A little boy grows up with the dream of becoming a doctor, but as he goes through school with few resources and little encouragement, he realizes that his place in the world was decided before he was born and it was right beside his older brother at the local McDonald's. All children grow up with big dreams, but the difference is that the dreams of low-income children are crushed before they leave the 5th grade (Kozol, 1991, p.57). By this time, children realize that they are not on an even playing field with other children. Our society's public school education system is reproducing, if not enhancing, social stratification and inequality. The United States spends less on the schools that have the largest population of low-income and minority children than on schools with children from the more affluent families, typically White children. We are only further widening the gap between rich and poor when we give the children who come from the bottom end of class structure and give them even less when they leave their homes to come to class. In the United States, we spend approximately \$900 less per year on each student from the poor school districts than we do in the more affluent communities; a gap that is unchanging. In addition, \$614 less is spent per student in districts that have a majority of students of color compared to districts with a large white population (Education Trust, 2005). With statistics like this it is almost impossible to say all children growing up in the United States have equal access to equal education and sadly, quality of education is closely related to race and economic status. Reproduction of inequality in the United States through the public school system is a result of institutionalized racism, underfunded schools, and lack of resources. As a result, there is often a lack of qualified teachers in low-income areas, a constant blame game, and a lack of culturally sensitive teachers. In this paper I will illustrate that we live in a society that is structured to keep the hierarchical kingdom intact by means of the education system.

Rich vs. Poor, rather White vs. Non-White

There is a vast difference between schools in low-income areas compared to schools in affluent areas. Minorities are most likely to be living in low-income areas because racism is still alive here in the United States. In Jonathan Kozol's "Savage Inequalities" (1991) most of the urban schools he visited were 95 to 99 percent nonwhite. According to Teach for America the present times aren't much different,

In America today, educational disparities limit the life prospects of the 13 million children growing up in poverty, impacting their earning potential, voter participation, civic engagement, and community involvement. These disparities disproportionately impact African-American, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American children, who are three times as likely to live in a low-income area. (Teachforamerica.org, 2009).

In one of the schools Kozol visited, located in one of the poorest areas in East St. Louis, "4 of the 6 toilets do not work. The toilet stalls, which are eaten away by red and brown corrosion, have no door. The toilets have no seats. One has a rotted wooden stump. There are no paper towels and no soap. Near the door is a loop of wire with an empty toilet paper roll" (Kozol, 199, p. 36). Furthermore, at a high school in East St. Louis, the students are trained for jobs in Burger King and McDonalds in their advanced home economics classes, the science labs are 30 to 50 years outdated, and there are 26 books for a 110 students with some missing the first 100 pages (Kozol, 1991, pp. 27, 37). Not only do the students but also at the schools in East St. Louis not have adequate resources to learn but their sanitary facilities are anything but sanitary. The children are already shown society does not care about them. Their own schools are giving up on them and allowing the students to settle when they train them for fast-food jobs instead of telling them to reach for the stars. Goals and dreams are not taught in East St. Louis.

On the other end of the spectrum is New Tier High School in Chicago where a counselor there says "80 to 90 percent of the kids here are good, healthy, red-blooded Americans" (Kozol, 1991, p. 66). The following are perks of being a student at New Tier high school (Kozol, 1991, p. 66):

- Diverse selection of music, art, and drama classes
- Numerous foreign language courses, including Latin
- Average class size is 24 students
- Elective courses such as Aeronautics and Literature of Nobel Winners
- Same faculty adviser for 4 years (Each faculty adviser only has 24 students)

At New Tier High School the children are encouraged to dream and go after their passions, which can be seen in their ability to choose from a buffet of classes. It is unmistakable when comparing New Tier High School and the schools from East St. Louis which children will be coming out ahead in the future.

The problem of unequal education among varying social ranks persists because the children from low-income areas have more hurdles to jump to get through school. Struggling schools are set up with an insufficient amount of books, substitute teachers that show no passion, and poor learning atmospheres. How are the children supposed to feel like they are worth something being in these environments every day?

