

Unveiling Discriminatory Structures Against Social Minorities: An Examination of Some Governmental Structures of Discrimination and Abatement in the United States

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Abstract

This paper examines the enduring structures that sustain discrimination in the US. It analyzes historical precedents, contemporary practices, and efforts toward its elimination. It begins by exploring legislative frameworks and highlights how policies such as the War on Drugs and immigration acts have disproportionately negatively targeted marginalized populations. It discusses how administrative practices, including law enforcement tactics and implicit bias, perpetuate differentially unequal treatment of people by categories within the criminal justice system. The study discusses how judicial precedents, notably the Supreme Court decisions, have also reinforced discriminatory structures, and how interpretations of civil rights laws have shaped policies affecting marginalized populations. Despite formal structures to combat it,

persistent bias, institutionalized barriers, and power dynamics perpetuate discrimination. Lastly, the study examines how efforts towards the elimination of discriminatory structures have included legislative reforms aimed at addressing systemic disparities, affirmative action programs, and diversity and inclusion policies. The understanding of the intersectionality of multiple factors of discrimination is analyzed to be crucial in understanding the complexities of discrimination, as individuals experience multiple layers of oppression based on intersecting social identities.

Keywords: Discrimination Sources, Discrimination Solutions, Affirmative Action, Legislative Reforms, Implicit Bias, Intersectionality

1. Introduction

Discrimination, the unequal treatment of people based on their category membership and the beliefs and stereotypes attributed to the category (Marger, 2015; Oyinlade et al., 2020) pervades the social fabric of the United States (US). Also, discrimination manifests itself in both overt and subtle ways within both formal institutions and informal interactions (Kovel, 1984). From historical precedents rooted in slavery and segregation to contemporary challenges of systemic bias and unequal treatment, the landscape of discrimination reflects a complex interplay of historical legacies, structural inequalities, and ingrained societal norms (see Marger, 2015).

Discrimination finds fertile ground within institutional settings, where policies, practices, and legal precedents often perpetuate unequal treatment and reinforce existing power dynamics. From disparities in law enforcement practices and criminal justice sentencing to barriers in education, employment, and housing, institutionalized discrimination exerts a profound impact on the life chances and opportunities available to marginalized communities. Practically all aspects of life chances in the US can be said to have historically been shaped by the various Jim Crow era formal discriminatory structures of government and the informal social norms and values that are arguably products of the formal structures.

As Joel Kovel suggested regarding everyday interactions, discrimination, at least the aversive type, often operates based on implicit bias, negative perceptions of minorities, individual decisions, and negative actions toward them in subtle but highly impactful ways (See Kovel, 1984). ~~These~~ Bias and consequential actions, deeply rooted in societal attitudes and stereotypes, perpetuate disparities across various dimensions of identity, including race, gender, sexuality, disability, and more. While overt acts of discrimination may garner public attention and quick condemnations, it is the insidious nature of implicit bias and negative treatment of people that underpins many of the category-based inequities (that is, stratification) present in American society today.

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to discuss the multifaceted nature of structures of discrimination in the United States by examining its manifestation across informal and institutional settings. By exploring historical contexts, contemporary challenges, and efforts toward its elimination, this paper aims to elucidate the scope and complexity of discrimination while highlighting pathways to equity and inclusion. Through an interdisciplinary lens encompassing legal, sociological, and intersectional perspectives, this paper endeavors to contribute to a nuanced understanding of discrimination and inform strategies for dismantling systemic barriers and advancing social justice.

2. Objective

The objectives of this paper are twofold: The first is to briefly discuss the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of discrimination in the US, drawing on scholarly research and legal precedents to elucidate the various forms and mechanisms through which discrimination operates. The second is to explore efforts toward eliminating discrimination, including affirmative action programs, diversity and inclusion policies, legislative reforms, and

intersectional approaches aimed at addressing structural disparities and fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

By interrogating the pervasive nature of discrimination and examining strategies for its elimination, this paper seeks to provoke critical reflection, stimulate dialogue, and inspire collective action toward a future with less discrimination, greater dignity, fairness, and respect accorded to individuals irrespective of their category memberships.

