

## *Original Paper*

# The Impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic Exposes the Inequalities and Inequities on Marginalized Communities

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### ***Abstract***

*This essay speaks to the inequalities and inequities that have had a major impact on the political, economic and social fabric of the world in general and the United States in particular.*

*These disparities and inequities came to the forefront in the world and our country as a consequence of the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic.*

*The pandemic exposed the inefficiencies in our government and its institutions that were unable to abate the pandemic in a timely manner. These inefficiencies resulted in many citizens becoming ill and tragically it was reported there were over 100,000 deaths and rising at the time of this writing. Minorities were affected more than non-minority communities.*

*The pandemic also highlighted the nation's dependence on the work force that keeps the country safe and supplies the food and products that keep the economy going. First responders, health care workers and employees in the food supply chain became essential workers and were branded as heroes," God bless them". It is my hope that this essay will share some issues and circumstances that are not normally found in political discourse.*

### ***Keywords***

*Inequality (income, social, political, economic), social construct, minorities, white supremacy*

## 1. Introduction

The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic has had a major impact on the political, economic, and social fabric of the world and the United States in Particular.

On one hand it has exposed the efficacy of our government in general and our political institution's in particular. On the other hand, it has cast a positive light on the workforce that for all intents and purposes were invisible for decades. These workers became essential to provide the goods and services for the country's populations survival particularly, in the food supply chain. They grow it, harvest it, sort it, transport it, and shelve it for us to consume it.

A large majority of jobs are performed by workers, largely by minority workers. People of color make up 60% of warehouse workers in the U.S.—(PBS Newshour). These workers have limited skills and work at low pay, often at minimum wages that are hardly enough to sustain their living needs. Yet, they put their lives at risk to go to work during this pandemic to keep the food supply chain moving. They do not have the luxury of having an income or savings that would allow them to stay at home during the lockdown. The lock down was put into force as a strategy to contain the spread of the virus.

The health care workers, doctors, nurses, technician's, food service personnel and custodians, and first responders put their own lives at risk to keep the hospitals going during the pandemic. The hospitals were overwhelmed, coupled with Shortages of medical personnel, protective equipment (PPE) supplies that exacerbated the crisis.

Parents have developed a new vision of teachers as schools were closed and kids had to stay at home and be home schooled by their parents. Teaching is hard as many parents have learned.

To put the Inequality that exists in our country into a social, economic, and political perspective we will look at historical events and situations that was the basis of this inequality and cite events and policies that still exists today.

It is my hope that the readers of this essay will look at the facts presented and draw their own conclusions.

In researching and writing articles, the writer searches facts to reaffirm his or her beliefs; we take parts of records or documents and develop an argument to defend our position. It is within this context that this essay is written.

## 2. Social Perspective

This section of the essay will address the framework of inequality beginning with slavery and the inhuman treatment of enslaved people for economic gain. It will document the impact of the corona virus on the country's workforce in general and people of color in particular.

Education inequality will also be addressed as well as the health conditions in minority communities and the current health programs in the United States.

### 2.1 Social Inequality-an Historical Perspective

Social Inequality occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly through norms of allocations, that engender specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories of people.

It is the differentiation preference of access of social goods in the society brought about by power, religion, kinship, prestige, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and class. Social inequality usually implies to the lack of equality of outcome, but may alternately be conceptualized in terms of the lack of equality of access to opportunity, so states, Caves, R.W. The Encyclopedia Organization of the City).

The social rights include the labor market, the source of income, health care, freedom of speech, education and political representation and participation.

Social inequality is linked to economic inequality and is usually described as the unequal distribution of income as indicated by Mr. Caves, R.W. (Wikipedia).

Today's voters are inundated with a plethora of information and issues, political views often confuse the electorate. Some of the information is accurate and some slanted to the advantages of the political party providing the information. Misinformation and disinformation are the communication vehicle that often finds ways into our homes. The question becomes, how do we sort through the information that is based on facts and separate it from non-facts, and is accurate particularly in this pandemic crisis that is ravishing the country. It is my hope to establish a background in historical events and the structure of our American culture that are omitted in today's political discourse that contribute to inequality. I will frame these events into the context of a social construct.

### 2.2 Social Construct

The framework for inequality is inherent in the culture/social context of domination and subordination that began with the institution of slavery by Europeans in the United States.

The definition of a social construct, in simple terms is a way of looking at a social phenomenon of creating and institutionalizing a tradition by mankind-dominate vs. subordinate. Dominance and subordination are a set of behaviors and rituals involved in the submission of one person or group to another. Those who take superior positions are referred to as dominants, and those who take subordinate persons are called submissives, (Wikipedia).

