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Assignment 4

A Case Study in Equality of Opportunity

The equality of opportunity provides a comprehensive understanding of the historical and current struggles that marginalized groups face in terms of access to equal opportunities and the challenges they have overcome to achieve progress toward true equality in society.

Throughout American history, various groups have been denied equal rights and opportunities due to discrimination based on race, religion, gender, and more. African Americans have been treated with less than equal rights to opportunity in American history. Since the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in 1619, African Americans have faced systemic discrimination and oppression in the United States, including slavery, segregation, and discrimination in education, housing, and employment. In this week's assigned reading, "Gender pay gap in the U.S. held steady in 2020" by Amanda Barroso and Anna Brown, they talk about the gender pay gap between men and women. Still, they also mention how there are "Other factors that are difficult to measure, including gender discrimination which may also contribute to the ongoing wage discrepancy." (Barroso & Brown, 2022). Not only are African Americans being discriminated against, but there is also an even deeper layer of African American Women getting discriminated against for being both black and a woman. Despite these obstacles, African Americans have made significant strides in overcoming discrimination and achieving success. One example of this success is the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, during which African Americans, led by figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., successfully fought for the desegregation of public spaces and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I have a dream" speech, he said, "I have a dream that

my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." (King, 1963). It goes to show how much King wanted to change and how no matter what, he wanted to make sure the future of America was equal. Another example of success for African Americans is the election of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States in 2008. Obama's election marked a significant milestone in American history, as he became the first African American president in the country's history. During his two terms in office, Obama implemented policies to address racial inequality, including healthcare reform, criminal justice reform, and education reform. In this week's reading from Pew Research Center, it's clear to Americans that there is still lots of systemic oppression in many places. The research center wrote, "seven-in-ten blacks and about a third of whites say blacks are treated less fairly in their dealings with the police. Similarly, about two-thirds of black respondents and a quarter of whites say blacks are not treated as fairly as whites in the courts." (Center, P. R., 2020). While the Civil Rights Act helped African Americans to gain many fundamental freedoms, there are still some who look down on others just because of the color of their skin. Looking at today, though, we see many African Americans have achieved success in various fields, such as entertainment, sports, business, and education. Throughout the years, African Americans have become role models, leaders, and successful figures, and they are breaking barriers and creating new opportunities for the next generations.

Another group that has been treated with less than equal rights to opportunity is the LGBTQ+ community. Since the colonial era, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ have faced discrimination and marginalization in various aspects of society, including employment, housing, and healthcare. Despite some progress in recent years, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015, LGBTQ+ individuals still face discrimination and a lack of legal protection in many states. One example of the lack of success for the LGBTQ+ community is the ongoing discrimination faced by transgender individuals. Transgender individuals face high unemployment and poverty rates and are disproportionately affected by hate

crimes. In addition, many states still lack explicit legal protections for transgender individuals and continue to face discrimination in healthcare, housing, and education. Moreover, according to a study by the Human Rights Campaign, there are still 29 states that are missing fundamental freedoms for LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite some progress, the LGBTQ+ community still faces significant obstacles in achieving equality of opportunity, highlighting the need for further efforts to promote acceptance and legal protection for this marginalized group.

In both groups, you can see a correlation between missed equality. Both groups have had, and still are having, a rough time with things like housing and healthcare. In this week's reading of "Still the Land of Opportunity?" by Isabel Sawhill, they talk about how low-income families struggle to find opportunities and how things like geography can offer more or less opportunity. Sawhill talks about advantages in the form of family, "well-placed parents can pass on advantages to their children without even trying: They have good genes... they have higher incomes, enabling them to provide better environments for their children." (Sawhill, 2017). In our current world, it is all about these early advantages. For example, an LGBTQ+ individual may not have supportive parents, resulting in poor living conditions and discrimination, which could eventually lead to suicide.

After comparing and contrasting the experiences of African Americans and LGBTQ+ individuals, it is clear that several factors have contributed to the success of the African American community while the LGBTQ+ community continues to struggle. As individuals, we can play a role in helping obtain equal rights for others by educating ourselves about the experiences and struggles of marginalized groups and by being allies to those who face discrimination. We can also take action by supporting policies and legislation promoting equality and speaking out against bigotry and prejudice in our communities. Overall, it is essential to remember that we cannot achieve true equality without the active participation and support of all members of society.

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