3. Sustaining Discrimination Structures

3.1 A Brief Historical Discriminatory Legislative Structures

Several government laws and policies have, over the years, been the formal structures that established and sustained various forms of discrimination in the country. Some of these laws and guidelines will be discussed here in no particular order. We start with a few early congressional acts. Historical discriminatory federal laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 directly targeted specific racial and ethnic populations, such as Chinese and other Asian immigrants, limiting their ability to immigrate to the United States based solely on their ethnicity (Schaefer, 2013). Drawing from Schaefer, examples such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 illustrate how federal laws discriminatorily restricted immigration based on race and ethnicity, perpetuating discrimination against Asian and other non-European immigrant populations.

Several other governmental policies also discriminated against minorities and contributed to social and economic disparities between them and the dominant White population.

For example, the National Housing Act of 1934 systematically denied housing loans to minority communities, particularly African American and Latino neighborhoods, thereby perpetuating racial segregation and exacerbating wealth disparities between white and minority populations (Alexander, 2010). The manifest intent of the law was to secure the ability of banks to generate revenues through loan repayments by requiring them to issue loans only to those who could demonstrate repayment through collateral. This resulted in the practice of redlining by the banks to demarcate between neighborhoods that were safe for loan investments and those that were not. This practice disproportionately affected racial-ethnic minorities, producing a discriminatory effect that added to the economic disparities between them and Whites (Alexander, 2010).

The War on Drugs initiative of the 1980s was another governmental action that unintentionally targeted and disproportionately affected poor communities, notably the African American communities. Michelle Alexander (2010) explored the systemic racial injustices embedded within the American criminal justice system relative to the War on Drugs program. She delved into the evolution of policies of the War on Drugs and demonstrated how they had disproportionately targeted communities of color, particularly African Americans (Alexander, 2010). Through compelling case studies and data analysis, she unveiled the harsh realities of mass incarceration and its profound impact on individuals, families, and communities. As part of the proverbial war, legislation such as the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988 differentially impacted people based on their racial-ethnic classifications (Alexander, 2010).

The laws imposed harsher penalties for crack cocaine, a drug more prevalent in poor urban African American neighborhoods, compared to powder cocaine, which was more commonly used by middle-class Whites (Alexander, 2010). This sentencing disparity resulted in a disproportionate number of African Americans being incarcerated for drug-related offenses, contributing to the already large incarceration of Black men and perpetuating a system of racialized social control akin to the Jim Crow era (Alexander, 2010). This demonstrates how legislation such as the Anti-Drug Abuse contributes to the creation of discriminatory structures within the criminal justice system.

Administrative practices within the criminal justice system, such as mandatory minimum sentencing and the three-strikes law, also disproportionately impact racial-ethnic minorities, contributing to their higher incarceration rates and perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement. These policies contribute to the creation of a permanent underclass, as individuals with criminal records face barriers to employment, housing, and social services upon release (Alexander, 2010). As a result, cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement are perpetuated, further entrenching systemic discrimination within society.

In “*Immigrant America*,” Portes and Rumbaut (2006) highlighted the discriminatory impact of immigration policies such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which targeted undocumented immigrants and reinforced stereotypes about Latino immigrants as criminals. It portrays Latino immigrants as criminals and contributes to negative stereotypes and discrimination against this community (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Additionally, the USA Patriot Act of 2001, enacted in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, expanded surveillance and law enforcement powers, leading to increased profiling and discrimination against Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities under the guise of national security measures (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

3.1.1 Policy Enforcement and Implicit Bias

Disparities in the official police guidelines that grant the use of force in arrests and legitimize the ability of the police to make arrests based on the race and ethnicity of suspects add to the official discriminatory structures of government. To this end, Richard Schaefer highlighted disparities in police use of force and arrest rates based on race and ethnicity. He posited, for instance, that Black individuals were more likely to be stopped, arrested, and subjected to violence by law enforcement officers compared to their white counterparts (Schaefer, 2013). Law enforcement regulations and practices, such as stop-and-frisk, have also been shown to disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic people (Doerner & Lab, 2015). These disparities in law enforcement contribute to the formal structural discrimination, distrust of the criminal justice system, and likely alienation experienced by the Black and Hispanic populations in particular and by other minorities in general. This position has support in the assertions presented in *Victimology* by William G. Doerner and Steven P. Lab, who argued that law enforcement practices such as stop-and-frisk disproportionately targeted Black and Hispanic individuals and perpetuate racial profiling and unequal treatment within the criminal justice system (Doerner & Lab, 2015).

