



Context in BLACK

A Conversation through the Lens of
African-American Led
Child Welfare Organizations



To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time.

James A. Baldwin



Mission:

African American leaders building a collaborative that positively impacts community change.

Vision:

African American leaders play an active role in correcting disproportionality in child welfare, education, and other deep end systems where equity is achieved through the skill and experiences of African American organizations.

■ Introduction

The African American Strategic Partnership (AASP), a group of thought leaders from the non-profit sector in Pittsburgh, came together in 2015 to grapple with some of the most important and pervasive issues impacting the lives of Black people in the city and region. Among them are institutional racism, racial bias, disproportionality in juvenile justice and child welfare systems, and economic inequality. Many of our members work, live and play in the very communities and neighborhoods that the AASP is striving to engage and support.

We've watched as vital sectors and services that our communities rely on, are compromised or dismantled in the name of progress and change. When we look for the people and families who are supposed to benefit or who stand to lose, we find them at the margins, not as stakeholders at the table. Something is wrong when evidenced-based practices lack cultural relevance, and interventions are fueled by the belief that deficits, not value and assets define Black families. In 1965, that was Daniel Patrick Moynihan's infamous claim: Black families represented a "tangle of pathology."

In 1972, Robert Hill, Ph.D., a Black sociologist, disrupted the narrative. He stepped forward with a fresh view and a different reality when he wrote about the seldom recognized strengths that were inherent in many Black families, even among those that were low-income and headed by single mothers.

The need to flip the script about the quality of life for Black families, children and communities is no less urgent in 2018. Nearly 50 years after Dr. Hill wrote the landmark *Strengths of Black Families*, children, families and communities still are viewed through a pathological lens. It's led to inappropriate intervention strategies, which therefore, have contributed to Black children being overrepresented in care and in the juvenile justice system. In 2018, race continues to be America's defining problem. A century earlier, the Kerner Commission, a bipartisan assessment of race in America, predicted the same: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal."

In 1968, when the controversial Kerner Report was released, urban cities burned with unrest and poverty and racism stoked the fire. Five decades later, pervasive poverty and racism are again reason to sound the alarm. The percentage of children living in poverty in the United States has increased, income inequality and gaps in wealth, health and incarceration rates have widened, and segregation has taken a seat in public schools and neighborhoods.

These are the kind of urgent issues that demand the attention of change agents. The AASP has and continues to be a viable solution-driven, thought partner in providing a response, a strategy and a solution for improving the quality of life for Black children, families and communities in Pittsburgh and in the state. We believe that political, economic, and social agency can only be achieved through the collectivist approach that AASP is advancing as its members move forward with focus, to live out the motto: "Nothing about us, without us."

Moving Forward

This brief will provide you with a look at some of the concerns for which our members seek appropriate prevention, early intervention, engagement, and culturally congruent support and services—child welfare, African Americans, social and juvenile justice, and mental health. First, we provide a national framework for understanding how African American people and families are faring in these areas and some of the factors that contribute to racial diversity gaps between Whites and Blacks in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the nation.

From a national view we take a closer look at Pennsylvania's two most populous regions for African Americans—Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. To shape the context, we draw from a variety of data sources, reports and books, including the National Urban League's State of Black America and State of Black Philadelphia, Child Trends, the University of Pittsburgh's Center on Race & Social Problems and Temple University's Healing Our Divided Society: Investing in America Fifty Years after the Kerner Report.

These briefs are meant to be a source of information, a platform for dialogue and cause for action and new policies that transform and improve the lives of African American people in Pennsylvania and beyond.

