

The Christian Call
to Racial Reconciliation Through
Community Integration

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Personal Background

- Born and raised in Pittsburgh in an intentional Christian community
- Graduated from Schenley High School
- Studied social work, urban studies, and international development at Calvin College
- Intern at Community Family Life Services in Washington, DC
- MSW at the University of Pittsburgh
- Medical social work intern at The Children's Home of Pittsburgh

Overview

- Racial segregation and its effects on racial inequality in the United States for African Americans
- The Christian call to justice and diversity
- The CCDA as a model of intervention
 - Role of social workers
 - Congruence with Christian beliefs
- Objections to the model and responses

Racial Segregation in the United States

- Segregation has improved since the 1960s
 - Restrictive covenants, blockbusting, neighborhood associations are no longer legal
- Despite these changes, segregation persists throughout the country and in cities

Racial Segregation and the African American Community

- 70% of black population lives in segregated neighborhoods
- 40-50% live in hyper-segregated neighborhoods
- In Baltimore it was found even “diverse neighborhoods” are segregated when you inspect on a closer scale



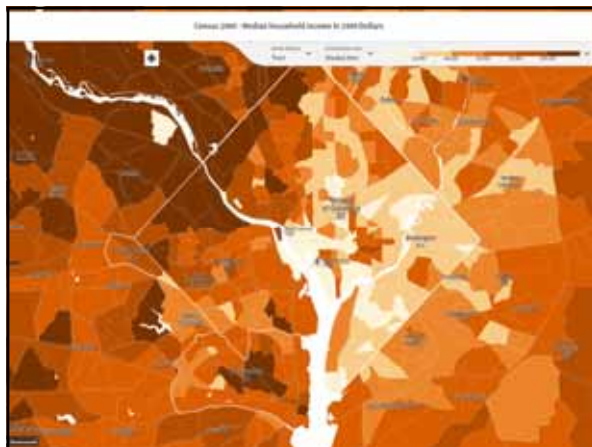
Why Does Segregation Persist?

- Personal choice and finances are not a sufficient answer
 - Neighborhoods tend to be racially segregated regardless of socioeconomic status
- Structural Inequality
 - Racial profiling in property insurance
 - Blacks are three times more likely than whites to get a subprime loan
 - In the United States roughly 6 million cases of housing discrimination happen every year, regardless of socioeconomic status

The Effects of Racial Segregation

Income and Wealth

- Black Americans are 3 times more likely to be poor than white Americans
- Black Americans earn 40% less on average
- Black Americans have about 1/8th the net worth of white Americans
- Due to spatial mismatching from housing, black Americans are less likely to get financially lucrative jobs
- Education



The Effects of Racial Segregation

Medical Care

- Black Americans are more likely to live with serious health conditions regardless of socioeconomic status: diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, hypertension
- Most people seek healthcare where they live
- Hospitals in black communities tend to have:
 - Fewer technological resources
 - Fewer specialists
 - Higher rates of adverse effects from negligence
 - Doctors are less likely to be board certified

The Effects of Racial Segregation

Environmental Racism

- Black Americans are 79% more likely than white Americans to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of causing the greatest health concerns
- Commission for Racial Justice Study
 - Three of the five largest waste facilities dealing with hazardous materials are in poor black communities
 - Three out of every five African American and Latino Americans live in areas near toxic waste sites
- 96% of black children who live in inner cities have unsafe amounts of lead in their blood
- Children of color are more likely to attend schools with asbestos and other health issues

The Effects of Racial Segregation

Neighborhood Violence

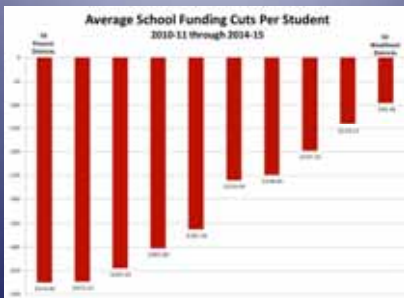
- It is assumed that violence results from lower socioeconomic status and the inner city
- Griffiths 2013
 - “Predominantly African American neighborhoods experience higher rates of violence relative to other ethno-racial communities, even when socioeconomic conditions can be held constant.”
 - Extensive residential segregation and the existing racial hierarchy that favors the white community increases frustration and violent tendencies as a coping mechanism

