

Video Assignment#1

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

3,4,5-1 Video Assignment#1

Initial Reaction to the Film

The film was deeply moving and troubling, stirring a range of emotions from disbelief to a profound sense of injustice. It showcased the harsh realities of mass incarceration, emphasizing not just the statistics but the human stories behind them. Throughout the film, I experienced a growing sense of urgency for reform and empathy for those whose lives are disproportionately shattered by a punitive system designed more for punishment than rehabilitation. The personal narratives intertwined with factual data created a compelling, visceral response that lingered long after the film ended. The film opened my eyes to the complex interplay of systems that sustain mass incarceration and its profound impact on individuals, families, and communities. The discussion it promotes is crucial for understanding and addressing the systemic reforms needed to dismantle this deeply flawed system.

Areas of Learning

Historical Context and Racial Targeting

The film provided an in-depth look at how legislative measures have historically targeted racial minorities. I learned about the origins and impacts of policies like the War on Drugs, which disproportionately affected communities of color and contributed to a cycle of poverty and incarceration.

Economic Exploitation

A critical learning was the economic exploitation inherent in the prison system. The film exposed how incarceration is commercialized, with private prisons and industries profiting from cheap, coerced labor, often under conditions that resemble modern-day slavery.

Systems Involved in Mass Incarceration

Judicial System

The film delineates the judicial system as a fundamental contributor to mass incarceration, pinpointing how legislation and prejudiced sentencing practices funnel individuals into the prison system. It highlights the significant disparities in bail amounts, sentencing lengths, and the plea-bargaining process, which disproportionately affect minority groups. These judicial practices often result in harsher penalties for the same crimes compared to other groups, underscoring a systemic bias that supports the cycle of mass incarceration.

Political System

The political landscape is another critical system implicated in perpetuating mass incarceration, as depicted in the film. Politicians frequently employ "tough-on-crime" rhetoric as a strategy to win or retain power, which in turn shapes public perception and drives the legislative agenda. This rhetoric often results in policies that favor longer sentences and more stringent penal measures, which disproportionately impact marginalized communities. The film explores how these political maneuvers contribute to the overcrowding of prisons and the expansion of the penal system.

Economic System

The economic system's role in mass incarceration is explored through the lens of prison privatization and the profit motives that underlie it. The documentary exposes how economic incentives drive the incarceration of a higher number of individuals, including for minor offenses, to bolster profitability. This system treats prisoners as commodities, with private

prison companies benefiting financially from increased inmate populations. Such economic dynamics reveal a troubling aspect of mass incarceration, where human lives are subordinate to corporate profits.

Health Outcomes Due to Mass Incarceration

The following systems are involved in health outcomes due to mass incarceration,

Mental Health Deterioration

The mental health consequences for incarcerated individuals are severe, with higher rates of psychological disorders that often remain untreated. The stress and trauma of imprisonment exacerbate these conditions, affecting reintegration into society post-release.

Physical Health Decline

Physical health issues are rampant, with overcrowded and unsanitary conditions leading to higher rates of infectious diseases and chronic illnesses. The lack of adequate medical care and the prevalence of substance abuse further complicate health outcomes.

Community Health Impact

Beyond the prison walls, the health of communities is significantly impacted. Families of the incarcerated face heightened stress and economic hardship, leading to broader public health challenges. Children of incarcerated parents are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues and developmental delays.