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Disparities in Minnesota

The death of George Floyd and subsequent protests/unrest in the Twin Cities (and across America) have reinforced that when it comes to skin color (and other things like cultural backgrounds or country of origin), all is not equal in Minnesota (or America). This is the case despite Minnesota being “first” or near the top of many critical markers—education, wages, even happiness.

Many of those “firsts” only apply to white-color Minnesotans, not to those who identify as African American or as being from other marginalized communities.

When you dig into the data, the disparities become glaring. This talk isn’t intended to shame anyone about those disparities, nor is it intended to make anyone feel guilty about being white in color. Rather, I believe that most people want to do the right thing; it’s just that most aren’t aware of how bad the skin color-based differences are and many don’t have any idea of how to work for concrete, positive change.

With this talk, I seek to shed some light on the gravity of the problem and offer some ideas on how to fix things.

I. Background Basics

- Federal Poverty Guidelines—the official definition of “poor” in America.
 - \$12,760 single person; \$26,200 for a family of four (2020).
 - Almost all gov’t benefits flow from where one sits relative to the poverty guidelines.
 - Child poverty rate in the U.S. is 16% of all children younger than 18 (2018); 32% of black children live in poverty (2018).
- Federal Minimum Wage: \$7.25/hr. This hasn’t increased since July 2009.
 - If minimum wage had kept pace with inflation since 1968, it would be approx. \$12/hr.
 - If minimum wage had kept pace with productivity gains since 1968, it would be approx. \$24/hr.
- MN minimum wage: \$10/hr. large employers (\$500K/yr. revenue); \$8.15/hr. for small employers.
- Minneapolis minimum wage as of 7/1/20: \$13.25/hr. (100+ e/es); otherwise, \$11.75/hr.
- Average rent for 2-bedroom apt. Minneapolis: \$1847/mo. (2019).
- Hourly wage needed to rent 2-bedroom apt. in Minneapolis: \$23.08 (2019).
- Minnesota Population (2016): 5.523 million.
 - 81.3% White alone; 18.7% All Other Races.

- Twin Cities Metro Population (2016): 2,978,822
 - White alone: 74.3%
 - Black/African American: 8.9%
 - Latinx: 6.1%
 - Asian/Pacific Islander: 7.2%

II. Disparities—Education—Minnesota

- 3rd Grade Reading Achievement—Meeting or Exceeding Standards (2019)
 - White (Non-Hispanic): 63.7% (66.9% in 2014)
 - Children of Color: 38.5 % (39% in 2014)
 - Lower Income children (185% FPG): 35.5% (40.1% in 2015)
 - Higher income children: 67.2% (72.2% in 2015)

- High School Graduation Rates (2018)
 - White (Non-Hispanic): 88.4% (86.5% in 2014)
 - Black: 67.4% (60.2% in 2014)
 - American Indian/Native: 51.0% (48.2% in 2014)

*MN ranks 50th (worst) in U.S. for racial disparities in high school graduation rates.

- College Graduation Rates (2 yr. and 4 yr. averaged)
 - White (Non-Hispanic): 66.8% (2018)
 - Black: 35.3% (2018)
 - Latinx: 27.5% (2018)

III. Disparities—Wages/Income—Twin Cities Metro

- Wages/Median Household Income (per MNDEED in 2016):
 - White alone: \$76,632
 - Black: \$32,819
 - American Indian/Native: \$43,183
 - Asian: \$71,980
 - Latinx: \$46,093
- According to a June 2, 2020 NPR *Planet Money* report, the median Twin Cities white family income is \$84,459 vs. median black family income of \$38,178. In the U.S., only Milwaukee (a heavily segregated city as well), has a worse income inequality gap.
- According to the same *Planet Money* report, approximately three-quarters of white Twin Cities families own homes; only about one-quarter of TC African American families own homes.

IV. Disparities—Poverty Rate

- Poverty rates (per MNDEED in 2016)
 - White: 6.5% in Twin Cities; 8.2% in MN
 - Black: 32% in Twin Cities; 34% in MN
 - American Indian/Native: 24.9% in Twin Cities; 31.4% in MN
 - Asian: 16.2% in Twin Cities; 16.1% in MN
 - Latinx: 21.2% in Twin Cities; 22.2% in MN
- The *Planet Money* report listed a more current (2019) white poverty rate in the Twin Cities at 5.9% while the black poverty rate is listed as 25.4%.
- None of the data takes into account how the pandemic has affected poverty rates; also, we know that black and brown people die from the virus

at higher rates than white-color people, which is reflective of their higher poverty rates (e.g. lack of access to healthcare).

V. Disparities—Arrest and Incarceration

- MN's incarceration rate (2018) is 364 per 100,000 people; MN locks up more people per 100K than the UK (139/100K), Canada (114/100K), and Norway (74/100K).
- United States incarceration rate is 698 per 100,000.
- In 2017, in the U.S., the incarceration rate for black prisoners was 1549 per 100K black adults; for Latinx prisoners is was 823 per 100K Latinx adults. For whites incarcerated, the incarceration rate was 272 per 100K white adults.
- 2010, the MN incarceration rates:
 - Whites: 216 per 100K whites
 - Black: 2321 per 100K blacks
 - American Indian/Native: 2646 per 100K American Indians/Natives
 - Latinx: 959 per 100K Latinx-identifying persons
- The *Planet Money* report states that the Twin Cities incarceration rate for blacks is 11 times that of whites.
- Black Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white Americans.

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Summary

Governor Walz recently said that, "We may only have one more chance to fix things," relative to reducing (or even better, eliminating) Minnesota's inequities and disparities. As the events following George Floyd's death showed, the disparities are right there, in plain sight. To date, many who control the economic, educational, law enforcement, and healthcare levers in Minnesota have refused to see or act on those disparities.

As a metropolitan area and state, we must do better. Our future viability depends on it.

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Sign up for my newsletter, *The Ripple*, by clicking on "Newsletters/Media" at www.elliekrug.com

My standing offer: any human can contact me relative to gender or sexual identity issues or anything else related to surviving the Human Condition. I'm a good listener and willing to meet with anyone in a public place or speak on the telephone for up to an hour. This is a real offer. Email: elliekrug@gmail.com

Please have compassion for yourself and for others!

ellie

Encouraging open hearts and thriving human spirits

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