



The Impact of Social Inequality in the United States of America

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Each year, the Betty Baker Jernigan Endowed Scholarship Fund offers a \$1000 award to the winner of an essay contest open to qualifying continuing and incoming USAO students. The contest asks students to write 300-500 words addressing the question, “How is America doing – politically, socially, economically?” *The Drover Review* also offers to publish winning submissions.

The winner of the 2020 Jernigan Award is Hannah Dawson, who argues that systematic inequalities in the availability of healthcare, the enforcement of justice, and the entrenchment of poverty mar America’s claims to be the land of freedom and opportunity.

PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING when it comes to looking at any society critically, and the same is true for the United States of America. Compared to many other countries around the world, the United States is seen as a land of freedom and opportunity. There are many freedoms and personal rights secured and protected by both state and federal governments, particularly for minorities. However, it is important to note and to understand that

there are many issues that could be improved upon in the many social structures of America. Economic equality is one such issue.

On both small and large scales, America is struggling in its structure of economic equality among its citizens. The privatization of the healthcare and the criminal justice system both directly impact the lives of the citizens who live here. Both also threaten the equal rights of the people. While the privatized capitalistic system stimulates economic growth overall, the price to be paid results in the suffering of many vulnerable individuals. In addition to this, the lack of accessible, affordable healthcare kills off a multitude of struggling low-income households in the country, and rates of incarceration are directly affected by prison privatization. The upper class are given a significant advantage as a result, being able to pay legal fines and afford expensive medication with little problems. On the other hand, many of those who are economically struggling can barely feed themselves, let alone afford many other necessities.

Poverty, meanwhile, is a difficult subject to discuss, as it is tricky to discern its specific causes. It is also true that poverty in the United States looks far different than it would appear other countries. In the United States, people typically question and place blame on the individuals going through economic struggle, but poverty does not always result from the actions of the individual. Sometimes the system put in place directly puts certain individuals at a disadvantage, particularly minorities. These disadvantages include high competition in fields of work, leading to lower rates of pay due to supply and demand, as we underemployment. Unemployment is relatively low in the United States of America, but it is steadily on the rise. Fewer hours and no benefits are becoming more common, leading to many poor individuals having to work two or three jobs and still struggling to pay rent. Financial stability among many citizens of the U.S has weakened, and these vulnerable individuals are looked down upon in the current economic state. These populations can become incarcerated due to debt and sometimes must decide between food or

monthly rent. Furthermore, those who are homeless often struggle to vote since they lack home addresses,

The United States struggles when it comes to equality pertaining to social class. Different opportunities and resources come and go as a result of one's economic standing. The rising rates of underemployment and social institution privatization lead to an overall inequality among the citizens. The United States may be the land of opportunity, and America does have its share of advantages and freedoms granted to the citizens. However, the state of economic inequality is impossible to ignore. ►►