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What the Hell is Wrong with America? The Truth about Racism and Justice for All

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Systemic racism is imbued into all policy domains of the United States. The result is a divided country with differences in the lived experiences of Black and white communities. By unpacking the historical influences of white supremacy, this article explores how systemic racism manifests in criminal justice, housing, education, health, and elections policies. Through our policy discussions, we assert substantial evidence of systemic racism against Blacks and offer a call to action to move forward. In implementing public policies, public administration and public policy leaders have a fundamental responsibility to create social change that dismantles systemic racism.

Keywords: Racism, Criminal Justice, Housing, Education, Health, Elections

> *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."*
> *- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

*A*n undeniable chasm exists in the United States of America. For some members of society, the American Dream is a continued manifestation of freedom, democracy, and inalienable rights. For others, the "American Nightmare" involves oppression, discrimination, and racism (Kendi, 2020, para. 15). This chasm, built on the hypocrisy of white supremacy, leads to differences in lived experiences. When compared to whites, Blacks have limited access to power and privilege in a system of governance with an undeniable history linked to white supremacy. If social justice is the pursuit of all things being equal, how then do we overcome the chasm of racism in the United States?

This manuscript is an exercise in "naming, blaming, and claiming" racism in the United States of America (Gooden, 2014, p. 66). The Scholar Strike for Racial Justice, an action and digital teach-in held virtually on September 8 - 9, 2020, addressed racism and

injustice in the United States. Organized on Twitter and YouTube, the two-day Scholar Strike was inspired by Drs. Anthea Butler and Kevin Gannon to fight for racial justice by raising awareness of police shootings and racialized violence (https://www.scholarstrike.com/). Like Colin Kaepernick and other professional athletes, raising awareness of the original sin of racism in the United States moved many scholars to activate, agitate and advocate for racial justice. In just a short time, faculty, staff, and students in higher education institutions participated in the national movement to raise awareness and educate others on the topics of race, racism, and injustice. The virtual event underscored the basic fact that despite centuries of struggle, race still matters. The emphasis on race-related scholarship intentionally guides the scope of our work.

Following our participation in the 2020 Scholar Strike for Racial Justice in September 2020, we offer an examination of five policy domains to highlight the racial injustice of Black Americans in the United States. We examine the intersection of race, privilege, and power in the context of these U.S. domestic policy areas: Policing, Education, Health, Housing, and Elections. In public administration, we affirm that problems create a starting point for examining injustice and eradicating racism in the United States. In dismantling white supremacy, we assert that the evidence of the underlying conditions must be used to construct reasonable alternatives to developing policies and implement programs as well as confronting the racialized trade-offs that make space to advance racial equity in domestic policy (Bardach, 2011). Our focus on these five domestic policy areas describes how we teach about racial injustice, explores factors contributing to American racism, and explains strategies to dismantle a racist system designed to build power and maintain privilege for white Americans. This manuscript is not only about power alone, but it is also about how white privilege perpetually exists in an unjust system. For Black children born into our American society, parents fear injustices in the juvenile and criminal justice system. For Black children born, their life expectancy at birth lags due to social and economic disadvantages (Adrasfay & Goldman, 2021). For Black citizens, advancing racial equity means achieving access to economic power and realizing racial equality. In writing this article, we seek meaningful and sustainable racial justice for Black people, Indigenous people, and other People of Color (BIPOC) by ending racist policies rooted in white supremacy and sustained by white fragility.

Naming and Blaming Racism in Five Policy Domains

> *"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am*
> *changing the things I cannot accept." - Dr. Angela Y. Davis*

The first and fundamental step in promoting racial justice is identifying how racism manifests in the United States. The act of "naming" racist policies and "blaming" the root causes of injustice (Gooden, 2014, p. 16) is imperative to identify solutions that will achieve systemic change (Sheppard et al., 1992). In Figure 1, the authors illustrate our naming, blaming and claiming conceptual framework that examines how racism manifests in Black America and corresponding a call to action. Using a hierarchical relationship to emphasize the process of naming, blaming, and claiming racism within key policy domains, we further illustrate how injustice and inequities interconnect to structure our examination and illustration of disproportionate outcomes for Black citizens. Furthermore, we call out inequities and injustices to emphasize that the time is now to reimagine meaningful social change for all.

Figure 1: Naming, Blaming and Claiming: A Call to Action within Policy Domains (derived from Gooden, 2014 and Sheppard et al, 1992)
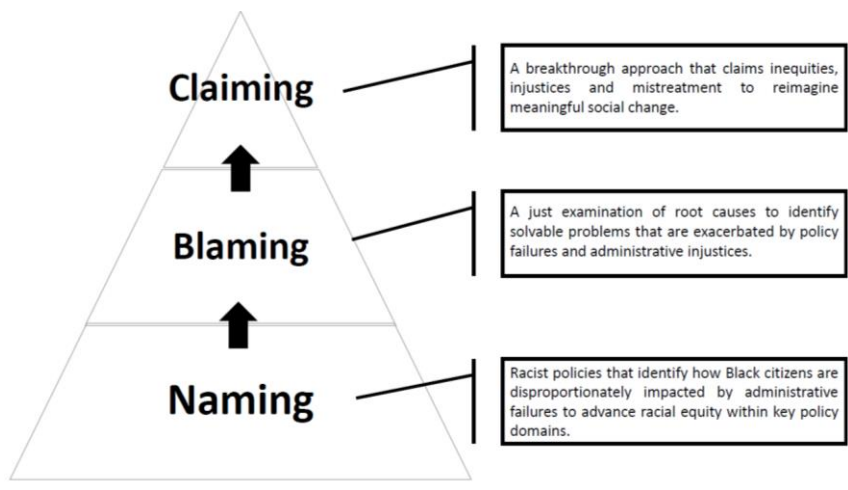
In the following discussion, we present five domestic policy domains with a specific focus on the manifestation of racism in the United States. The five U.S. domestic policy areas are Policing, Education, Health, Housing, and Elections. We conceptualize policy as "any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups" including "written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people" (Kendi, 2019, p. 18). We have chosen these policy domains as powerful and illustrative examples of racism in the United States. While we solely focus on these five policy areas, it is important to note that all of the institutions within the United States were birthed by racist foundations. As racism permeates American society at the individual level, it manifests at the institutional and organizational levels as evidenced by public policy. Moreover, readers can, and should, examine how racism manifests in other policy domains such as climate, employment, transportation, immigration, agriculture, etc. We hope this discussion is a starting place for those extended examinations.