Context about African-Americans in PA

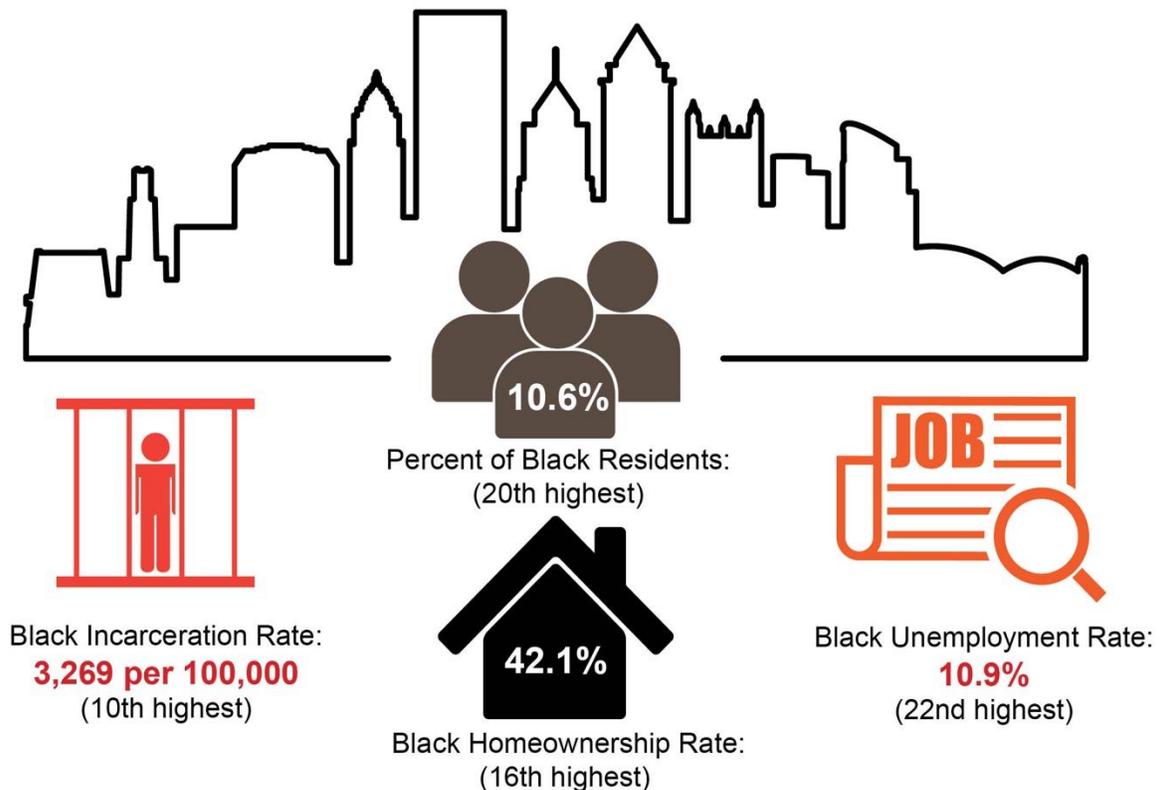
A Lens on African Americans in Pennsylvania

The 21st century has ushered in the greatest racial and ethnic diversity that this nation has ever seen. It is undeniable that social and legal changes have propelled individuals, families, and, indeed, whole communities toward the promise of justice for all. However, the persistent challenges of institutional and individual racism, income equality, and segregation in class and race, continue to negatively impact the lives and potential of African Americans to thrive.

According to research on the family from Temple University, the family structure remains a stubborn and steadfast challenge. Black children in the United States are more likely to live with just one parent, usually their mother. In 2015, nearly 55 percent of Black children lived with one parent. In 2015, 25 percent of Black mothers were not a part of the work force. Notably, such parental employment patterns directly impact the quality of life of Black families and children. The poverty rate for Black children was at 33 percent in 2015. Socially, Black teen rates of juvenile detention have remained at 40 percent and rates of incarceration for Black males between 18 and 29 outweigh their Hispanic and White counterparts. In 2010, 9.7 percent of Black males between 18 and 29 were incarcerated. The research concludes that these social dynamics, together with culturally insensitive policies and social biases, not only advance inequality across economics, education and health, they continue to marginalize African-American families and children and the communities in which they live.

In the state of Pennsylvania, the struggles, disparities and barriers look much the same.

Just two years ago, the state of Pennsylvania made a national Top Ten list. But for African Americans who make up 10.6 percent of the state's population, the recognition was for all of the wrong reasons. The results of this national survey labeled Pennsylvania one of the nation's 10 worst states for African Americans. These are some reasons why:



The poverty rate among Whites in Pennsylvania is lower than the national White poverty rate, but among Blacks in the state, the poverty rate is higher than the national Black poverty rate. Only four other states in the country have such disproportionate poverty rates. The 29.5 percent poverty rate among Blacks in the Keystone State is roughly three times the poverty rate among the state's White population. In Pennsylvania, high poverty is linked to lower educational attainment. While 30.5 percent of White adults in Pennsylvania have a bachelor's degree, only 16.4 percent of Black adults have similar educational attainment.

