

Intergenerational Inequality of the Black Population Caused by Incarceration

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Abstract:

This paper explores the starting point of the intergenerational inequality of the Black population and the possible connection between inequality, eviction, incarceration, and mental health. The paper utilizes published papers and personal reflections to first find the existence of poverty in the Black population because of racial policies. Then, the paper finds the existence of two cycles: the cycle of poverty and eviction and the cycle of eviction, incarceration, and mental health. The first cycle functions by poverty resulting in eviction and eviction causing increased poverty for the evictees. The second cycle functions by eviction pressuring tenants to access illegal income sources and by putting evictees in a dangerous or risky environment; both negative results of eviction that can lead to incarceration, which, in turn, results in mental illness and higher risk of re-incarceration and eviction after release. The connection of the poverty of the Black population and the two cycles, means intergenerational inequality is passed down, remaining unbreakable without outside help. The U.S government should plan to execute long-term policy reforms as well as to raise awareness of the inequality and its consequences to the general population.

I. Introduction

Forty percent of the incarcerated population in the US are black inmates and they have a national incarceration rate of approximately 2,306 people per 100,000, which is highest among all other races; 39% of US incarcerated population are whites, which is a similar percentage to blacks, they have a national incarceration rate of approximately 450 per 100,000 (Sakala). Black national incarceration rate is almost five times higher compared to Whites.

Research has proven that the Black population is the main target of the US incarceration system. However, only very few studies have addressed the direct reason for *why* the Black population has been targeted as the main victim. Some might say their imprisonment was just; the punishment was necessary for the crimes committed. However, this statement fails to answer the question of *why* the Blacks are more likely to commit these crimes; in other words, the environmental factors that have led to an increased crime rate. This article aims to study the relationship between the environmental

and financial disadvantages of Blacks; moreover, it aims to explore how incarceration worsens these disadvantages, causing Blacks to be more vulnerable to re-incarceration. Lastly, it argues that the US prison system is disproportionately and negatively impacting the Black Population, resulting in an endless cycle of re-incarceration, mental illness, and poor housing and living quality; moreover, incarceration is negatively impacting the employment and income level, inducing recurring poverty, and connecting the intergenerational cycle of inequality.

In order to support this hypothesis, this article investigates two important factors: housing and mental health. It will first present redlining, which is an intentional process put in place by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) that aims to segregate housing based on race. Eviction and its consequences will then be discussed, focusing on how these cumulatively affect the incarceration of Blacks. The theme of deinstitutionalization will be presented, its reasoning and consequences, and how it puts any mentally-ill black patient in risk of incarceration. Lastly, it will explain why eviction, deinstitutionalization, and incarceration are more present to the Black population.

II. HOUSING

A. Case study of Miami-Dade County, Florida

Before examining the relationship between the U.S. prison system and housing, we need to examine the housing conditions Black people are placed in “before” incarceration.

According to Mohl, the housing project of the Liberty Square area in the 1930s Miami had serious racist ideologies and plans (321), an analysis of this project shows how discriminating it was to the Black population. One of the plans was titled the “Negro Resettlement plan,” which centered on disassembling the Central Negro town (Overtown) to three designated Negro park locations. These new park locations were at least fifteen miles apart from the Central town where the Black population originally lived (Mohl 322–323). This “Resettlement Plan” was approved unanimously by the Dade County Commission and George E. Merrick, the chairman of the Dade County Planning Board in the 1930s, emphasized the importance of the plan before the Miami Board of Realtors (Mohl 321–323). This evidence shows how prominent the idea of segregated housing programs was in the 1930s. The idea of Black removal continued in the Miami county commission until the 1940s.

If the economy developed only in the central area of Miami and fell in the outer areas of Black resident area, there would be an even bigger poverty gap between the white population and Black population. Thankfully, this plan was never taken to action. But what would happen if a similar segregation plan took place across the whole country?

B. HOLC & FHA and redlining

In 1933, a federal agency called the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created to “grant

long-term, low-interest mortgages to homeowners who could not secure regular mortgages or who were in danger of losing their homes” (Mohl 324–325).

HOLC created 239 color-coded residential security maps across the United States, giving grade letters from A to D (Jackson 1980; cited by An, et al. 2–3) to classify the financial likelihood of paying back a mortgage. The classification further expanded to neighborhood quality, housing stock, proximity to industrial and hazardous uses, and population composition (An et al. 3), becoming a standard rating for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) alongside private institutions such as banks and companies (Mohl 325–327). It was followed by what is now known as “redlining.”