Our article begins with a discussion of each of the five policy domains. In these areas, we name and blame the manifestation of racism in that specific policy context emphasizing who is harmed and important historical contexts. We have included in our policy examinations the critical identification of race, power, and privilege in each associated discussion. Using multiple policy analysis frameworks and distinct policy areas, we highlight the clear and consistent ways that racial injustice is embedded in the social policy fabric of the United States. While multiple explanations persist in explaining the trade-offs between equity and efficiency, our examination of domestic policy informs value judgments about injustice in America and necessary next steps to dismantle white supremacy and achieve equal outcomes for all.

Our analysis centers on the problem that we all live with – racism. Our concluding remarks focus on claiming a breakthrough approach to resolve the issues identified in the policy analysis. In our examination of policy domains, we identify unequal outcomes using a 21st-century definition of racism: "A system of advantage based on race and supported by

institutional structures, policies, and practices that create and sustain benefits for the dominant white group, and structure discrimination, oppression, and disadvantage for people from targeted racial groups" (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. 118) In our work, we acknowledge that racism has become internalized so much so that "the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy exists where whites are consistently ranked above People of Color" (Huber, Johnson & Kohli, 2006, p. 183). Consequently, in American society, both systemic and institutional racism shape outcomes in critical public policy domains. In the sections that follow we clearly articulate the linkages that exist between racism and policy with a particular focus on discriminatory outcomes geared toward Black individuals. Finally, the conclusion presents a starting point to craft solutions that are both action-oriented and justice-oriented so that we may begin to reconcile the past injustices that the Black community has endured for centuries.

Domain #1: Criminal Justice in the United States

The criminal justice system is predatory and designed to subjugate people who are Black, dehumanizing them and assigning them a number while stripping their identity (Alexander, 2010). In practice, the criminal justice system is embedded with both individual and systemic racism targeting Blacks at disproportionate rates (Walker, 2020). Institutional racism is defined as "those established laws, customs and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities in American society... whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions" (Jones, 1972, p. 131), which impacts the cultural, economic, political, cognitive, and organizational experiences of Blacks (Ward & Rivera, 2014). Feagin (2013) details systemic racism as five components: (1) dominant racial hierarchy, (2) comprehensive white racial framing, (3) individual and collective discrimination, (4) social reproduction of racial-material inequalities, and (5) racist institutions integral to white domination of Blacks. All three institutions of the criminal justice system (i.e., law enforcement, courts, and correctional system) have persistently continued to marginalize and disenfranchise Blacks at outlandish rates (Hinton, Henderson, & Reed, 2018). From its inception to the present day, the criminal justice system serves as one of the primary vehicles in creating intergenerational trauma for Blacks.

By examining the role of systemic and institutional racism within the criminal justice system, we can begin to unpack the continued disenfranchisement of Blacks. More specifically, we can highlight how the criminal justice system continues to prey on Blacks, reinforcing a narrative that attempts to make them second-class citizens. In the following sections, we highlight the injustices experienced by Blacks through all three institutions of the criminal justice system, as we believe that our examination of injustice must emphasize both the individual and interconnectedness of racism within each phase that shapes the American criminal justice system today.

The first major arm of the criminal justice system is law enforcement. We must discuss its origins in the United States to understand how institutional and systemic racism is embedded within law enforcement. Two systems were set up in the original colonies to serve as de-facto police departments. In the north, volunteer watch groups sought to subjugate the Indigenous population (French, 2018). In the south, slave patrols captured and punished enslaved people who ran away (Reichel, 1988). At the behest of Congress, enacted laws criminalized, abused, and controlled the enslaved and Indigenous populations. For instance, the Fugitive Slave Acts in 1793 and 1850 guaranteed slaveholders the right to recover their enslaved runaways (Franklin & Schweninger, 2000; Gross, 2000). Both northern watch

groups and southern slave patrols were active in fulfilling these laws. As a function of these primary responsibilities of these patrolling forces, from the beginning, law enforcement has been intentionally designed to police and dehumanize Black bodies (Rios, 2015).

Given its beginnings, the disenfranchisement of Blacks continues today in their interactions with the justice system. In the juvenile justice system, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges provides historical context for the role of the juvenile court, in that:

> *"Juvenile courts were established early in the 1900s based on the doctrine of parens patria, which allows the state to intervene as the parent and employ the concept of individualized justice, whereby care, custody, and discipline decision about each child were made based on that individual child's circumstance - eliminating a 'one best way' approach to adjudicating cases involving youth" (Berry-James, 2012a, 201).*

Cases referred to juvenile court are processed through nine decision points of the juvenile justice system and at some points of contact, cases can be handled informally or formally. Berry-James (2012a) asserts that Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately processed and detained at every decision point - juvenile arrest, referral to juvenile court, diversion, secure detention, a petition of charges file, adjudication, probation supervision, secure confinement, and transfer to adult court. At the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Roundtable on Social Equity, Berry-James argues that Black children continue to experience disproportionate minority contact (DMC) and the cumulative impact of overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system amounts to a cruel and unusual punishment for system-involved youth (Birdsell, Berry-James, & Woolridge, 2020). While distinctly different from the criminal justice system, Berry-James makes the point that the juvenile justice system is a critical part of the school-to-prison pipeline for criminal justice, with public policies mandating juvenile courts to transfer offending youth to adult court.

