

Lesson 14, Policy Analysis Brief

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Goal Statement

This policy brief provides a comprehensive analysis of the persistent issue of racial inequality and discrimination in the United States, which has significant impacts on individuals and communities. Racial inequality and discrimination take many forms, including unequal access to education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and justice, as well as disproportionate rates of police violence and incarceration for people of color. These systemic issues are not only a violation of fundamental human rights but also harm the overall well-being of society.

To address these issues, this policy brief emphasizes the urgent need for policy interventions at all levels of society. Social workers and policymakers have a crucial role to play in implementing and advocating for policy changes that promote racial equity and combat discrimination in all areas of society. These interventions should be based on evidence-based research and community-based approaches that engage and empower local communities to become active agents in the fight against racial inequality and discrimination.

The policy brief provides actionable recommendations for social workers and policymakers to address racial inequality and discrimination in education, economic development, healthcare, and access to justice. These recommendations include promoting equal

access to education and resources, supporting economic development programs that benefit all members of the community, promoting policies that provide affordable healthcare to all members of the community, reducing racial bias in policing, providing alternatives to incarceration, and increasing access to legal representation.

In summary, this policy brief highlights the pervasive issue of racial inequality and discrimination in the United States and the urgent need for policy interventions to address these issues. Social workers and policymakers have a crucial role to play in implementing and advocating for policy changes that promote racial equity and combat discrimination in all areas of society. By promoting evidence-based research and community-based approaches, we can work towards creating a more equitable society for all.

The brief will explore the scope of the problem, past policies, current policies, and proposed solutions, including the involvement of local communities and faith communities.

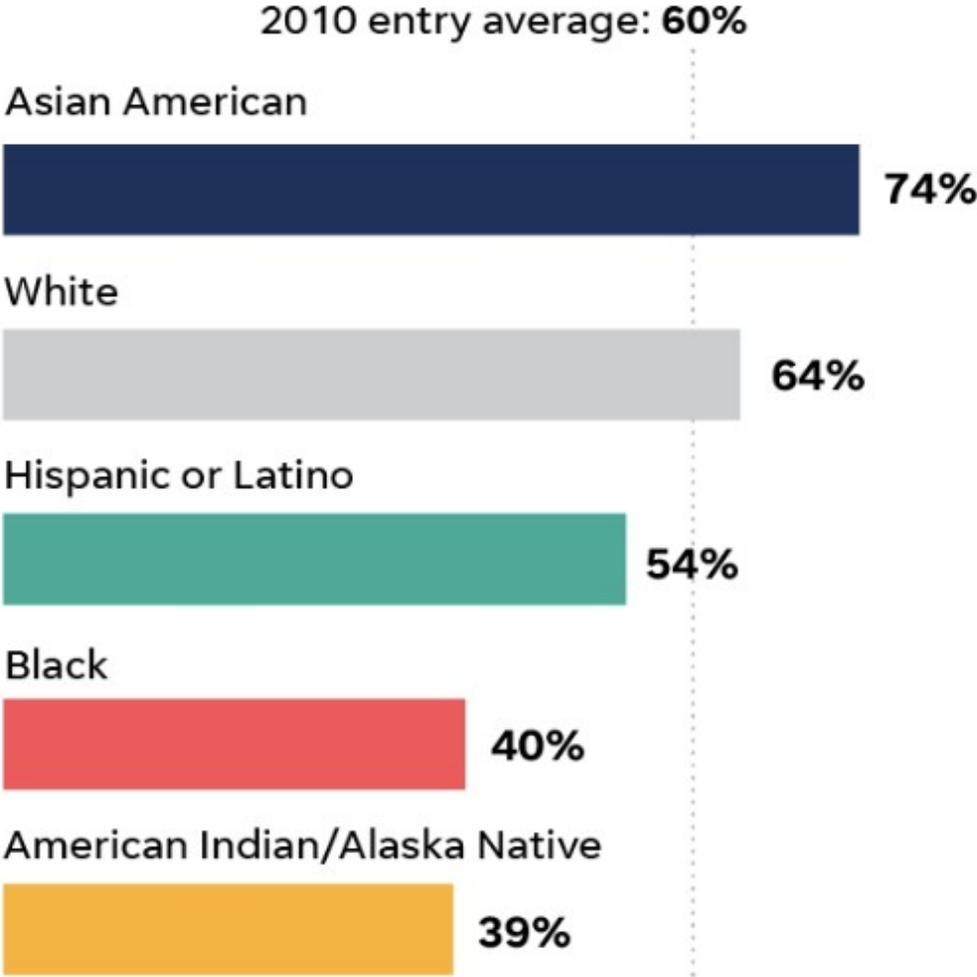
Scope of the Problem

The pervasive nature of racial inequality and discrimination in the United States is a significant challenge that affects millions of people across the country. The disparities experienced by Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color are systemic and deeply ingrained in American society, with their roots tracing back to the country's history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination.