One reason why there's a large distinction between some schools is that the funding the schools receive is largely determined by property taxes paid by homeowners. In neighborhoods where the population is made up of mostly working and lower-class families, properties are less expensive and in return taxes are much lower than those in more affluent neighborhoods. Thus, there will be an unequal allocation of resources

leading to lower test scores and lower college enrollment rates than students from affluent areas. Due to lack of funding, many of the low-income schools don't have sufficient supplies to teach their classes and they offer few enrichment programs such as AP courses, gifted programs, or library collections (Teachforamerica.org, 2009). AP courses give students a boost on their college applications while simultaneously taking care of various GE requirements. This allows these privileged students to finish college at a quicker pace allowing for extra time for work, internships, and/or less money spent on college as a whole. Since the students from low-income schools do not ordinarily have access to AP courses and other gifted programs there are once again at a disadvantage because they will not have these extras on their college applications when other students do.

In an article written by Lizzie Logan, a student at the urban school of San Francisco, discusses another factor that separates rich students from poor students farther along in their education, the SATs. Logan argues that the SAT is supposed to be a test that measures all students equally, yet income differences across families make a huge impact on scores. The more money you spend, the more times you can take the test and the more private tutoring you can afford (Logan, 2009). The College Board, creators of the SAT, is an example of businesses reproducing inequality though the education system. On top of the SAT costing money each time you take it, the prep books cost money, as well as the prep classes. While students from wealthy families can afford to take the test as many times as they want and hire private tutors, these luxuries are not often available to low-income children. Lack of school books, unqualified teachers, and

unequal opportunities at receiving high SAT scores, aren't the only difficulties the poorer children face.

The problems within school walls, due to lack of funding, doesn't stop when students leave the classroom. Their problems are just beginning and this is another thing that keeps the rich separated from the poor. In East St. Louis, 98% of the population was black, there were no obstetric services, no regular trash collection, approximately 1/3 of families live on less than \$7,500 per year, and 75% of the population live on some sort of social welfare (Kozol, 1991, p. 7). In addition, they have some of the sickest children in America. According to Kozol "Children lives for months with pain that grown-ups would find unendurable. The gradual attrition of accepted pain erodes their energy and aspiration" (Kozol, 1991, p. 21). Once again, this places children from low-income areas at an extreme disadvantage and reproduces inequality.

Blame Game

Those with the power in society -- government, private funders, education professionals, and the media -- blame the individual rather than society when it comes to things such as poverty and life choices. Once students are told that they are to blame for their situations, students often internalize these messages. So-called "poor family values" or "low self-esteem" are popular reasons used for why an individual doesn't succeed. Ethnographer Julie Bettie points out that "...although naming 'family breakdown' as the cause for virtually all social ills is based on dubious social science, it has become a rallying cry across the political spectrum" (Bettie, 2003:6.) An example of one's low self-esteem, as seen by others, as a reason for one's place in society can be seen in the following passage from Julie Bettie's "Women without Class" (2003):

In their less judgmental moments, preps described smokers as having "low self-esteem." While it certainly was the case that many of them suffered from low self-esteem, to suggest this as the cause not the consequence of their class location (among other things) helps reproduce the belief in a classless society and suggests an individual rather than societal remedy (Bettie, 2003, p.109).

This type of ideology further perpetuates the widening gap of our education system because it ignores the core problem, educational inequity, and provides a convenient scapegoat. Those in power like to blame the individual because it keeps the lower-income children, typically those of color, out of their school systems because, as Kozol writes, "they see the poorer children as a tide of mediocrity that threatens to engulf them" (Kozol, 1991, p. 61). It is a common theme in our society to be told that you can do whatever you want in life and if you aren't doing what you dreamed, it is your fault. When children from low-income areas realize that college isn't an option for them they take fault as opposed to blaming their schools, teachers, or even society in general. Kozol describes the blame game perfectly, "placing the burden on the individual to break down doors in finding better education for a child is attractive to conservatives because it reaffirms their faith in individual ambition and autonomy. But to ask an individual to break doors that we have chained and bolted in advance of his arrival is unfair" (Kozol, 1991, p. 62). We as a society can no longer say that one's future lies solely in their own hands when some children have to jump over hurdles and others have a straight clearing to the finish line.

