white counterparts (Alpert, Dunham, & Smith, 2007).
- African Americans motorist were more likely than their white counterparts to be subject to pat down and vehicle searches (Alpert, Dunham, & Smith, 2007).

A concept well known in the African American community is driving while black (DWB). The driving while black notion means the awareness of the African American community is likely to be subjected to unfair treatment as an operator of a motorized vehicle (Rojek et al., 2012) DWB occurs when law enforcement target African Americans not because of the violation of a traffic stop but on the notion of their race (Moore et al., 2016). In the African American community this practice has become routine and regular that they are pulled over without a legitimate explanation. This particular concept has caused distrust and has caused more of a suspicion of police motives from African Americans due to the violation to protect and serve. Law enforcement is more willing to detain African Americans even when inadequate evidence is available or it is a simple

charge such as disorderly conduct, because law enforcement may view African Americans defendants as the “usual suspect” although the arrest typically does not lead to prosecution (Kutateladze et al., 2014).

Arrests

The largest racial disadvantage occurring between African Americans and whites are the disparity of conviction for drug offenses though drug use prevalence is the same across racial groups. African Americans are arrested at a rate 10 times higher than their white counterparts. This may be related to the war on drugs initiative, which was targeted for the arrest of minority’s group’s involvement with drugs.

President Ronald Reagan formally proclaimed the existing drug war in 1982, prior to crack becoming a problem in the media or a crisis in poor African American areas (Alexander & West, 2012).. A few years following the drug war was announced, crack began to expand quickly in the poor African American areas of Los Angeles and later appeared in cities across the nation. The Reagan administration appointed staff to announce the rise of crack cocaine in 1985 as part of a tactical effort to build public and judicial reinforcement for the war (Alexander & West, 2012). The media crusade was an amazing achievement. Almost immediately, the media was flooded with pictures of African American “crack whores,” “crack dealers,” and “crack babies”—pictures that appeared to validate the most horrible undesirable racial stereotypes about disadvantaged urban citizens(Alexander & West, 2012).. The media coverage about the “new demon drug” assisted to boost the War on Drugs from a striving federal strategy to a real war (Alexander & West, 2012). The period of the

crack epidemic aided to provoke conspiracy ideas and overall assumption in poor African Americans societies that the War on Drugs was part of a genocidal strategy by administration to extinguish African American people in the United States. As time went on the war on drugs began to expand beyond crack cocaine to include other drugs such as marijuana, which lead to mandatory sentencing.

Sentencing

African American defendants receive relatively harsher sentences for crimes. Race is taken into account from the victim and defendant when determining sentencing.

- African Americans were more likely than their white colleagues to be detained prior to trial (Kutateladze et al., 2014).
- African Americans were more likely to have robbery and theft related charges (Kutateladze et al., 2014).
- African Americans are more than twice as likely to be imprisoned, nearly three times as likely to accept a custodial plea bid, and nearly twice as likely to be sentenced to jail for misdemeanors although they are more likely to have misdemeanor cases terminated (Kutateladze et al., 2014).
- African Americans receive verdicts that are 4.25 times higher than those of whites even after monitoring lawfully applicable factors such as category of crime (Burch, 2015).
- The average verdict received by whites is about 270 days shorter than those received by African Americans for their first offense (Burch, 2015).

- If the defendant is African American, the victim is white, and a violent crime was committed it is more likely they will receive a longer sentence as this is viewed as a violation of social boundaries (Wooldredge et al., 2011).
- Guilty pleas account for roughly 90 percent of all convictions and can be based on racially motivated threats (Wooldredge et al., 2011).

Minority defendants are more likely to participate in plea-bargaining if they have feelings of distrust of court participants. This distrust comes from the perception that majority-white juries are unable to relate to African American defendants and victims. Plea bargaining is a more desirable substitute trial that avoids trials and costs. Plea-bargaining for minority may be used if there is a majority white juries they may not want to leave their future in their hands. It may also be a disadvantage as this ensures convictions of cases and the inability to appeal decision (Wooldredge et al., 2011). In addition, poorer defendants are rarely able have the means to hire private lawyers and adequate court representation.

Courtroom workgroup is the concern from individuals to maintain relations with other individuals of the courtroom by warranting the fluidity of cases through the system and not opposing the majority ruling and unfair treatment of others (Kutateladze et al., 2014). Courtroom workgroup can take place among jurors, officers, judges, and other court officials. This means persons in the courtroom may rely on stereotypical attributes to determine the conviction of defendants and in the case of African Americans may unfairly wrongfully convict them rather than redirecting their colleagues. The racially coded social order that is sometimes unconscious is maintaining the systematic disadvantage of minority defendants.

