

Issue Brief: African Americans and Latinos in the U.S.

Key words:

African Americans, Latinos, Poverty, Education, Affirmative Action, Mass Incarceration

Description:

This brief focuses on three of the main issues that plague both the African American and Latino communities. The three issues are poverty, lack of the proper education, and mass incarceration.

Key points:

- Increasing poverty rates in the African American and Latino communities.
- Quality of K-12 education in low income African American and Latino communities.
- The higher education of African Americans and Latinos and Affirmative Action.
- The mass incarceration of African Americans and Latinos and the causes of the two groups' overrepresentation in the prison system.

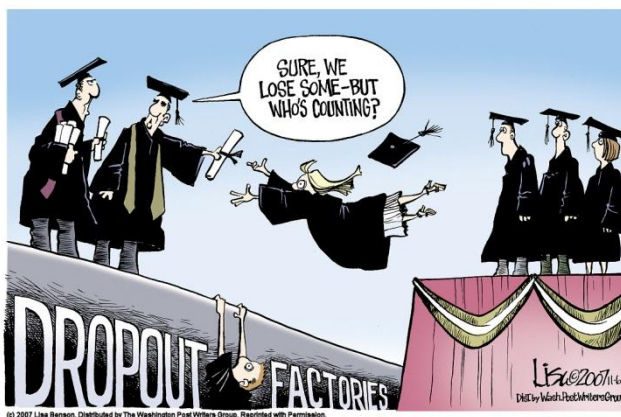
Issue Brief:

African-Americans and Latinos seem to share some of the same burdens when it comes to their experiences as two of the most prominent, marginalized ethno-racial groups within the United States. Both groups have been the victims of the poverty epidemic, the silent killer that has swept through the nation. Also, the lack of education, which is one of the many causes of poverty, as well as the perpetuator poverty, keeps a substantial amount of African Americans and Latinos from obtaining opportunities that would otherwise improve their lives. Besides poverty and the lack of a proper education, mass incarceration of both groups is another defining characteristic of the struggle of both African Americans and Latinos.

Poverty is an epidemic that has swept through both the Latino and the African American ethno-racial groups. Although both groups saw a collective improvement in their socio economic standing in the 1990's, both groups have since back tracked, erasing the progress of the 90's. For African Americans, the group opened up the 90's with a poverty rate of 29.3% and closed the decade with a 19.3% poverty rate. However, from 2000-2006, the poverty rate for African Americans increased to 24.2%. This pattern continued with Latinos; from 1990 to 2000 the group's poverty rate decreased from 25% to 19.2% but increased to 20.6 in 2006 (<http://www.americanprogress.org>).

These statistics have since climbed and show no signs of slowing down in the current financial climate of America. For example, the Pew Research Center reported that in 2010 27.5% of African Americans and 26.7% of Latinos are now in poverty.

One of the main reasons why poverty and the overall position of African Americans and Latinos in America have worsened is because of the education or the lack thereof present in the low income areas in which large numbers of African American and Latino children can be found. First, an African American child is three times more likely than a white to live in poverty and attend a school in a poverty stricken area. Schools within these poorly funded and unkempt districts are more like what the documentary entitled *Waiting for Superman* would call “Drop Out” factories as opposed to institutions of learning. Further, 16% of all elementary and secondary school students (7.7 million), 33% of which are African American and 35% are Latino, attend these poorly organized schools and in 2009 it was reported that 9.3 African Americans and 17.6% Latinos dropped out of school (<http://nces.ed.gov>). Also, of these schools, 19% of African Americans and 12% of Latinos attend schools that do not offer Advance Placement courses, which would assist in the preparing the students for college. Aside from the obvious poor conditions of the schools and the troubling statistics, African American and Latino children who attend these schools lack the skills and basic education to obtain a job or learn a trade, let alone go on to a decent college.



<http://www.theeditorialcartoons.com/subject/6102/The-High+School+Dropout-Editorial-Cartoons.php>

Although, Affirmative Action in education is supposed to lead to more African Americans and Latinos being accepted and enrolling in more top tier universities, that has not occurred. According to the CQ Reader, after race preference policies came into existence as an incentive for minorities to gain admissions into various universities, the quality of K-12 education has yielded only a small percentage of Black and Latino children who are able to apply and then receive admission into the nation's top tier universities (pg.36). In addition to the lack of a proper K-12 education, it is also well noted that the education achievement gap between minorities, especially African Americans and Latinos, and other racial groups is growing. Public schools are segregated by race and income and the children who attend schools that are placed in poverty stricken areas are more likely to attend a school in which the quality of teachers and resources are inferior to schools that are placed in an area surrounded by families of a higher socio economic class.

It is also well known that students who do not receive a decent education are more likely to be subjected to a troubled future filled with poverty and in the worse cases, incarceration. Sadly, about three times as many Blacks and Latinos live in jail cells as on college campuses. While African American men are incarcerated at a rate more than 2.5 that of Latino males, both groups remain the most represented in the prison system (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com>). Project America reported that in 2007 there were 3,138 Black male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Black males in the United States a rate of 1,259 Latino male sentenced prisoners per 100,000 Latino males (<http://www.project.org>). The same pattern of mass incarceration persists with women, with 150 Black and 79 Hispanic per 100,000 of each group being imprisoned in 2007.



Blackcommentator.com

Works Cited/General References:

- "Affirmative Action." *Issues in Race and Ethnicity*. Washington, DC: CQ, 2009. Print.
- http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2008/04/minorities_economy.html
- <http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/factsheet-erm.aspx>
- <http://www.blackcommentator.com> (Second Cartoon)
- http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21001543/ns/us_news-life/t/more-blacks-latinos-jail-college-dorms/#.T1RSmPFtq8U
- <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16>
- <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2127/hispanics-poverty-rate-census-bureau-supplemental-poverty-measure>
- <http://www.project.org/blog/?p=600>
- <http://www.theeditorialcartoons.com/subject/6102/The-High+School+Dropout-Editorial-Cartoons.php> (First cartoon)

Relevant Websites:

- <http://americaswire.org/drupal7/?q=content/educators-alarmed-black-latino-high-school-students-perform-levels-30-years-ago>
- <http://drugwarfacts.org/cms/?q=node/64>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/21/black-latino-seniors-poverty-in-retirement_n_1290767.html
- http://naacp.3cdn.net/e5524b7d7cf40a3578_2rm6bn7vr.pdf
- http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/hispanics-surpass-blacks-in-college-enrollment/2011/08/25/gIQAFDTYeJ_story.html