The real blame lay with the funding gap, but for some reason those in power choose to ignore this aspect. The Education Trust argues that, "funding gaps undermine one of our most powerful and core beliefs that we as Americans cling to: that no matter what circumstances children are born into, all have the opportunity to become educated and, if they work hard, -to pursue their dreams (The Education Trust, 2005, p. 2). When the funding gaps are presented it is obvious that there is an immense disparity, yet the ones in power still combat it. Critics in the press, who are against more spending in the low-income area school districts, try to manipulate

the facts to make it seem like the schools in those areas are not spending the money wisely. For example the press pointed out that East St. Louis has one of the largest sources of paid employment in the city. Yet, what the critics failed to point out that due to the dire circumstances in this poverty-stricken area they needed more gifted staff. Furthermore, the crumbling infrastructure burned up a much larger chunk of their per-pupil budget than an updated school building in a more affluent area would need. Once more this allots the children in the richer districts more money towards their educational experience. The affluent in our society are either in denial or choose to ignore the funding gap as one of the roots of the education inequity problem because it keeps them at the top.

Somebody's Got to Do It

Education is more important now than ever. Nowadays, the type of education a student receives typically reflects the amount of money they make later on in life. More and more jobs require a high level of skill and knowledge, and jobs that don't require those high levels rarely provide a wage capable of supporting a family (The Education Trust, 2005, p.4). The problem with this is our education system is set up to make sure that there are always people to fulfill the "dirty jobs" and it's not surprising to realize that the people that fill these jobs are not usually the children that were from more affluent families and went to a good school. A businessman from Chicago told Jonathon Kozol, "these bottom-level jobs exist. They need to be done. Somebody's got to do them." Kozol proceeding by saying, "it is evident, however, who that somebody will be. There is no sentimentalizing here. No corporate CEO is likely to confess a secret wish to see his children trained as cosmetologists or clerical assistants. So the prerogatives of class and caste are clear" (Kozol, 1991, p.76). This is a great example of Collin's Conflict Theory of Stratification, "those that control resources are likely to try to exploit those that lack resources"

(Ritzer, 2008, p.272). Once again the people in power are making sure they keep their pockets deep.

Through the school system, the children at low-income schools are very aware of where the place in life is going to be. Many of these children react with defiance and realize that no one is looking out for them or understands where they come from. Children that are defiant at school are typically written off as troublemakers and are at the moment given up on by their teachers and school. At this point, since school did not work out for them, work becomes the source of their self-esteem and purpose in life. Two examples of boys that took the "counter-school culture" in Paul Willis's Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs are Spike and Joey. Spike works at a linen wholesaler's and views his job as more important than school and would happily miss school for work. The money he earns brings him confidence and he even helps out his parents when they are going through a hard time. Joey works as a painter and sees school as a forced chore because the job gives him more self-confidence than school did (Willis, 1977, p. 39). The stories of Spike and Joey are examples of what many other workingclass children feel. These children become tarnished by the education system and begin to believe their best option is to go straight to the workforce. Their situations of giving up on school also relate to lack of cultural sensitivity, in that teachers do not typically teach a curriculum that is relevant to them. They usually teach a curriculum that offers little relevance to improving the self concepts of students from diverse backgrounds. Willis depicts the working-class boys, 'the lads', and their need of escape from the school system:

One should not underestimate the degree to which the 'the lads' want to escape from school-the 'transition' *to* work would be better termed the 'tumble' *out* of school-and the lire of the prospect of money and cultural membership amongst 'real men' beckons very seductively as refracted through their own culture" (Willis, 1977, p. 100).

This leads to confusion, anger, loneliness, and lastly failure because at one point or another 'the lads' will begin to blame themselves, not their teachers or society, for their life circumstances.