Addressing racial inequality and discrimination requires a comprehensive and sustained effort from all levels of government, civil society, and individual citizens. It involves not only addressing the immediate consequences of discrimination but also dismantling the systemic barriers and structures that perpetuate racial disparities. Such efforts require a multi-faceted

approach that includes policies, programs, and initiatives that promote equity and combat discrimination in all areas of society. It also requires an ongoing commitment to social justice, anti-racism, and the advancement of human rights for all individuals, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Percentage of students who graduate from 4-year college programs

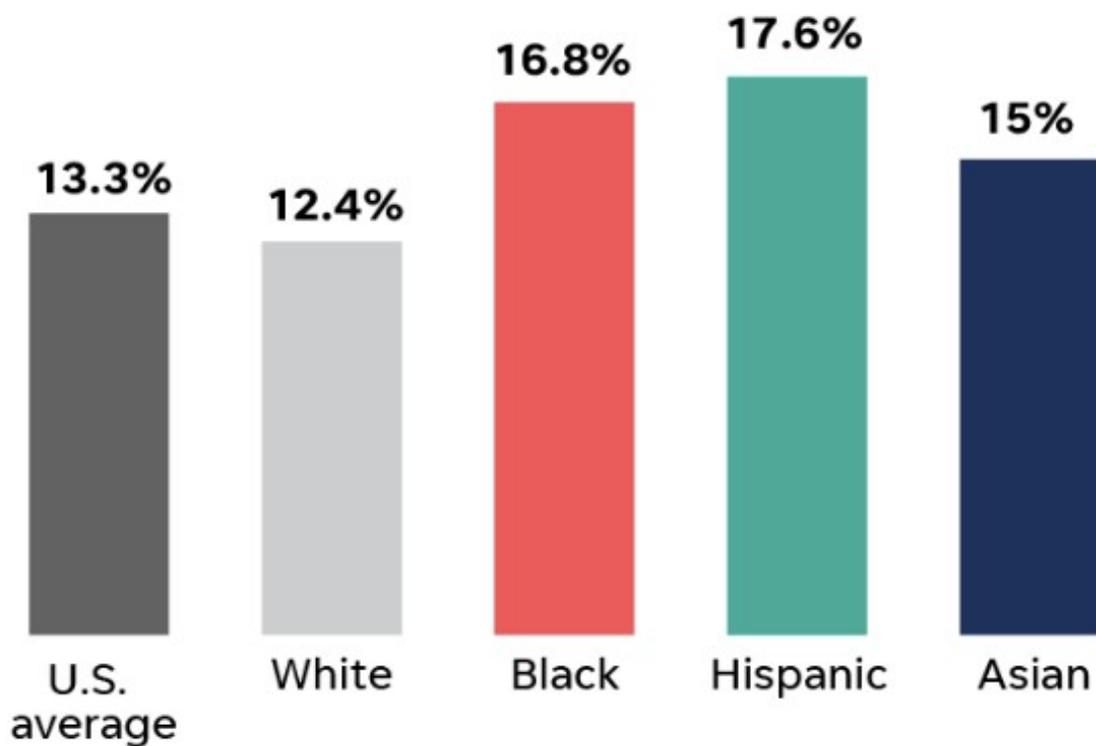


In the realm of education, the disparities faced by students of color are widespread and persistent. Public schools in predominantly Black and Brown neighborhoods are often underfunded, have fewer experienced teachers, and lack access to resources and technologies that are readily available in predominantly white schools. These conditions result in lower

academic achievement, higher dropout rates, and limited opportunities for future success. Such disparities are not limited to primary and secondary education but are also evident in higher education, where students of color are less likely to enroll and graduate from college.