The following chart represents several examples:

Category	Dominant	Subordinate
Economic	Have and Have Moers	Have -Nots
Ethnicity	Majority (Whites)	Minorities (non- whites)
Religion	Protestants	Non-Protestants
Gender	Male	Female
Sexual Preference	Heterosexual	Non-Heterosexual

### 2.3 *The Black History Arc*

-American Slavery-1619-1700-1800 (246 years)

-Segregation-1865-1900-1954 (89 years)

-Racism-1954-and continuing

The United States in its infancy, became an economic slave society (circa 1600s). The economic dependency of the country was an economic society based on the subjugation of humans (slavery) and was referred to as the original sin of the country. The practice of slavery, which has its roots in economics, was to legitimize this practice and has driven the nation's politics and practices to dominate minority populations thru White Supremacy. This practice evolved into segregation and "Jim Crow", so states Bryan Stevenson during an interview on the Fareed Zakaria's CNN TV Program.

To label is to divide, e.g., black vs. white, red states vs. blue states, Republicans vs. Democrats, elites vs. working people, etc. The invention of the white race was instituted to subjugate people of color. The power brokers used this labeling tactic to divide and conquer, (dominate vs. subordinate).

Slavery and Jim Crow not only excluded generations of Black Americans from benefits and opportunities. It exposed them to the most predatory features of our capitalist system. It turned Black and Brown People's attempt to build wealth the American way through property ownership. It presented an opportunity for others to profit at their expense as observed by, Andrew Kahrl, in an essay written in the New York Times Newspaper, "Black People's Land was Stolen".

Institutional racism is a pattern of social institutions characterized by the negative treatment that government agencies, schools, banks and courts of law give to people based on their race which leads to inequality.

These events and policies marginalize people of color and still exists today in one form or another. Income inequality affects the entire population.

### 2.4 *Income Inequality*

Income inequality is for all intents and purposes is defined as the disparate income distribution among Americans where the top one percent of the population (Haves) own more than forty percent of the country's wealth (circa 1960). This disparity has impacted minorities and low-income communities the hardest.

What causes income inequality in the US? Income inequality has increased in the United States over the past 30 years. Income has flowed unequally to those at the very top of the income ladder. Current literature cites three explanatory causes of falling wages and rising income. Technology, trade, and government policies are the factors, suggests Olga Baradon, a political scientist, which she presented at the World Economic Forum (2019).

Of the three explanations for the rising inequality, technology and the education arguments are most prevalent as large wage premiums are awarded to workers with high levels of education and skills.

David Autor, Massachusetts Institute professor states that, "Demand for skills has consistently increased across developed countries". "The skill premium, then is a result of skills not being supplied

at a rate to keep up with demand. The proposed solution to inequality driven by these trends is increasing education and job training opportunities for workers so they can get a better job” (Wikipedia).

### *2.5 Pandemics’ Impact on the Workforce*

The pandemic recession has knocked millions of the most economically vulnerable Americans out of work. The push to open various businesses that employ this group is likely to exacerbate long standing inequalities. Workers’ who are college educated, relatively affluent and primarily white, are able to continue to work from home that minimizes outdoor excursions to reduce the risk of contracting the virus.

Those who are paid at lower wages are less educated and employed in jobs where teleworking is not an option. This situation presents a hard choice if employers order them back to work. It exposes them to the pandemic or lose their jobs. This disempowered group is heavily black and Latino which also includes lower-income white workers as well.

Black and Latino Americans have less ability to withstand a prolonged job loss as whites as they entered the crisis with lower incomes as compared to whites generally. The median black household is just under \$18,000 in wealth in 2016, federal statistics show while the median Hispanic household was just under \$21,000 and the median white household had nearly 10 times more-\$171,0.

Calculations by the Center for Economic and Policy research found that Black and Latino Americans were overrepresented in many, essential jobs during the pandemic like grocery store clerks, and delivery drivers in New York City. The greater number of front- line workers in the pandemic were Americans of color nationwide; about 1 in 5 black workers worked in the health care industry last year (2019) compared with about 1 in 8 white workers as compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

This pandemic has again exposed the overall inequality that exists in this country between the majority (white) populations and people of color.

“Who Lives, Who Dies” is the Subject of an article in the New York Times Newspaper written by Linda Villarosa, who documents how the coronavirus (Covid-19) has revealed the deadly realities of a racially polarized America.

On Feb.5 New Orleans held a multiagency planning meeting on the same day, a statement posted on the city’s website read: Our public health care systems are ready for Mardi Gras and the coronavirus poses a very low risk to the Carnival Celebration.