Bourdieu and Paseron come to 'the lads' defense and go on to argue that the 'cultural capital' views and standards of the dominant groups in society ensure the success of their offspring and thus the reproduction of class position and privilege. This is because educational advancement is controlled through the 'fair' meritocratic testing of precisely those skills which 'cultural capital' provides. Diplomas and certificates work not to push people up, but to maintain those who are already at the top (Willis, 1977, p. 128). It should be clear by now that the ones in power, the people with money, are treating our school system as a business. A business that is training the rich for the top-positions and leaving the poor for the bottom. Money is a relative commodity, if it weren't for the poor, there wouldn't be any rich people. The wealthy realize this and use the education system as a way to maintain the hierarchical structure in our society.

Where the Grass is Greener

Although educational inequity exists in rural communities the effect it has on the children is more extensive in urban areas due to relative deprivation. Relative deprivation is the perception of an unfair disparity between one's situation and that of others (Dictionary.com, 2009). What makes it difficult is that the poorer, urban schools are often just on the other side of the hill to the nation's richest districts, and this dissimilarity strengthens the resentment the poorer children feel (Kozol, 1991, p. 74). When a child can see another child of the same age who lives nearby succeeding and receiving special privileges such as a nicer school, their own books, and a soccer team, it only further perpetuates their belief that they are the ones left behind and society doesn't care about them. After seeing this picture replayed throughout their life, they

will begin to believe what society has taught them; their current place in the world is due to their own actions. Many of the students come to the realization that a diploma from a ghetto high school isn't the same as the diplomas the richer children receive (Kozol, 1991, p. 29) and consequently stop going to school because they see no rational reason why they should. They come to realize their place in society. This causes many of the girls to have no reason not to have a baby, only further increasing our poverty rate in the United States.

Consequences of Poverty

Not only do children have to face hardships in school, but outside of school as well. In East St. Louis they have "some of the sickest children in America" (Kozol, 1991, p. 20). Being sick definitely takes a toll on your body but most importantly, on your ability to concentrate and process information. Since problems not only occur within the school walls, it is far more difficult to provide equal access to education because the poorer schools need that much more assistance. Allocating equal resources to schools could be one huge step forward to help children living in poverty to have a chance at climbing the social ladder. These schools not only need more money for books and more qualified teachers, but also for services like free breakfast and lunch programs because many of these children do not get adequate meals at home.

In a rural high school in Central California the student body was composed of many teenagers from working and lower class families. Most of these students worked almost 30 hours per week to help support their families (Bettie, 2003, 10). This automatically puts low-income students at a disadvantage compared to students from middle class or higher families because they may have to work less or not at all, leaving more time for homework and extracurricular activities that look good on college applications. Also for the small percentage that do go to college they have to work to put themselves through college while at the same time going into

debt from student loans. Students from more affluent families whose parents pay for their schooling have the option to work and save the money they make. If a student from a low-income family makes it to college graduation there is a good chance that they will be in debt from students loans and consequently their work money will then go to paying off bills, as opposed to the wealthy student who has the ability to put their money from work to luxuries such as a house or car. Once again the students from the more affluent families come out ahead and it all begins in the classroom.

Educational Tracking

Institutional racism is prevalent in the public school systems which can be seen through educational tracking. The following is a definition of tracking from Ann Arnett Ferguson:

School rules govern and regulate children's bodily, linguistic, and emotional expression. They are an essential element of the sorting and ranking technologies of an educational system that is organized around the search for and establishment of a ranked difference among children. This system is designed to produce a hierarchy: a few individuals who are valorized as "gifted" at the top and a large number who are stigmatized as failures at the bottom. School rules operate along with other elements of formal curriculum such as standardized tests and grades to produce this ordered difference among children (Ferguson, 2000, pp. 49-50).