Governmental school policies, though mostly at state levels, have also been cited as

perpetrating discrimination among school children by race and ethnicity (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014). Research has indicated a pattern of differential treatment of school children's placement in special programs and disciplinary actions. Black and Hispanic students, for example, have been reported to likely face disciplinary actions and be placed in special education programs compared to their white peers, even when their behavior or academic performance is similar (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014). The long-term outcomes of the subjugation of these children into undeserved special education programs and disciplinary actions may worsen existing and future racial and ethnic disparities among these children. While a deeper exploration into the outcomes of the treatment of school children by race and ethnicity is beyond the scope of this study, what is certain is that these administrative actions are based on school regulations and policies, hence constituting structurally induced discrimination in schools. We acknowledge the possible position that administrative actions in schools may be expressions of implicit bias of teachers and administrators. Such was the case expressed in the book *Privilege: A Reader* (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014), which explored how implicit bias shapes administrative decisions within government agencies, such as child welfare services and education. While this exploration is legitimate, we discern implicit bias as a product of conducive social structures. Hence, we emphasize the structural basis of school administrative actions over implicit potential bias of any individual or collective school administrators.

3.1.2 The Judiciary: Supreme Court Decisions

The US Supreme Court has also played a significant role in shaping legal precedents that have perpetuated discrimination. A few examples of the Supreme Court's decisions will suffice in demonstrating the court's contributions to formal discrimination structures. For instance, in cases like *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Court's rulings denied citizenship to African Americans and upheld racial segregation, respectively (Takaki, 2008). These decisions reinforced discriminatory structures by legitimizing unequal treatment based on race. Similarly, in "*The New Jim Crow*," Alexandra (2008) examined cases such as *McCleskey v. Kemp*, where the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of racially disparate sentencing practices as examples of judicial actions that perpetuated inequalities within the criminal justice system.

The Supreme Court's interpretations of civil rights laws have also influenced policies affecting marginalized populations. For example, in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, the Court's decision shaped affirmative action policies in education and impacted greater educational opportunities for minority students (Schaefer, 2013). Additionally, rulings such as *Shelby County v. Holder* weakened protections against discriminatory voting practices and enabled voter suppression efforts that unfairly target minority populations (Schaefer, 2013). These interpretations have had far-reaching consequences, exacerbated inequalities, and hindered progress towards achieving equality and justice.

4. Efforts towards Elimination

4.1 Legislative Reforms

The US Government has made many legislative reforms to dismantle old structures of

discrimination and erect new antidiscrimination ones. In no particular order, we shall briefly outline a few of these governmental efforts at combating discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It prohibited discrimination in public accommodations, employment, and federally funded programs. Title VII of the Act specifically addresses employment discrimination, establishing the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce its provisions (Civil Rights Act, 1964). In 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed in response to widespread racial discrimination in voting practices, particularly in the southern states. This Act aimed to protect the voting rights of racial minorities. It prohibited racial discrimination in voting, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, and authorized federal oversight of voting practices in areas with a history of discrimination (Voting Rights Act, 1965).

Another anti-discrimination legislative reform was the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which aimed to address housing discrimination by prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin in the sale, rental, and financing of housing. Congress also passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 to prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, and telecommunications. It requires employers and public entities to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities and promotes accessibility and inclusion (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990).

Other government anti-discrimination laws include the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which aimed to address gender-based wage discrimination by prohibiting employers from paying employees of one gender less than employees of the other gender for equal work requiring equal skill, effort, and responsibility (Equal Pay Act, 1962). The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967 also prohibits employment discrimination against individuals aged 40 and older based on age. It applies to hiring, promotion, compensation, and termination practices and seeks to promote equal opportunities for older workers (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1967). Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in educational programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance (US Department of Justice, Online). It has been instrumental in promoting gender equity in education, particularly in athletics and academia.