1. Redlining

Redlining is a denial of financial services to residents of a certain neighborhood not because of their credit, but based on race and current wealth (Bartelt, 2010; Ladd 1998; cited by Doan 6). For example, the neighborhood with the presence of any African Americans was given a lower grade than it was supposed to; a clear racist policy (Hillier, 2003; Jackson, 1980, 1987; cited by An 3). Redlined Black neighborhoods were “off-limits for federally insured home loans and, in turn, ensuring disinvestment and decline” (Gotham, 2000b; Grove, Cadenasso, Pickett, Burch, & Machlis, 2015; Grove et al., 2018; Oliveri, 2015; cited by Bakelum and Shoenfeld 62).

2. Effects of Redlining

The effect of this decline still remains today. Seventy-four percent of formerly redlined areas presently gain income that is 80 percent or more lower than the average (National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 2017; cited by Bakelum and Shoenfeld, 62). The poverty and disinvestment in Black neighborhoods leads to eviction.

C. Eviction

Eviction is generally ordered by landlords through court, but is sometimes executed informally through eviction notices or by calling the sheriff. According to Desmond, out of all evictions annually in Milwaukee, 46% occurred in Black neighborhoods (98). Between 2003 and 2007, out of 16 daily evictions, half of those happened in Black neighborhoods (104); the other half consisted of several other racial groups. In other words, the Black population has the highest eviction rate among all the races. What is the importance of this high rate?

1. The relationship between poverty and eviction

The main reason for general eviction is poverty. Because a large portion of most tenants’ incomes is devoted to paying rent, small expenses such as new clothing or a taxi fare can make them fall behind on their rent. Moreover, to cover that shortage, tenants commit to working overtime,

relying on their social networks, and perform other risky jobs (Desmond 108). Redlining has left most Black neighborhoods in poverty, and therefore eviction is much more present in Black neighborhoods.

2. Effects of eviction

The consequence of eviction is also critical. According to Desmond, tenants who have previous eviction records are likely to experience the following four consequences: inability to secure decent housing, poorer housing quality than before, loss of property during eviction, and lack of access for housing fund programs (118). Most landlords refuse to accept tenants with an eviction record because, like a criminal record, it proves that the tenant has committed some kind of offense that caused them to be evicted.

According to research by TransUnion, 84% of landlords responded their top concern was payment problems and 56% responded their concern was prior eviction history (Collatz). This shows how landlords hugely disfavor, and even discriminate against, tenants with eviction records, a factor which makes the renting process more difficult. In the worst case, an individual with an eviction record might not be able find any new form of housing and become homeless. This is why tenants with eviction records are only able to rent housing of the lowest quality with high rent in the market; they have no choice.

3. Pathway from eviction to incarceration

Since the start of redlining, Black neighborhoods and tenets have been suffering through the endless cycle of poverty and eviction. Their poverty and rent cost grew constantly, but their housing condition only dropped because of their payment failure and eviction records. If worse, tenets fail to secure even the lowest-quality housing and become homeless (Desmond 118).

A. Unsafe sex and high pregnancy

Homelessness also results higher risk of unsafe sex and pregnancy. According to Cheng et.al, 25% of street-youth have never used condoms and 56% did not use condoms the last time they had sex. Non-usage of condoms is only part of the many “risky sexual behaviors” that includes sex with strangers, or in foreign places (Cheng et.al). This data also proves Zivanovic et.al’s statement, “Homeless youth have also been previously found to experience higher rates of pregnancy compared to their housed counterparts.”

B. Redistribution of money from pregnancy

Pregnancy gives birth to children; the more children, the more to feed and care. It is especially challenging for parents who are suffering from poverty and homelessness.

As stated by Cheng et al., teen fathers who lack stable income are likely to engage in illegal drug dealing to support their families. However, according to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, drug-related offenders are prohibited from

applying to the Public Housing Agency housing support program. In other words, teen fathers who utilize illegal drug-dealing to prolong their living, are unable to receive any federal support. Moreover, it can be inferred from the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 that incarceration of drug offenders are very likely. This results in incarceration of parents who are unable to financially support the isolated children. Children who cannot afford housing rent are evicted and laid out on the streets until parents are released.