On Sunday, Feb 23, President Trump set the tone for the country when he said, “We have the coronavirus situation under control in the country”. However, President Trump had already been warned by his own trade adviser, Peter Navarro, about the potential of a half million deaths and an economic hemorrhage of trillions of dollars as the consequence of the pandemic according to Ms. Villarosa’s research.

In addition, his health and human services director, Alex Azar, had already alerted him twice about the possibility of a pandemic.

On March 9, the same day Louisiana reported its first presumptive case of covid-19. President Trump compared the virus to the flu on Twitter, and also tweeted: “The Fake News Media and their partner, the Democratic Party, is doing everything within its semi-considerable power (it used to be greater) to inflame the coronavirus situation far beyond what the facts warrant”.

On April 6, Louisiana became the first state to release Covid-19 data by race, while making up 33 percent of the population. African Americans accounted for 70 percent of the dead at that point. Areas with large populations of black people were revealed to have disproportionate devastating death rates.

In Michigan, black people make up 14 percent of the population with 40 percent of the deaths (at that time).

In Wisconsin, black people are 7 percent of the population with 33 percent of the deaths. In Mississippi, black people are 38 percent of the population with 61 percent of the deaths.

In Milwaukee, black people are 39 percent of the population with 71 percent of the deaths.

In Chicago black people are 30 percent of the population with 56 percent of the deaths. In New York which has the country’s highest number of confirmed cases and deaths, black people are twice as likely to die as white people. In Orleans Parish, black people make up 60 percent of the population with 70 percent of the dead, according to Ms. Villarosa’s research.

#### *2.6 Impact on the Health and Living Conditions for Marginalized Populations*

On April 8, a C.D.C. (Center for Disease Control) study suggested that about 90 percent of the most serious covid-19 cases involve underlying health conditions: hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, chronic lung disease. These diseases are more common and more deadly in black Americans and strikes at younger ages.

According to the C.D. C., the average life expectancy, from birth is about 3.5 years lower than white expectancy. In fact, the health outcomes of black Americans are by several measures on par with those of people in poor countries with much less sophisticated medical systems and technology.

A letter stating the covid-19 does not discriminate along racial or ethnical lines. Existing disparities and inequities in health outcomes and health access may mean the nation’s response to preventing and mitigating its harm will not be felt equally in every community. It was submitted by lawmakers: Senators Kamal Harris, Elizabeth Warren and Corey Booker to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex Azar.

Fifty years after the legislative and social advances of the civil rights movement, events indicate America still remains deeply segregated. Black people are more likely than white people to live in communities with high rates of poverty. Physical and social structures are crumbling, where opportunity is minimal, low incomes and unemployment is high. Even educated, affluent black people live in poorer neighborhoods on average than white people with working class incomes.

Living in safe communities, with adequate education and health care services, outdoor space, clean air and water, public transportation and affordable healthful food all contribute to longer healthier lives.

The accumulated effects of environment, inequality is compounded by the physiological ramifications of an atmosphere of fear and discrimination. It has been documented that these situations lead to rates of poor health outcomes for black Americans. Dr. Arline Geronimus, a professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, termed the phenomenon, “Weathering”.

Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, a physician and epidemiologist and a former president of the American Health Association describes the effect of the wear and tear of racism, as, “Accelerated Aging”. The stress of it, is responsible for the difference in health outcomes in black populations compared to white populations.

It is evident that the pain and the hurt and harm of the disparities in the health care outcomes as a function of race have been with us for decades. It has stripped bare and pointed out how deep it is and left us with little choice but to finally say **“Who Lives and who Dies”**.

### *2.7 Health Care*

The Affordable Health Care Act (Obamacare) was designed to give working class and, middle class families the security needed to afford health care as 40 million, primarily minority and low-income wage earners, who did not have health insurance. The Affordable Health Care Act (ACA) was modeled after the Health Care Act enacted in the state of Massachusetts when Mitt Romney was the governor.

People without health care tend to use hospital emergency rooms as their primary health care provider as required by law. These services as provided are labeled as “uncompensated care” so the costs are generally picked up by the taxpayer’s who have health insurance.

Obviously, there are flaws in the program. The present administration has been on a crusade to eliminate the program to the detriment of millions of Americans seeking to have adequate health insurance. Instead of trying to fix the flaws, the current administration continues to dismantle it. An old adage applies here, “don’t throw the baby out with the bath water”.

Education is another area where inequality continues to exist.