The courts have served as an avenue to disproportionately impact Blacks, as evidenced by the overrepresentation of Black children exposed to the courts throughout their lifetime. Nationwide statistics indicate the disproportionate effect of institutional racism on Black children. While Black children make up 14% of the population, they represent 32% of children arrested, 42% of children detained, and 52% of children whose cases are judicially transferred or waived to criminal court (NAACP, 2014). Moreover, when interacting with the courts, Black children are often wrongly viewed as predators and prone to violence (Agyapong, 2018). At the same time, Black children tend to face more severe charges relative to their white counterparts. Building awareness of the needs of juvenile justice reform and examining the disparate treatment of system-involved youth (NAPA, 2020) is critical to understanding the historical factors that contribute to racism in the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, national statistics indicate that 1 in 10 of every Black men in his thirties is in prison or jail (Toldson, 2019). Adherence to the problem of racism affects not only Black men but also Black women. Women make up a growing share of arrests and report higher use of force than they did 20 years ago, observing that Black women are most likely targeted by police officers (Edwards, Lee & Esposito, 2019). These insights indicate that law enforcement agencies are placing an undue burden on Blacks and causing trauma. Further, recent evidence has shown that Blacks are also subject to unjustified stop and frisk practices. Glevchak (2021) found that being Black is associated with being frisked and subjected to non-weapon force in New York City. Moreover, Blacks were less likely than white Americans to be carrying contraband during stops. These recent findings show that despite the over-policing of Black

bodies, they are no more likely to be involved with criminal activity, which further signifies that the main driver of over-policing in Black neighborhoods is driven by systemic racism.

The courts intentionally create inequality for Blacks as well. Recent scholarship has found that Black adult defendants are faced with far worse outcomes than white adult defendants. For instance, Berdejo (2018) found that racial disparities in the length of sentences are primarily driven by the fact that Black defendants tend to face more serious initial charges than white defendants. Similarly, Metcalfe and Chiricos (2018) found that Blacks, especially Black males, are less likely to plea and are expected to receive a lower value for their plea. The issue is persistent despite committing similar crimes as well. Bishop et al. (2020) found that Black defendants in Massachusetts are more likely to be locked up for drug and weapons offenses and get longer sentences than white defendants for similar crimes. All of these examples indicate that judicial courts play a role in continuing to disenfranchise Blacks.

The third major institution within the criminal justice system is the correctional system. Like law enforcement and the courts, the correctional system is currently riddled with disparities for Blacks. It is widely known that there is an overrepresentation of Blacks that make up the general population of both jails and prisons in the United States. Blacks make up only 13.1% of the total population, yet they make 34% of the total correctional population in America (Sundaresh et al., 2020). At the state level, the trends of overrepresentation within the correctional system for Blacks are even more troubling. Blacks are incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 5 to 1 the imprisonment of whites. In five states (Iowa, Minnesota, New Jersey, Vermont, and Wisconsin), the disparity is more than 10 to 1 (Nellis, 2016).

Overall, all three institutions that constitute the criminal justice system are disproportionately discriminatory towards Blacks. The criminal justice system does not operate alone within a silo. The intersections of the criminal justice system, education, housing, elections, and health intertwine to create a larger U.S. constellation that discriminates against Blacks.

Domain #2: Education in the United States
The practical and moral underpinnings of the U.S. education systems are firmly rooted in systemic racism. As with the other policy domains explored in this manuscript, our education system has historically and contemporaneously promoted the success of those with privilege due to white identities while discriminating against others with Black identities. Taking a broad look at racism in public education, this policy discussion names systemic racism using Young's Five Faces of Oppression (1990, 2011): marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, exploitation, and violence. Drawing on Gaynor (2018), we apply the five faces to the education systems to blame institutional failure. Our analysis tells the story of how the entire education system fails to support, and achieve success for, BIPOC students. We name each of the 'faces' separately though our intention is not to suggest the forms of oppression are distinct; instead, they intersect and overlap and mutually reinforce each other. This overlapping oppression is critical to the systemic nature of racism in education. Indeed, research shows that most discussions about racism in schools do not connect racism to a structured analysis of oppressions (Kohli et al., 2017).

The first form of oppression is the marginalization of Black students in the education system. Marginalization manifests when individuals are excluded from useful and meaningful participation in social life. The term 'useful' and 'meaningful' denotes a productive sense of being, occurring with a corresponding internalized self-respect and identity of being useful.

Young (2011) writes that marginalization is "perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression" because it forces a whole group of individuals to be "expelled from useful participation in social life" (p. 53). Historically, the marginalization of Black students from education was explicit, originally by making education illegal for the Black community and later through segregated schools (Anderson, 1988; National Museum of American History, n.d.; Span, 2014). While we have moved on from 'separate but equal' under Plessy v. Ferguson to integration under Brown v. Board of Education, the school system in the United States continues the marginalization of BIPOC students, often through microaggressions. Microaggressions are defined as "derogatory slights or insults" that "communicate bias and [are] delivered implicitly or explicitly" (Torino et al., 2018, p. 3). One example of explicit microaggressions is school closings. National reports indicate trends in school closing reached a peak in 2010 and 2011 but are declining in recent years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The impact, however, is widespread for the Black community, with research showing that school closures occur disproportionately in majority-Black schools, with one case study from Chicago finding that 90% (n=49) of schools closed in 2013 were majority-Black schools (Ewing, 2018). These school closures often occur without awareness about the social impact of closing schools in majority-Black communities. For example, if a school has been named in honor of a historic Black leader and seen as a source of pride after decades of segregation, yet elected officials still close it without understanding the ramifications of such actions (Ewing, 2018).