C. Failure of financial stability

When parents, or mostly fathers who are drug-offenders, are incarcerated, the prison charges extra fees such as prison pay and correctional fees for doctors' visits, health services, and other expenses. These extra fees force fathers to rely on their families (Hairston 1998 qtd in Geller et.al), creating an ironic situation where the parent is relying on whom he is supposed to support. In fact, the difference of financial support from non-incarcerated and incarcerated parents is significant. According to Geller et.al, the fathers in low economic statuses contributed around \$8000 a year to their children. Former incarcerated fathers, on the other hand, only contributed \$2600. In addition, 86% of never-incarcerated fathers were likely to contribute, while only 60% of former incarcerated did.

D. Pressure of eviction, demand for illegal income source, and isolation of children from parents

The distribution of income gets more complicated when parents have multiple children with partners in the prison. As Johnston suggests, a complicated family tree tends to challenge income sharing and coparenting relationships (qtd in Geller et.al) because there are more members to distribute the income to and it arouses a conflict on the matter of "responsibility of the child" between the two parents. This lack of "financial support" leads to the failure of the family and the isolation of children. One woman in Anderson's study suspected that, "formerly incarcerated men are unable to lift their families out of the ghetto or provide them with 'respectable' middle-class lifestyles" (cited. in Geller et. al). According to Geller et al., three-year-old children in large cities with incarcerated fathers were more likely to face unstable financial support, housing, and familial relationships than their counterparts.

Without financial support, children and their parents will fail to pay the rent, and become evicted or homeless. The parent will get hands on illegal drug-dealing to earn money and get incarcerated. Children who are living in poor housing condition will be exposed to unsafe sex and get pregnant, suffer poverty, and also get hands on illegal drug-dealing and get incarcerated.

E. Cycle of poverty, eviction, and incarceration

To reach the conclusion, we have to go back to the very first evidence: redlining made black

neighborhoods suffer poverty and residents failing to pay rent were then evicted and became homeless. Eviction and homelessness resulted in two things: engagement in illegal drug-dealing and unsafe sex. Illegal drug-dealing can lead to incarceration; unsafe sex can ultimately lead to decrease of financial stability, which can lead to poverty and further eviction and homelessness. Since redlining segregated and putting black residents in poverty, the endless cycle of eviction and incarceration has started. Other problems and hardships also awaited the released black prisoners.

4. Effect of incarceration caused by eviction

a) Higher eviction rate after release

Released criminals are more vulnerable to eviction because of their criminal records. Similar to eviction records, criminal records help landlords determine if their tenant is credible; for example, a criminal record will notify the landlord that the tenant is more likely to commit his previous crimes (Geller and Curtis). In Helfgott's (1977) study cited by Geller and Curtis, two-thirds of the surveyed landlords mandated the disclosure of criminal records, and 43% indicated that they rejected ex-criminal tenants, emphasizing the concern for safety. Moreover, certain ex-criminals can be legally prohibited from living in designated areas (Metraux et.al 2007; cited by Geller and Curtis). The denial of housing access for released criminals not only makes them homeless, but vulnerable to re-incarceration.

b) Higher re-incarceration rate after release

The perception for common manifestations of homeless such as sleeping in public and loitering is different for "ex-criminal" homeless, putting them at greater risk of frequent arrest (Center for Poverty Solutions 2002 cited by Geller and Curtis). An influential factor here is the possession of a criminal record which can greatly increasing the "risk" of potential conflict. Roman and Travis found that ex-prisoners who frequently changed their residence were more likely to be rearrested (Geller and Curtis).

c) Lower income

Poor or no housing also affects income stability. According to Bradley et al. 2001, stable housing is a very important factor in employment. For example, employers often require the address of the applicant in order to contact the applicant during the application process (qtd in Geller and Curtis). Stable housing can also prove stable income from a previous job or good relationship with the landlord.

Moreover, not only does housing affect employment, but the serving time as well. For instance, ex-prisoners are less productive than their counterparts since they lack opportunities for personal and career development (Holzer et.al. 2003). Those disadvantages faced by ex-criminals make it unlikely that they will be hired by employers.