### *2.8 Education Inequality*

The fortunes of birth, unfortunately, are a determinant factor in education achievement. In an article published in the April 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the New York Times written by Sean Reardon entitled, “No Rich Child Left Behind”, He states a fact that the rich perform better in school on average than the children from middle class or low-income families. Consequently, they have better grades, score better on standardized tests, and have higher graduation rates of college enrollment completion. His premise is that money is a better predictor of success than race.

The question is can education provide a path for students out of poverty. What has been going on in schools has not reduced educational inequality between these two groups. In effect, the author suggests that the academic gap is widening. Rich students enter kindergarten better prepared for school success as compared to middle class and low-income students. They have the resources to advance their education. Money helps families provide cognitively stimulating experiences for their young children.

A stable environment is provided that is conducive to positive parent interaction with their children, in addition to having the resources for adequate childcare and preschool activities (Readon).

Susan Crawford, a professor of law at the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law in New York City, has written a book that speaks to the monopoly of the telecom industry by four Corporate Organizations. The book is entitled, “Captive Audience”, which she spoke about on the Bill Moyer’s telecast on 2/28/13. Professor Crawford’s major point regarding internet access for the public was and probably still is the fact that we are paying more and getting less than other developed countries for comparable services.

She intimates that the reason for this is that the giant conglomerates, Comcast and Time Warner (wired service) and Verizon and ATT&T (wireless service) as they, rig rules, raise prices and stifle competition. They divide up markets for their economic gain. This practice contributes to income inequality. It denies opportunity to people who cannot afford to pay fees for internet access. The internet provides education, job applications, information about political activities, needed for life enhancement.

She classifies this situation as a “**digital divide**”. What better example of this situation is the current effect the Coronavirus Pandemic Crisis (circa-2020) on education as schools have been closed. Students are acquiring academic courses online via the internet. So, children without computers are unable to access internet services are left out exacerbating the education gap wider between the “haves” have “Nots”.

“The School Year, really Ended in March of 2020”, is the Title of an article written by Susan Dynarski on the New York Times Newspaper. The main premise of her article is that getting millions of students back on track will not be cheap after the coronavirus pandemic (2020).

School children across America are struggling to learn under challenging conditions. Moreover, for a large group of students, online learning and work sheets are no substitute for trained teachers in classrooms.

The country must acknowledge the fact without large funded programs to reverse the loss, great harm will be done to a generation of children. This group will learn less than the group who went before them.

The resulting shortage of highly trained workers will hamper the economic recovery and intensify earnings inequality, suggests, Ms. Dynarski.

The pandemic has exposed and intensified enormous gaps in schools’ and families’ capacity to support children’s learning. Many families, especially in rural areas lack access to the broadband internet, (referred to earlier as “The digital Divide”). Parents and multiple siblings may have to share a single computer- if they have one at all. A quiet place to work may not exist in crowded small apartments.

Most children will return to school without the skills and concepts that they meant to master in the spring. Many have lost ground and will need to relearn an entire year’s worth of material.



One suggestion that Ms. Dynarski suggests, to address this situation, is, that The Federal Government can tap unused energy and talent by funding big domestic volunteer efforts for our schools in the style of America Corps. There will be too many unemployed college students and graduates in the coming years. The recession always hits young workers the hardest. Young people could be paid to tutor, troubleshoot technology, (virtually or in person). Some schools and teachers have made the transition to online teaching successfully, but most need technical and pedagogical support. Volunteers can help in this area. **Rebuild America** should be the call to Arms.

The author concludes by stating, “Unless the United States takes action to restore the education that so many children have lost, it will suffer as a society. There is likely to be rising inequality in our schools with widening gaps in achievement and spiking drop-out rates. Privileged children are well educated as their parents have the resources to provide tutors and child-care to support their learning. A, majority of children do not have these resources and depend on public education”.

A new emphasis of providing student’s with employable skills is needed.

### *2.9 Technical and Vocational Programs*

“Calling on all skilled workers-plumbers, electricians, welders, and all skilled workers who make civilized life possible this is the theme of Don Sardella. The Director for Leadership Development Organizations, who gives motivational talks to various corporations and educational forums.”

Over the past thirty years, America has convinced itself that the best path for most people is a four-year degree; pop culture has glorified the corner office and has belittled jobs that helped build the corner office. As a result, our society has devalued any other path to success and happiness, Community Colleges, trade schools and apprenticeship programs are labeled as alternatives, so intimates Mr. Sardella.

Millions of well-intended parents and guidance counselors see apprenticeships and on -the-job training opportunities as vocational consolation prizes best suited for those not cut out for the so called” brass ring”-a four- year college degree.

