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Not All Are Created Equal

The United States has significant inequality within the workforce, institutions, systems, schools, and daily life. All areas in which inequality is present play a role in the lack of development of equality for minorities and women in corporate America while creating an ill perception throughout America's corporate ladder. America may not achieve perfection, but the concentration of 1% that is either made up of blacks, women, and or other small minority percentages at the top of the corporate ladder is not just discouraging; it also symbolizes the systemic barriers faced by certain groups. Minorities and women, from birth, find themselves disadvantaged due to factors such as biased perceptions and systemic inequalities.

The standard way of thinking about minorities and women in corporate America is that white men overpower them. The issue is gently touched upon in *How Many Black Executives Are There in the U.S.? by AboveBoard*. The article discusses the small percentage of black CEOs in the U.S., including S&P 500, Russell 3000, and Fortune 500 companies. These companies are market indices used as benchmarks for the U.S. stock market, and Fortune 500 companies are the top 500 companies worldwide as measured in revenue. There is a minuscule percentage of black CEOs and an even smaller percentage of women CEOs, precisely, women of color representing just about 1% of executive officers. Very little progress is being made for minorities and women in the hierarchy of these corporations.

There have been a few trailblazing black executives in the U.S. who have left a profound impact. In 1987**,** Dr. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. became the first African American CEO of a Fortune 500 company that company is TIAA(Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America), one of the world's biggest pension funds holding assets of over $1 trillion in total (AboveBoard). The current TIAA CEO is Thasunda Duckett, who is "a former CEO of Chase Consumer Banking, a division of JP Morgan, and a member of the board of directors of Nike." (TIAA) When discussing who is at the top of black female CEOs, AboveBoard states, "Rosalind "Ros" Brewer, CEO of Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc., the only Black female CEO in the S&P 500…and the highest-ranking Black CEO on the *Fortune* 500 list." (AboveBoard) AboveBoard urges people to open their eyes and minds to the minuscule percentage of women of color represented on this grand scale, especially as more women of color become qualified. Currently, 44 women are employed at the top of Fortune 500 companies, and five are women of color.

The mental view people have, or instead built-in, is that institutional racism is built into people's minds and has greatly affected employment and other significant areas in corporate America. According to AboveBoard, "Wharton pointed to the issue of "institutional racism" that can be "built into the psyche of a people." In Wharton's view, "collectively, there's a problem." (AboveBoard) When different standards favor certain groups over others, it perpetuates a societal imbalance. Often, this imbalance arises from biases favoring individuals who are white or male, even when individuals from marginalized groups possess comparable qualifications. Systematic racism can be defined as "said to occur when racially unequal opportunities and outcomes are inbuilt or intrinsic to the operation of a society's structures. Simply put, systemic racism refers to the processes and outcomes of racial inequality and inequity in life opportunities and treatment."

(Franc) While evaluations may vary, the prevalence of decision-makers being predominantly white men perpetuates stereotypical views and exacerbates systemic inequalities.

The goal in corporate America has been to create a more diverse and gender-neutral workforce. In recent years, many companies have looked to have more gender requirements and ethnic diversity when hiring, but only in some places. In *A Seat at the Head of the Table by Emily Bazelon* of The New York Times, she interviews Shelley Correll, a sociologist at Stanford, and Katherine W. Phillips, a professor of organizational management at Columbia University. Both women direct leadership centers and have generated practical work to advocate the differences between women and men in the workforce. Phillips states, "the double bind that women face. If they're perceived as nice and warm and nurturing, as they're expected to be, they don't show what it takes to move into a leadership position. But when they take charge to get things done, they're often seen as angrier or more aggressive than men. It's like a tightrope women are asked to walk: Veer just a bit one way or the other, and they may fall off" (Phillips). Phillips highlights the enduring stereotype that women are expected to fulfill traditional domestic roles, as perpetuated by historical norms and reinforced in media portrayals.

The media plays a significant role in shaping and perpetuating gender stereotypes, often portraying women in traditional domestic roles. At the same time, men are depicted as breadwinners or leaders, further reinforcing entrenched societal norms. Media has depicted women through a tunnel for many years, and proper rights not given immediately have created such a societal norm for women. Natasha Quadlin, a sociologist at Ohio State University, performed an experiment in which over 2,000 job applications were sent to employers advertising job openings, with resumes featuring either women's or men's names. Results showed that employers were only half as likely to follow up or offer job interviews to women with high

grades compared to men with similar qualifications, with even larger disparities for women math majors. This bias persists nationwide and is compounded by the perception of math as a domain of masculine genius. Women have significant disadvantages in the American workforce that cause their quality of life to decrease and experience increased hardships. However, there are ways to help aid against these disadvantages and take the call to action for a better America and contagiously worldwide. Furthermore, women with high grades were less likely to be called back than women with average grades, and employers surveyed tended to prioritize competence in men and likability in women, reflecting systemic biases.