Likewise, high poverty and poor educational attainment in Pennsylvania's Black communities likely contributes to worst social outcomes. The incarceration rate among the state's White population is 375 incarcerations for every 100,000 Whites, below the national rate of 450 incarcerations per 100,000 White Americans. Meanwhile, the incarceration rate among the

state's Black population of 3,269 for every 100,000 Black residents is significantly higher than the national rate of about 2,306 incarcerations for every 100,000 Black Americans.

Taking a closer look at Pennsylvania's two most populous regions for African Americans—Pittsburgh and Philadelphia—the levels of challenges are alarming. A strong, thriving non-profit sector is most often why the city of Pittsburgh is praised nationally. But when it comes to racial parity, its Black population say the city they call home has a long way to go. In a 2017 report from the National Urban League, Pittsburgh ranked 65th in Black-White income inequality out of 71 U.S. metro communities. Writing in the *Pittsburgh City Paper*, Sabrina Bodon remarked that, “Within the city, predominantly black neighborhoods lack thriving business districts and other basic services found in other neighborhoods.”

In 2015, two years before the National Urban League released its report, the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Race and Social Problems published similar findings. They highlighted the inequalities faced by African Americans, who are by far the largest group of people of color in the Pittsburgh region.

The center's report focused on six areas, including family life, economics, intergroup relations and mental health. While problems afflicting the poor have been pervasive and present for decades, the data showed that in almost all these areas, African Americans in Pittsburgh severely lag behind their White counterparts and in some cases—such as professional employment and family life—landed at the bottom rung among all racial groups.

These are among the center's significant findings:

- Blacks in the Pittsburgh metro region live largely in segregated communities where they are disadvantaged by poor transportation and waning public safety and where 75 percent of the households are headed by Black females.
- Economically, Black males have unemployment rates that are two to three times higher than their White counterparts and when they are working, nearly 60 percent are employed in low-paying service or sales positions.
- The average median household income of White households nationally in the 2007-2011 time frame was about 1.6 times that of Black households, but in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, White households took in twice as much as Blacks.
- While Blacks had substantially higher death rates than Whites locally for a range of diseases.
- There was a far greater disparity locally in the arrest rates of Black and White citizens than is the case nationally. Black youths were arrested at twice the rate of White youths nationally, but six times as much in the Pittsburgh region. The violent crime arrest rate for adults was four times higher for Blacks than Whites nationally, but 10 times higher in the region.

In Philadelphia, known as the City of Brotherly Love, the situation seems just as urgent and bleak. Here, African Americans have been pummeled by the same gaps in income, unequal employment, educational disparity, and high rates of poverty as Pittsburgh.

“The State of Black Philadelphia” report, released by the city’s Urban League in 2007, showed:

- Nearly one third of Black families live in poverty compared with less than half that rate among Whites.
- The median income for Black families is only (\$26,700) about two-thirds that of Whites (\$42,400)
- While an equal proportion participate in the labor force, the Black unemployment rate is at nearly 10 percent, more than twice the unemployment rate for Whites.
- Only one in five Black youth who is out of school has a job, compared with three out of five for Whites.
- Only 53 percent of African Americans in Philadelphia are homeowners, compared to 64 percent of whites. Of the 53 percent of Blacks who own homes, their property values are considerably less; the median home value for African Americans is \$75,100, while for Whites it is \$174,100, a difference of almost \$100,000
- A look at homicides also paints a disheartening picture as more than 5 times as many Blacks are murdered (per 100,000 persons) as Whites
- As a percentage of their respective population ages 25 year and older, the number of Blacks and Whites with only a high school diploma is 42 percent and 36 percent, respectively. There is a slightly greater gap in the high-school drop-out rate, however;
- 25 percent of Blacks have less than a high school diploma compared with 18 percent of Whites.

In context, Philadelphia’s Urban League concluded, these persistent challenges—unequal wages, employment levels, education attainment, and other factors like the war on drugs and criminal justice disparities—are significant factors that fuel the kind of looming disparities that threaten, and even erode, generations of Black family life. These disparities are pervasive and massive. And to address them, no doubt, will require a massive response, including interventions and innovations in practice and thought.

At the same time, the impact of poverty, unemployment and criminal involvement, fuels negative perceptions and encourages stereotypes. It also dooms Black neighborhoods to long-term depreciation and negatively impacts the views of the Black children and families who live there. To continue to view communities of people through a deficit lens further reduces the impact and engagement that culturally sensitive programming and practices seek to address their challenges.