The rush for higher education has coincided with the removal of vocational programs from most high schools nationwide, and the effects of this situation has laid the foundation for a widening skills gap and massive student debt.

Today, the skills gap is wider than it has ever been, the cost of college tuition has soared faster than the cost of food, energy, real estate, and health care, according to Mr. Sardella.

Student loan debt is the second largest consumer debt category in the United States with forty-four million borrowers who collectively owe more than \$1.5 trillion, according to the Bureau of Labor statistics. There are more than seven million jobs available across the country, the majority of which don’t require a college degree, and still, we keep lending money we don’t have to people who can’t pay it back for jobs that don’t exist.

The good news is that some school districts are offering dual diplomas, one for academic studies and the other for Career Technical Education (CTE). A student can take courses in technical areas, such as

computer science, cyber security, nursing, health programs, technical and vocational programs geared to the job market and for jobs of the future.

Students who graduate in these programs have the skills to gain immediate employment or pursue further education at a community or four-year college. What is important is students have a choice for a pathway to be successful and address the shortage in skilled labor jobs.

### **3. Economic Perspective**

This section of the essay will address how trade, globalization and offshoring production facilities effect the countries workforce and communities, and its effect on the bargaining power of unions.

In addition, the recent tax cuts will be highlighted that was a boon for the top group on the income ladder and people on the lower rungs were left out.

#### *3.1 Trade and Globalization*

A second explanation to address inequality is trade and globalization. The increases in trade and offshoring is noted as a cause of income inequality. Growing trade between the United States and the rest of the world, especially China which has increased the number of imports in the U. S. economy. This has led to job loss, particularly in industries that originally produced those goods in the United States.

Another explanation which has also affected jobs and wages. Both these trade phenomena led to declining employment, a falling labor force participation, and weak inflation-adjusted wage growth.

The last explanation suggested by Ms. Baradon is that the U.S. government policies created an institutional framework that led to increasing inequality. Since the late 1970s, deregulation, de-unionization, tax changes, federal monetary policies, “the shareholder revolution”, and other policies have reduced wages and employment.

She further suggests that policy changes such as increasing unionization, better supervision of Wall Street, raising the minimum wage, and maintaining a full employment focus in monetary policy, is needed to address inequality and declining wages.

The present Pandemic crisis forced government to enact strategies to contain the virus and get the economy moving forward.

“Government Budgets Tell Us Who Matters”, an article written by Pamela Shifman and Salomishah Tillet in the New York Times Newspaper reported that, “the federal coronavirus relief package were less effective than they could have been because they ignored the ways the pandemic would invariably harm some communities more than others, Government budgets tell us who matters, according to the authors”.

It is incumbent on the government at all levels to analyze the impact the funding will have on women, men, boys and class and other social identities in a way that alleviates inequality rather than reproduce it.

The Cares Act allows small businesses to receive loans. A provision that's gender and race neutral on the face, however, only 12 percent of the Black and Latino owners in a survey who applied for the funds did not receive what they asked for. The reason being that Black and Latino businesses do not have relationships with banks. Our societies, budgets are neither gender-neutral or race-neutral as budgets tell us whose lives matter and whose don't.

The authors' indicated that the next federal stimulus package should be designed to reduce inequality and not make it worse.

### *3.2 Taxes*

After two years President Trump's tax cuts have failed to deliver on the GOP's promises before the Coronavirus pandemic surfaced. Two years ago, the Republican Congress passed a sweeping tax cut. It was purported to be a boon for taxpayers and the economy, particularly for the working people by boosting their pay checks. In fact, more than 60 percent of the tax savings went to the people in the top 20 percent of the income ladder, according to the non-partisan tax policy center. The measure also slashed the corporate tax rate by 40 percent. In effect the promises for the tax cut were not fulfilled. The tax plan would grow so fast it would more than make up for the revenue loss to lower rates, also, the tax plan would pay for itself with economic growth according to Stephen Munchin, Treasury Secretary. Obviously, it has not worked out that way.

Tax cuts were never going to and have never come anywhere close to paying for themselves says, Maya MacGuineas, the President of the Committee for a responsible Federal budget.

Corporate revenues fell 31 percent in the first year after the tax cut was passed as overall tax revenues have declined as a share of the economy in each of the two years since the tax cuts took effect.

If you cut taxes you get less revenue and what we were doing at the same time was increasing spending and as a result the deficit has exploded. In addition, the tax cuts also failed to produce a boost in economic growth even though the stock market has been soaring and unemployment was low (MacGuineas).

While wealthy Americans are celebrating their savings, prior to the coronavirus pandemic from the past two years, the working people feel like an afterthought, so states Senator Wyden of the Senate Finance Committee.