Even if they get a job, it is hard to expect a secure income. Limited credit and rental history from

their period of imprisonment makes ex-criminals unfavorable to employers (Geller and Curtis). Limited credit and rental history often signify one's economic spending and ability to cover one's own spending or debt. However, if an employee lacks these records, it is hard for employers to evaluate if they will successfully adapt and perform productively at their job.

d) Avoidance from the Government

The government also limits the economic recovery of ex-criminals through federal policies. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), for example, denied Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps to drug offenders. Moreover, Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) were permitted to "evict and exclude from the application process for a 'reasonable amount of time' any household containing a person with a felony conviction, a background of drug-related offenses or violent criminal activity, or anyone with a background of criminal activity that the PHA believes would endanger the health or safety of the community" (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development 1997; cited by Geller and Curtis). As stated earlier, many evicted tenants become drug-offenders. They commit to drug-dealing because they need financial aid to avoid further evictions. However, PHA, who are supposed to help those with eviction problems, rather has excluded them for a reasonable amount of time. Ex-incarcerated criminals have no way to

earn money to pay rent, nor even apply for a stable housing to avoid re-incarceration or acts of crime to survive.

III. Prison Mental Health

A. Mental illness in Prison

"About 1 in 7 state and federal prisoners (14%) and 1 in 4 jail inmates (26%) reported experiences that met the threshold for serious psychological distress (SPD) . . . 37% of prisoners and 44% of jail inmates has been told in the past by a mental health professional that they had a mental disorder" (Bronson and Berzofsky), where SPD include mental disorders "severe enough to cause moderate-to-serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning and to require treatment" (Weissman, et al).

This data clearly implies that there are no sufficient mental health treatments in prisons and jail to treat the mental disorders. Moreover, incarceration has proved to worsen the mental health of prisoners. According to a WHO report, factors such as "overcrowding, various forms of violence, lack of privacy, lack of meaningful activity, isolation from social networks, insecurity about future prospects (work, relationships, etc.), and inadequate health services" are the major factors that worsens mental health in prison. Incarceration causes several other disorders, but this article will focus on two factors that are most impactful on inmates' mental health as well as the resocialization of the inmates.

A. Lack of self-worth and personal value

The first factor is lack of freedom and privacy which results in a reduction in self-confidence and self-esteem. Haney states: “prisoners typically are denied their basic privacy rights, and lose control over mundane aspects of their existence.” For example, prisoners live in small and cramped cells with a cellmate one has never met before. Moreover, they have no choice when to go to bed or what to eat everyday (Haney). Haney reports that this stigma and degradation may result for the prisoner to have a “diminished” sense of self-worth and personal value, as to think that they are the kind of people who deserve such agony. This thinking of low self-trust could result in various consequences, such as degradation of social interaction skills, depression, or discouragement for self-improvement.

B. Lack of emotional control and social skills

The second factor is the development of “prison masks” from the prison environment. According to Haney, a prison mask is defined as emotions “unrevealing and impenetrable for themselves and others”, creating “permanent and unbridgeable distance” between themselves and the society. This phenomenon is dangerous for two reasons. First, it can worsen the effect of low self-value. Distance between social interactions means therapy sessions or mental health treatments are difficult to relieve the disorder. Second, this “mask” not only causes low self-value, but limits all social interactions with other people. This violates one of the four goals of

corrections, which applies to prison too: rehabilitation (Kifer et al.)

C. Innocent being incarcerated

Some populations of the incarcerated are innocent or committed crimes not voluntarily; yet they are still incarcerated, suffering through mental illness. DeHart reports of a black woman resident of one of the neighborhoods who had committed theft at a young age because she was forced to by her mother. One woman left the house voluntarily because her parents suffered from drug addiction (DeHart 5). In both cases, the two women became un-protected by, and practically from, their parents, leading to potential homelessness. A resulting exposure them to crime is due to the lack of financial and housing security.

In another case, one woman stabbed her boyfriend to protect herself from getting jumped, and one woman stabbed her husband who had raped her eight-year-old daughter. One white woman took the blame for the car-accident of her husband since she was afraid of the abuse (DeHart 6-7).

For whatever reason, all the examples have one thing in common: it wasn't their own will to commit a crime. Yet they all had to be punished or go to jail.

E. Relation between mental illness and Black population

But how is mental disorder from incarceration and incarceration of the innocent related to the black population? In order to answer this question,

we must reflect back on the environment Black population were living. We have identified earlier in the paper that racist housing policies have put Blacks in poverty, which lead to evictions. Repeated eviction make tenants financially unstable, forcing them to access drug dealing and get incarcerated, which, in turn, leads to Black people who are incarcerated because of eviction suffer mental disorder and experience having a hard time rehabilitating back to society.