Across the nation and in the state of Pennsylvania, the problems reported by these sources and organizations are not new, but perhaps what’s missing are better policies, practices and platforms to help realize the progress needed in the fight to close racial gaps. As members of the African American Strategic Partnership, it is our hope that this report serves to convey the urgent need to address these issues and outline why steps need to be taken to do more than what is being done for our Black children, families and communities.

Context of African-Americans in Child Welfare

Child Welfare

“Kasserian Ingera,” is Swahili for, “Are the children well?” Across many countries in Africa, this is a traditional greeting. In Kenya, it was the important question of the day for Masai warriors. And the traditional response is, “All the children are well,” meaning efforts to care for and protect the children with no voice or power is a priority. In the United States, there are also those who place the well-being of children foremost. Ask them how are the African-American children? The answer may be, “not well.”

Recent research on the family from Temple University points to why the family structure remains a stubborn and steadfast challenge. Black children in the United States are more likely to live with just one parent, usually their mother. In 2015, nearly 55 percent of Black children lived with one parent. In 2015, 25 percent of Black mothers were not a part of the work force. Notably, such parental employment patterns directly impact the quality of life of Black families and children. Socially, Black teen rates of juvenile detention have remained at 40 percent and rates of incarceration for Black males between 18 and 29 outweigh their Hispanic and White counterparts. In 2010, 9.7 percent of Black males between 18 and 29 were incarcerated. The research concludes that these social dynamics, together with culturally insensitive policies and social biases, not only advance inequality across economics, education and health, they also continue to marginalize African-American families and children and the communities in which they live.

In the country’s child welfare system, this impact is glaring. Child welfare and a parent’s poverty go hand in hand: When African-American children cannot remain with their parents, poverty is often why they enter child welfare systems—and why they linger there. Culturally, for the African-American population, involvement in the child welfare system itself induces personal trauma. Overlay this on top of the historical traumas of centuries of slavery, years of discriminatory Jim Crow laws, decades of segregation, marginalization, and sustained individual and institutional racism, the problem they face is compounded. This combination deeply impacts Black families and helps to explain why Black children are overrepresented in the system. Black children make up 14 percent of all children in the country, yet they are 24 percent of the children in foster care, almost twice their proportions in the general child population.

The system is overloaded and often fails many of the children it was created to serve. It’s well documented that when children cannot remain home, they do best and thrive when raised by relatives or kinship caregivers. According to reports on children and families from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the likelihood that African-American children will experience kinship care – disruption from being raised by a parent – is more than double that of the overall population, with 1 in 5 Black children spending time in kinship care at some point during their childhood. When kinship care is culturally appropriate, it reduces disproportionality of African-American children in foster care and responds to historical trauma.

How are the children doing in the Keystone State?

In Pittsburgh's Allegheny County, like in many jurisdictions across the country, Black children continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system. They comprise 60 percent of the cases. These same children are less than one-fifth of the population. For more than two decades, this has been the equation. Today, the county is looking at ways to reduce disproportionality. Supporting and prioritizing relatives for African-American children who cannot remain with their parents is one way to both benefit children and reduce their overrepresentation in the system. Offering programs to promote cultural diversity and awareness, and address personal and institutional racism is another approach.

In Philadelphia, the cycle of poverty that leads many Black children into the child welfare system takes root early—in childhood. In 2016, the poverty rate was 37.3 percent for children under age 18, with 17.7 percent of them living in deep poverty. For Hispanic children, the poverty was higher, 48.6 percent; and for Black children it was 42.2 percent. If there is a bright spot, among the 10 poorest large cities, the change in the child poverty rate in Philadelphia was below the median.

How are the African-American children? Most times, the response is a challenge, in part because the predictors of their quality of life are complicated and are linked to poverty and race, parents and place, the legacy of trauma and segregation, and environment—matters that our children cannot control. What can make the difference in addressing these factors, ensuring that children are nurtured, and that their well-being is protected? The research points to this prescription: harnessing the collective experiences of those who advocate for children, developing smart policies and pushing for culturally competent institutions and practices.

Context of African- Americans in Mental Health

Mental Health and African Americans

Despite progress made over the years in the quality of Black life in the United States, race continues to have a profound and negative impact on the mental health of African Americans. Research puts Black health at the bottom rung, compared to other racial and ethnic groups. That's a numbing legacy of centuries of trauma, chronic racism and social injustice, and the impact these factors have had on Black minds and bodies.