### *3.3 Inequality Regime*

Robin Kaiser-Schatzlein's review of "Our Inequality Regime" written in the New Republic Magazine of Thomas Piketty's book, "Capital and Ideology", is most salient. In my opinion the review consolidates a number of issues connected with inequality that has existed for centuries and still exists today.

Mr. Piketty's book focuses on property Rights as an incremental part of inequality. His premise is that quasi-sacralization of property rights in ownership societies, leads to unjust disparities in income, wealth and political power. The book attempts to trace the origins of inequalities and propose methods of eradication.

When the shutdown of the World's Economy was enacted in an effort to mitigate the coronavirus pandemic. It sent the world into a spiraling recession, as the wealthy fled into secluded second homes, while millions were thrown out of work and were forced to do dangerous jobs, observes and notes Mr. Kaiser-Schatzlein, the author of the article.

Mr. Piketty's argument in his book lies in rethinking private ownership. He writes that individual property rights were not always at the heart of society as he takes us through a part of history.

In certain cultures, up to the eighteenth century there were three classes in the societal structure-the clergy, the nobility and the people who worked. The clergy were the intellectual and spiritual leaders, while the nobility were the military power and agrarian landlords. These two classes shared power and owned all the cultivable land and they were the masters of the land and the masters of the people (dominate and subordinate).

Around 1789 thru 1914 across Europe and America private property ownership consolidated wealth and inequality surged. Private land ownership and the Agrarian economies flourished under a small group in Europe and the spoils of colonialism flowed to just a few.

The financial economics of slavery in the United States privileged whites with inherited wealth, crushed small farmers in the south and kept Black Americans destitute.

Later the ownership structure of the industrial trusts like those were created by Jay Gould, and John D. Rockefeller ensured the gains of productivity went to a tiny coterie of financiers.

BY the late 1920's the top 10 percent of American's took half of all income, which Mr. Piketty references in his book.

Fast forward to today, 2020, as Mr. Piketty postulates that we live in a neo-proprietarian "Inequality Regime". This regime takes the logic of inviolable rights to property and extends it to wealth and income.

The extraordinarily high incomes of tech executives, Corporate lawyers, and unicorn entrepreneurs, their defenders argue it is theirs to keep. They should keep it because they earned it in a dispassionate meritocracy is a lie. Mr. Piketty states that, "It is a system that allows people with a head start to stay ahead".

The ruling class is defined and legitimized by educational credentials', by the way, the working class in America is President Trump's base that got him elected and we also note that the last five presidents have all had Ivy League degrees.

Piketty's solution to this inequality conundrum is to move beyond ownership to some blend of private-public and temporary ownership since many societal goods are already owned by the public. Examples are electrical grids, highways, or parks and some areas are owned by communities, even some states name themselves commonwealths with the idea that people have responsibilities for their shared resources and are entitled to use them. In his view homes, wealth, real estate, patents and financial assets like stocks and bonds would all benefit the community if they were owned temporality.

He also believes the central government (Federal) should have the power to bring big business under control thru nationalism or regulation. It takes us back to the time when Teddy Roosevelt then President enacted the Sherman Anti-Trust Act that broke up the big oil and sugar trusts.

Well, Mr. Piketty ideas and suggestions gives us plenty to think about and we can always say, “Keep Hope Alive”.

#### **4. Political Perspective**

This section of the essay will focus on the benefits and flaws of government and political policies that were enacted for the general welfare of the populace, e.g., Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “New Deal” and the recent financial bailout programs for corporations and businesses.

In addition, it will shed light on the smashing effect on home ownership as the American Dream for people of color was trashed.

##### *4.1 Political and Business Policies*

Consider, for example, the governmental responses to the Great Depression, which saw Franklin Delano Roosevelt efforts to undertake the most transformative progressive governmental intervention since Reconstruction. Yet from the outset, FDR’s New Deal excluded key groups, such as agricultural and domestic laborers characterized as “sacrificial lambs” as to Southern demands that any enhancement of labor rights not threaten local relations premised on white supremacy, as reported by Kimberle’ Williams Crenshaw in an article entitled, “Racial Disaster Capitalism”, published in the New Republic Magazine.

So, the present administration (2020) is proposing a policy to open businesses in deference to recommendations by health professionals during the Coronavirus pandemic is discussed in an article by Jim Tankersley. The article is, entitled, “An early Reset Opening Businesses as a Result Risks a Deeper Inequality”, published in the New York Times News Paper.

“Efforts to restore economic activity risk further dividing Americans along socioeconomic lines”, suggests Mr. Tankersley.