A by-product of microaggressions is feelings of powerlessness resulting from internalized racism (Huber et al., 2006). This is the second form of oppression named in this analysis. Powerlessness occurs when "access and the ability to exercise power" not granted and instead "reserved for those in the most socially privileged positions" (Gaynor, 2018, p. 363). Like marginalization, powerlessness can occur implicitly and explicitly. Contemporary examples of implicit power oppression in schools are extensive occurrences of white teachers failing to learn the names of Black students (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). When white teachers forget, mispronounce, or rename Black children in schools, it is a horrific and dehumanizing act. These microaggressions cut to the heart of powerlessness and internalized self-worth. Similarly, returning to the school closings in Chicago, an implicit microaggression involves the language used by officials which described these schools as "underutilized" and "under-resourced" (Ewing, 2018, p. 4), despite sustained enrolments for Black students and the lack of resources being determined by central administration. Both examples show that there is an implicit undermining and devaluing for Black students. Historically, there are explicit forms of powerlessness, the education system repeatedly ends policies that worked for improving outcomes for Black students, such as desegregation (Hannah-Jones, 2014, 2015, 2016). When policies that benefit Black students end, despite protests and input from Black parents, the impact of these actions is that Black students and Black families do not have access to the power to have an education system that benefits them.

The third face of oppression named in our analysis is cultural imperialism. When one group's experiences and culture become "universalized" and are "established as the norm" while those outside the dominant group are both made "invisible" and stereotyped as "the Other", it is the result of cultural imperialism (Young, 2011, p. 59). In public education, one area that cultural imperialism manifests in curriculum offerings. Since the founding of the colonies until the present day, requirements for curriculum, now established by national and state standards, overwhelmingly emphasize Eurocentric interpretations of history, literature, mathematics, and social sciences (DuFresne, 2018; Kohli, 2008; Loewen, 2007; Mead, 2006).

This means that white culture has become the de facto norm and is represented in all courses, at all levels of education, and by all teachers. When subjects relating to the Black community are offered, they are typified as special topics, special events, ethnic observations, or cultural ceremonies. This only further reinforces the "othering" of the Black community. However, when schools do use culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally-informed curriculum, the comprehensive content and teaching methods that align with the cultural experiences of Black students close achievement gaps remarkably fast (Dee & Penner, 2016, 2019). This cycle of cultural imperialism is perilous because, as Young (2011) states, the dominant group's culture defines and assigns meaning to the oppressed group, resulting in feelings of inferiority and a sense of invisibleness. As with the previous forms of oppression in systemic racism, this results in an internalized devaluing and dehumanization.

The fourth face of oppression named in this analysis is exploitation, or "the coercive ways in which those with power benefit from the labor of the worker" (Gaynor, 2018, p. 362). To some, exploitation may feel outside the realm of the education system and be more directly related to the economies of labor and workforce participation. However, the concept of exploitation is not a tangent to the systemic racism of Black students in the education system and there is clear evidence of economic exploitation resulting from this oppression. Historically, the Black community was excluded from public education altogether before reconstruction (Anderson, 1988) as a means to keep their labor focused on tasks with direct benefits to plantation owners (Span, 2014). The historical evidence suggests blatant exploitation by the public education system. Still, more recently, we have evidence that the United States has a documented school-to-prison pipeline where Black students are forced out of the school system and into the juvenile confinement systems (Christle et al., 2005; Flannery, 2015; Skiba et al., 2014; Teaching Tolerance, 2013; Wald & Losen, 2003). Furthermore, despite the public nature of a criminal justice system for young children, there is a rising trend in the number and percentage of juvenile confinement facilities being run by private companies (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2015; Puzzanchera et al., 2020) with a history of corruption (Graham, 2019; Guggenheim & Hertz, 2015) and civil and human right violations (National Juvenile Justice Network, 2015). Exploitation occurs in perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline which benefits private companies because there is no supportive and alternative form of 'labor', used here to mean supportive and responsive educational options, which Black students can pursue outside of institutional racism.

The fifth and final form of oppression is violence (Young, 1990, 2011). This oppression involves intimidation, harassment, degradation, humiliation, stigmatization, and physical violence that are derived from individual actions and connected to systemic social constructs that permit the actions to occur and, in many cases, tolerate the actions with the explanation they are acceptable. How violence manifests in schools involves implicit, recall previous discussions about microaggressions, and explicit examples. One clear trend in violence toward Black students involves racial profiling and excessive punishment in schools. Black students are more likely to be called out for misconduct and more likely than their peers to receive harsher punishments for their actions compared to white peers (Johnson et al., 2006; Kinsler, 2011; Riddle & Sinclair, 2019). Research has shown that over-punishment is not the result of greater misconduct but rather systemic and structural bias in the education system (The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2020). When students are unfairly targeted for punishment, violence can take the form of stigmatizing, harassing, degrading, or intimidating Black students.