Black unemployment rate among highest

May 2020 seasonally adjusted rate:



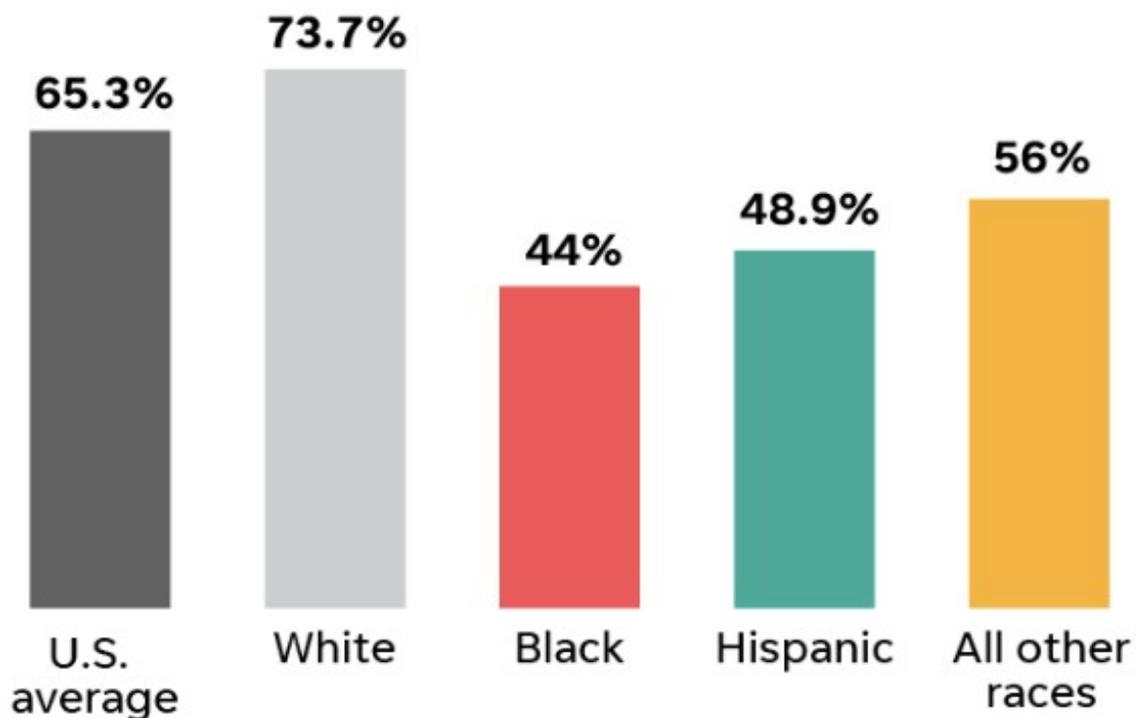
SOURCE Bureau of Labor Statistics

In the realm of employment, racial disparities are equally concerning. People of color experience discrimination at all stages of the employment process, including hiring, promotion, and pay. They are less likely to have access to quality jobs and often work in low-wage and precarious positions with limited benefits, job security, and opportunities for career

advancement. These disparities, in turn, contribute to higher rates of poverty, limited economic mobility, and intergenerational disadvantage.