In Ferguson's fieldwork at Rosa Parks Elementary her first impressions showed that those who were tracked to the bottom, were clearly those of color. Her original views of the children and families came directly from the school via teachers, administrators, tests, and scores. From these she learned that the worst-behaved children were black and male, as well as having some of the lowest test scores. Furthermore, black children almost never made it into the ranks of Gifted and Talented programs. Lastly, where the blame game is apparent, she gathered from the school that these black kids need special treatment, in the case discipline, because they don't get enough

attention at home and thus demand it in the classroom. Rosa Parks Elementary isn't the only school with these tracking practices.

Educators often treat low-income children as though they are "bad" or "dumb," and overtime children internalize this definition of themselves. This is where the labeling theory comes in or a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a case study done by Julie Bettie, called "Women Without Class," the idea of institutional racism and tracking can be seen at a rural high school in central California. As an ethnographer, Bettie gets to know all the different cliques of girls throughout the year. They trust her with information and share their oppressed stories. She describes how they see themselves; class, race, status, and gender all become intermixed, "through their narratives they constructed race and class identities for themselves which were relational, clearly defined by the context of the communities from which they came." (Bettie, 2003: 8.) The girls were divided into cliques, the "preps" and "las chicas" being two examples. "Preps", typically white middle class girls, were prepared for college, while "las chicas" were almost always automatically advised to take vocational schooling. After one of the "las chicas" was explained the concept of tracking this was her response: "Oh, yeah. That happened to me. This counselor told me to take all the non-required classes. Now I'm way behind in English and math, so that is why I can't go to a state school. The counselor said I wasn't ready. I heard she got fired for that" (Bettie, 2003, p.77). "Las chicas," typically working or lower class girls, were never given a choice of which classes that wanted to take. School administrators tracked "las chicas" without testing their academic capabilities. This type of labeling that was placed on them by administrators, teachers, and advisors immediately restricted their life outcomes. Another example tracking is when the "las chicas" were taken to a vocational school tour by a school administrator and the woman providing the orientation told them there is a difference between

education and skills, arguing that thirty thousand dollars into debt with a student loan for four to six years of college and then coming out with a bachelor's degree in history and therefore no job is impractical. Further, she went on, 'Junior college takes twice as long as business school because of crowded classrooms and general education courses which aren't necessary" (Bettie, 2003, p. 87). Not only did she make it seem like that was their only choice she also left out the fact that many of them couldn't afford the cost of vocational schooling and the prospects of a stable job afterwards were not encouraging.

According to Ferguson, race also plays a huge role in tracking, "race continues to be a ready-made filter for interpreting events, informing social interactions, and grounding identities and identification in school" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 17). Ann Arnett Ferguson exemplifies the role race plays in tracking in her book Bad Boys: Public School in the Making of Black Masculinity. Ferguson observed and interacted with the students at Rosa Parks Elementary School and saw in her fieldwork that"...just as children were tracked into futures as doctors, scientists, engineers, word processors, and fast- food workers, there were also tracks for some children, predominantly African American and male, that led to prison" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 2). In Bettie's study the girls were tracked into classes at school that gave them no opportunity to get into college, while in Ferguson's case it wasn't a matter of classes the boys were tracked into but the school labeling processes that revealed the hidden curriculum of the school to isolate and marginalized the African American boys by means of discipline. Three-quarters of the boys that were suspended that year at Rosa Parks Elementary were boys, and of those, four-fifths were African American (Ferguson, 2000, p. 2). Typically teachers think getting in trouble at school is upsetting for children and will help to change the child's behavior in the future, but Ferguson's study shows the complete opposite. Getting into trouble for the children was an escape from a classroom of

monotony and routine (Ferguson, 2000, p. 32). These children don't feel class relates to them and see getting kicked out of classroom as a relief, quite similar to the boys from Willis's study.