Incarceration

Racial disparities in imprisonment are detrimental to society in many aspects. Racial minorities face high rates of disproportion in incarceration, such as African Americans are incarcerated 5.6 times the rate of their majority colleagues (Garland & Spohn, 2008). On an individual level, incarceration causes separation from positive social supports and this may lead to a disconnection from the outside world, which can lead to depression, anger, and other undesirable expressive states (Wooldredge 1999). Once prisoners are released they may be encountered with trouble adjusting to change, fear of failure, and dim employment options as being disadvantaged by criminal charges and minority status (Rollo 1988). Traumatic reactions originating from racial profiling and exploitation can include irritability, nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, despair, fear of police, and intrusive thoughts (Aymer, 2016).

Normally, released inmates must return to their communities where they last lived, which, for most, means returning to a poor and socially secluded inner-city area or community. Many inmates arrived with drug, alcohol, or mental health difficulties. In majority of occurrences, they obtained little or no treatment or counseling during their imprisonment because of decreased funding for therapy programs as well as the termination or decrease of mental facilities (Crutchfield, 2015). Realistically, in some cases those that are ordered to complete court ordered drug related treatment has to sell drugs in order to self-fund their treatment to remove themselves from the criminal justice system but are actually in turn more likely putting themselves in situation to reoffend to survive.

Unfortunately, this means that inmates freed back into their old communities return no better off—or, in many occasions, worse off—than they were before being locked up.

Effects on the Family System

The incarceration of one person in a family unit can affect the functions and alters family roles within that system. Families are strained by the financial loss if the inmate is the primary breadwinner. This in turn can cause families to downscale homes, new neighborhoods and schools for children, going onto welfare, replacing new male roles into families, and reduced time with biological parent in search of secondary employment (Clear and Rose 2003: 39).

By disproportionality incarcerating African Americans and some based on race this reduces opportunity for upward mobility as incarceration reduces employment opportunities over an entire lifetime, which in turn affects social class of future generations of family units. The earnings gaps between African Americans and whites continues to widen which overall keeps African Americans confined to a lower class social group (Garland & Spohn, 2008).

The New Jim Crow

Police Departments were originally created in use to enforce slave code laws such as Jim Crow to control the social order of minorities. Examples of the original Jim Crow laws include things such as the ban of interracial marriages, separate bathroom facilities, drinking fountains, and segregated public schools by race. However, it is no longer socially acceptable to use race as a basis for discrimination, segregation, and social contempt so the new Jim Crow concept has been introduced as a substitute for criminals rather than race. The criminal justice system is still used as the mechanism of controlling African Americans but rather than labeling them “negro” they are labeled “criminal”. A number of different initiatives have been implemented as stated throughout this paper such as the war on drugs or stop and frisk to purposely condemn African Americans.

In the world today, it is legal to discriminate against a criminal or a felon in numerous aspects of society such as employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of public services such as food assistance, denial of educational advancements, and prohibiting from jury selection (Alexander & West, 2012). In addition, higher incarceration or conviction of crimes of African Americans also means smaller percentages of African Americans that meet the criteria to vote. Forty-eight states exclude felons from voting, and 13 states have prohibited felons from voting forever (Mauer 2002). This means that oppressed persons have no judgment in who is elected officials in their local, state, and federal positions, which mean these persons in authority, can maintain the oppressive system. Overall, our Jim Crow system or caste system is being maintained through mass incarceration of African Americans or people of color.

Police Brutality and Death

Police mistreatment can be dated back as far as the creation of the police task force. The majority or powerful acting on the judgment of threat will use law-breaking mechanism tactics to confine and bound those who threaten their interests.

The brutality and killing of African Americans men in the 21st century is similar to the practice used in the 20th century to control social order, which is lynching (Aymer, 2016). The existing stereotypes of African Americans males as violent and disorderly can be dated back to when whites feared that an angry group of African Americans males might arise and attack on their ladies, which instilled fear and reason to react (Aymer, 2016). If law enforcement is more likely to perceive African Americans males as a menace, they are more likely to justify the use of deadly force. The concept “negrophobia” or “African Americans phobia” is the illogical fright of being victimized by African Americans than can conclude in whites killing or hurting an African American based on criminal/racial stereotypes (Chaney & Robertson, 2013). Police brutality in response to negrophobia whether conscious or unconscious can be physical, psychological or verbal attacks on a citizen that can escalate where unacceptable acts are no longer justified. In the world today, we have witnessed numerous footage of unlawful police violence among citizens.

