Incarceration

As we continue our discussion around the Social Determinants of Health, we see how these factors impact on health. Carlos T. Carter, President and CEO of Pittsburgh Health Foundation, and Black Male Leadership Development Institute, will share his insight on how the ways the mass industrial prison system impacts people. We will also discuss the systemic racism that shades Black and brown communities.

Our country spends $10.3 billion in incarceration costs for juveniles every year. While we are not willing to fully invest in education, housing, or other resources that could prevent incarceration, we are more than willing to spend money to lock up a few people, while impersonating that those individuals are of a different color.

Have we become so accustomed to doomsday and criminalize Black people, who are leading their reintegration into the prison system when compared to white Americans? What if we had Black people in prison instead of similar crimes which were committed by their white counterparts? They are also more likely to end up in jail due to being unable to afford bail. Our investment in incarceration is setting children and future generations to fail. It is difficult to understand your greatness when you are imprisoned! It is challenging for people who are incarcerated to think back to their childhood and envision decent futures. What are the non-medical forces that shape a person's life today? What are the ways that society and criminal justice systems criminalize Black people?

Firstly, we see that children of incarcerated parents or grandparents are at risk for educational failure and involvement in the justice system. Secondly, we must begin to understand the intergenerational trauma that Black parents cannot cotton to. Thirdly, we must consider the long-term impact of incarceration on the health of children and the child's development. It is devastating to have a parent or a grandparent in prison. It is felt as a loss on the basketball team or the baseball team in the community, and you don't see your parent back home in the community because your parents are incarcerated.

Secondly, we consider some of the ways that the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh helps people around the transformation of their histories and their incarceration.

We help returning citizens in many ways, including through the Urban League Foundation of Hope (UHF) and the HIV/AIDS 2000 Bridges Program. We also offer programs to help improve voting rights and registering, and other programs to help them when they are served in prison.

We currently provide free job training and health care through the University of Pittsburgh's CISO (Career and Social Integration Opportunities) program with special support from the Urban League. We are actively recruiting people to join both programs. We offer mentoring and support for more information.

Finally, we must provide youth leadership opportunities for our young boys and girls through our Black Male Leadership Development Institute and Black Female Leadership Development Institute. We must give them the tools they need to succeed.

As we work together, we can create a community that is aware of the needs of our incarcerated neighbors and supports those who have sacrificed so much for our country!

Compared to other major countries, the U.S. has the highest rate of imprisonment per 10,000 people put behind bars with 1.9 million confined in prisons and jails. In Pennsylvania, there are about 73,000 people incarcerated, including more than 20,000 local jail olds who are most awaiting trial hearings.

Of those people, Black Americans are incarcerated at a rate that is 2.5 times higher than that compared to White people, especially for drug-related charges and driving with a suspended license. They also receive the worst medical care available.

Social determinants of Health (SDH) are the non-medical forces that shape a person's well-being from birth to death. They play a role in this inequality, especially with the disproportionate high incarceration rates. They participate in prison as a sentence, drug law enforcement, sentences, and racial profiling.

The ripple effect of incarceration is profound.

For example, Dr. Duane's research asks important questions about the health of Black and Brown people and the place they live. For example, we know from research that people who are incarcerated are more likely to have issues with mental health and addiction. A recent study in the journal of American Medicine reports a link between incarceration and lower life expectancy.

What Dr. Duane and others' research has shown us is that in times of hardship, it causes disruptions in every aspect of their lives. They are not only impacted their health, but also impact their families, friends, and communities. Their incarceration affects the health of children and the community they live in. It is devastating to have a parent or a grandparent in prison. It is felt as a loss on the basketball team or the baseball team in the community, and you don't see your parent back home in the community because your parents are incarcerated.

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