Domain #3: Housing in the United States

The history of access to adequate housing in the United States is a tale of racist policies with devastating impacts. There is ample evidence that federal and state policies for housing have a disproportionately negative impact on Black communities (Hiller, 2003; Morrison et al., 2017; Rothstein, 2017; Urban Institute, 2015). The long-lasting implication of housing policies, such as federal and state 'redlining' laws restricting lending for Black people and investment in Black communities in the 1930s, still plays out today. In their report, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (2020) explains how COVID-19 disproportionately impacts communities redlined in the 1930s. Less explicitly and more implicitly connected to the notion of redlining are ranking systems that potential buyers consult but that P.A. scholars have shown to be racially biased, consistently ranking Black communities lower than others (Granger & Price, 2015). Indeed, as explained by the current Biden Harris Administration in their Memorandum on Redressing Our Nation's and the Federal Government's History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies that was released on January 21, 2021, the "ongoing legacies of residential segregation and discrimination remain ever-present in our society" (The White House, 2021, para. 1).

For this analysis on housing policy, we zoom in on specific examples to better observe the clear impact of systemic racism on racial equity. Baltimore, Maryland represents a case study emblematic of racist policies in the housing sector. As the 30th largest city in the United States, Baltimore has a population of roughly 600,000 in 2019 with 63% of the population being Black and 32% of the population being white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Baltimore has a tragic legacy of apartheid housing, as the current Mayor Brandon Scott notes, "Baltimore is the birthplace of redlining and residential segregation. That legacy shows up in the stark inequalities of our City today, which have been exacerbated by this pandemic" (City of Baltimore, Office of the Mayor, 2021).

Housing segregation is entrenched in the racist history of Baltimore, dating back to the forced removal of the First Peoples of the Susquehannock and Piscataway Conoy tribes in the 1600s (Youssi, 2019; Piscataway Conoy Tribe, n.d.) and later decisions made regarding where to establish food markets in 1751 as the city began to grow (King et al., 2019). But this 'segregation by design' (see Trounstine, 2018) takes shape over the next four centuries. During the late 1700s and early 1800s, as the city incorporated in 1796, Baltimore was majority white with free and enslaved Blacks living with or in the alleys behind their employers or owners. As Baltimore expanded, the population quadrupled from 1790 to 1840. Compared to the rest of the state, there was a disproportional rise in Black residents fleeing the south during the Civil War and after Emancipation. This population growth created pressure for the city to expand and develop more housing. By the mid to late 1800s, land developers explicitly seized on racial segregation as a marketing strategy and, in doing so, made extensive profits from the establishment of new housing communities for white families (Glotzer, 2020). These development efforts further concentrated housing along racial lines and built wealth within the same white communities for landowners and land developers (Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage, n.d.).

Concentrated wealth through segregated housing continued through the early 1900s when Baltimore passed a law, Baltimore City Ordinance 610 or the West Plan, in 1911 prohibiting Blacks from moving into white residential blocks, the first act of de jure segregation in the United States (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 2021; Pietila, 2010; Trounstine, 2018). When de jure segregation was outlawed, first in public housing in 1954 under Brown vs. Board of Education and later in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the city continues to have de facto segregation to the present day (Rothstein, 2017; Crenson, 2017).

Even more recently, analysis of community investment programs between 2004-2016 (i.e. loans for homes or small businesses and capital investment in infrastructure systems) shows a striking pattern of greater funding in neighborhoods where the population is less than 50% Black compared to predominate Black neighborhoods (Theodos et al, 2020). Other scholars unpack the neo-liberalization of federal Section 8 voucher policies by examining the specific impact in Baltimore neighborhoods, finding that by outsourcing public housing (from public housing buildings maintained by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to Section 8 vouchers used in the private real estate rental market), poverty and segregation are further concentrated in Baltimore (Rosen, 2020). This pattern, segregating race and concentrating wealth, is a persistent and pernicious legacy of Baltimore.

The cumulative impact of these de facto and de jure policies for Baltimore are neighborhoods that are hypersegregated by race, wealth, and health outcomes (Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2017; Logan and Stults, 2011; Brown, 2021). Among public discourse and in academic scholarship, there are "two Baltimores," one for the Black community and one for the white community. The segregated impacts of housing policy and community investment are not random, and in fact, very noticeable when visually represented using mapping software. In 2016, the scholar-activist Dr. Lawrence Brown named the shape "The Black Butterfly" and "The White L" because targeted policy zones and government-funded investments, when mapped, form recognizable shapes that mirror the demographic distribution for areas of Baltimore. This visual understanding of Baltimore's historical and contemporary housing policy was a watershed for analyses of other city data. For example, the Baltimore City Health Department reorganized their analysis of health data and found that life expectancy in "The Black Butterfly" to be 70 years old but in "The White L" is 84.

The racist history of housing policy is not limited to lending and investment practices; it is also involved and entrenched in the administration of public housing. The United States does not maintain permanent supportive public housing, which is guaranteed housing for the very poor such as "the disabled, elderly, women with children, those with mental illness or families unable to earn a living wage" (Thomas & Alozie, 2019, p. 52). The goal of supportive housing is to provide a safe and affordable place to live and support accessing food, school, and health care. The failure to establish permanent supportive housing has caused an "epic failure" of cyclical poverty concentration throughout the United States (Thomas & Alozie, 2019, p. 48). Instead of permanent supportive housing, the United States maintains public housing, focused almost extensively on 'roofs overs heads' instead of a supportive philosophy for housing, for individuals who apply, wait, and accept to live in units maintained by local officials or use vouchers to pay for housing through local rental markets.

In 1995, six public housing tenants, acting as a class on behalf of thousands, and represented by the ACLU of Maryland and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, filed a lawsuit against the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This case, later called Thompson vs. HUD, would prove to be a landmark lawsuit for fair housing that would be litigated for nearly 20 years. In the case, the Plaintiffs argued that HABC and HUD had unfairly concentrated Black residents in the city's poorest and racially segregated parts (ACLU of Maryland, 2018; Legal Defense Fund, 2021). In 2012, the courts awarded a settlement that involved the creation of a new version of the housing choice voucher program, called the Thompson program. In the court-ordered evaluation of the Thompson program, just five years after the implementation of the consent decree, evaluators found that plaintiffs who chose to participate in the program were moving and living in areas with higher levels of opportunity, as measured by a metric

established by the court including the concentration of poverty, racial demographics, and percent of homes that are rentals (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017).

