Systemic Disparities within Education
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Minority communities are deeply disadvantaged because of socioeconomic limitations and systemic barriers that prohibit access to education. The brief will discuss ways by which Black and Brown communities are denied education and how this connects to socioeconomic status, institutional racism, and youth.

II. OVERVIEW

The systemic oppression resulting from ethnocentric beliefs about superiority has directly affected the opportunities marginalized1 communities are exposed to. The present discrimination on Black and Brown groups is evident within the United States. Segregation by design from the lasting effects of redlining relates to the education system because when public services, specifically schools, are denied financial opportunities the quality of education decreases. The connection between economic disparity and race has a profound impact on educational institutions because schools in white neighborhoods are given better resources and more funding, further contributing to the issue of gentrification and displacement of minority groups. Racial inequalities stemming from discriminatory policies have made it harder for Black and Brown groups to overcome poverty and gain equitable access to education.

A. Relevance

When comparing literacy rate between Black and white communities, there is an evident difference due to a lack of resources. In 2022, the National Assessment of Educational Progress2 found that a higher percentage of white students scored better in reading and mathematics compared to Black students; 17% of Black students scored at or above proficiency in reading, while 42% of white students did. Such can be connected to the privilege of white groups and the separation of race on economic status. The correlation between high income school districts and a higher percentage of white students is prevalent in New York City, for instance. School districts that are wealthier mostly attract white students, and because of this they receive more funding and opportunities. From this, white communities are often given more resources to succeed compared Black and Brown communities, contributing to dropout rates, racial stereotypes, and achievement gaps.

III. HISTORY

A. Current Stances

The denial of education for minority (specifically Black) communities is prominent through anti literacy laws of the 19th century, aiming to control and limit the voice oppressed groups had. Knowledge has been an uplifting power that fueled the Civil Rights Movement, and the denial

of education has harbored a rise for action. Systemic barriers that prohibit access to greater education breed harmful and inaccurate stereotypes3 about minorities.

Moreover, a study by Johns Hopkins University analyzed data from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, which followed 8,400 public high school students. The research found that white teachers were significantly less likely than Black teachers to predict that Black students would graduate from high school or complete a four-year college degree. Specifically, white teachers were 40% less likely to expect Black students to graduate high school and 30% less likely to expect them to earn a four year degree. Such contributes to stereotypes built up for centuries denoting Black Americans as 'inferior', further pushing the false narrative that minority and low income students are incapable4 of succeeding. Such puts pressure on Black students to succeed in an environment that is constantly bringing them down and reinforces the idea that they must overperform just to be seen as equal.

Efforts to minimize systemic barriers are seen through affirmative action and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) within educational institutions. Both combat discrimination by considering the challenges minorities face within education, seeking to increase opportunities for underrepresented groups. However, the Supreme Court ruled against race based affirmative action in higher education in 2023 arguing that a 'color-blind' approach was more equitable, even though it has been proven that Black and Brown communities do not get the same advantages as other racial groups. Current federal enactments lean towards 'race neutral' approaches, and

limitations have been enacted to prevent Black and Brown groups from thriving in education, setting our policies back in time.

IV.   POLICY PROBLEM

A. Stakeholders

Low income minority students serve as primary stakeholders for this issue. The denial of opportunities coming from systemic institutionalized racism pushes minorities to have to work harder to succeed in comparison to their white counterparts. The drive to overachieve further affects Black students through enforcing toxic standards as warranted by funding differences in contrasting racial communities. This lack of opportunity stresses to low income students of color that they must push forward in adversity – a challenge only understood by minorities. The pressure minorities experience when trying to compete with white students harbors struggles in mental health, leading to increased suicide5 rates amongst Black teens. Poverty and inequitable access to healthcare builds struggles in mental health for students of color.

Moreover, schools serve as stakeholders for this issue since oftentimes there exists inadequate teaching staff or a lack of diversity, in turn bringing the student down rather than empowering them. To add, if a school doesn't receive funding because of redlining or further segregational design factors there becomes a deterioration in its quality, affecting the students' education and access to learn. Educational institutions serve to benefit from increased diversity and further accessibility.

B. Risks of Indifference

The risk of indifference to disparities within education is given through systems of prejudice that have been fostered around denying education to communities of color. If this issue is ignored, literacy rates will further drop with a correlation to school funding, continuing giving low income minority students poor resources. Phrases such as "young, Black, and gifted" or "Brown and Proud" build empowerment within diverse communities, symbolizing resilience in the face of marginalization. However pressures youth face of having to 'prove themselves' because of their background could result in worsened mental health. Students in underfunded schools lack access to quality education, demobilizing their chances of pursuing higher academic learning, thus widening the achievement gap between socioeconomic and racial groups. Such connects to the criminal justice system which thrives from inequality and limited educational support.

