Sociology of Urban Poverty

Final Project/Final E-Portfolio

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Who is an immigrant? According to the Webster Dictionary an immigrant is a person who comes to a county to take up permanent residence. Illegal immigration to the United States is the act of foreign nationals entering the United States without government permission and in violation of United States nationality law, or staying beyond the termination date of visa, also in violation of the law. This paper provides the analysis of the challenges and opportunities Afro-Caribbean face due to immigration reforms and policies, it also focuses on impact and the effects that immigration reforms has on the Afro-Caribbean community in regards to health care access, job opportunities, and education.

Immigrants are much more likely to lack health insurance than similarly poor native born citizens. The Supreme Court decision of Pyler v. Doe states that no state can limit a child access to public elementary and secondary education based on his or her immigration status. Job opportunities for immigrants is difficult to obtain due to immigration status, so these individuals have to succumb to low wage jobs that provides economic value for their families but no greater opportunity such as pension and job security.

Due to the recent immigration reforms such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) preliminary findings displays the impact that the program has offered to these recipients such as obtaining jobs, opening their first bank accounts, and receiving their first credit card. Approximately 61% of young adults who received DACA have obtained a new job. Also with this new found opportunity immigrants will be able to obtain a college a degree, gain job security, and health care access. (How DACA is Impacting the Lives of Those Who are Now DACAmented. (n.d.), 2013)

To some up the interest of immigration reform and its impact on Afro-Caribbeans it’s safe to say that with the new immigration reform and with anticipation of more reforms to come that Congress and the President will take into consideration of how reform policies can have a positive impact the livelihood of the recipients who receives it.

**INTRODUCTION**

According to the United States Department of Homeland Security the unauthorized resident immigrant population is defined as all foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents. Most unauthorized resident either entered the United States without inspection or were admitted temporarily and stayed past the date they were required to leave. Since the 18th and 19th century American has encouraged an open door policy for individuals migrating to the United States, however during the turn of the centuries immigration reforms became rigid and stricter, and even captured fear for individuals who are considered immigrants. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services the events of September 11, 2001, injected new urgency into Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) mission and initiated another shift in the United States' immigration policy. The emphasis of American immigration law enforcement became border security and removing criminal aliens to protect the nation from terrorist attacks. At the same time the United States retained its commitment to welcoming lawful immigrants and supporting their integration and participation in American civic culture. (USCIS.gov, 2013). With the new immigration reform such as the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) this program brings forth a glimmer of hope for the individuals that it will impact. This paper will analyze the challenges and opportunities that Afro-Caribbean’s face due to recent immigration policy reform (2009-2013) and its effects on their health care needs, education, and job opportunities. With the increase support of immigration policy and reforms job opportunities, education and health care needs will be greatly impacted, because once an immigrant has some kind of “security” in the United States; the vast amount of opportunities greatly impact his/ her livelihood and brings stability in the lives of these individuals. I am a Registered Nurse for about 3 years; and I provide care for a wide range of Afro-Caribbean immigrants.  My future career goal is to become a nurse practitioner, this topic relates to my future career goal because as a nurse practitioner I will be responsible for the care of these individuals in an acute care setting and/or outpatient setting; having knowledge of the Afro-Caribbean community medical and social needs will greatly improve the individuals’ quality, management, and of care in the community.  The impact of immigration and the effects that it has on the Afro-Caribbean community relates to this class because it is focusing on individuals of Afro descent who lives in the black urban communities and how immigration affects their medical treatment, education and way of living in America. A creative option was created with this topic; I choose to do an ethnography which consisted of a video interview of two individuals focusing on a recipient of the DACA and an undocumented immigrant who has been living in the United States for over 20 years. These individuals’ best drives the topic of immigration since they are actually living out the policies and reforms that United States has placed on them on a day to day basis.