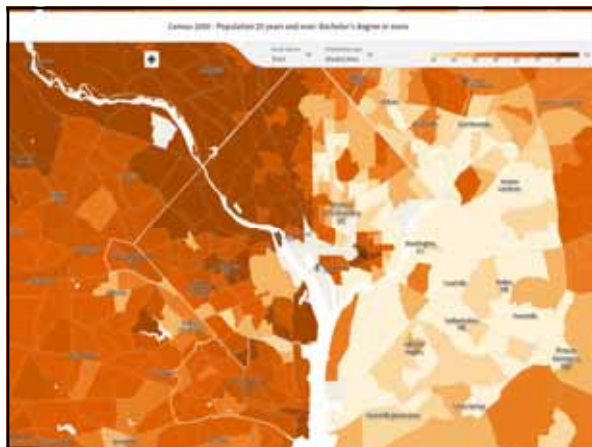
The Effects of Racial Segregation

Education

- Black children tend to receive worse educations throughout their lifetimes
- Funding disparities
 - Philadelphia (79% black and Latino) \$9,299 per-pupil
 - Lower Merion (91% white) \$17,261 per-pupil
- Budget cuts to education tend to effect low-income minority communities the most
 - Charter schools
 - Early education programs
 - Job training programs
 - Career and technical education

Funding Cuts in Pennsylvania





The Christian Call to Justice

- “But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream” (Amos 5:24, NIV)
- “Blessed are they who act justly, who constantly do what is right” (Psalm 106:3, NIV)
- “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern” (Proverbs 29:7, NIV)
- “For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them” (Isaiah 61:8, NIV)

The Christian Call to Justice

- Segregation has played a role in the hegemonic racial relationship that has formed in our society
- As Christians, Scripture demands we step away from this system of oppression

The Christian Call to Diversity

- “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes” (Revelation 7:9, ESV)
- “You then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat” (Romans 14:10, NIV)
- “Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman” (Galatians 3:28, CEV)
- God sees us all as equal and loves all His children
 - It is then our duty to pursue God’s will on earth as it is in Heaven

Christian Community Development Association

- John Perkins, influential member of the social gospel mission
- CCDDA advocates for Christians to invest long-term in poor, minority, and urban populations
- Hands on, tangible solution people can participate in
- A caveat
 - African Americans have a harder time of getting a loan to relocate housing, regardless of socioeconomic status
 - White Christians need to acknowledge their position of privilege and take responsibility and action
 - This should not be taken as a level of superiority or paternalism

CCDA Components

1. Relocation
2. Reconciliation
3. Redistribution
4. Leadership Development
5. Listening to the Community
6. Church-Based
7. Holistic Development
8. Empowerment

Relocation

- Living in a neighborhood long-term
- Charity is easy, but it is not an effective long-term solution
- Christians should commit to a neighborhood
 - Time consuming, costly, life altering
- Boenhoffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Reconciliation

- Evangelism and the healing of relationships
- It is not enough to live in a neighborhood
 - Actively connect and engage
- Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*
 - Process through which a person invites the other into a relationship
 - Invitation
 - Waiting
 - If they accept, the embrace is shared
 - Separate

The Social Worker's Role in Reconciliation

- The NASW Code of Ethics requires cultural competency
- Social workers play a key role as mediators in the cross-cultural engagement
- Must acknowledge issues of oppression, stereotypes, discrimination, prejudice that threaten to breakdown communication

Redistribution

- The just distribution of resources
- CCDA believes that if people are actively doing the first 2 components, this will develop to some degree naturally
- New skills, new connections (networking), and new resources help empower a community to attain a greater level of equality
- Jobs, schools, health centers, and other development projects

The Social Worker's Role in Redistribution

- Based on NASW code of ethics
 - Social workers are trained to promote social and economic justice
 - Social Workers are trained to participate in policy reform
 - “Social workers must become actively involved in establishing and changing policies on multiple levels, including social welfare and agency policy, for the benefit of their clients” (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 2010)

Leadership Development

- Many people that attain financial security choose to move out of low-income/inner-city communities
 - A large number of black people relocate to suburbs from cities when they can afford to leave
- Get youth to succeed and give back to the community they came from
- Youth involvement in community problem-solving produces improved development results and youth get essential life skills
- Service learning promotes youth's future involvement with civic engagement and neighborhood support

Listening to the Community

- Focus on what the community wants instead of what you think they need
- Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)
 - Focus on what already exists rather than needs
 - Talents, resources, skills, infrastructure, people
 - Desire of residents
 - Residents are solution to the challenges
 - Sustainable

Social Worker and Christian's Role in Listening to Communities

- Social work connection
 - Active listening, client engagement
 - Strengths perspective