Incarceration of the innocent is also related a phenomenon because of its relevance to eviction. When a family is evicted, as mentioned earlier, they are naturally exposed to a risky environment. Especially for a case where the parent is incarcerated, the probability of an evicted family forcefully being part of crimes is inevitably high. And the highest population evicted in the U.S is Black people.

IV. Conclusion of Housing and Prison mental health section

To conclude, the relationship between the disadvantages that members of the Black population and the consequences that lead to incarceration must be identified.

A. First disadvantage from redlining

The first disadvantage that Blacks have to endure is redlining. HOLC purposefully discriminated against Blacks and confined them in undeveloped neighborhoods that were not likely to receive neither private investment nor government

funding. This lack of investment naturally leads to poverty, which in turn causes higher rates of eviction in Black neighborhoods. Eviction then leads to unstable housing, lower incomes, unsafe sex, drug dealing, and finally incarceration. The cycle recurs when individuals who are released are unable to find any stable housing or income due to their criminal records, making them vulnerable to reincarceration. The practice of redlining means the government can be seen to be fundamental in the cycle of eviction and incarceration of the Black population.

B. Second disadvantage from incarceration and mental illness

The second disadvantage that Blacks have to endure is mental disorder developed in prison life. We have identified in the first disadvantage how most black prisoners have once been evicted or been poor before they were incarcerated. With unstable financial ability, it is difficult for the released criminals to seek the expensive mental health treatments. The neglect of their mental illness will worsen the symptoms, paralyzing their ability to work or live normally. Without a proper income source, these released criminals get evicted or access illegal/risky jobs and the cycle from the first disadvantage takes place again.

II. Economic consequence of mass incarceration

A. Short term unemployment

According to the United States. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the definition of unemployed people is:

“Persons aged 16 years and older who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the four-week period ending with the reference week.” This measurement excludes incarcerated work forces because they are limited to making “specific efforts” in prison.

Table 1
Observed and Adjusted Unemployment and Jobless Rates for U.S. Men, 1983-95

YEAR	UNEMPLOYMENT			JOBLESSNESS		
	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i> ₁	<i>u</i> ₂	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i> ₁	<i>u</i> ₂
All men:						
1983	9.7	9.9	10.6	29.4	29.4	29.9
1985-89	5.5	5.9	6.7	26.2	26.3	27.0
1990-94	5.9	6.5	7.6	27.0	27.2	28.1
Black men:						
1983	19.1	20.0	22.9	39.5	39.5	41.7
1985-89	11.6	13.3	16.9	34.0	34.3	37.0
1990-94	11.3	13.6	18.8	34.3	34.6	38.5
White men:						
1983	8.6	8.8	9.2	28.3	28.3	28.6
1985-89	4.7	5.0	5.5	25.3	25.3	25.7
1990-94	5.2	5.5	6.2	26.2	26.2	26.8

Source: Western, Bruce, and Katherine Beckett. “How Unregulated Is the U.S. Labor Market? The Penal System as a Labor Market Institution.” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 104, no. 4, 1999, pp. 1030-60., Table 5

In the table above, *u* indicates actual unemployment rate and *u*₂ indicates unemployment rate including inmates among unemployed. In 1983, the actual unemployment rate for Black men was measured almost 4% lower than the adjusted level; in the 1990s, the difference was almost 8%. For the joblessness rate of Black men, the adjusted rate remained constant around the high 30s, with the lowest difference of

2.2% between the actual rate. This data goes along with the trend of increasing incarceration rate of young unskilled men in the 1980s and 1990s (Geller, Garfinkel, et.al., 2006) and especially black males. 20% of non-college-educated Blacks in their twenties were incarcerated on an average day in 2000 (Geller et al. 2011, 2), and “1 in 3 non-college black men were estimated to have prison records by their mid-thirties in 1999” (Geller et.al.). However, we cannot define that the unemployment rate is under-recorded because it is true the incarcerated population does not participate in any economic activity. This is the reason why the unemployment rate in the *u* column in table 1 is the “short-term” unemployment rate. It does not account for the effect of incarceration on labor productivity.

C. Long term unemployment

The United States has been implementing “more aggressive prosecutorial practices, tougher sentencing standards, and intensified criminalization of drug-related activity,” which resulted in a rising trend of incarceration. It also increased the incarcerated population of property and drug offenders compared to other industrialized countries (Western and Beckett 1037).

