

“A Call For Equity: Confronting Racial Healthcare Disparities”

Racial Injustice has continued to torment our society for centuries despite attempts toward equality. From the slavery of Black people to unjust criminal charges and health care disputes, racial injustice has left a significant mark on people, communities, and countries throughout history and is still doing so. There have been countless forms of racial injustice over the ages, but one that has always left the largest and cruelest mark is Racial Disparities in health care. Racial Health Disparities mean the difference in the healthcare treatment provided to a group of people because of their race, gender, or color. Black people in America have always faced Racial disparities in healthcare, notably during the Civil war and even as recently as the COVID Pandemic. In order to overcome these differences, we must first acknowledge the historical mistreatment of black people specifically in health care, and then take active steps to make this better.

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhuman,” Martin Luther King Jr.

Black people are less likely to receive the same healthcare service as their white counterparts, the service is usually worse. One such historical example of Racial Healthcare disparity is during the American Civil War. Black soldiers faced significant healthcare disparities in contrast to their white counterparts, despite fighting for the Union Army. Black soldiers faced several issues which included but were not limited to, poor living conditions, incomplete medical care, and severe racism.

One of the main issues faced by Black soldiers during the Civil War was the lack of proper medical assistance. Many of them were forced to request help from unqualified doctors or untrained medical personnel. Their wounds and injuries were often neglected compared to the White soldiers, who were given the best care and attention. The wounded Black soldiers in the Union Army were placed in separate wards that were poorly staffed. They would usually die from the same wounds that White soldiers recovered from, due to the differential treatment and lack of supplies and medical care. According to the national archive, almost 30,000 Black soldiers died from infection or disease; this makes up 75% of the Black soldiers who died over the course of the war.

In addition to poor care and attention during combat, Black soldiers were more likely to contract infectious diseases due to their poor living conditions. Many were housed in unclean and poorly sanitized barracks, despite being heavily wounded. This made them susceptible to developing illnesses such as Smallpox, Dysentery, and Pneumonia. Moreover, they were given unhealthy food and dirty water which further depleted their

health. Furthermore, the extremely harsh punishments and disciplinary training increased the damage to their mental and physical health.

The racial healthcare disparities faced by Black people during the COVID-19 pandemic are a painful reminder that the discrimination faced by black people during the Civil War continues to torment our society. During the pandemic, the mortality and hospitalization rate for Black people was far more than that of their fellow white people. This can be attributed to multiple factors. Black people in many societies are more likely to receive discrimination and inferior treatment in areas such as healthcare, education, employment, and housing. This systematic inequality can result in poorer health conditions. The reason many Black people contracted COVID-19 was due to pre-existing health conditions. According to a study conducted by CDC, only 30% of black people were able to telework and this could be contributed to differences in education, particularly, college education. Black people were faced with the impossible decision of either being unemployed or risking getting the virus. Various black people live in densely packed and poor communities where they are unable to access sufficient healthcare.

Although more than a century separates the mistreatment of Black soldiers during the Civil War and the recent COVID-19, there are striking similarities in how these two historical events have exposed the deep-seated structural inequities and racial disparities that continue to plague the American Healthcare systems. To overcome the history of racial injustice and address the issues we are facing today, we must acknowledge the injustices directed towards Black Americans throughout history and confront them directly. In addition to that, we must take active steps to dismantle structural racism and discrimination in healthcare, education, employment, and the criminal justice system through policy and instructional changes. We must also increase access to quality education and healthcare for Black Americans. Having a better education ensures that individuals are more knowledgeable about their health and it equips them with the skills, knowledge, and resources to make informed health decisions. It also inclines individuals toward living a more healthy lifestyle as they become extra aware of the medical issues they are facing. Increasing access to healthcare could include expanding healthcare coverage, increasing funding for community-based healthcare initiatives, and improving access to medical care and resources.

Furthermore, it is important to confront racism and challenge biases and stereotypes regarding Black Americans. By doing this, we can begin to create a more just and equal society for all. Racial disparities in healthcare not only affect the people being targeted, they cause unease in the society as well. They are a justice issue as they cost

hundreds of people their lives. Doctors and Medical Personnel are supposed to save lives no matter what; not giving appropriate care to a person based on their race is a violation of the Hippocratic Oath. We can control this by creating specific rules and regulations; for example, doctors and medical personnel should be charged a fine or any other punishment for discriminating against a patient based on their race. Finally, we must recognize and commemorate the contributions of Black Americans and other people of color to American Society. Only by valuing diversity and promoting equality can we build a more inclusive society for all. This includes sharing the stories of Black Americans and acknowledging the cultural, scientific, artistic, and economic contributions of Black Americans.

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