




**The Legacy of Slavery and the Educational Debt owed to Students of Color in Today's Classrooms \*Excerpt\***

Melissa Pointer

*"If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, that's not progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. The progress comes from healing the wound that the blow made. They haven't even begun to pull the knife out. They won't even admit the knife is there." - Malcolm X*

<p align="center"><b>1850</b> Great Great Grandparent – Great Grandparent</p>	<p align="center"><b>1880-1940</b> Great Grandparent - Grandparent</p>	<p align="center"><b>1940-1970</b> Grandparent - Parent</p>
<p align="center"><b>Slavery</b></p> <p><b>Criminal Justice/Legal/Political -</b> Blacks had no legal rights. They endured public lynchings, beating and violence without any due process. Those in positions of power told whites "you may be poor but at least you are white" as a strategy of social control and to create an "us versus them" "white is supreme" philosophy. Those in power extended special privileges to poor whites in an effort to drive a wedge between them and black slaves (greater access to Native American lands, ability to police slaves, etc). Slave codes prevented blacks from congregating, marrying, traveling, etc. without their masters' permission. "White" began appearing in statues.</p> <p><b>Economic -</b> Zero wealth or opportunity made available to blacks.</p> <p><b>Education –</b> Slaves not allowed to read or write. Little to no literate blacks.</p> 	<p align="center"><b>Slavery Abolished/Jim Crow</b></p> <p><b>Criminal Justice/Legal/Political –</b> Slavery abolished and replaced by Jim Crow. Segregation in all domains in life. Slavery allowable as punishment for "crime". Voting prohibited. No political power or influence. During Westward expansion blacks were not allowed to own land, were fined for entering some states and were often forced to leave at gunpoint. Vagrancy laws and other laws defining activities such as "mischief" and "insulting gestures" as crimes were enforced vigorously against blacks. Aggressive and often dishonest enforcement of these laws created an enormous market for convict leasing. Tens of thousands of blacks were arbitrarily arrested during this period and forced to work off their release.</p> <p><b>Economic –</b> No resources or support provided for freed blacks to begin a life. Corrupt Sharecropping in place keeping blacks indebted to whites with no recourse to contest dishonest debt. Theft of black owned land common. Blacks were not allowed union membership. Black Wall Street destroyed in White Terrorist attack.</p> <p><b>Education -</b> 1880 76.2% of blacks were illiterate compared to 21.5% of whites. Segregated libraries and schools were poorly equipped with limited resources. In some states blacks were not offered high school because local governments felt they didn't need it. During Westward expansion, many blacks were not allowed to go to public school at all.</p> 	<p align="center"><b>Civil Rights Era</b></p> <p><b>Criminal Justice/Legal/Political -</b> Jim Crow still in place for much of this time period. Voting laws passed but many blacks still unable to vote due intimidation by KKK at polling locations, beatings, etc. 1968 Fair Housing Act passed but discriminatory practices were in place preventing homeownership and housing access. Southern Strategy (SS) utilized to appeal to white racial fears and antagonism to get Nixon elected. He targeted anti-black voters and convinced them that poverty was not caused by structural factors related to race but by the "pathological" black culture (welfare cheats, crime, drug use, poor character, etc.) despite similar crime rates between black and white.</p> <p><b>Economic -</b> GI Bill Benefits and Social Security access limited or unavailable for POC. SSI not allowed for Domestic &amp; Agricultural Workers. Neighborhood covenants legally preventing blacks from purchasing homes. Blockbusting and predatory lending occurring. Restrictions on black businesses in place. Discrimination in hiring well documented.</p> <p><b>Education –</b> Brown vs Board of Education passed but violence and fear prevented many from being able to access white schools and if they did, the mistreatment was often severe. In 1950 12% of blacks were illiterate compared to 3% whites.</p> 

**The Compounding Effect -**  
 Disproportionality in achievement and school discipline for kids of color with the victim blamed for their poor outcomes rather than understanding our nation's Educational Debt to them due to systemic oppression and inequity in every aspect of life over generations.  
 Note: not included in this excerpt are the impacts from a Health (physical and psychological) and Media/Majority Perception lens.

- Summary –**
- The ravages of slavery, Jim Crow, forced migration and US policies that enforced unequal treatment placed blacks and most people of color at an economic and social disadvantage that persists to this day.
  - The compounding effect of all of these disadvantages are substantial and impactful on children today. Our nation's academic and discipline gaps should be seen as our nation's "educational debt". The direct result of compounding economic, social and political inequalities that have plagued the US for centuries.
  - Economic disadvantages alone have a substantial educational impact on the achievement of all students. Home ownership, household income, employment rates and most importantly inheritance is substantially impactful for whites. Net worth grows as home values increase. POC primarily rent which means they can't gain equity and are unable to generate opportunity for the next generation and creating a cumulative disadvantage.
  - Physical and psychological separation by race creates very real boundaries in lived experience that make us unable to learn from and understand those that are different from us and creates no urgency for whites to change past practice.
  - The children in our schools are only three-four generations away from profound discrimination and the brutality of slavery. We owe them something different and something more than we are doing for others. Equal is not equitable. More and different is our moral and ethical obligation.

1980-2018  
 Child in our School

*New Jim Crow/New Racism*

**Criminal Justice/Legal/Political** - Blacks lack authentic political and social power and are criticized for any form of protest. War on Drugs began in 80s resulting in disproportionate in arrests, convictions, and sentencing for black men even though POC are no more likely to be guilty of drug crimes than whites. In 2000, although the majority of drug users and dealers nationwide were white, 3/4 of all people imprisoned for drug offenses have been Black or Latino. Installation of mandatory minimum sentencing included severe punishment for distribution of crack versus cocaine resulting in skyrocketing incarceration rates for black men. Mass incarceration, disproportionate sentencing & false suspicion and convictions unprecedented. Over past 25 years prison population leaped from approx. 350,000 to 2.3 million due to changes in laws and policies not due to increased crime rate. In 2006, 1 in every 14 black men were behind bars compared with 1 in every 106 white men. In 2000 blacks were six times as likely as whites to be sentenced to prison for identical crimes committed by whites. Frequent police killings of unarmed black children and adults causing widespread trauma and fear.

**Economic** - Extreme net worth/wealth gaps (blacks have 1/8 average net worth as whites). Bias in lending & Redlining (blacks shown fewer available properties, given fewer options for financing than whites in home buying & property values declining in black neighborhoods) still a reality. Discrimination in hiring practices. Manufacturing jobs disappear and the impact of globalization and deindustrialization felt most strongly in black inner-cities communities.

**Education** – Misinformation about race impacts biases and lower expectations for blacks, discriminatory policies and procedures in place in school systems, inequitable funding, lack of access to higher education (a white child is twice as likely as an African-American child to have a parent with a college education), disproportionate outcomes in achievement and discipline (18% Black Proficient in Reading in 4<sup>th</sup> grade according to NEAP compared to 46% White). Disproportionate school discipline practices leads to the school to prison pipeline.

**Sources-**

1. US Census Data
2. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study from 2013
3. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders 1968
4. Associated Press 2001 Three-part investigation into the theft of black-owned land
5. The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
6. NEAP Website