Church-Based

- Using the church as a focal point of programs and neighborhood initiatives
- Provides a place of worship for residents to commune
- Church is a shared space where people can come together to share their skills, ideas, and gifts

Holistic Development

- Racial segregation/inequality is complex
 - Solution must be multifaceted
- CCDA builds coalitions in communities so that multiple efforts solve various issues in tandem
- Nothing happens in a vacuum, improvements in areas will change the system

Social Worker's Role in Holistic Development

- Training in systems theory
- Generalist practice
 - Engage client's social, biological, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs

Empowerment

- Mutual relationships over dependency
- Fights against paternalism and "white man's burden"
- Focus on dignity and self-respect of the residents
- Old Testament structure of gleaning crops

Benefits of Integration

- Charity alone is dangerous
 - Dependency
 - Can miss intended target
 - Harms local economies
 - No relational qualities
 - Leaves racial division
 - Short-term

Benefits of Relocation

- Taxes
 - Public Schools, roads, police, public services
- Stronger form of advocacy
- Housing values increase
 - Common way to increase personal wealth

Benefits of Integration

- Higher functioning level of civic orientation and generalized trust
 - Generalized trust leads to economic benefits and institutional performance
- Contact hypothesis
 - Interaction between races leads to more harmonious race relationships
 - Helps majority group alter views
 - Strong correlation for racial interaction and minorities gaining economic and social capital

Benefits of Integration

- Educational improvements
- Black and white test gaps reduce considerably when integration takes place
- Card & Rothstein (2007) found “robust evidence that the black-white test score gap is higher in more segregated cities.”
 - Holding family background and other factors constant, integrated cities closed about 1/4th the raw black-white gap in SAT scores
- First year college students at University of Illinois at Chicago
 - When holding outside variables (SAT scores, high school rank, etc.) students from diverse high schools had 0.25-0.5 higher GPAs on average

Benefits of Integration

- Reduction in income inequality
- Education is a predictor in financial security
- Increasing the percent of college graduates in a metropolitan area by 1% increases the average wage by about 1.9%
 - 1.1% of that wage increase is to individuals whose education and skills did not change
- New business opportunities and job development in disenfranchised areas

Arguments Against the CCDA

- Color Blind
- Assimilation
- Gentrification

Color Blind Argument

- Let race issues solve themselves
- Racial inequality is more about a person's motivation and drive to succeed
- Racial equality is achieved if we ignore racial differences

Response to Color Blind Argument

- Ignoring race means ignoring structural injustice, invalidating their experience
- “You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say ‘you are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair.” –President Johnson
- Personal choice is not a sufficient answer
 - Even when the family is intact, the average black family is poorer than the average white family
- As the majority group has benefited from historical racism, this means that there must be sacrifices necessary to help people of color overcome the effects of racism

Assimilation Argument

- Model can be viewed as wealthy white people coming in to a poor black neighborhood
- “White man’s burden”
- White people “fix” what is wrong with the black community
- Replicate wealthy, white, suburban America

Response to Assimilation Argument

- If you do each of the components of the CCDA correctly you will not take over the community
- Focus is on building relationships, listening to the community
 - Provide skills and resources as requested
- Operate from Volf’s perspective on embrace

Gentrification Argument

- “Gentry”- upper class, wealthy, college-educated
- Gentry move into poor neighborhoods and buy houses and begin redevelopment
- Rising property values → rising property taxes → rising rents and mortgages
- Without supervision, many original tenets can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood and are forced to relocate

Response to Gentrification Argument

- Rising home values, increased education levels and income, new business, and job opportunities are good community development if done right

Response to Gentrification Argument

- Policy interventions: Affordable housing and a strong community system
- Build middle/low-income housing
- Prohibit or limit large-scale luxury development
- Reduce or freeze property taxes to protect long-time residents
- Vouchers for long-time residents in low-income neighborhoods
- Protect elderly residents
- Non-governmental organization interventions

- Community organizing
- Contact your mayor, district representative, congressman

Who Should Participate

- Anyone who cares about racial reconciliation, community development, and cities
- It is a sacrifice, but faith is costly
- Scripture is clear that we have an imperative to seek justice, this is not guaranteed to be a comfortable life

Conclusion

- There is a clear systemic oppression taking place that racial segregation plays a part in
- We as Christians have a moral imperative to intervene
- The CCDA provides a useful model in how to engage in racial integration and reconciliation
 - It is not enough on its own, but it is a tangible first step anyone can make
- Social workers provide unique training and skills in facilitating this process

Contact

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