Black homeownership rates remain lowest in US

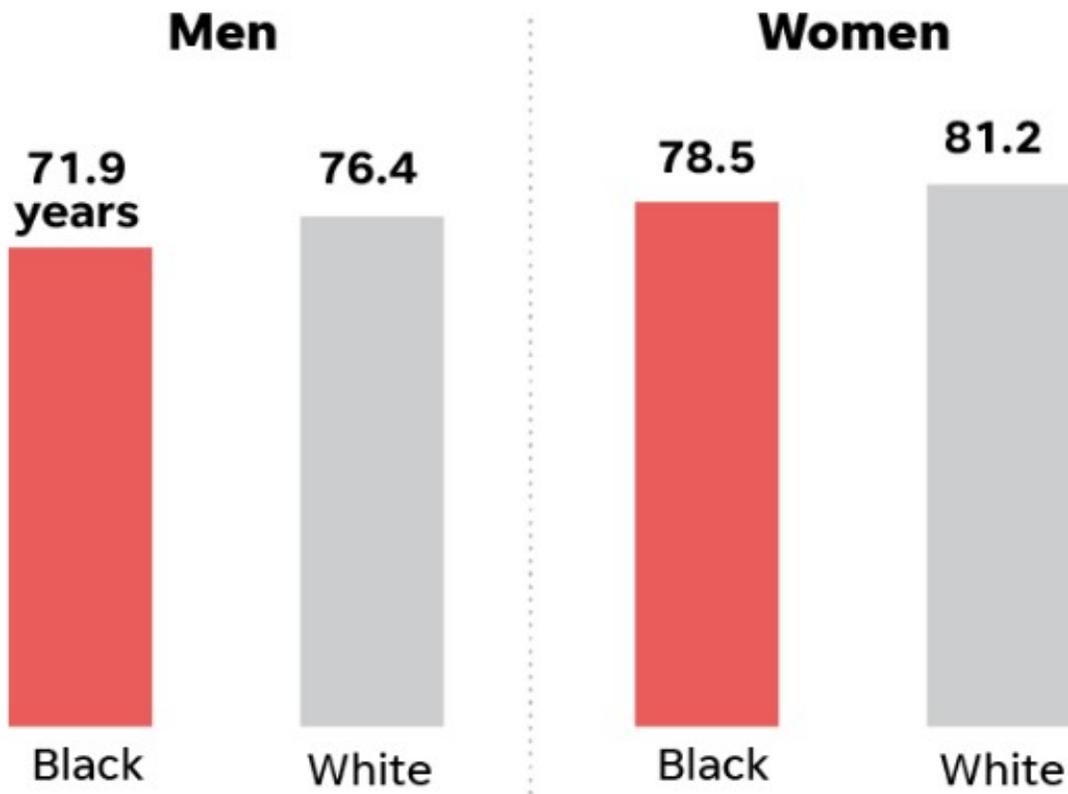
Rates as of first quarter of 2020



SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau

Housing discrimination and segregation are also persistent problems in the United States. Communities of color often face significant barriers in accessing safe and affordable housing, which can lead to homelessness, displacement, and unsafe living conditions. Such discrimination not only limits the opportunities of individuals and families but also reinforces and perpetuates residential segregation, which in turn affects access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