Finally, discussions about housing policy are also directly connected to populations that cannot access housing at all. Homelessness is a profound and enduring housing challenge facing many individuals and families in the United States and is an understudied domain of public management literature (Callahan, 2019). In the most recent data available, collected before the impact of COVID-19 that is expected to exacerbate homelessness, social service census data in 2019 showed that over 568,000 individuals and families were homeless on a single night in the United States (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020b)[1]. Although the problem is not unique to the U.S. (Bainbridge & Carrizales, 2017), the persistent crisis of homelessness runs counter to the popular narratives of American Exceptionalism. Indeed, trends in homelessness reflect systemic racism embedded in the provision and protection for the homeless. Although individuals who identify as Black make up 13% of the overall U.S. population in census data, they represent 40% of individuals experiencing homelessness and 50% of families experiencing homelessness (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020a). In their report on racial disparities and homelessness, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020a) indicates that historical and contemporary systemic racism against Blacks, notably redlining as well as housing segregation and discrimination (including ownership and renting), can be directly attributed to the over-representation of Blacks experiencing homelessness.

Domain #4: Health in the United States
At the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP), researchers describe health disparities as those differences in prevalence, mortality, and burden of disease and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups. This differs from healthcare disparities, which are the differences in access, process, and structure of healthcare among specific population groups (Berry-James, 2012b). The factors that contribute to the underlying causes of health disparities and healthcare disparities are social and environmental, system and policy factors, individual factors, and provider factors, according to CHERP. These underlying factors not only contribute to disparate social problems but also persist as America becomes more diverse. While racial/ethnic minority groups make up about a third of the American population, life expectancy by race and ethnicity is starkly different. For Blacks, life expectancy lags behind all other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019, the life expectancy at birth for Blacks was 74.7 compared to 78.8 for Non-Hispanic Whites, and 81.8 for Hispanics. The Black-white and Black-Hispanic gaps in life expectancy are palpable and due to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Hispanic communities, the mortality advantage continues to erode for BIPOC (Arias, Tejada-Vera, & Ahmad, 2021).

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[1] Census data on homelessness are inaccurate given the various definitions and methods for counting different populations. Federal audits of census data have found them unreliable and inaccurate, begging the question about why this method is used in the first place. In other words, could this data collection system be "designed to produce an undercount" (NY Times Editorial Board, 2021, para. 2)? Inaccurate data for this population leads to challenges in ensuring adequate services are available across providers (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010). The number used here is the national tabulation from the Point-In-Time census counts which involve collaborative efforts by several organizations to count all the individuals in service locations and on the street, on a single designated day in 2019. This figure is likely underestimated, and caution should be used when making generalizations.

In the American healthcare system, health disparities have long been documented. Berry-James (2012b), in Cultural Competency in Health Care: Standards, Practices, and Measures, explains how cultural competence can be used as a strategy to reduce health disparities and healthcare disparities among cultural and social groups so long as policies intended to close health disparities prioritize access to health care and quality of care for racial/ethnic minorities. Structural racism and health care inequities produce the health care gaps persistently observed in the American healthcare system. While physicians, health policy experts, and federal health agencies describe health disparities as gaps in access, quality, and affordability, Riley (2012) affirms that implicit bias contributes to resistance in meaningful health care reform, even as medical education embraces cultural competency training for students, trainees, and physicians. The root causes of health inequity arise, according to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), from social, economic, environmental, and structural disparities and are clustered around structural inequities and social determinants of health. Across lines of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, gender expression, and other dimensions of identity, the National Academies assert that the unequal distribution of power and resources sustain deeply rooted structural equities which are the result of our "historic and ongoing interplay of inequitable structures, policies and societal norms like segregation, redlining, foreclosure and implicit bias which amount to more than individual choice or random occurrence" (p. 161).

In Structural Racism and Health Inequities in the USA: Evidence and Interventions, Bailey, Krieger, Agenor, Graves, Linos, & Bassett (2017) define structural racism as the "totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, media, health care, and criminal justice" (p. 1453). Krieger et al., point out the reluctance of researchers to identify racism as the root cause of health inequities and like other scholars, agree that structural racism is likely the plausible cause of health disparities and the life expectancy gap between Black and white Americans (Laud, Zhou, Nattinger, 2019). For decades, health policy experts have relied on trend data to understand persistent health inequalities and prevalence between social classes and social groups (Bleich, Jarlenski, Bell & LaVeist, 2012). Despite prioritizing prevention, diagnosis, and treatment efforts to align with the challenges facing socially disadvantaged groups, health differences amount to social injustice and failed public health policy - particularly in a society incapable of dismantling systemic racism (Braveman, Kumanyika, Felding, LaVeist, Borrell, Manderschield & Troutman, 2011). Systemic racism within the medical community alone is not the source of poor health for socially disadvantaged groups. The impact of other policy domains detailed above, such as poor quality public housing, and other areas outside the scope of this work, such as a lack of health insurance coverage or environmental injustice, also affect racial/ethnic health disparities between groups (see Breysse, Jacobs, Weber, Dixon, Kawecki, Aceti, & Lopez, 2011; Buchmueller, Levinson, Levy, & Wolf, 2016). Yet, even the most ambitious plan to relocate and integrate the urban poor into mixed-income communities with safer, healthier and more supportive environments that on the surface offers resources, relationships, and opportunities fails to take into account the legacy of segregation (Chaskin, 2013). Space and place matter in eliminating health care disparities - separate and unequal systems that fail to account for the interaction between the clinician and the patient and the unmet needs of disadvantaged groups fall short of using evidence-based policies to justify healthcare decisions (Fiscella & Sanders, 2016).