The pervasive assumption of women being undervalued in higher positions in America correlates with the low representation of women in executive roles, reflecting systemic biases. Bazelon inquires Dr. Correll about Carnegie Mellon's successful increase in female representation in its computer science major from 7% to 42% over five years. Dr. Correll explains that the key was eliminating the requirement for prior computer programming experience, instead teaching coding skills and emphasizing technology's social impact. By modifying their job advertisement from seeking a "ninja coder" to a more inclusive language, the company attracted a more diverse pool of applicants, including more women. Dr. Correll's insights highlight the potential for significant change in workforce dynamics through minor adjustments. Imagining broader adoption of gender-neutral and inclusive advertising approaches could lead to a more diverse and productive workforce, fostering confidence and innovation among all individuals.

The U.S. Department of Labor is committed to illustrating inequality seen in all areas of support workers and continuing its mission. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, "Women workers, particularly women of color, experience multiple types of inequality in the

labor force, including gender and racial wage gaps, occupational segregation, and a disproportionate burden of costs associated with caregiving." (Labor) The United States is on a mission to make the world a fairer and better place for those who have been set back from marginalization in past or present years and to protect future generations. However, the ideal or necessary focus of the United States has yet to be achieved.

Anshu Siripurapu's article "The U.S. Inequality Debate" examines the current debate about income inequality in the United States. In the discussion of "How do race, ethnicity, and gender factor in?" Mr. Siripurapu States:

"The relationship between race, ethnicity, and inequality has been well-documented. Since 1960, the median wealth of white households has tripled while the wealth of Black households has barely increased. For decades, the unemployment rate among Black Americans has been roughly twice that of white Americans. Black Americans are also underrepresented in high-paying professions, including corporate leadership…Black and American Indian children have far lower economic mobility compared to white, Asian, and children of Hispanic ethnicity" (Siripurapu).

Mr. Siripurapu illustrates how far behind blacks and other minorities are in the economy. Systematic racism is "embedded in systems that it often is assumed to reflect the natural, inevitable order of things. Slavery—explicitly supported by laws—endured for 250 years in the United States and was followed by almost 100 years of Jim Crow laws—often enforced by terror—that were deliberately designed to restrict the rights of African Americans, including the rights to vote, work, and get an education." (Brazeman) Minorities, specifically blacks, have been put behind in society by slavery, segregation, discriminatory laws against principle rights, and more, and long-living perceptions that have created the distinctions between living in white

and black America: two different Americas, same place but very different standards and experiences. The America differences also include women. Numerous categories have been trying to play catch up for years. The differences in money splices are another contributing factor to the U.S.'s inequality towards minorities and women. In discussing the intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender in U.S. inequality, Siripurapu highlights systemic racism's roots in policies like redlining and the exclusion of Black Americans from post-war benefits like the G.I. Bill.

Furthermore, Siripurapu emphasizes the broader implications of inequality, citing experts who argue that it hampers economic growth and fosters political dysfunction. Concentrated income and wealth diminish overall economic demand, while reduced opportunities for low-income households further undermine economic stability. This ripple effect not only affects individuals directly impacted by inequality but also weakens the economy as a whole, leading to a lower quality of life, limited education and opportunities, and hindered economic growth. Thus, addressing inequality is a matter of social justice and critical for ensuring a robust and equitable economy that benefits everyone.

MLK was assassinated on April 4th, 1968, by James Earl Ray. According to the History editors, "Ray had a definite motive in assassinating King: hatred. According to his family and friends, he was an outspoken racist who informed them of his intent to kill Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." (History) James Earl Ray had what many people had in those times, hatred towards minorities and equality and some people specifically hated "unorderly" women. Those struggles back then are still alive today, as people with such intentions still exist. The ones who are against equality for minorities and women seem to be the ones who are racist and or sexist. They are conformed mentally to look down upon minorities and women.

In today's world, some still go to this MLK extent in stopping something they feel goes against their beliefs. A recent example of an outrage because of a killing is that of George Floyd, whose death sparked the Black Lives Matter movement. It is important because it demonstrates some people's reluctance to change and how much it takes for something to get done in either direction.

Detailing the end of MLK's life, History editors state, "In the months before his assassination, Martin Luther King became increasingly concerned with the problem of economic inequality in America. He organized a Poor People's Campaign to focus on the issue, including a march on Washington...traveled to Memphis in support of poorly treated African-American sanitation workers." (History) While attempting to make America a better place and shed light on the issues at hand, he was stopped out of hatred. To make America's workforce more equal to all is only out of a good place. Not to strip one of their jobs, not to prioritize one over the other, not to hurt the economy, and not to hurt families.

In conclusion, the United States has built a smoke and mirrors of the "American Dream" that is possible but not yet the standard. Minority and women workers are currently shackled down but may have a brighter day ahead if it is determined. There was once great progress being made, but the obstacles set forth make it quite hard for more progress, and new variables are present. There are seemingly too many 1 or 2%, statistically speaking, when it comes to minorities and women. In an America that works out the inequality issue better than now, all will benefit, and a much more intricate and efficient workforce will strive. The economy and quality of life will be better. Everything starts with effort and the shared perspective of change. A better and equal United States will help millions and might even change the world.

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