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Assignment #4:
Conflict within the American Borders: A Glance at Systemic Racism

STUDENT DATA

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Conflict within the American Borders: A Glance at Systemic Racism

As worldwide conflicts have only grown in severity and visibility, much of the

American society has turned a blind eye to the conflicts that lie within its own borders.

While attention has been on Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other Middle Eastern

tensions or on American relations with countries such as North Korea, a very dark seed

of American history has crept back into a subtle but frightening resurgence that many

have yet to acknowledge. This conflict has plagued many areas of the American

society, from housing separation to political party tensions, and from street violence to

threatening one's freedom of speech. Conflict, such as this, must be strategically and

gently addressed before it grows beyond the government's oversight. This conflict has

developed to bring the stability of the American democracy into question and raise the

point of interest on the possibility of a second civil war (Wright, 2017). Racism is one of

America's most prominent internal conflicts, and it must be addressed in order to ensure

continued peace and safety on America's own front.

Incidents, such as Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, where white nationalists

gathered to form what they hoped would be the largest supremacists' gathering in

decades with the goal to "take America back" (Heim, Silverman, Sharpiro, & Brown,

2017), represent the lingering conflicts in the veins the American people. In addition,

despite the Fair Housing Act of 1968, African Americans continue to remain behind

whites in home ownership which affects their building of a middle class wealth

(Williams, 2018). There also continues to be protests against the removal of

Confederate statues throughout the South, in which some African Americans are being

denied the right to make civil changes to their land that would increase civility and

decrease the consistent reminders of the turmoil of African American history in these areas. Police shootings, that cannot deny the presence of racism in the hearts of city officials, continue to occur and divide the black and white population all the more. Many continue to acknowledge that Sunday mornings remain the most segregated window of time in each week. Companies, like Starbucks, are enforcing racial bias training, as incidents of discrimination and denial of rights have occurred within their stores. To continue to reveal areas in which all aspects of American society have been infiltrated with seeds of racism would still seem insufficient to the reality of its presence in the country.

Conflict is not resolved by ignoring a problem and expecting it to get better, but that is what appears to be the American government's position on the current racial tensions within the country. Upon navigating civil wars in many other countries and studying the history of the United States Civil War, there are conditions in which support the prediction of a possible second civil war in America. These are:

Entrenched national polarization, with no obvious meeting place for resolution; increasingly divisive press coverage and information flows; weakened institutions, notably Congress and the judiciary; a sellout or abandonment of responsibility by political leadership; and the legitimization of violence as the "in" way to either conduct discourse or solve disputes (Wright, 2017).

In addition to the preceding list, 2017 "was a year that saw the 'alt-right,' the latest incarnation of white supremacy, break through the firewall that for decades kept overt racists largely out of the political and media mainstream" ("The Year in Hate", 2018). This led to an increase of four percent from 2016 of known hate groups in

America ("The Year in Hate", 2018). The racial conflict in America cannot continue to remain without some sort of acknowledgement and plan for resolution. It is no surprise that this conflict has frequently succumbed to silence, as humans naturally handle most conflict in this manner (Patterson, Grenny, Maxfield, McMillan, & Switzler, 2013). However, it stands as more and more imperative that the leaders of this country choose to revert to resolution over silence.

In their analysis of the clash of civilizations, Esther Hauk and Hannes Mueller (2015) note that, "the fundamental source of conflict in the post-cold war period will be along cultural and religious lines" (367). Cleary evident in the race conflict of the United States, this source holds true. The conflict of race seems to be rooted in a conflict of culture more than in one's color of skin. The difference in cultural roots and the habits of one's life often are the foundation of such riots, discriminations, and injustices. Even in the similarities of the same national origin, when the differences of race and culture receive all the attention, it is of no surprise that similarities still become divisive or dissenting (Hauk & Mueller, 2015). Thus, this cultural source of conflict must be addressed by leaders within each culture group, and for the United States much of this resolution will be found through governmental and newsroom influencers. These types of positions remain the public faces of the United States and have the potential to carry the greatest influence in this area.

Possible Resolution Plan

America has significant work to be done in the area race relations that has long been ignored, whether blatant refusal to approach the issue or decisions to pretend to be "color-blind" and in turn denying the existence of a problem. There is such a deep

history in the area of racial tensions in the United States that the solution will not only

take dedicated research but unbiased empathy and approaching the conflict from its

roots. This conflict is like an old tree within the country. The government has

implemented laws and policies, as if cutting down the trunk of the tree, but they have

failed to approach the roots to truly bring positive change. Then, newsroom reports' and

public leaders' biases simply fertilize the issue that is still present. Both sets of

influencers must recognize their impact and seek out reconciliation for themselves.