White Privilege

A privilege is something anticipated; an extra benefit or incentive as a consequence of some prior higher standing or superiority (Zack, 2015). There are two categories of white privilege that are most prominent in today's society. The first is the accessibility whites have toward upward socioeconomic mobility and access to certain benefits only available to the more privileged in society. The second is the better chance whites have in having their basic human rights protected by government officers and those with control and authority in public organizations (Zack, 2015).

The concept of white supremacy can be dated back as far as 1935 when W.E.B. DuBois introduced the notion in respect to low wage black employees. The consciousness of white supremacy peaked during the Civil Rights Era Movement in 1965. (Zack, 2015). Some examples of white privilege include generally having positive relations with law enforcement, being favored by school authority, attending segregated and affluent schools, learning about your own race in an academic setting, and having the privilege of deliberately witnessing the biases of the media in your own race. White privilege is the privilege to feel normal.

Historically, fighting for equality or equal rights for all has been a highly desired phenomenon. African Americans are not asking for extra rights or protection for being African American they are requesting the same privileges that the majority has already accumulated as a basic human right. In addition, white privilege is the ability of whites to be true and free to their culture and be able to preserve their tradition. However, the

African American culture has historically been invaded through dance, fashion, hair, language, and more by whites.

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement was created in 2013 after the murder of Trayvon Martin. BLM movement has created a platform to confront politics, give a voice to popular rage, establish new grassroots resistance, and end the resist of progress during the age of President Obama (Rickford, 2016). The act of police violence and killings and the message that they are unwarranted yet lawful and lack accountability illustrate why black lives may not matter (Aymer, 2016).

The BLM movement is essentially demanding accountability for police mistreatment, violence, and killing effecting African Americans people. It is essential to become accountable because the message sent by not being accountable means that grand juries who do not prosecute such murderers, or juries who found them not-guilty in court, found that other things mattered more, such as, the letter of the law, police discretion and reasonable doubt (Zach, 2015). Their protests outlets have included occupying freeways, road crossings, athletic events, sales stores, shopping malls, campaign occasions, police stations, and community buildings (Rickford, 2016). The concept of BLM and the enforcement of marches, rallies, and die-ins are to signify the importance of restoring basic human rights and dignity to the lives of African Americans people.

The current creation of BLM and hostile response seems to evoke painful memories of protests that took place in the 1960's or 1990s in response to the death of Rodney King.

African Americans persons have always struggled to acquire fairness and security through continual peaceful protests expected to result in social change and disturb white power. Resistance to civil rights actions has traditionally led to public approved violence by law enforcement such as the use of water hose and dogs (Aymer, 2016). The BLM also can be a reminder of the Black power, Black Panther, and SNCC era (Rickford, 2016).

In contrast, the BLM movement has generated arguments of “Black on Black crime”, “all lives matter” and “blue lives matter” which completely dismisses the purpose of the movement and introduces a fictitious post racial ideal. Law enforcement agencies themselves have been the most opposed agents of criticism against the BLM movement. They have promoted the claim that BLM actually provokes assaults on cops and police forces and often confront the unarmed protests with military personnel. The Black Lives Matter has also created campaigns such as “say her name” to evoke a personnel connection that this could be you.

The BLM movement has generated a great deal of empowerment among people of color and has re-identified allies to fight for the rights of others. In conclusion, the Black Lives Matter movement works in full to rebuild the African Americans liberation movement.

Discussion

There has been very little research to adequately answer my research question. Relatively few studies on disproportions have been submitted and approved in scholarly and peer review outlets. There have been large bodies of literature studied that have resulted in mixed or incomplete findings. This particular study topic is very fast paced and changing that research quickly becomes inadequate or insufficient. Other studies have focused just on a single decision making point of the criminal justice system and not others. Geographical research is also another gap as it studies only a single county, state, or department. Another gap in the study is that the individual officer is the only person who can state if race was used as the source of an act which there are rarely personal accounts made that will state that.

The unexplained disproportionality cannot identify how much of that is actually caused by discrimination. Although the ratio of incarceration rates between African Americans and whites have been studied does not necessarily explain why the disproportion exists. The cycle of racial inequality seems to always exist and the spectrum of racial disparities seems to widen causing a domino effect in all areas of life. As systematic racism seems to be maintained which then reinforces wage gaps causing intergenerational mobility to stay the same. African Americans tend to belong to lower middle class families or live in low-income neighborhoods causing them to attend less affluent schools, which does not prepare them to seek higher education. Without a sufficient education, African American young adults received significantly lower wages than their white counterparts do.

