The Way that the Media Portrays the African American Community

And it’s Negative Consequences

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As human beings we all cognitive misers, we use stereotypes to stay in power and make life easier for ourselves. But in order for others to be in power others have to be pushed down and degraded. In the world we live in today we use the media we see from day to day to build up our ideas on other social groups. Today the group that truly seems to be affected the most in my opinion, is the African American community. The African American community in the media seems mainly to be based on criminal actions, poverty, and poor education. People will assume that citizens that are African American are destroying this country piece by piece even though that isn’t the case at all. The African American presence in America is truly not even a large one, taking only 13.1 percent of the country’s population, which compared to the white citizens population is really just a small fraction (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). So being in the minority makes it harder for the blacks to really have a strong voice in the country to change the image that the media has set for the world to see. Studies shown that white men who were convicted of a crime had a higher chance of getting a job than a African American male who hasn’t had any criminal past. That is truly showing everyone how much the African American male is treated in this country. The only reason people can act like that towards a specific race is because they haven’t interacted with anyone from that specific race
group, and they use the media to set the ideology on that social class. So when the media shows black males being violent, in jail, not doing well in school or just on the street in poverty that’s how they are going to perceive other people in the same community. In the media the black community has been portrayed as criminals, which causes the people who view this media to treat most African American citizens unfairly and unjust assuming that everyone in the community is poor, violent and incapable of accomplishing higher things in life because of low education standards in the African American community.

Almost half of the stories in one week of news featured crime stories that pertained to an African American male (Oliver, 2003). This will have people start to make the stereotype that African Americans commit most crimes. In a research poll asking about how people felt about crimes the results showed that mostly all the whites where scared and intimidated by African Americans in their presence because they believed that in that moment the African American would commit a crime (Oliver, 2003). Even though some studies result in no or barely any indication of bias towards the way the media portrays African Americans, other studies show the complete opposite results, finding that African Americans are depicted in the media as criminals and now are linked with more than just crimes, but also are now being connected with adjectives such as dangerous and guilty (Oliver, 2003). In some cases when African Americans and whites are suspects to the same crime, white people will assume that the African American committed the crime over the white counterpart just because he is African American because of the stereotypes accompanied with being African American (Oliver, 2003). With the unjust stereotypes placed on African Americans, even the consequences given by whites are worse than the consequences given to a white criminal who was guilty for the same
exact crime (Oliver, 2003). The media, such as news reports and television shows, in the United States is one of the main reasons why African Americans are assumed to be criminals, and potential threats to citizens of the country (Oliver, 2003).

As the media was portraying the poor of people in poverty in the United States it unequally showed mostly African Americans so being poor in the United States somehow became known as a “black” issue (Clawson & Trice, 2000). As a result of, the media over representing African Americans in poverty, people truly believe that African Americans make up almost half of the United States poverty but it’s shown that African Americans are only just 27 percent of the people in poverty in the United States (Clawson & Trice, 2000). The media depicts the white community as only about 33 percent of the poverty rate in the United States when they are actually 45 percent of the poverty rate (Clawson & Trice, 2000). This goes to show how the media uses it power to build stereotypes to keep certain groups in power. In the magazine world they still over represent the African American poor in this country by so much, while the counter parts of the African American community are being represented fairly (Clawson & Trice, 2000). Even though African Americans were represented in the media for poverty when it came to show sympathy for the community because of poverty the media actually started to change its ways and barely displayed the African American community (Clawson & Trice, 2000). This is how the media will keep a small minority group down, not putting the African American poor in the parts of magazines when showing sympathy took away from the people who would’ve potentially helped the community. The media uses the stereotypes as well, to depict the poor in the United States and they had a predisposition to be African American (Clawson & Trice, 2000).
Being African American is considered already to be a problem when it comes to education because of the limited resources they have, but it is shown that African American students test scores can and have been on par with the white students in the country (Steele, 1992). As young African American students progress through school they tend to be left behind the white counterpart in academic achievements (Steele, 1992). Even if an African American student makes it to college it is a high 70 percent chance that the student will drop out of school compared to a white student who’s chances of dropping out of college is just 45 percent which is almost close to half of the African American rate (Steele, 1992). The issues above are thought to be caused because of the disadvantaged background that the African American student had (Steele, 1992). The background of the African American student is portrayed in the media as a violent and unsafe environment. In the media, black schools all around the country are being shut down due to lack of public funds and other issues of the sort so this will cause a dramatic drop of educated students in the black community.

African Americans in this country are portrayed as the poor of the country, the violence ambassadors and as the failures of the academic world by the media, which causes negative stereotyping all over the country for the African Americans. Being in a mostly white neighborhood as an African American can make you a targeted suspect for anything that goes wrong because of how the media makes the community out to be. Every day citizens all around the country watches television or online post to stay connected with what’s going on around them, and if they watch a news story on how a black man has robbed a store, people will eventually start to believe that all African Americans are criminals. This is just the way people are they make a generalization to make things easier to sum up. It is a part of being a cognitive
miser, it just seems to happen being a human. The African American community has suffered
compared to other races because of how the media makes the community look. An African
America is looked at to be poor, guilty or stupid because that’s all people see. Even on
television shows blacks can be seen a criminals or seen as a struggling student in classes barely
making it by. The media can have positive effects on the African American community
sometimes but honestly the positive gets over looked by negative almost all the time to most
people.
References