C. Nonpartisan Reasoning

Systemic inequality is rooted deeply within our society through education, economy, and politics. Nonpartisan intervention allows for access to education for youth, something that should be prioritized regardless of racial or socioeconomic status. The benefits of such intervention include but are not limited to the following:

1) Increased diversity within higher education and the workforce: Addressing systemic barriers could be accomplished through the usage of various perspectives. When systemic barriers are addressed, all students have opportunities to succeed. Through increased equality within teachings, students of color are given opportunities to succeed. This leads to further enrollment in colleges, workplaces, and leadership roles, fostering an inclusive environment catered to multiple views. Moreover, this allows for interconnectivity amongst multiple races.

2) Greater literacy rates: With an increased access to education follows stronger literacy rates, providing academic stability and fostering innovation. Through removing and limiting systemic disparities, all children are given chances to academically thrive which increases future employment and aids the economy. From such breeds diversity within prestigious universities. A greater degree of education is necessary for minority youth, and such would be provided through the elimination of inequitable policies in education.

3) Increased civic engagement and community involvement: The spread of knowledge amongst underserved communities allows for further civic engagement. Increased literacy rates would boost civic engagement as voters would take time reading the ballots and understanding them, as provided by equitable education. Such accessibility would increase community engagement within civics and fuel voters to make informed decisions.

V. Tried Policy

Multiple bills6 have been incorporated within the

United States to increase diversity and promote inclusion. In New York City a few bills have been placed as a solution to systemic barriers. For example, New York State Senate bill S5088 requires school districts to have equity, diversity, and inclusion officers. This marks significant shifts toward addressing systemic education in New York's school system through the diversification of teaching staff and encouragement of policy reform in order to affirm equity. Senate Bill S6825 similarly enacts the public education racial equity and diversity act, in support of Bill 29225. Bill 29225 empowers underrepresented groups by introducing multiple perspectives through the New York State Charter School Commission.

Affirmative action is another instance by which policy was enacted to prevent systemic discrimination. The goal of affirmative action was to promote access and opportunity for historically marginalized groups, and it refers to policies that account race and ethnicity as part of the admissions process. Despite this, the court struck down race conscious admissions at public and private institutions in 2023 in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard and UNC*.

VI.   Policy Options

Incorporating Mentorship

A lack of equitable funding and opportunity results in disproportionate efforts of success amongst various racial groups. From such fosters less access to high quality education. Oftentimes, students of color from low income communities are enticed to feel as though they need to live up to the stereotypes set in place by our education system, though it is not considered how students of color do not have as many given opportunities to accomplish such. From this breeds harmful stereotypes about minorities, and worsens youth mental health.

To overcome this, I recommend incorporating mentorship programs within schools. Such programs could be structured around reformative justice, and also provided in juvenile detention facilities by which youth end up as a consequence of poor education. Moreover, peer on peer mentorship through mental health allows for a safe space by which youth are able to share their individual experiences, combating racial prejudice and fostering community.

Reintroducing DEI policies

As seen in New York, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies have become incorporated within education, fostering an inclusive environment by which all perspectives can be shared.

I propose that schools should require a diverse teaching staff in order to alleviate the alienation students of colors may experience in certain environments. Doing so warrants connectivity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students. Moreover, the reintroduction of affirmative action allows for equitable comparison of applicants. It would be unjust to not consider the circumstances someone who is low income and a minority goes through and compare them to a high income white student. There lies a disparity in funding – often, the low income minority individual does not gain as many opportunities as the high income white student.

Additionally, introducing diversity could also be accomplished by adding Black history into curriculum, and further sharing the narratives

of oppressed groups. Education is shaped by those in power, and may be subjective.

Increased funding for under resourced schools & addressing economic inequities

There lies an incredibly disproportionate difference in funding, often varying because of socioeconomic status. Because minorities such as Black people are not given proper opportunities to succeed and rather pushed down than uplifted, it can result in a wage gap and toxic workplace. In reality, not much is done to combat the systemic struggles minorities experience.

By increasing funding for under resourced schools, students of color are warranted higher access to education. Increased funding generally allows for innovation and empowers underrepresented communities.

Racial wage gaps are another issue commonly seen as a form of systemic discrimination. Ending this could be accomplished through expanding access to high quality jobs, which can only be done if schools are given proper funding. Additionally, wage disparities could also attempt to be solved through increasing minimum wage, as workers of color are overrepresented in low wage jobs. Greater income allows for more investment into education, shaping the opportunities youth are provided.

VII. Conclusions

Within this paper I have discussed the consequences of systematic disparities on education, and how this in turn affects youth. A lack of funding in schools of low income areas results in increased violence and unequal opportunity. Segregation by design continues

impacting students and limiting the opportunities they receive. A common phrase recited today is 'youth is the future', yet how can this be true if students of color are continuously denied the resources needed to succeed or even be on level with their white counterparts?

Systemic disparities within education affect every racial group, and by implementing diverse and inclusive policies targeted towards empowering minority students the historical marginalisation of racial groups within education can be limited.

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