**Fixing American Cities**

Like other places in the world, American cities have continued to witness an increase in their population. One of the key reasons for this trend is that cities offer more opportunities to individuals than in rural areas. Currently, America is home to several large cities including Philadelphia, Houston, Phoenix, San Diego, San Antonio, Dallas, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Despite the opportunities associated with cities, they all have several challenges. Personally, I think the greatest challenge that American cities face is inequalities. In essence, there is a lot of inequality in American cities as shown by the presence of classes. From lecture five, it was clear that American cities replicate class divisions. This explains why the poor tend to occupy the periphery of cities. Addressing the issue of inequalities has been a challenge for a long. This is because of deficiencies in strategies that are meant to address it. However, I believe with a specific plan or policy, the issue of inequality in cities can be fixed.

**What Has Been Done In the Past to Create Urban Inequalities?**

           Inequalities in American urban cities have a long history. For instance, it can be traced to the colonial period, when settlers started settling in American; slavery era, where slavery was used as sources of labor; the designing of cities; and, racism. Actually, the events of these different eras were responsible for the creation of inequalities in society. During the colonial period, settlers played a critical role in creating inequalities. Accordingly, the white settlers from Europe came up with settlement patterns that tend to separate them from others. For example, settlers would settle in areas that are considered productive: leaving the unproductive areas to other communities. As a result, there was a difference in generation and gaining of wealth between the locals and the settlers: leading to inequalities in wealth. Moreover, the white settlers promoted inequalities among different races by influencing the generation and distribution of resources.

           Slavery also played a critical role in creating inequalities that have continued to persist in cities up to the present. Accordingly, slavery pushed some individuals, especially African Americans, into poverty as their ownership of property was difficult. This treatment meant that these individuals were not given the same privileges as others. As a result, a lower class of individuals emerged from slavery. When slavery ended, its impact on social class continued to be experienced. For example, the communities where former slaves settled had to struggle with different challenges including poor standards of living. As a result of being disadvantaged, slaves and former slaves become members of lower classes.

           Designing cities also played a critical role in the creation of inequalities. Accordingly, the designing of cities determined how resources and services are distributed, how land was used, and the distribution of settlements. The impact of designing of cities was clear from the design of Washington DC as the capital. Specifically, the designing of DC showed that when the state is given the mandate to design a city, the emphasis would be mostly on large-scale transportation and monumentality. However, the issues of neighbor and walkability will be under looked.

           Racism has also continued to play a critical role in promoting inequalities in our societies. This is demonstrated by the existence of racial inequalities in our cities. For example, in most cities, minority groups have been pushed to live in ghettos. One historical action that was responsible for racial inequalities is segregation. When one looks at American history, he or she is likely to identify the impacts of segregation on inequalities. To make matters worse, such segregation attempts were engrained in the law: meaning that they had legal backing. A good example of such laws was the Jim Crow Laws, which enforced segregation in the southern states. The impact of segregation is that it created a society where the disadvantaged groups were denied basic resources: hence, inequality. Since then racial inequalities have continued to exist in our society. Its persistence can be traced to the different forms it has continued to take. Currently, structural racism has permeated nearly all aspects of our society. In our cities, racism does not only affect the distribution of resources but also it decides our residence and relationship with others.

**Fighting Against Racial Inequalities**

Attempts to address inequalities in our cities have been long. In the 19th century, the fight against inequalities was dictated by the concept of environmental determinism. According to the concept, some people can be changed by changing their surroundings while others cannot be changed. As a result of this concept, the fight against inequalities in cities was not successful as it was selective in reforming or changing the society.

           Several progressive reforms have been used to attempt to address the issue of inequalities in cities. One example of such reforms was led by the settlement movements, which began in the 1880s. Through the establishment of settlement houses, the settlement movement wanted to bridge the gap between the lower and high social classes in society. Some of the services that were provided by settlement houses included healthcare, daycare, and education. Other reforms that were done to help address the issue of inequalities include enactment of laws such as the Raines Law, which aimed to address the control of saloon business, curtail prostitution, and protect the Sabbath. The Raines Law also ensured that there were no saloons for the working class: meaning that saloons were accessible to all classes. Anti-poverty movements also played a critical role in the fight against inequalities. For example, slumming individuals from the middle and higher class were able to experience life in the lower classes.

           Architectural reform movements also focused on solving the issue of inequalities. Accordingly, the architectural reform movements focused on addressing the issue of inequality in society by influencing the design of cities including the use of land, settlement, distribution of infrastructure, and social amenities. One architectural reform that attempted to address the issue of inequality is the City Beautiful Movement (CB). CB movement came into being as a reaction to the heavy commercial life associated with cities. Moreover, it represented a powerful and conservative effort to restore civil building’s dominance, which had been overtaken by commercial monumentality. CB activists believed that the beautification of cities would help upset inequalities by promoting harmonious social order: which would improve the quality of life for different groups. The works of Daniel Burnham in designing the Chicago plan, the San Francisco plan, and Washington captured the concept of CB.

**Fixing the issue of inequalities through a specific plan or policy**

The issue of inequality in American cities can be fixed through a specific plan or policy. Failure by previous plans and policies does not mean that plans cannot be used to address them. This is because the nature and application of the previous were faulty. Accordingly, the policies such as urban anti-poverty measures were applied in a way that it disadvantaged other groups while favoring some. Policies and plans need to focus on specific issues that are responsible for inequalities. For instance, a policy that would affect the creation and distribution of opportunities, as well as increasing minimum wage, can help address the issue of inequality in cities. Moreover, specific policies on inclusivity in the distribution of leadership positions and resources can address the issue of urban inequality. The focus on inclusivity in leadership positions would have the largest impact on equality as they would affect governance and implementation of anti-equality measures.

**Lessons from the issue**

           Several lessons can be learned from the issue of inequality in American cities. First, the design of our cities plays a critical role in the perpetuation of inequalities. This is because it determines the distribution and access to resources, opportunities, and services. Another lesson from the case of inequalities in our cities is that governance leadership can be blamed for inequalities in our societies as it determines the implementation of policies and distribution of resources. Thirdly, it is clear that the issue of inequality has a long history in our societies. Accordingly, we can trace it to the time of slavery and time for the designing of cities.