Access to quality, affordable care is the hallmark of eliminating disparities in health and health care for socially disadvantaged groups. Early work by Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, and Ananeh-Firempong (2003) pointed out that "variations in patient recognition of symptoms; thresholds for seeking care; the ability to communicate symptoms to a provider who understands their meaning; the ability to understand the prescribed management strategy; expectations of care (including preferences for or against diagnostic and therapeutic procedures); and adherence to preventive measures and medications" were key factors which influenced clinical decision-making and cultural interactions in health care systems (p. 294). From their view, eliminating racial/ethnic disparities in health and health care could be done by linking a cultural competence framework to minority health care using three strategic approaches: (1) displaying organizational cultural competence by increasing diversity among health professionals and health care leadership; (2) developing structural competence interventions through innovative health care system designs to improve quality health care; and (3) improve clinical cultural competence by teaching health care providers the tools necessary to deliver quality care for diverse social groups (p. 299).

After decades of research and the implementation of strategic approaches, the state of health and health care remains the same and widespread disparities persist between racial/ethnic groups. Disparities in health care are often explained by race, ethnicity, and poverty status, amounting to significant differences between the haves and the have-nots. For example, measures used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to examine public health practices further identify and track racial disparities in childhood asthma to socioeconomic status and other important demographics (CDC, 2013). With regards to the health of America's racial/ethnic groups, asthma, poverty status, parental educational attainment, exposure to cockroaches, fungi, molds and housing characteristics, weight status, psychological distress, lack of health insurance coverage, cost barriers and unemployment are important underlying factors that significantly differ by race and ethnicity, and amount to observed differences in health and health care. To advance racial equity and provide support for underserved populations, we have so much more work to do.

Domain #5: Elections in the United States
Voting and elections matter. The U.S. election process varies from year to year, from election to election. What remains the same is the timing of events: The Presidential or general election occurs every four years, and congressional or midterm elections take place every two years. Between the general elections and midterm elections, the American people determine who will control the Congressional chambers. The 2020 election cycle was no different from previous elections, bar none - with democracy on the ballot and racial disparity on full display. Reflecting on the 2016 presidential election, when we bore witness to failed election policy, voting while Black meant significantly longer wait times in polling locations compared to predominantly white polling places (Chen, Haggag, Pope, & Rohla, 2019).

During presidential elections, congressional elections, as well as state and local elections, all Americans deserve access to voter guides and an opportunity to cast a ballot for their first-choice candidates. In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution affirmed the rights of full citizenship to Blacks and when suffrage continued in 1870, the 15th Amendment confirmed: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (U.S. Library of Congress). Notwithstanding constitutional efforts guaranteeing the right to vote for Blacks and Hispanics, many states continue to make casting a vote more difficult by blocking representation in the chambers of government. Furthermore,

Blacks and Hispanics who are underserved by the government are also more likely to live in vulnerable communities where casting a vote for a first-choice candidate is nearly impossible because of measurable gaps in service or unfounded allegations of voter fraud.

In Election 2020, extending early in-person voting, mobilization efforts, and mail-in ballots were an effective strategy to empower people and expand voting opportunities for Black and Hispanic voters. Like in past elections, executing a "souls to the polls" initiative meant an increase in voter participation, particularly in key states, and by casting absentee ballots before election day, advocates created important strategies to increase voter turnout in critical elections (Herron & Smith, 2012). Earlier evidence affirms that early voting laws have historically had a positive impact on Black voter turnout, particularly in swing states. Yet, the outcomes from Election 2020 are convincingly clear.

In Ohio, for example, Kaplan & Yuan (2020) affirm that early voting turnout had greater impacts on women, Democrats, independents, as well as young and working adults. Voting by mail or absentee ballot has historically presented a different challenge for voters and continues to affirm what has long been known about disenfranchising Black voters. In addition to voter photo-identification laws and a poll tax, voting by mail and absentee voting raised concerns for several reasons. In the interest to maintain social distancing during the recent election, Hopkins, Meredith, Chainani, Olin & Tse (2021) point out additional risks noting that mailed ballots may not be received in time or may have higher rates of clerical errors. Furthermore, "curing a ballot" or requiring corrections for mail-in ballots is much more time-consuming when compared to addressing voter challenges during in-person voting.

For decades, Blacks have borne witness to an electoral system riddled with inequities and electoral processes fueled by voter suppression. During the 2020 general election, many voting rights advocates feared the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic voters. Despite these fears, the U.S. Census Bureau (2021) revealed that Election 2020 yielded the highest voter high turnout in the 21st century. For the record, the Census Bureau points out that the "COVID-19 pandemic did not prevent Americans from registering and voting at relatively high rates given that 17 million more people voted in Election 2020 when compared to Election 2016" (Fabina, 2021). Since the previous general election, there was higher voter turnout across all racial/ethnic groups with 71% for Non-Hispanic Whites, 63% for Non-Hispanic Blacks, 59% for Asians, and 54% for Hispanics in Election 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Evermore, new legislation in Georgia and Florida appears to target minority voters. New voting law changes that reduce early voting hours, limit county use of drop boxes and require identification for absentee voting under the guise of improving voter security do nothing more than restrict voting and use of mail-in ballots to disenfranchise voters (Florida Senate Bill 90; Georgia Senate Bill 202).

