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Learning Log #3

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HSP 402 Human Services Professionals and Organizational Systems

The idea of Clinton’s response to handling crime, incarceration, and the death penalty is an interesting concept to grasp with all that was going on in the 1990s. It seems problematic for Clinton to expand police forces and increase incarceration rates, which greatly affect poor black men who are at a very high risk of being in the criminal justice system, even for very small drug offenses.

On page 23, it describes all the laws Clinton passed, and billions of dollars that were spent on law enforcement and prisons. Clinton made it very hard for poor communities to come out of their situations with the war on drugs, and TAMF, which made it incredibly difficult for the lower class, considering it was required to have a clean record, to have any access to resources such as welfare. Yet, all these laws specifically targeted the black community and other ethnic minorities who were already facing the likelihood of dealing with the unjust and discriminatory criminal justice system. At this point in time, discrimination and segregation have constantly been transformed into a new system that marginalizes any person who is not white. Clinton essentially transformed the new system of crime and drugs into a more unjust way of imprisoning those who are set up to fail, by not providing resources or social services to help minorities who are already poor and vulnerable and trapping them into the system.

This law has brought us to our current criminal justice system today that has only incarcerated more African American men than ever and has transformed our system into a new, inefficient and unfair way of dealing with law enforcement and incarceration. I do not agree with any of the welfare or crime laws that were passed by Clinton during his term. It has not only created a racial under caste within the laws, but has fed into the negative stigma that is represented with the African American population within these systems of welfare, criminal justice, and the war on drugs. It has only resulted in more violence with the police force and more drugs and violence on the streets for those who have nowhere to turn. More and more African Americans are imprisoned for small crimes are not prepared when they get released and go back to the same lifestyle. Therefore this lifestyle continues, and the cycle of poverty and violence continues.

Through these issues, I realize I have personal bias related to incarceration, welfare, and minor drug offenses through personal experiences with friends and family. From a personal level, I have seen how screwed up the system is, and can now understand how and why those situations fit in with the bigger picture. My personal bias changes the way I view politics and how the system is handled through the government and law enforcement. I also have political biases, given my liberal and democratic views on the system and my understanding of the laws, history, and Clinton and how he handled these issues in the 90s. Considering that Clinton was a democrat, I would assume I would side with him on an issue. However, politics are always changing and it is difficult to understand. After reading this paper, this leads me to automatically disagree with the way things were handled, especially after reviewing the pattern of segregation in the past few centuries. However, my understanding of political history is uncertain given all the laws and bills that have been passed, constantly changing the dynamic of the economy, equality, and the issues that stem from those categories.

Reference

Alexander, Michelle. (2012). The rebirth of caste. *The New Jim Crowe: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* The New Press: New York.