A federal report from the Department of Health and Human Services provides this national look:

- Black adults are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress than adult Whites.
- Black adults living below the poverty line are three times more likely to report serious psychological distress than those living above poverty.
- Black adults are more likely to have feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness than are adult Whites.

- While Blacks are less likely than Whites to die from suicide as teenagers, Black teenagers are more likely to attempt suicide than their White peers (8.3 percent compared to 6.2 percent).

There are extensive findings, including reports by the surgeon general's office that attribute racial disparities in mental health outcomes for African Americans and Whites to clinician bias, socioeconomic status and environmental stressors (such as high rates of crime and poor housing).

But other reports say racism is the frame for understanding the mental health of African Americans. A starting point is the past.

A growing body of research looks back about 150 years to understand the present. It begins to unravel the historical trauma and adversity, which includes slavery, and the vestiges of racial segregation on health, education and social and economic resources—key determinants of the quality of life. In a country that has never publically confronted its racism, urging even therapeutic conversations about U.S. slavery and mental health, could be a problem. That's because this part of Black history is "too painful to look at," wrote Ibram X. Kendi, then an American University professor, in a 2018 *New York Times* opinion piece titled *The Heartbeat of Racism is Denial*. Says Kendi: "When our reality is too ugly, we deny reality."

The collective experiences and pain of a people, researchers say, is passed down, internalized and individualized over generations. The transfer may explain why trauma and stress continue to abound in the everyday experiences and lives of Black people in America. And, at the same time, why racist stressors and chronic discrimination often go undiagnosed and unhealed. A new field of study called epigenetic inheritance suggests that an ugly, tortured and racially segregated past stoke poor mental health and explain the emotional scars that African-Americans bear today. How to affectively treat these things in the 21st century is the challenge. Surprisingly, say Black psychiatrists, there is little to no research on how to properly treat Blacks suffering from some of the most common mental disorders—schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, and drug and substance abuse.

In Pennsylvania's two most populous regions for African Americans—Pittsburgh and Philadelphia—mental health problems abound, but access to care and treatment is lacking. When researchers at the University of Pittsburgh's Center on Race & Social Problems reported on the mental health of Blacks in Pittsburgh's Allegheny County, the findings mirrored those in the nation: Blacks have more mental health problems than Whites, but lag in seeking treatment and care.

- The shares of Blacks having little emotional support and being generally dissatisfied with their lives were 11 percent and 14 percent respectively, up to 3 times higher than their White counterparts. The share of Blacks reporting mental distress or impairment was 7 percent, nearly double their White counterparts.
- Blacks have substantially higher rates of emotional health problems and mental distress than Whites in Allegheny County.

- While more Whites than Blacks use the mental health and drug abuse services provided by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services, the percentage of Blacks in mental health treatment is three times higher than their presence in the population.

In Philadelphia, comprehensive statistics about the mental and emotional health of Blacks are hard to come by. But this is what's known:

Disparities in mental health care—including stress management—between Blacks and Whites in Philadelphia are a persistent problem. For Blacks, though, a mental health diagnosis may not lead to care and treatment. The research shows that 49 percent Blacks compared to 59 percent of Whites get mental health treatment when they are diagnosed. According to findings from the Urban League's 2007 *State of Black Philadelphia* report, the lack of good health insurance can keep African Americans from getting the mental health care that they need. The Urban League report found, 12 percent of Blacks in Philadelphia are uninsured compared to 6 percent of Whites.

It's important to note how mental health and health, overall, are closely linked and impact multiple quality of life issues. For example, access to medical and mental health care is critical to keeping people and communities healthy. The research shows that if you're poor and don't have access to health care, you get sick more often. In turn, the impact is wide: when Black people are sick and poor, so are their communities; and when Black communities are sick and poor, so are the people who live there—businesses crumble, families flounder and children don't thrive. This research also revealed that Blacks often shrug off depression and call it "just the blues." They preferred to turn to spiritual counsel, friends, family, and even their beautician, rather than to seek professional mental health care. The stigma that's frequently attached to mental health and treatment in the Black community played a major role.