Exposure to the coronavirus outbreak presents a dilemma to minorities and other low-income workers as they are forced to choose between potential sickness or financial devastation and death.

Amand Girdhanadan, author of the book, “Winners Take All”, as a guest on the Amanpour TV Program (2020) during his interview he indicated that bailing out corporations when they get into financial trouble should have conditions which he characterizes as “conditionality”. Conditions should be a prerequisite when getting taxpayer money. In other word’s if the government gives you money to bail you out of trouble, we the taxpayers want something in return such as:

- environmental activities to protect the environment
- eliminate spending money in politics
- increase worker’s wage scales
- develop training programs in technologic areas

-Not pay \$500 for rescheduling a flight itinerary to the airlines, etc.

He further intimates that the virus was not a product of the plutocracy in America but the way in which the virus affected us as to who is dying.

“In many parts of the country, literally a plague is killing Black Americans, at substantially higher rates than other communities”, notes Mr. Girdhanadan.

He poses a statement that the government has been discredited and defunded, a recent example is the elimination of a pandemic government office. He poses the question, “was this action at the behest of the working American people”, NO! He intimates that it is a product of lobbying in Washington to deregulate, cut federal funding and cut taxes to serve the interests of the plutocracy.

He presents an analogy, when he sees the same class of people stepping up “it is like an arsonist putting on a costume and claims to be a firefighter”. It appears they are trying to buy mercy on the cheap, so we the general populace do not fix the society in a way that reduces their power and makes us less vulnerable the next time a pandemic occurs”.

He advocates for a change in corporate law to enhance stakeholder value (workers) in relation to shareholder value-which serves rich peoples’ interest.

He states, that, “other countries in the world have Capitalism, e.g., Germany has Capitalism, and the Scandinavian Countries have Capitalism. All these countries have major companies. All these countries have universal health care as it is good business. Employees are not penalized by losing their health care if they change jobs, obviously a great benefit for the working class”.

He states that the data indicates that the pandemic has stripped bare the racial divide in the health of our nation. A complex and a long- standing conglomeration of factors explains the higher death rates for minorities as detailed in previous sections on health care in this Essay.

In his book, “Winners Take All”, he suggests that for the people at the bottom of the income ladder to get a larger piece of the economic pie, the people at the top will have to take less. In my opinion, “I say good luck with that”.

#### *4.2 Home Ownership, the American Dream*

The book, “Homewreckers”, written by Aaron Glantz depicts how a gang of Wall street Kingpins: Hedge Fund Managers, Crooked banks, and vulture capitalists suckered millions out of their homes and demolished their American dream.

The American Dream was centered around homeownership which was treated as an asset. Under normal economic circumstances homes appreciated in value over time and established equity that could be borrowed against. In effect, it created a source of wealth for homeowners.

Prior to The year 2,000 (year of the financial crisis) people of color, namely African Americans and Latinos found it difficult to buy homes because of racist policies that made it difficult to obtain mortgages.

In housing surveys, housing counselors reported that as they dealt with the bureaucratic hell of recalcitrant bank mortgage modifications programs for their black and brown clients were often told their applications were incomplete, so reports Mr. Glantz.

Institutional racism meant that African American and Latino borrowers were consistently given worse financial terms during the housing boom and in addition they found it hard to access government loan programs.

In an effort, to seek the American Dream thru home ownership, minorities became the victims of aggressive salesman hawking predatory mortgage products that they could not repay which led to foreclosures on their homes, references Mr. Glantz.

As, of June 10, 2,000 the non-profit Center for Responsible Leadership estimated that 11 percent of African Americans and 17 percent of Latino homeowners had already loss their homes or were close to foreclosures compared to 7 percent of white homeowners.

So, went the American Dream for many people of color.

#### *4.3 The Culture in a Society and Its Execution (Government) also Has a Role in the Scenario of Inequality*

To view how the political structure affects inequality, one can look at, “White Collar Government”. Nicholas Carnes book, “White Collar Government”: “The Hidden Role of Class in Economic Policy Making”, begins with an example of a working class citizen’s election to Congress. Edward Beard. A house painter was elected to the Rhode Island’s state legislature in 1971. In 1974 he was elected to Congress and his agenda focused on the working class. He founded the “Blue Collar Caucus” which supported working class issues. He is reported as saying. “Only two percent of the members of Congress come from the majority of voters”. He further states, that “the working class is vastly underrepresented in public office as the vast majority of policies are made by a “White Collar Government.

Donald Matthews, a political scientist observed,” that more than a quarter century ago, almost every legislator is better educated, possesses higher status occupations, and have more privileged backgrounds than the people they represent (Wikipedia).

