

Racial Separation and Official Inequality

The issue of racial segregation is one of the strongest structural forces that influence inequality in the United States. Whereas the open manifestation of racism has stopped, the system of institutions that perpetuate racial hierarchy still remains active in the field of housing, criminal justice, health, and economic life.

Sociologists underline that not only was segregation a historical remain but an active process of race-making, which continues to generate disparities between generations. The institutional structures such as residential patterns to policing patterns generate an environment where the Black communities have reduced access to resources and the inequity is normalized as a regular aspect of the social life.

Residential segregation has been an efficient tool of creating and strengthening racial inequality. According to James (1994), racially segregated neighborhoods are so as though a race-making situation, which defines identity and life opportunities through the concentration of poverty, restricted access to quality education, and the separation of black residents to the social relations that allow upward mobility. These spatial separations are not random acts; they are the consequence of such policies like redlining, exclusionary zoning and discriminatory lending. Consequently, geography is used as a proxy of race and geography reproduces racial inequality. Williams and Collins (2001) also prove that one of the root causes of racial disparities in health is residential segregation. Segregated neighborhoods are more vulnerable to environmental risk, have less access to health-related services, and more chronic stress, which all contribute to the increase of disease and early mortality risks.

The institutional racism is also reflected in the day-to-day operations of the public and the private institutions. Albiston (2009) theorizes institutional inequality to occur as a result of organizational practices and legal regulations that systematically benefit certain groups and to the disadvantage of others, even without any explicit prejudice. These customs entrench inequality as time goes by since institutions come off as being non-racial, hiding the racialized effects of their institutions. On the same note, Harris and Lieberman (2015) assert that the American institutions keep pulling back African Americans through deeply established discrimination

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that the American institutions keep putting society in a racial hierarchy through deeply established discrimination patterns that remained to be witnessed even in the world that can say it has progressed beyond racism. They demonstrate that the history of historical exclusion is still evident in the employment, political participation and social mobility.

The criminal justice system is one of the most apparent institutional inequality actors in the present day. Mass incarceration, which is one of the crime control practices, is overlapping with residential segregation to maintain the racial hierarchy. According to Smith (2012), policing and incarceration are disproportionately targeting isolated Black communities and strengthening institutional discourses which pathologize communities of color. Mass incarceration disrupts family cohesion, restricts work prospects and diverts social resources out of community services-making them stuck in poverty and marginalization. The overview of the administrative segregation provided by Steiner and Cain (2016) bring into focus the way correctional facilities enhance inequality within themselves, where institutional violence and institutional housing are being disproportionately imposed on incarcerated people of color.

These institutional arrangements have far reaching local impacts. Blessett and Littleton (2017) discover that the Black segregated communities are limited in economic development, political influence, and social well-being due to institutional racism. These neighborhoods are generally exposed to exhausted community social services, reduced business investment, and deteriorated civic infrastructure that make it harder to progress as a community. These differences are not merely the consequence of personal bias but they are rooted within the policies and organization structure which dictate the distribution of resources.

The combination of these works shows that there is a reciprocal strengthening of racial segregation and institutional inequality. Segregation establishes structural conditions, which include concentrated disadvantage, isolation, denial of resources, and institutions reinforce these conditions by policies that ensure equal access to opportunities and social goods are not achieved. These disparities cannot be resolved on an individual level, and it needs structural changes that would admit the existence of institutionalized means of perpetuation of racial hierarchy. Racial inequality will continue to feature prominently in the American society unless the interplay between segregation, policies development, and institutional practice are challenged.

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