

## □ To what extent have ethnic minorities made social and economic progress?

In 1968, the Kerner Commission reported on the status of black Americans with the conclusion that, of many things they were; victims of police racism, they received substandard education and they faced severe unemployment.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century some people would argue that not much has changed since then with statistics showing that Black Americans living in the USA earned a mere 61% and Hispanics earnings averaged around 67% of White Americans, but to argue this would be too simplistic.

Unemployment is a major factor affecting the progress of ethnic minorities in the US. During the Clinton administration all unemployment rates dropped but for Blacks and Hispanics those levels still seemed to be higher than that of White Americans. Another fact would be that ethnic minorities seem to be poorly represented in professions and well paid jobs which could be seen as discrimination.

However, contrasting with this, at the very top end of the labour market there is now very little difference between Blacks and Whites and in fact Black female top earners out-earn White female top earners by about 10%. This could be due to the fact that it appears Black women are more likely and more prepared to work full time and longer hours.

Poverty also plays main role in this progress. A key theme has been identified in that there has been a significant reduction in poverty in the Black community. In 1959 the level of Blacks living in poverty was well over half whereas in 2001 this figure dropped to less than a quarter, but although the figures are decreasing the Black community still have the highest level of people living in poverty.

These extremely high levels are mainly due to the fact that they are victims of the poverty cycle. Eg.// being born into poor families generally leading to a poor education and low paid jobs maybe even unemployment. Though at the same time the way poverty levels are measured in the USA is highly criticized as the simplicity of it was leaving the FPL at a mere \$19, 500 annually whereas it should be somewhere around the region of \$32, 000.

On the other hand there is a small percentage of the Black community who live in “Gilded Ghettos” - those who have lived the American dream and experienced significant improvements, they are well educated and are in well paid jobs.

This goes to show that there seems to be no in-between, In the Black community you are either very rich or living in “poverty”.

In addition to this Education unsurprisingly plays a part. Literacy rates in the US are declining mainly due to the fact that the Hispanic population is evermore increasing many of whom English is a second language. As you would expect White Americans are more literate than non whites but Hispanics do better than Blacks. This is surprising considering African Americans see education as a way out of poverty and in the last 20 years the percentage of African Americans completing high school has soared from just over 50% to around 75%, while those graduating college has rose from a mere 6% to 14%.

Concluding this, to say that ethnic minorities have made social and economical progress, unless backed up with clear evidence and statistics would be hard as shown above. In the last 50 years small improvements have taken place but no drastic changes have been put in order which is restricting Ethnic Minorities in the USA in every possible way.