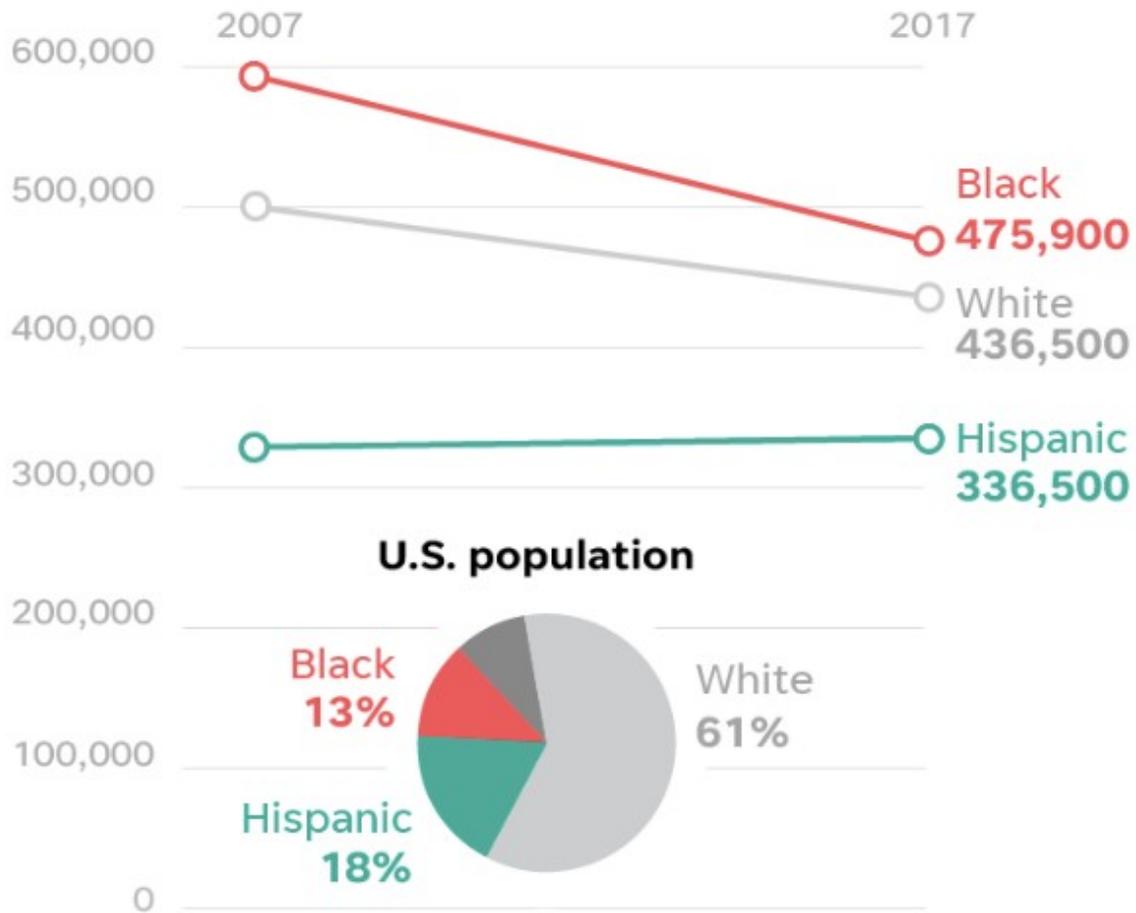
Black men and women live shorter lives



SOURCE Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In healthcare, racial disparities are evident in access to care, quality of care, and health outcomes. People of color are more likely to be uninsured or underinsured, which limits access to preventive care and treatment for chronic conditions. They also face racial bias from healthcare providers, which leads to misdiagnosis, inadequate treatment, and distrust in the healthcare system. These disparities, in turn, result in poorer health outcomes, reduced life expectancy, and a disproportionate burden of chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Inmates in federal and state prisons



SOURCE Bureau of Justice Statistics

Finally, the criminal justice system disproportionately affects communities of color, particularly Black and Brown individuals. They are more likely to be arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced to harsher punishments than their white counterparts, even for similar offenses. Racial disparities are also evident in policing practices, where communities of color are more likely to be subjected to excessive use of force, racial profiling, and other forms of police violence. These disparities contribute to a cycle of poverty, disadvantage, and trauma that is difficult to escape.

Past Policy

Historically, government policies have played a significant role in perpetuating racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. For instance, slavery was a government-sanctioned practice that allowed white people to own Black people as property and use them for labor without pay. Even after slavery was abolished, segregation laws were introduced, separating Black people from white people in public spaces, schools, and housing. These laws were meant to limit the rights and opportunities of Black people and maintain white supremacy.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were significant pieces of legislation that aimed to address discrimination and promote racial equity. The Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in employment, housing, and public accommodations. The Voting Rights Act aimed to protect the right to vote for all citizens, particularly Black Americans who had been disenfranchised by discriminatory voting laws.

However, despite these policy changes, many argue that they did not go far enough to address systemic discrimination and promote racial equity. For example, housing discrimination continued through a practice known as redlining, in which banks and government agencies denied mortgages and loans to people of color in certain neighborhoods. This practice limited the opportunities for people of color to build wealth and forced them into under-resourced and poorly maintained communities.

Similarly, the War on Drugs, a federal policy launched in the 1980s to combat drug use and trafficking, led to the mass incarceration of Black and Brown Americans. This policy contributed to the disproportionate imprisonment of people of color, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and disadvantage for individuals and their communities.

Today, the legacy of these policies and practices continues to shape and perpetuate racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. Addressing the impact of past policies on communities of color is a critical part of promoting racial equity and combating discrimination in the present and the future.

Current Policy

Current policies in the United States continue to perpetuate racial inequality and discrimination in several key areas, including the criminal justice system, immigration policies, and education policies. These policies have a disproportionate impact on communities of color, particularly Black and Brown communities, and contribute to the systemic racism that has been a long-standing issue in the country.

The criminal justice system is one of the most visible and egregious examples of systemic racism. People of color are more likely to be stopped, searched, and arrested by law enforcement than white people, even when controlling for other factors. Once in the system, they are more likely to be charged, convicted, and sentenced to longer prison terms than white people for similar offenses. The criminal justice system's practices, including mandatory minimums, three-strikes laws, and cash bail, disproportionately affect people of color and contribute to the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people.

Immigration policies also have a disproportionate impact on communities of color, particularly immigrant communities. The current policies have resulted in the separation of families and the detention of children, particularly those from Central American countries. The policies have created a climate of fear and mistrust in these communities, and have contributed to their marginalization and disenfranchisement.

