

The US Census projects that the United States will become a majority minority country by the year 2045. How can we combat, prevent and/or reduce prejudice, discrimination and violence in a new, more diverse America?

Prejudice, discrimination, and violence against minorities was born out of the need of a race of people to render themselves superior to all others. Europeans who immigrated to what is now the United States of America needed to be set apart, and so the American slavery system was spawned. Slavery was a deliberate and carefully planned institution designed to oppress minority groups through denial to **education, socio-economic opportunities, and basic health care**. In a new, more diverse America, the discrepancies that still exist in these three areas must be eliminated in order to combat the trio of evil: prejudice, discrimination, and violence.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Nelson Mandela). Early European immigrants used education to change the world towards prejudice, discrimination, and unspeakable violence to set themselves apart for economic gain and other self-serving reasons. American history is riddled with stories of minorities persecuted for attempting to read or being denied entry into an elite learning institution. However, our history also proves that when given equal access to educational opportunities minorities achieve as much as, and oftentimes more than, the majority race. For example, in 2011, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that minority students attending more affluent schools scored approximately two years ahead of their peers being educated in high-poverty schools. European immigrants used education as a tool of oppression. We can use it to combat biases in a new, more diverse America.

“Now, as a nation, we don’t promise equal outcomes, but we were founded on the idea that everybody should have an equal opportunity to succeed” (Barack Obama). European

immigrants to the new world sought opportunities for economic gain. They wanted a better life for themselves. Unfortunately, they believed to secure their economic advances meant denying those same opportunities to others. From this ideology came sharecropping, housing redlining, and the black tax. These systemic means of discrimination meant minorities did not achieve because of inability, but because of inequity. Some famous examples are the Tuskegee Airmen, Carl Brashear (the first U.S. Navy master diver), and the college educated swim coach James Ellis. In each of these stories, the minorities were denied access to the same equipment and jobs their majority counterparts accessed. Yet each one persevered and overcame. Minority perseverance has shown that when we all have access we all benefit. The discoveries of African American laboratory supervisor and instructor of surgery Vivien Thomas, who was denied entry into medical school, are used to this day. Making socio-economic opportunities available to all in a new, diverse world is a stand against prejudice.

“The lack of [a true national] health care [system] is a man-made disaster that is causing unneeded pain, suffering and death” (Deborah Burger, President of National Nurses United). Another vital aspect to the success of the slavery system was to deny the right to self-care, healthcare, and basic body maintenance. Slaves were denied clean clothes, soap, regular access to clean water for bathing, not to mention they were violently beaten and tortured, and often left untreated. A more recent, dark moment in our history is the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment where poor black sharecroppers were told they were being treated for “bad blood”. They were in fact not being treated at all. This experiment lasted for 40 years, and resulted in unnecessary deaths, the spread of the disease, birth defects, stillbirths, and developmental delays in children born to these people. Today we see this in unequal treatment of minority patients by majority doctors, causing longer periods of illness and higher mortality rates in minority communities.

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Removing biases about how minorities process pain and why they are sick is a giant leap towards reducing discrimination in the new, diverse America that lies ahead.

Creating equity in education, socio-economic resources, and access to health and self care is the way to combat and reduce prejudice, discrimination, and violence today and in the future. Employing more teachers who look like us will help close the achievement gap and the pipeline to prison. Removing barriers to equal pay and homeownership will provide stability in minority families. Making healthcare a right and not a privilege will start minority youth on equal footing. Equity is the bridge to a new, diverse America free of prejudice, discrimination, and violence.