Structural efforts of the government to combat discrimination of any kind may also be found in programs such as Affirmative Action and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Affirmative action has been a contentious topic in addressing structural discrimination, particularly concerning race and ethnicity, in various spheres of society, including education and employment (Oyinlade, 2013). It is a program that is intended to encourage both government and private organizations to be proactive in dismantling their discriminatory structures in hiring, firing, and promotions (Reskin, 1998). The uniqueness of affirmative action policy is in its proactive intent to prevent discrimination before it occurs, rather than the after-the-fact approach of redressing discrimination grievances through the courts (Reskin, 1998). While the affirmative action policy may be well intended, its effectiveness may be questioned on the grounds that it is implemented in a way that discriminates against others (such as Whites, Asians, and men in general) (Pincus, 2003). Also, the persistence of bias that

people still harbor in society against various categories of people contributes to the effectiveness of the program (Alexander, 2010). For example, in Michelle Alexander's seminal work, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, the author argued that while affirmative action programs have been implemented to counteract historical injustices and promote equal opportunities, the deep-rooted bias within the criminal justice system undermines their effectiveness, resulting in a disproportion of Blacks being incarcerated compared to Whites (Alexander, 2010). Additionally, Ronald Takaki's *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* provides a historical context for how systemic discrimination has shaped societal structures and hindered the effectiveness of affirmative action initiatives (Takaki, 2008). Takaki's analysis emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms that address the underlying causes of inequality beyond mere policy prescriptions.

Regarding the use of DEI in combating discrimination, William Doerner and Steven Lab's *Victimology* offers insights into the importance of diversity and inclusion policies in creating a safer and more equitable society (Doerner & Lab, 2015). By examining victimization patterns across different demographic populations, the authors underscored the significance of inclusive practices in addressing the unique needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized people (Doerner & Lab, 2015). Moreover, Michael Kimmel and Abby Ferber delved into the complexities of privilege and its implications for diversity initiatives, highlighted the role of federal agencies in promoting inclusive environments, and underscored the need for ongoing efforts to dismantle institutional barriers that perpetuate stratification (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014).

Discrimination against minorities in the workplace persists as a widespread problem despite laws and corporate policies designed to promote equality. While efforts to create equitable workplaces often emphasize differences, focusing on similarities can help bridge these gaps and enhance organizational synergy. Affirmative action, as Barbara Reskin (1998) describes it, aims to level the playing field for minorities who have historically been marginalized. By mandating proactive measures to recruit, hire, and promote qualified minorities, affirmative action challenges entrenched bias and institutional barriers. Affirmative action is not merely about quotas or preferential treatment but about recognizing and correcting systemic stratification. Reskin (1998) emphasizes that affirmative action compels organizations to scrutinize their hiring practices, ensuring that unconscious bias does not distort meritocracy. Affirmative action can lead to a more diverse workforce, which is the bedrock for fostering inclusion and reducing discrimination (Reskin, 1998). Deborah L. Plummer expands on the notion that more than diversity alone is required with deliberate inclusion strategies. Diversity management involves creating an organizational culture where differences are valued, and every employee feels a sense of safety and belonging (Plummer, 2003). Both affirmative action and comprehensive diversity management are essential for achieving structural change.

Affirmative action tackles the immediate need to diversify the workforce, while diversity management ensures that this diversity is sustained and supported (Reskin, 1998). Affirmative action can be misapplied without proper management and understanding,

potentially fostering inequality as a counterproductive outcome. One possible approach in the combination of affirmative action (Reskin, 1998) and DEI initiatives is to create an organizational culture that does not tolerate discrimination (Reskin, 1998). When minorities see representation at all levels of an organization based on earned efforts and experience fair treatment, it will foster trust and engagement with peers and the rank-and-file of an organization (Saunders, 2003; Katz & Miller, 2023). Structural changes in recruitment, retention, and promotion practices help to dismantle the informal networks and bias that often exclude minorities from advancement opportunities. By institutionalizing fairness and transparency, organizations can create pathways for minorities to succeed based on their abilities and contributions (Saunders, 2003; Katz & Miller, 2023).

4.1.1 Intersectionality: The Need for Comprehensive Solutions

Kimberlé Crenshaw highlights how individuals experience multiple layers of discrimination and privilege due to the intersection of various social identities such as race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, and more (Crenshaw, 2017). When it comes to discrimination, intersecting identities can compound experiences of marginalization, leading to unique challenges that are often overlooked by traditional approaches to policy and advocacy. Policy responses usually fail to fully address the complexities of intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 2017). For instance, anti-discrimination laws may prohibit discrimination based on race or gender separately but may not adequately address discrimination against individuals who experience both simultaneously. Similarly, social welfare programs may target specific marginalized categories of people but may overlook the unique needs of individuals who belong to multiple marginalized identities. To address these issues, policymakers and advocates need to adopt intersectional approaches that recognize and address the intersecting nature of discrimination (Crenshaw, 2017).