Education policies are another area where systemic racism is apparent. Black and Brown students are disproportionately affected by issues such as school funding disparities and discipline policies. Schools in predominantly white areas often have better funding and resources, while schools in predominantly Black and Brown areas are underfunded and lack resources, resulting in lower-quality education. Discipline policies also disproportionately impact students of color, who are more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than their white peers.

Efforts to address these issues include policies aimed at reforming the criminal justice system, including reducing mandatory minimums, eliminating cash bail, and ending racial profiling. Immigration policies aimed at promoting family reunification and protecting immigrant rights have also been proposed, such as a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Education policies aimed at increasing funding to schools in underserved communities and addressing discipline policies that disproportionately impact students of color are also being proposed.

Addressing current policies that perpetuate racial inequality and discrimination is critical to promoting racial equity and combatting systemic discrimination. It requires a long-term, sustained effort to change policies, practices, and attitudes at all levels of society. It is essential to listen to and center the voices and experiences of people of color in policy discussions and decisions to create meaningful and lasting change.

Proposed Solutions

To effectively address racial inequality and discrimination in the United States, a multifaceted approach is needed that includes policy interventions at various levels, as well as

community-led initiatives. Some proposed solutions include:

Police reform:

- **Demilitarization:** This involves reducing the use of military-grade equipment by law enforcement and shifting towards a more community-oriented approach to policing.
- **Community policing:** This involves building relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, prioritizing de-escalation and community-led solutions to public safety issues.
- **Increased transparency and accountability:** This involves implementing measures to ensure that law enforcement officers are held accountable for misconduct, such as body cameras and civilian review boards.

Immigration reform:

- **Providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants:** This would provide a way for undocumented immigrants to gain legal status and eventually citizenship, allowing them to fully participate in society.
- **Protecting the rights of immigrant workers:** This includes ensuring that immigrant workers are paid fair wages, protected from exploitation, and have access to basic labor rights.
- **Addressing the root causes of migration:** This involves addressing issues such as economic inequality and violence in countries of origin to reduce the need for migration.

Education reform:

- Addressing funding disparities: This involves providing additional resources to schools in underserved communities to ensure that students have access to quality education.
- Increasing access to higher education: This includes providing financial aid and other support for students from underrepresented backgrounds to attend college and obtain advanced degrees.
- Implementing anti-discrimination policies: This involves addressing issues such as school discipline policies that disproportionately impact students of color and promoting culturally responsive teaching practices.

Economic justice:

- Increasing the minimum wage: This would help to address the racial wealth gap by ensuring that all workers earn a living wage.
- Expanding access to affordable housing: This would help to address the disproportionate impact of housing discrimination on communities of color.
- Promoting small business development in communities of color: This would help to promote economic growth and reduce disparities in wealth.

Health equity:

- Addressing healthcare access and outcomes disparities: This involves increasing access to healthcare for communities of color, including through expanding Medicaid and other public health programs.

- Promoting culturally competent care: This involves ensuring that healthcare providers are trained to provide care that is responsive to the unique needs of patients from diverse backgrounds.
- Investing in public health initiatives: This includes addressing social determinants of health, such as poverty and racism, which can have a significant impact on health outcomes.

Community-led initiatives:

- Grassroots organizing: This involves bringing community members together to identify and address issues that impact their lives, such as organizing for better public schools or advocating for police reform.
- Community-led policing initiatives: This involves building relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, prioritizing de-escalation, and community-led solutions to public safety issues.
- Promoting dialogue and understanding: This involves creating opportunities for people from different backgrounds to come together and engage in honest, open conversations about issues related to race and racism, to promote greater understanding and empathy.

Involvement of Local Communities

The involvement of local communities is crucial in addressing racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. Local communities are often the first line of defense against discrimination, and community-based efforts can have a significant impact on promoting racial

equity. In this section, we will discuss the various ways in which local communities can be involved in combatting racial inequality and discrimination.

- Local communities can play a critical role in promoting racial equity in education. Education is often cited as one of the most effective ways to promote upward mobility and break the cycle of poverty. However, the racial achievement gap in education remains a significant issue in the United States. Local communities can be involved in promoting education equity by advocating for policies that promote equal access to education and resources. Community organizations can also provide mentoring, tutoring, and after-school programs to help students who are falling behind academically.
- Local communities can promote economic development that benefits all members of the community, regardless of race. In many areas, racial inequality is closely tied to economic inequality. Local community organizations can work to promote economic development programs that benefit all members of the community, such as small business development, affordable housing initiatives, and job training programs.
- Local communities can be involved in promoting equitable access to healthcare. Racial disparities in healthcare outcomes are a significant issue in the United States, with African Americans and other communities of color often experiencing worse health outcomes than white Americans. Local community organizations can promote policies that provide affordable healthcare to all members of the community, as well as programs that increase access to preventive care.
- Local communities can be involved in promoting equitable access to justice. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system are well documented, with African Americans

and other communities of color experiencing disproportionate rates of arrest, incarceration, and police violence. Local community organizations can work to promote policies that reduce racial bias in policing, provide alternatives to incarceration, and increase access to legal representation.