Dedicated unbiased research to journey through both sides of the history for the

last 400 years likely stands as the greatest potential stimulus for conflict resolution. As

leaders discover the realities of the treatment, discriminations, injustices, and stigmas

that have clung to the America story from both positions, they will be more likely to have

an open mind to positive moves of reconciliation. Also, as this is modeled, society

members may be more likely to do research for themselves and understand their black

or white counterparts better. Leaders must choose to leverage their knowledge for good

and purposes of reconciliation because it has been recognized that, in cultural conflicts,

members of the population are unable to defend their own interests or opinions and are

more easily swayed to a leader's discrimination or bias when there is a lack of

information or knowledge about the issues within and each side's position of the conflict

(Hauk & Mueller, 2015).

Next, empathic, unbiased approaches to what each side feels is important.

People naturally go into a conflict with their own partiality. However, it is important, in

specific, for cultural bias to be set aside in order to better understand the root of the

conflict. Eric Foner, award winning historian and author, notes that America has "some

pretty deep divisions along multiple lines—racial, ideological, rural versus urban" (as cited in Wright, 2017), and all lines come with bias and prior experiential knowledge that affect the way individuals approach people and the conflict within each line. Also, there stands a predisposition of one's own security and stability, which is adversely affected by the precarious, insecure condition of today's social and economic relations (Wozniak, 2016). This "gives rise to our newly emphatic, overreaching concern with control and to the urgency with which we segregate, fortify, and exclude," states Garland (as cited in Wozniak, 2016, pp. 1064-1065). With this recognition of an individual's natural standpoint on the frontend of conflict, cultural leaders should seek to remove these biases, despite how engrained they are in nearly every individual.

Additionally, governmental, societal, and educational leaders should be educating Americans on the truth of the history of the United States. Justice and reconciliation cannot be achieved without a full telling of the truth and a recognition of the prejudices present (Milligan, 2018). Although slavery ended many years ago, many majority members are participating in systems and structures that are historically rooted in slavery (Milligan, 2018). Thus, majority members are perpetuating the process of reconciliation because of unwillingness to reveal the whole truth and make necessary progresses in their actions—political, personal, and organizational. Educating the people of what truly happened, rather than pretending the ugly past did not occur, in the classroom, news, publications, etc. is necessary for change.

With the preceding concepts in mind, possible steps in which United States racial conflict resolution, from the political and reporting industry, could occur follows as:

- Intentional attention and awareness from political and cultural leaders (i.e. presidential recognition of the home front issues, black and white politicians raising awareness of perspectives and the people they represent).

- Research followed with conversations with leaders from both sides of the conflict. (This could include politicians, influential reporters, and advocacy and hate group leaders, etc.)

- Housing and city law assessment and enforcement (i.e. leaders at the federal level encouraging bank, landlord, and investors to follow proper civil rights protocols (Williams, 2018)).

- Implement racial bias training for government workers, city officials, first responders, etc.

- Examine economic and educational disadvantages and implement programs to remove the racial bias within those statistics.

- Educating and advocating, in order to end divisive fear tactics, by the influential cultural leaders.

Concluding Solutions

Although this matter has made significant progress from the early 20th Century, there remains traces of racism in many factions of society. This is only one aspect of the social change that would need to occur to see true change in America. Churches and many non-profit organizations hold the potential to inflict substantial change in resolving this conflict. However, there remains work to be done on racial prejudices within each of those. Thus, this paper stands as one of many beginning steps to seeing positive

change on the political and public side of the conflict. As a 400 year long history is

rooted in this conflict, there are deeper resolutions than accounted for here. However,

as government officials, cultural leaders, and societal influencers do their part in the

afore mentioned efforts significant progress will be made.

      Unfortunately, much of this conflict comes to constituents' personal biases and

actions. However, with proper awareness and implementation of reconciliation and

fairness programs, many individuals will be less likely to act in such ways as the

devastating acts in Charlottesville. Increases in cultural fears prospectively can translate

into increased discrimination (Hauk & Mueller, 2015). Thus, awareness that decreases

the inhumane fears of each culture can decrease discrimination. Also, conversations

between party or governmental division leaders, in which civility and empathy are

present, will begin to bring unity to the dividing governmental bodies, and it will provide

an element of trust for those following certain leaders. Also, as "people's opinions about

race relations are significantly related to their opinions about the police" (Wozniak,

2016, p. 1077), implementation of city official racial bias training has the potential to

positively impact the public's view of both the police force and overall race relations.

Although these may be small efforts to a country-wide conflict, substantial change is

possible through even the smallest efforts, especially as most society members view the

government as being silent on the issues and reporters using unfair bias and personal

prejudices. There remains no better time for social change to be addressed, in regards

to America's racial tensions, and truly experience the safety and freedom that should

reside in the democracy of the United States.

Resources

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