Daily racist stressors, don't only assault psychological and emotional health, there is recent evidence from the community mental health sector that chronic discrimination and perceived racism can also assault the body. When sustained over time, the adverse physiological impact of racism can heighten anxiety, lead to cardiovascular disorders and diseases, escalate blood pressure, and trigger depression and other psychiatric symptoms. Being sick—mentally and physically—erodes the quality of life for children, families, and communities. In Philadelphia, Blacks are falling behind as the health gap between Blacks and Whites widens. This is what the Philadelphia's Urban League report revealed about the health, death, diseases and quality of life of African Americans:

- Blacks suffer from disease at higher rates than Whites, particularly HIV (74 percent more frequently), diabetes (57 percent more frequently), and prostate cancer (54 percent more frequently).
- Good quality groceries are absent. That means that 40 percent Blacks must travel outside of their neighborhood grocer just to get to a full-service supermarket, compared to 27 percent of Whites.

- Blacks in Philadelphia are dying at a considerably higher rate than Whites—roughly 25 percent higher. Particularly notable is the death rate for males aged 15-19, which is two and a half times higher than their White counterparts.

Across Pennsylvania and the nation, being poor, homeless, incarcerated, and addicted to drugs determines who is at higher risk for poor mental health outcomes. Reckoning with the past, historical trauma and racism also sicken the minds and bodies of Black families and communities; and confounds diagnosis and treatment for Blacks. It's time for healing and reducing barriers to mental health care, conversations and treatment in the African-American community.

Context of African-Americans for Social and Juvenile Justice and Change through the Mission of AASP

Social and Juvenile Justice

During the first half of the century, perhaps a lesser known migration was happening in the United States. As many Blacks were making their way forward in the Great Migration from southern to northern states, many others in the fight for civil rights were leaving Pennsylvania for the South. Working largely unseen and noticed by the nation, this social justice mission was massive—to end centuries of racial oppression that dated to the 1600s. This group of Blacks and their allies took from Pennsylvania the zeal to fight for the rights of all Blacks and against the segregation that held them back. By registering people to vote, educating the unschooled and bringing healthcare to the sick, they were striving to remove some of the barriers that continue to keep African Americans disenfranchised, less educated, segregated, poor and unhealthy.

When the words “social” and “justice” were first fused in the 1850s, it described the problem of poverty and the need for an equal distribution of resources. Today, social justice is still about achieving change. Efforts to narrow the nation’s long existing gaps in areas including educational attainment, income, and health are one example. And from that same base, social justice is concerned with creating change (and enlisting change agents). Social justice considers access, equity and opportunity when people have been denied—health care, educational attainment, fair housing, equal before the law, social inclusion. The list of issues and challenges is long.

In need of change, criminal justice is one lens to view social justice in the nation and across Pennsylvania. Discriminatory Jim Crow laws are no longer on the books, but in all aspects of the country’s criminal justice system is where deep racial disparities persists.

A 2015 demographic report by race and ethnicity from the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Race & Social Problems provides a national look at criminal justice. It begins with this disturbing distinction: the United States has the largest incarcerated population in the world—nearly 2.3 million people. The center also reports these findings:

- Nearly 1 in 100 adults in the U.S. is in a prison or jail. America may only have 5 percent of the world’s population, but it has 25 percent of the world’s prisoners.

- There are striking racial disparities in arrests, incarceration, and victimization: They include the 2.3 million citizens in federal and state prisons and local jails, 34 percent are White, 39 percent are Black, and 21 percent are Hispanic.

In her bestselling, 2010 book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, legal scholar Michelle Alexander writes about the millions of African Americans arrested for minor crimes, remain marginalized and disfranchised and trapped by a criminal justice system that has forever branded them as felons. The strike against them ripples: the system denies them basic rights and opportunities that would allow them to get a good job, thrive in their community, take care of their families, vote and be productive citizens.

Said Alexander: "Today there are more African-Americans under correctional control — in prison or jail, on probation or parole — than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.

Racial discrimination is among the reasons why, according to a [new joint report released by the United Nations and the Sentencing Project](#), a criminal justice reform non-profit.

- Blacks and other people of color experience discrimination in the policing, pretrial, sentencing, parole, and post-prison stages of the country's justice system.
- By race, in 2016, African Americans were 27 percent of all individuals arrested in the U.S., double their share of the population.

What also lands more Blacks in jail, the report found, was “disproportionate levels of police contact with African Americans,” especially regarding drugs. More than a quarter of those arrested for drug violations in 2015 were African American, though drug use rates "do not differ substantially by race and ethnicity," the report states.