So, in deference the existence of unions and coalitions are the only groups that can represent the issues and concerns of the working class.

Given today’s climate in our capitalist System, Companies and corporations are fewer and larger and more powerful. Union representation such as the Amazon company are non-union. Laws limiting the bargaining power of unions in states like Wisconsin have been enacted.

## 5. Concluding Statements

Bill Moyer's in his narrative on his TV program (2012) offers the following observation which is timely and I have taken the liberty of using his narrative in other essays and works. It is most profound in my opinion. He states, "We are close to losing our democracy to the mercenary class as a result of the predators in our capital who are close to monopolizing control of the government". He further states, "they have bought a political system making change from within impossible. The plutocracy gets tax breaks, loop-holes in legislation, and are awarded contracts. They fix the system so multi-national Corporations'; Hedge fund managers and private equity firms pay a less tax rate than the average worker. They get subsidies, rich corporate firms and banks get bailed out by taxpayers when they get into trouble. They fight regulations (Dodd/Frank Bill), prolong tax havens, for multi-nationals, and stick it to consumers as we pay at the pump, at the grocery store and we pay the taxes they write off". "We are faced with a choice that the crisis makes inescapably clear. We can stay hunkered down in self-isolation fearing and shunning one another, letting our common bond wear away to nothing; Or we can use this pause, in our normal lives to pay attention to the hospital workers holding up cell phones, so their patients can say goodbye to loved ones; the planeload of medical workers flying from Atlanta to help in New York".

In the aerospace workers in Massachusetts demanding that their factory be converted to ventilator production; the Floridians standing in long lines because they couldn't get through by phone to the skeletal unemployment office; the residents of Milwaukee braving endless waits, hail, and contagion to vote in an election forced on them by partisan justice and the workers in the food supply chain who are now classified as essential workers are all victims of this pandemic.

"We can learn from these dreadful days that stupidity and injustice are lethal; that, in a democracy, being a citizen is essential work; that the alternative to solidarity is death. After we've come out of our hiding and taken off our masks, we should not forget what it was like to be alone", suggests George Packer in his article, "We are a Failed State", published in the Atlantic Magazine, (2020).

Racism is alive and well in the United States as evidenced by the recent incident in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May of 2020. Four police officers arrested a black man, George Floyd for allegedly passing counterfeit currency. During the arrest, Mr. Floyd was handcuffed and pinned to the ground by one officer knelling on his neck which affected his breathing and elicited a response from Mr. Floyd saying, "I can't breathe" while the other three officers stood by and watched.

Tragically, M. Floyd died soon thereafter. All four officers were subsequently fired and the officer kneeling on Mr. Floyd has been charged with third degree homicide and Manslaughter. Most unfortunately, protests have developed into riots compelling the Mayor and Governor to call out the National Guard to quell the disturbances.

"Dejavu", we have seen this before. Eric Garner, a black man was apprehended and placed under arrest for selling cigarettes (illegal) on a street corner in Staten Island, New York in July of 2017. Mr. Garner



was placed in a choke hold by the arresting officer which elicited the response, “I can’t breathe” and subsequently died. The officer was fired but no charges were filed.

Richard Fowler, a Fox news commentator gives his take on the current situation, He states, “George Floyd is the latest in a long line of victims of the deadly epidemic of racism. Armand Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd were killed simply because they were black in the United States of America”. He further states, “We as a nation must come to the realization that prejudice is alive and well. These young people are just three more victims of the deadly epidemic known as racism”.

America’s racism problem will not be solved in the hands of Congress or in state capitals. Our problems must be solved around dinner tables and living rooms suggests Mr. Fowler.

A recent example of people addressing this anathema was a group of white women in Louisville, Kentucky on 5/28/20 where they formed a barrier between black protesters and the police. This happened as a consequence of people calling for justice in the death of Breonna Taylor who was shot in her apartment in March by Louisville police during a no knock warrant.

The “I can’t breathe” statement became the slogan of several civil rights movements, particularly, the “Black Lives Matter” Movement to protest police brutality.

So, racism is still alive in the world and in our country. This cycle of the Black History is depicted in an arc in the section of the essay on social Inequality.

The world is at a crossroads, as the pandemic has highlighted the disparities that exist in this country in particular and in the world in general. We are interconnected on a global basis and to solve global issues we must work together to overcome the problems of inequality, that tear at the social, economic and political fabric of our societies. Hopefully, by collaborative efforts to address these inequities and inequalities we can have a better world. It has been said, a crisis brings opportunities, so, let’s, not waste it.

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