The effectiveness of DEI efforts as a structural approach to eliminating discrimination in government agencies and nongovernmental organizations can easily be called into question on the grounds of its one-dimensionality in addressing socially distinguishing characteristics upon which otherness and, hence, discrimination is based. That is, DEI tends to address discrimination by making provisions and concessions for organizational members based on singular characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, or veteran status rather than based on the collective and compounding effects of the combination of these characteristics in becoming victims of discrimination.

Gathering data that capture the intersecting identities of individuals is crucial for understanding the unique challenges they face. This data can inform the development of policies and programs that address the needs of diverse populations. Policies could be analyzed through the intersectionality of various factors of discrimination to identify their individual and combined effects on the likelihood of victimization and potential and unintended consequences of victimization for individuals with intersecting identities. This analysis can help policymakers design more inclusive and effective interventions. This may involve targeted outreach activities, culturally competent services, and intersectional training for service providers. Intersectional approaches should prioritize the voices and leadership of marginalized

populations in policy development and implementation. Empowering these populations to advocate for their needs can lead to more responsive and equitable policies. Intersectional approaches could aim at dismantling structural inequities that perpetuate discrimination across intersecting identities. This will involve addressing the multiple layers of structures that produce racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression embedded within institutions and policies.

4.1.2 Persistence of Discrimination: Implicit Bias

While formal structures are in place to combat discrimination and prejudice, the informal structures that sustain discrimination are not as monitorable and enforceable in the same capacity as the formal ones (Alexander, 2010). Implicit bias and stereotypes deeply ingrained in societal attitudes and perceptions play a significant role in perpetuating discrimination. Even individuals who consciously reject discriminatory beliefs may still hold unconscious bias that influence their attitudes and behaviors. These bias can shape decision-making processes in such areas as hiring, promotion, housing, and criminal justice, leading to disparate outcomes for marginalized people (Alexander, 2010). Discriminatory practices and policies embedded within social institutions, such as education, healthcare, criminal justice, and employment, also contribute to the persistence of discrimination. In addition, historical legacies of discrimination, coupled with stratified inequalities, result in institutionalized barriers that disadvantage certain population categories based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, and other identities (Schaefer, 2013).

Discrimination is closely intertwined with broader structural inequities, including socioeconomic disparities, educational inequalities, and access to resources (Alexander, 2010; Kimmel & Ferber, 2014). These structural inequities create conditions that exacerbate discrimination and perpetuate cycles of disadvantage for marginalized populations. For instance, limited access to quality education and employment opportunities disproportionately affects racial-ethnic minorities, perpetuating economic disparities and reinforcing racial-ethnic discrimination (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014). Power dynamics and systems of privilege may also play a pivotal role in perpetuating discriminatory structures. Dominant population categories often benefit from existing power structures and may resist efforts to challenge or dismantle systems of oppression that benefit them. Privilege, whether based on race, gender, class, or other factors, grants certain people (*mostly Whites and men regardless of race and ethnicity - emphasis, ours.*) advantages in society while it disadvantages others (Kimmel & Ferber, 2014). These power imbalances can impede progress toward achieving equality and justice for marginalized people.

Cultural norms and societal expectations can also perpetuate prejudice and discrimination, even in the absence of explicit discriminatory governmental policies. Norms around gender roles, beauty standards, family structures, and sexuality can reinforce stereotypes and contribute to the marginalization of certain populations (Takaki, 2008). Changing cultural and structural norms requires sustained efforts to challenge ingrained prejudices and promote values of diversity, inclusivity, and equity (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

5. Conclusion

The analysis presented in this paper underscores the pervasive nature of discrimination in the United States, illuminating its manifestation in both formal and informal entrenched institutional practices. From historical injustices rooted in slavery and segregation to contemporary challenges of systemic bias and unequal treatment, discrimination continues to shape the lived experiences of millions of individuals across various forms of identities.

Our examination of the structures of discrimination, albeit a modest one, reveals the complex interplay of historical legacies, informal implicit bias, and institutionalized barriers that perpetuate inequality and hinder progress toward a more just society. From racial disparities in Congressional Acts, executive actions, the Supreme Court decisions, and law enforcement practices to inequities in employment and education, discriminatory structures continue to exert a profound impact on the life chances and opportunities of marginalized people across multiple dimensions of distinguishing social identities (race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc.).