In Pittsburgh, the situation seems just as grim when Black youth and adults are both perpetrators of crimes and victims, the Center of Race & Social Problems concluded:

- Blacks made up the largest number of adult murder victims in the Pittsburgh area and nation in 2012.
- In 2012, all of the juvenile murder victims in the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County were Black.
- Whites represent the largest number of total youth arrests in the Pittsburgh MSA and the nation.
- Blacks represent the largest number of total youth arrests in the city of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.
- Whites represent the largest number of total adult arrests in Allegheny County, the Pittsburgh MSA, and the nation. Blacks and Whites have about the same number of total adult arrests in the city of Pittsburgh.

- Whites make up the largest number of youth and adult arrests for drugs in Allegheny County, the Pittsburgh MSA, and the nation. Blacks make up the largest number in the city of Pittsburgh. It is noteworthy that Blacks and Whites have comparable drug use rates but Blacks have much higher arrest rates.

In Philadelphia, the racial gaps in criminal justice are wide and trail the nation. “The State of Black Philadelphia” report, released by the city’s Urban League in 2007, looked at social justice through the lens of “Equality Before the Law.” This is what the Urban League reported about arrests rates, crimes and incarceration among Blacks in Philadelphia:

- Blacks are arrested at significantly higher rates than Whites. As a percentage of all Part 1 (serious crimes) arrests, 70 percent of black adults were arrested compared to 29 percent of Whites in 2006. A similar proportion of Black adults were also arrested for Part 2 (less serious) crimes—67 percent vs. 32 percent.
- For juveniles, a starker disparity exists: as a percentage of Part 1 arrests, 82 percent of juvenile Blacks were arrested compared to 17 percent of juvenile Whites in 2006. The disparity is only slightly less for Part 2 crimes—77 percent vs. 23 percent.
- Blacks in Philadelphia are more likely to be imprisoned once arrested than Whites. As a percentage of arrests, 2.8 percent of Blacks are imprisoned once arrested compared to 1.2 percent of Whites. The fact that Blacks are more than two times as likely to be imprisoned once arrested sheds light on the disproportionate amount of Black arrests that result in the person becoming a prisoner.
- Blacks are incarcerated in prison and jail at more than five times the rate of Whites in Philadelphia. More than three times as many Black offenders receive probation for crimes than White offenders.
- Once confined—whether in prison, jail, or on probation, average sentences for Blacks and Whites with a criminal history were close to parity. The mean minimum prison sentence for Blacks in 2006 was 3.8 years and the mean maximum sentence 8 years. Whites had almost the same minimum sentence and a slightly higher maximum sentence (8.1 years).
- For offenders with no prior criminal record, Blacks had a greater mean minimum prison sentence—4.3 years compared to 4.1 years for Whites. Moreover, except for the mean maximum prison sentence, Blacks had longer sentences in jail and probation; this may reflect the racial bias Blacks face in the criminal justice system.

Revelations in Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* continue to reverberate—lifting the veil on Black families devastated by the scourge of mass incarceration. “A stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow,” is how Alexander describes mass incarceration in the U.S. The country’s criminal justice system needs to be overhauled. It entangles and traps low-income Black families in a never-ending cycle of despair and missed opportunities. Although African Americans make

up 13 percent of the national population, they are 40 percent of the prison population—a rate five times that of Whites.

When change makers and strategic leaders look at social justice through the lens of criminal justice, these findings and reports show what they are up against. The Philadelphia Urban League offers this guidance and a way forward:

- Encourage the collection of more data at the time of an arrest on charging decisions, type of counsel available, offender information, employment, social and family status, role in offense, and responsibility.
- Provide data collection in the aggregate that includes race and gender so that disparities, particularly those involving racial profiling and discrimination, can be more easily detected and understood.
- Increase racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural diversity of staff, particularly attorneys, and establish clear anti-bias policies for personnel in the adult and juvenile justice system and youth agencies.
- Expand involvement of churches, civic associations, and other community groups in the African American community to provide mentoring programs.
- Encourage the legislature to allocate adequate funding for indigent legal defense service; adopt uniform attorney compensation standards; and appoint a commission to ensure uniform training standards and manageable workloads.
- Urge state and local policymakers to ensure full equality for African American youth and adults impacted by the criminal judicial system.
- Provide incarcerated individuals with “employment track” job training skills; post-release employment; socialization skills training; housing and community support; and drug and alcohol intervention to utilize upon their release.