- Local communities can promote intercultural understanding and dialogue, which is crucial in addressing racial inequality and discrimination. Community organizations can organize events and initiatives that bring people from different backgrounds together to share their experiences and learn from one another. This can help promote empathy and understanding, break down stereotypes and misconceptions, and build trust and relationships across racial and ethnic lines.
- Local communities can be involved in promoting civic engagement and political participation. Historically, communities of color have been underrepresented in the political process, and this has contributed to the persistence of racial inequality and discrimination. Local community organizations can promote voter registration, educate their communities about the importance of participating in elections, and encourage their members to run for public office. They can also advocate for policies that promote equal representation and address systemic racism.

Examples of local community efforts to address racial inequality and discrimination include the Black Lives Matter movement, which began as a grassroots effort to raise awareness about police violence against Black Americans and has since evolved into a global movement for racial justice. The Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of organizations and individuals working towards the same goals, has called for a wide range of policy changes, including

divesting from policing and investing in communities, reparations for slavery and systemic racism, and the demilitarization of law enforcement.

Another example is the Latino community's efforts to promote immigrant rights and address discrimination against undocumented immigrants. Local community organizations, such as the National Council of La Raza and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, have advocated for policies that protect the rights of undocumented immigrants and provide a pathway to citizenship.

Local communities have an important role to play in combatting racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. By promoting education equity, economic development, healthcare access, and access to justice, local communities can work towards creating a more equitable society for all. Social workers and policymakers can support these efforts by working with local communities and providing resources and support to community-based organizations.

Involvement of Faith Community

Religious institutions have long played a significant role in promoting social justice and equality in the United States, and their involvement is essential in addressing racial inequality and discrimination. The involvement of faith communities can take various forms, including providing support and resources for affected individuals and communities, advocating for policy changes, and facilitating community dialogue and engagement.

Faith leaders and institutions have a unique ability to reach diverse communities and bring people together to work towards common goals. For instance, they can collaborate with community organizations to organize events and initiatives that promote education and

awareness about racial inequality and discrimination. Additionally, they can advocate for policies that address systemic racism and support marginalized communities.

Faith communities can also provide critical emotional and spiritual support to individuals who have experienced discrimination and racial trauma. For instance, they can provide counseling services and create safe spaces where individuals can share their experiences and receive support from others who share similar experiences.

Furthermore, religious institutions and faith leaders can use their platform and influence to promote values of compassion, justice, and equality, inspiring individuals to take action against racial inequality and discrimination. Many faith traditions emphasize the importance of social justice and encourage their followers to work towards a more equitable society. For example, in Christianity, the concept of "love thy neighbor" and "treat others as you want to be treated" promotes the value of treating all individuals with respect and dignity, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Faith communities can also work towards building bridges and fostering dialogue between different communities, promoting understanding and empathy. They can provide a space for interfaith and interracial dialogue, encouraging individuals to learn from each other and build connections based on shared values and common goals.

In addition to their spiritual and moral guidance, faith communities can also contribute to practical efforts to address racial inequality and discrimination. For instance, they can provide financial support and resources to community organizations and initiatives that work towards social justice, such as community-based education and job training programs.

The involvement of faith communities is crucial in addressing racial inequality and discrimination in the United States. Their engagement can enhance the effectiveness of policy

interventions, promote community dialogue and understanding, and provide essential emotional and spiritual support for affected individuals and communities.

In conclusion, addressing racial inequality and discrimination in the United States requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy interventions at various levels, community-led initiatives, and cultural and societal changes. It requires the participation and engagement of all members of society, including government, corporations, and grassroots organizations, to work towards promoting equity and justice for all individuals regardless of race. By implementing these proposed solutions, the United States can make progress toward addressing systemic racism and building a more equitable and inclusive society.

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