Our discussion underscores the importance of addressing discriminatory structures to reduce or fully eliminate (*if possible*) discrimination. Hence, we ask the question: if the government has been actively attempting to end racial-ethnic discrimination for over a century, what, then, is the holdup from full success? Why has it not fully succeeded? Unless one is cynical about the intent of the government, one will give the US government the benefit of the doubt that it is honest about its intentions to end discrimination through formal restructuring of society with legislations and programs that are directed at ending racial-ethnic and all other forms of discriminations in the society. So therefore, the failure of the government in this endeavor is concerning, and it requires some investigation and recommendations.

While the investigation and recommendations for the failure of government efforts at ending racial-ethnic discrimination are outside the focus of this paper, we find it necessary to make some comments about it. First, we see value in the comments of Ron Takaki's (2008) narrative that emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms that address the underlying causes of inequality beyond mere policy prescriptions. Based on Takaki's conception, we argue that a thorough understanding of racial-ethnic discrimination, as well as other forms of discrimination, is necessary by the government (executive, legislative, and judiciary) and an overhaul of the structural designs (legislations and programs) that have sustained discrimination be made. Rather than passing piecemeal legislation and programs that address discrimination based on the squeaky approach, we suggest sweeping reforms that would attack racial-ethnic discrimination at multiple levels at the same time. We reckon that the systemic synergy of such an attempt will produce a more comprehensive solution than the traditional piecemeal efforts. The persistence of discrimination undermines individual dignity and human rights, as well as social cohesion and economic prosperity. As such, there is an imperative for collective action and policy innovation to dismantle discrimination structures and foster a more equitable and inclusive society.

Collective action through grassroots movements, advocacy efforts, and community organizing may be employed to give a voice to marginalized people in combating discriminatory practices and effect meaningful change in society. These efforts, however, should only complement

governmental structures that aim to eliminate discrimination. Because the roots of all forms of discrimination are the different formal and informal structures in society, the government and executives of nongovernmental organizations are best positioned to guide the efforts to dismantle discrimination in society through legislative and organizational policy reforms that will proactively prevent discrimination in organizations and hence, society. Governmental and organizational strategies are many. They range from legislative reforms and judicial actions to affirmative action programs, diversity and inclusion policies, and intersectional approaches. Simply put, there is a myriad of opportunities to address structurally induced disparities and promote equity across various spheres of society. By enacting laws, regulations, and other initiatives that dismantle discriminatory structures and promote inclusive practices, policymakers will be positioned to create a more equitable playing field for all individuals.

By providing comprehensive insights into issues of race, ethnicity, privilege, victimization, and immigration, we can raise awareness and deepen understanding of the complexities surrounding diversity and inclusion by offering a broader perspective on the experiences of marginalized people and the structural barriers they face. Through case studies, data analysis, and theoretical frameworks, we encourage critical thinking and analysis of power dynamics, discrimination, and inequality. By examining the historical and contemporary manifestations of oppression, people may be prompted to interrogate their own bias and privileges and thus act to lay the groundwork for more inclusive practices.

The importance of addressing discriminatory structures cannot be overstated. As we confront the challenges of the 21st century, it is incumbent upon society to confront the legacy of discrimination head-on, challenge entrenched inequalities, and strive toward a future where all individuals truly enjoy equal rights, opportunities, and dignity. Through collective action and policy innovation, we can realize the promise of a more just and inclusive society for generations to come.

6. Limitation

This paper only moderately discussed the roles of formal structures that give rise to, as well as sustain, discrimination. Our emphasis is mainly on formal governmental structures at the federal level, although we alluded to the roles of private organizational structures under our discussion of affirmative action and DEI policies. In addition, it is by intent that we did not give a litany of all possible legislative and judicial structures. Our purpose was fulfilled by the use of only a few examples of discriminatory structures and solution structures to demonstrate the roles of formal structures in the creation and elimination of discrimination in society. We purposely did not discuss the roles of informal structures like cultural norms and values that also promote and sustain discrimination. This was intended to make this paper relatively short and well-focused. However, it also means we must defer any analysis of state- and local-level legislative and judicial structures, as well as informal structures, of discrimination to future reports or to other scholars who may wish to contribute to the discussion of discriminatory structures.

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