Social Justice Issues Related To Food And Culture

Posted on October 11, 2022

View this essay online:
https://academic-master.com/social-justice-issues-related-to-food-and-culture/

Food Justice

Described as a social issue, a political problem, and a matter of economic importance, food justice overarches the idea of social, environmental, and economic equality through improved health and nutrition. In the United States, the issues related to poor access to food, hunger, diet-related illnesses, and other food system concerns impact the population, especially the people of colour. The leading food system, with its global food chains and empty calories, results in many Americans remaining unhealthy and undernourished and adversely impacts low-income communities. Food insecurity is most prevalent in African-American households and is twice as adverse as compared to white households. For the Latino community, one in every five is food insecure, in contrast to one in ten whites and overall one out of eight Americans (Grace Communications Foundation, 2021).

In the United States, the leading causes of illness, mortality, and disability are heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer. The minority groups are most impacted by these conditions due to limited access to healthy food. This can be viewed through data on the prevalence of obesity among Native Americans, who are sixty per cent more at risk of obesity as compared to US whites, while the rate of diabetes is seventy-seven per cent higher among African Americans. These events are not isolated facts but rather relate to a larger context of poverty, which unreasonably impacts people of colour. The roots of this are embedded in the historical policies that have deemed people of colour to be oppressed, with less wealth, possessions, and opportunities. Today’s hunger and food injustice run deep and are rooted in centuries of exploitation targeted towards minorities (Adelman, 2003).

Social Justice And Culture

With its roots fixed in various disciplines, culture is an all-encompassing aspect related to symbols, stories, artefacts, and an amalgamation of knowledge, belief, and values. The cultural aspect of social justice is interpreted in numerous ways and entails the culture-specific concept of what is considered just. The United States is a land of immigrants with diverse cultures and colourful ethnicities. Therefore, cultural justice entails that minority groups are treated equally and without discrimination. However, systemic injustice and racial discrimination implanted in the American culture cause minorities to be oppressed and denied equality (Maddox, 2010).

Cultural injustice is prevalent in the US in the form of racial discrimination, ageism, and homophobia. Black Americans have, for a long time, faced disparities in employment opportunities, health, education, and income; however, from the White Americans' perspective, minorities are given equal and, in most cases, better opportunities. This perception reveals an ignorance among white Americans regarding a long-standing history of racism in the country. Immigrants face rejection, discomfort, and even persecution owing to their status as foreigners with dissimilar traditions and customs. Similarly, certain religious groups are also oppressed because of their beliefs (Salter, Adams, & Perez, 2018).

Even today, the minority groups in America are subjected to violence. Viewing immigrants as foreigners who take away American jobs and foster xenophobia leads to animosity. Another fear prevalent among white Americans against Spanish-speaking immigrants is that of a cultural shift in terms of language. Americans believe that since most Spanish-speaking immigrants do not learn English right away, they are bringing a cultural change from Anglo to Spanish (Koppelman & Goodhart, 2005).

Personal Perspectives

Social injustice in any society stems from a discriminatory stance towards a particular group based on an actual or perceived difference, resulting in the suppression of life necessities and equal opportunities. Every human being has a right to the provision of healthy and fresh food; however, food injustice renders minorities at a disadvantage. All societal injustices are based on cultural prejudices, which result in particular groups being oppressed not only in terms of food access but also health, education, housing, and employment opportunities.

There are many examples of cultural and food injustice found in American society. The 9/11 incident sparked cultural stereotyping against Muslims, and extreme prejudice in America was prevalent due to fears of terrorism associated with that group. Similarly, ageism, which is also related to cultural injustice, discriminates against the elderly, and they are denied employment and regarded as a burden. Other examples of cultural injustice include prejudice against gender and sexual dispositions of individuals leading to the wage gap between groups and the oppression of the "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTQ) community".

Food insecurity leads to increased hunger not only in the US but also all over the world. It is an overall system of discrimination against a group that leads to low-income families that are ultimately food insecure. I believe that food insecurity is an outcome of a larger problem that is based on discrimination based on the cultural context. It is, therefore, imperative that instead of overcoming the expressions of bias, the root cause of the problem is controlled to promote antiracist and anti-discriminatory practices.

Social Systems And Behaviors

Within a society, various social structures exist, and these systems are based on shared values. The basis of all injustice is the behaviours promoted by these social systems. Since social systems are based upon shared culture, class, roles, social status, and various institutions, all of these are the contributing factors to discrimination and injustice within society. Many examples of such stereotypes exist in our society. The wage gap is an example of behaviour promoted by the social system, which has caused notable differentiation of wages based on gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. These social systems also lead to cultural bias against the LGBTQ community, outlawing same-sex marriages and directing persecution towards transsexuals not only in the wider community setting but also in institutes such as schools. Similar prejudice is observed in other institutes such as health care facilities and offices.

Political Systems And Behaviors

Although a single political system may not encompass the entire society, it is the type of political system that determines the type of society and individual behaviour. The political systems influence public policies and reflect the government's ability to make decisions that are inclusive, efficient, and effective in catering to the vast ethnic and racial diversities in a country. However, political injustice results in public administration based on corrupt practices where minorities face a disadvantage and remain food insecure, face discrimination in terms of opportunities and even face persecution at the hands of powerful groups. The conflicting ideas about equal rights and equal resource allocation often threaten the status quo and those in power, resulting in an ever greater need for social change and an improvement of the system. Injustice in society will become prevalent if the public policies and judicial system disregard the rights of minorities. Involving minorities in the decision-making process by giving them ample opportunities for representation can aid in the progress towards a just society.

Conclusively, I believe that social justice is a vast concept that is impacted by numerous factors. While food insecurity is one aspect which is rooted in economic injustice, it leads to other problems, such as health-related concerns, which ultimately highlight the discriminatory health benefits. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the cultural undertone of the problem, which directs hatred and violence towards groups that are deemed insignificant in society.

References

Adelman, L. (2003). *RACE: The Power of an Illusion. Background Readings: A Long History of Racial Preferences – For Whites*. Retrieved from PBS/California Newsreel: https://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-03-02.htm

Grace Communications Foundation. (2021). *Food Justice*. Retrieved from Food Print:

https://foodprint.org/issues/food-justice/

Koppelman, K. L., & Goodhart, R. L. (2005). *Understanding human differences: Multicultural education for a diverse America.* Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Maddox, M. (2010). Cultural justice. *Peace Studies, Public Policy and Global Security, 5*(24).

Salter, P. S., Adams, G., & Perez, M. J. (2018). Racism in the structure of everyday worlds: A cultural-psychological perspective. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 27*(3), 150-155.