There are many weaknesses that can be found in this study. It can be very time consuming to conduct interviews with so many people. It may be difficult for persons to answer the questions honestly and in full if they are not comfortable or feel the interviewer is not neutral and is persuaded a certain way. The interviewee may also provide answers to questions they feel are supposed to have a certain answer if they are influenced by what society tells them and may have been influenced by the media in which persons may falsify or embellish their answers. This issue may also be a very sensitive subject and can resurface resentment, hatred, ill feelings, or negative emotions.

Although traumatic reactive feelings may be persistent and can interfere with a person's ability to function there is no diagnostic category in the DSM. Although these symptoms of historical trauma are consistent with disorders like PTSD the diagnoses and need of treatment is diminished because of the societal label that the stressors are not catastrophic. Then, another label is placed on this group as crazy or non-compliant without considering the concept of them struggling to manage the psychological damages of racial oppression.

Implications

Perhaps this study will open the eyes of the participants, society, and the world today whether it is positive or negative. By actually discussing the stressful events that the participant endured may help them recognize a level of strength or resiliency they first never recognized. By publicizing real life stories and data may create sympathy from others. It may also bring to light to society the role that race has in the criminal justice

system and how it continues to maintain racial divisions. This may in turn develop new programs and initiatives through departments, states, and on a government level to increase positive police interaction and satisfaction. More importantly, the majority needs to address and align themselves with the minority to advocate for change.

In addition, locally our communities and county officials need to invest in higher education of students. Exploration of post-secondary education recruitment needs to increase in low-income minority neighborhoods. A current and recent program implemented in Waterloo schools is a program called leader in me. The purpose of leader in me is to provide students with leadership and life skills while also creating a culture that every person can be a leader. The leader in me program is a strengths based approach and implementation of this nationwide can affirm the strengths in students at an early which in turn develops resiliency to adversity. In addition, by furthering education, persons then increases their chances of income and social mobility which then decreases their likelihood to be arrested.

An analysis of conviction policies and mandatory sentencing such as stop and risk, “war on drugs”, and other violent crimes should be reversed and in turn adopting a less costly and more compassionate treatment plan. This includes implementation of new rehabilitation tactics. Unlike the military, the criminal justice system does not rehabilitate persons to leave better than they entered although that is the purpose. An initiative for offenders is better employment opportunities for recently release offenders. Employment after incarceration brings organization to an individual’s life. Persons with stable

employment show higher rates of self-confidence, stability, and they are less likely to reoffend.

Another initiative to address the bias policing is diversifying the ranks of police agencies. This could help eliminate or greatly reduce both the appearance and the reality of racially discriminatory policing. In addition, eliminating the practice of stopping motorists for minor violations could eliminate unwarranted arrests.

Lastly, heavy involvement and visibility in African American communities can reduce the stigma associated with law enforcement. It takes a village to transform a community and raise the children because children are the future. Community leaders and religious leaders in these communities need to unite and uplift the culture in these communities. They need to create a culture of love, sacrifice, passion, and purpose that lead to longevity. Collaborative conversations between law enforcement and citizens need to take place to bridge the gaps and misunderstanding between the two parties. Overall, all leaders need to set an example and work together for the common good.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to focus on the unfair and destructive policing against the African American community. The mistreatment of African Americans in every aspect of the criminal justice system is complex. The institutional racism that African Americans face in the criminal justice system causes imprisonment of innocent persons, creation of criminal records, and unexplained deaths of guiltless people. The involvement of the criminal justice system in the African American community is impactful

in communities, individuals and families. The effects of institutional racism of the criminal justice system can cause depression in individuals, separation of families, and prevents the citizens from reaching their full production capacities in communities.

In reference to the system of politics, education, employment, and police, it was not created in the interest of African Americans people and must now be reexamined to address the historical trauma. The lack of cultural competence in the educational system discourages students from furthering their education. In addition, African Americans are unlikely to experience social mobility due to the circumstances of historical prejudice and discrimination in the United States.

African Americans are not in a current state of physical slavery with shackles on plantations. However, we are still mentally and socially enslaved and we are suffocating because the lack of voice that society has given us. In summary, the obstacles faced by individual's, communities, and families from the effects of racism diminishes the idea of America being the promise land of equal chance and lacks the realism of full incorporation of African Americans into American society. The reality of this all is that racism and discrimination among African Americans is an inevitable part of life. The criminal justice system is the way of governance to control the African American community. Once you are in the criminal justice system there is no way out and it controls your life chances.

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