For democracy to work and work for all, our electoral process must include a fair election process. Reinstating voting privileges and extending the voting rights act are the first steps toward equal treatment and opportunity for all. To ensure a government of the people, for the people and by the people, influential leaders, both elected and appointed, must be committed to what is right and true. Indeed, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Moreover, in the fight for racial justice, American democracy begins and ends at the ballot box.

Claiming: A Path Forward and Demands for Action

> *"What the people want is very simple - they want an America as good as its promise". - Barbara Jordan*

The United States in all its glory, prestige, and pedigree represents two sets of warring ideals. At one end of the spectrum, there is the opportunity for hope, freedom, life, and liberty. However, at the other end of the spectrum, oppression, injustice, deceit, and a false narrative that all citizens can achieve the "American Dream" if they just work hard enough are self-evident and indisputable, especially for Blacks. Detailing the many inequities, injustices, and mistreatment against Blacks, all people may be created equal, but they are all not treated equally. Unjust policies, which were originally founded on white supremacism, create unjust lived realities for Blacks. As evidenced by the Scholar Strike for Racial Equality and other protests in 2020, many people in the United States believe that it is time for the academy and the broader public to no longer just speak on these issues, but to take actions to address them. Recognizing institutional and systemic racism as root causes is the first step to address these issues. Institutional racism is ingrained in criminal justice, education, housing, health, elections, and more, and it continues to affect Blacks disproportionately. There has always been an alarming need for government intervention. The government, which is usually seen as a passive actor, must be active and transformative in dealing with the systemic racism plaguing society. Given the ongoing series of Black Lives Matter protests and political campaigns in 2020, President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. and Madam Vice President Kamala Devi Harris (the first woman and first Black and Asian American) promised to make inroads in combating institutional racism. While the verdict is still unknown as to how their term will play out, we offer several recommendations to combat institutional racism and the long-term effects of systemic racism.

By dismantling institutional racism, the United States government must (1) recognize and acknowledge that white supremacy permeates in all policy domains, (2) prioritize justice and fairness in policy initiatives, (3) use data to quantify racial equity, and (4) be committed to learning from historically disadvantaged scholars. Understanding that systemic racism has disproportionately affected Black citizens, the government can unite to combat white supremacy. The Biden-Harris administration can mandate that all departments collect data with special attention to race and offer sanctions on departments that do not change hiring practices, professional training, or produce equitable outcomes. Leading by example, international governments can look internally and make meaningful, systemic changes for their citizens.

The Biden-Harris administration must make justice and fairness their priorities in policymaking. They can establish and integrate standards that measure justice and fairness within all policy initiatives. COVID-19, healthcare, climate change, and the economy are areas in which the government can consider how their policies create a culture of justice and if the policy incentive actors operate from a position of fairness to all impacted by these policies. Furthermore, the Biden-Harris administration can tie funding to programs that promote racial equity as the key outcome for the policy. By prioritizing justice and fairness in policy initiatives, the government can create a culture that is conscious of the racial inequity in society while driving actors, organizations, and agencies are motivated to come up with creative solutions to solve it.

At the federal level, we need to be data-driven in pursuing racial equity. As part of this initiative, all federal agencies must collect and make publicly available data related to the distribution of services and outcomes broken down by race and ethnicity. By using this framework, agencies can then begin to measure who is being served and the quality of outcomes. We must utilize political will at the top, where the Biden-Harris Administration spoke intentionally about the necessary change, and create networks that link federal agencies to service providers fighting for racial equity. As part of this data-driven process, federal, state, and local agencies can all incorporate racial equity into the policy cycle. Administrators must consider racial equity and incorporate it into agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and evaluation.

Finally, the Biden-Harris administration can do more to "affirmatively advance equity in civil rights, racial justice, and equal opportunity as a systematic approach to embed fairness and redress inequities" by learning from historically disadvantaged scholars and underserved communities (Exec. Order No. 12985). White scholars must go from being complicit to being co-conspirators, challenging higher education institutions to transform and dismantle racial and economic systemic discrimination affecting Black faculty, underrepresented students, and historically underserved communities (Cantor, 2020). Black faculty are often seen as the only scholars fighting for racial equity and social justice to ensure that the American government works for all. We need a seismic system change to make the government work and work for all because the struggle for racial equity is real. Dismantling white supremacy and disrupting systems of injustice must involve everyone, starting with BIPOC as subject matter experts. In a historic effort to address racial disparities, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Executive Office of the President issued a Request for Information (RFI) notice on May 5, 2021, to take decisive action against racism and to close equity gaps (86 FR 24029). Supported by agency heads, Methods and Leading Practices for Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through Government, RFI solicits promising ideas, best practices, and breakthrough approaches from a diverse group of key stakeholders representing all sectors in our society; solicited public comments close on July 6, 2021. To truly advance racial equity, the Biden-Harris administration must also advance research and scholarship from historically underrepresented scholars and disadvantaged communities who have had to bear the brunt of racism in America for centuries.

The changes outlined above are not a checklist for correcting the historical and ongoing racial injustices but suggest an action-oriented response to deal with the disproportionate effect of racism on BIPOC. Our examination of policy domains provides a reasonable and meaningful place to begin the intentional work of ending systemic racism. To address the effects of racism, today and in the future, our intentional anti-racist work will require sustained political will, public attention, and tireless momentum to achieve lasting change. Notwithstanding, transformation must occur. The divided realities and lived experiences for BIPOC communities and white communities in the United States cannot continue. It is morally unjust and economically unsound to continue oppression, dehumanization, and discrimination. We look to the future when policy areas like criminal justice, education, housing, health care, and election are not covered with the filth of white supremacy but reflect America's commitment to helping underrepresented, underserved, and vulnerable communities thrive under the cloak of justice. The time is now to advance racial equity in America.

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