According to USA Job. Org many immigrants view American as the land of opportunity-the land of milk and honey- the Promise land, and with these perception immigrants migrate for better opportunities, financial income, and a better way of life. After migrating to the United States most immigrants realizes that the American dream is not as easy as they had hoped, there are law that are set forth that halts the American dream. The challenges they face are tremendous, stressful, and daunting. The challenges that immigrants face are finding housing, getting a job, if the immigrant has non friends or family already in the US, he/she was doubly handicapped, many Americans dislike immigrants so racial discrimination develops. One of the many social issues that are affected are health care needs, according to the article *Immigrants and the U.S. Health Care System* there has been accusations that immigrants use health care services for which they are not eligible, or use them more often that everyone else are commonplace…. As the following facts confirm, health care expenditures in the U.S. are lower for immigrants than for native born residents and immigrants use less health care services overall than citizens. Let’s not look at this statement as a means of saying immigrants don’t affect the U.S., in fact this should be an eye-opener and even bring awareness that there is something lacking in the U.S. health care system for immigrants. According to article I*mmigrants and U.S Health Care System* it is a known fact that undocumented immigrants have very little access to public funded health care program and are reluctant to use services because of fear, and confusion over eligibility. Health services available to undocumented immigrants are limited in most states to emergency or to services that protect the public health (such as immunizations). Yet many undocumented immigrants do not seek even this limited care because of other barriers such as fear, confusion…etc. This factual information is daunting to me as a health care professional. This fact came to light the video interview with Mr. Sydney Ottar who explained to me that he uses clinics only on days when he does not feel well, his lack of heath assessments are due to fact that he has to show proof of income which at times he is fearful for because of his immigration status, Mr. Ottar also stated that the clinics don’t improve the well-being of individuals it just creates more trouble because specific test are not being done at the time of injury or when the medical ailments are noted, he informed me that you referrals are done first and subsequently a follow up appointment. He was truthful into letting me know at times he is not able make it to the appointment like many others , because of work or don’t have the money/ resources to get back to the clinic for the follow-up/ referral appointments.

Let’s begin to look at the current immigration policy of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ( DACA), DACA is not offered to all individuals because eligibility has to be checked first before you can apply for the DACA. The application fee for DACA is $465 dollars that does not include the cost of an immigration lawyer or legal representation. According to the United States Department of Homeland Security one can request consideration of deferred action for childhood arrival if you:

1. Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;
3. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
4. Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
5. Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012;
6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and
7. Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

With the eligibility criteria, possible recipients can file and if granted they will be able to benefit from the opportunities given to them, such as being able to apply to college, possible receiving financial aid which is granted in some states, apply for a drivers license and most importantly they will receive a social security number; which we all know is a integral part in the adaptation in the American society. The interview with Ms. Gloria Mendez, she did not want disclose her face because of the shame and embarrassment of being labeled alien, immigrant, etc. Ms. Mendez reported that she feel a great sense of security now that she does not have to fear deportation or face ramification for her parents action of migrating her to the US at 11 years of age. Ms. Mendez is able to attend a City University of New York (CUNY) college and is now in her 3rd year of receiving her bachelor’s degree in human services. One thing that is still a concern for Ms. Mendez is health care, she stated that since does not qualify for private health insurance and is hoping that with the new affordable care act that she will be able to choose her own primary care physician and follow up in a doctor’s office rather than a clinic to receive proper management of her care. Ms. Mendez is just one of the roughly 1.8 million immigrants in the United States who might be, or become eligible for the Obama Administration “deferred action” initiative for unauthorized youth brought to this country as children. (Who and Where the DREAMers Are, Revised Estimates. (n.d.), 2013).

Unlike Ms. Mendez who is able to benefit from this national immigration reform, Mr. Ottar will not benefit from this program, because he does not fulfill the eligibility criteria. Mr. Ottar explained to me that he migrated from Jamaica in hope of getting rich, but instead of getting rich he sees himself much poorer than when he left Jamaica. Mr. Ottar stated that when he migrated to the U.S. that he could have obtained a GED by paying his way through school, but decided not to due to the fact that his profession at the time did not need a degree but actually work experiences. Mr. Ottar is currently seeking to obtain permanent residency through his children who are U.S. citizens, this is also known as “mixed status” families-those with at least one undocumented immigrant. Mr. Ottar who is now 51 years old, stating that his work opportunities has depleted due to immigration reforms, his age, and also a change in the education requirements for a service technician.

With regards to recent immigration reforms, migrants can hope for a brighter future in the United States. Each day is breakthrough for immigration reform such a Governor Christie who signed a bill on December 20th 2013 to have undocumented immigrants who graduated high school in New Jersey after attending for at least three years to be eligible for the lower in-state rates at public higher educational institutions, including in-county rates at community colleges (NJ.com *The Star Ledger,* 2013)

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