There are two major reasons why an increase in incarcerated population results in a high unemployment rate. The first reason is “institutional exclusion”, where the public label “ex-inmate” makes one excluded from “legitimate

institutions such as the labor market and set in motion social disadvantages.” (Apel and Sweeten 451). The notable disadvantage is that the focus of the employer is not on the behavior of oneself, but rather on the label “ex-inmate”. This is clearly supported by Devah Pager (2003)’s finding on employment of entry level jobs, where the employer was “less than half as likely to call back applicants who reported a criminal history (a felony cocaine trafficking conviction with 18 months prison time)” (Apel and Sweeten 451). Entry level jobs often don't require prior experience, and skill inefficiency can be covered by training. This indicates the only reasoning for the “no call-back” is because of one’s criminal record. The second reason is the lack of investment in human capital. “Steady investments in human capital—through work experience, education, and training—increase an individual’s skill level and market value” (Apel 452). Incarcerated inmates have no access to any form of human capital investment. Even worse, some skilled inmates without periods of investment might result in constant or retarded skill level, which makes them less competitive in the labor market. As Mincer (1962) estimates, “on-the-job training comprises as much as half of a worker’s human capital” (Geller et.al.), constant investment and training is essential for improving one’s market value and employment.

The two reasons introduced above have focused on employment level based on the standard of bureau of labor statistics. Employment level does

not count earnings and occupation in the informal sector of the economy such as the black market. Since offenders can earn profits in the informal market, they do not seek formal market jobs (since it is challenging), and this phenomenon results in high unemployment in general.

C. Government’s action

Unfortunately, fiscal policy by the government does not have a positive impact on the unemployment level. Government spending in both inflation and recession have little to no effect on the employment level (Dupor and Guerrero 13). Moreover, increasing or reducing unemployment benefits neither yields significant positive nor negative effects on unemployment in the short term. In the long term, when benefits are reduced, negative effects dominate the positive; when benefits are increased, at some point wages increase and make it difficult for small firms to hire workers (Bauermann 29). In either case, the unemployment level increases in the end.

D. Consequences

It can be concluded that there is a direct relationship between incarceration and unemployment rate. But how does this relate to the Black population and the general economy?

1. Relation to the Black population

In the previous sections, we have identified how redlining has resulted black population in an endless cycle of poverty, eviction and incarceration.

Repeated eviction forced tenants to commit to illegal jobs (notably drug-related) which incarcerated them. The evidence of higher unemployment rate for “ex-inmates” supports the existence of intergenerational poverty prevalent in the black population. Moreover, not only blacks who are affected by redlining but also blacks in general hold the majority of the population in the U.S prisons. In other words, it is more likely for black people to be incarcerated and suffer from unemployment and joblessness. This unemployment will result in low income, which can cause eviction that ultimately leads to re-incarceration. Essentially, unemployment and joblessness is another consequence of incarceration, like mental illness, that causes re-incarceration.

2. Relation to the general economy

The US has the world’s highest incarceration rate of 737 people per 100,000 (BBC News). Prison population is constantly growing, as well as “ex-inmate” populations. This indicates that the growing population of the U.S are suffering from unemployment or joblessness, accessing illegal occupations with higher profit which are not as profitable compared to formal or normal jobs in the regular labor market. This on-going income gap between the never-incarcerated and incarcerated is going to grow endlessly. The government may stop or even decrease the unemployment rate in the short-run, but the unemployment rate will increase in the long-run.

This increase in unemployment will worsen income-gap, which worsens poverty and decelerates the U.S economy growth.

IV. Importance of future actions

A. Addressing the cycle of poverty, eviction, incarceration and mental illness

In order to break this cycle of poverty, eviction, incarceration, and mental illness, two acts must be done. First, the government should plan and execute a long-term poverty relief plan for the black population. The plan should be targeted centered on the population or area most affected by red-lining or other racial policies. This relief will end the repetitions of evictions and prevent other consequences from unstable housing. Second, access to mental health services should be easier and cheaper. This will not only reduce the number of mentally ill patients, but also improve the social acknowledgement of mental health treatments and increase job opportunities in the psychology sector.

B. Addressing the cycle of incarceration, unemployment, and poverty

Addressing the cycle of incarceration and unemployment requires far more intense action from the government. This paper does not aim to examine specific policies or to provide solutions the government should take. However, it does urge the reader to acknowledge the continuous worsening of the income gap, especially in the black population, and call for reform in the current policies.

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