Purging Youth

One of the most shocking things that occurred and is probably still occurring in schools, was the pushing out of students that is shown in Michelle Fine's "Framing Dropouts" (1991) where many of the students were in a sense forced out of high school and put into a GED course. The students were told, by school administrators and teachers, that because of their behaviors, for example absenteeism, they would have a better chance with an alternative school program. The school gave them the incentive that it would take them less time to complete their GED at an alternative program than through their high school. In a conversation with Constance, a student who had been recently discharged, she was asked if a GED is as good as a high school diploma and her response was that it was better because you could get in 6 months you could get in 3 months with a GED (Fine, 1991, p.91). The students were never told that they a choice in the matter and could stay at the high school and were thus "discharged." Additional alternatives that the students are given are private training programs and the military. Both of which have results that they don't advertise such as: less than honorable discharge, low skills, and poor pay (Fine, 199, p.100). The main problems with all these alternatives are that the students are not given all the pros and cons of each to properly weigh their decisions. These are life-changing decisions that should be handled with care. Michelle Fine says that "public high schools 'discharge' adolescents who are low income and who are minority-group members as though they bear no responsibility for what happens or doesn't happen next. The schools give little to no information about the 'down side' of these alternatives, but what they do bolster the stories of the exceptions and illustrate the alternative programs are guaranteed second chances, free training, jobs, and

glamorous worldwide travel. Where is educational informed consent? (Fine, 1991, p.100). The recruiters for GED programs, private training programs such as cosmetology, and the military know what aspects to focus on in their presentations to students from low-income areas to play on their emotions and show them a "better" life, which cannot be achieved through the traditional route. How can educators, the people that are supposed to be helping children, purge the students that typically need the most help out of the public school system and into something that they know has little prospects for them? When they get rid of the so-called "bad" students from their school their testing scores are no longer burdened and thus they receive more funding for the school and their pockets.

The main incentive that the school administrators use to purge these "bad," typically low-income, students out of the school was portraying the GED as the easiest and best route. The GED, Graduate Equivalency Diploma, is a test-determined certificate of graduation for students over the age of 18-years-old who does not complete a regular high school program. (Fine, 1991, p. 86). Ned, the director of an autonomous dropout prevention program, appended to a comprehensive city high school, said in regards to the GED: It can become a dumping ground and it's not as good as a real diploma. Employers know they have failed once and employers are hiring a person for degree, discipline, ability to work with others, come on time and you get a GED, it doesn't prove any of that (Fine, 1991, p. 85). Fine added that she never heard a teacher, counselor, or administrator tell a possible dropout that in New York, where her study took place, only 48% of those who took the GED met the state score requirements for 1984, New York ranked last among to 50 states for GED pass rates (General Educational Development Testing Service, 1985), or that a GED appears to be the economic equivalent of a high school diploma (Rumberger 1987) (Fine 1991, p. 86). Not surprisingly, the students that are typically affected by

these purging efforts are those of color. Latino and African-American dropouts are less likely than white dropouts to return to school for a GED, and urban dropouts, in general, are least likely to return (Fine, 1991, p.86). There is no discussion of white, wealthy children dropping out of school.

An example of administrators playing a part in reproducing inequality through our education system can be seen with Mr. Reynolds, a teacher at the comprehensive high school Michelle Fine observed. Mr. Reynolds, who also teaches in the evening school, was primarily responsible for discharging students and referring them to the GED evening school, in which he was a faculty member. According to student folklore, "Mr. Reynolds be gettin' \$90 for everybody he throws out of here and sends upstairs to the night school. He be tellin' us, 'Thanks you just made me a rich man' when he discharges us." Although a fee-per-head commission was not actually collected, the growth of this evening school (which had been at been at risk of failing due to insufficient enrollment) was seen as at result of the daytime purging efforts of Reynolds and colleagues (Fine, 1991, p.88). Reynolds was not the only one who took part in the transferring of students out of the public school system. A majority of counselors and administrators agreed that seventeen year olds in 9th grade didn't have much chance of surviving through to graduation, and that their best bet to succeed in live would be to get a GED. With their supervisors and teachers telling the "bad" students that the GED is their smartest option, why would they choose any other direction? It's distressing that the school administrators didn't believe in the children, and based on what? Apparently the teachers did not do too much research on what the local GED programs were like, or perhaps they just did not care as long as the students were no longer their problem. The administrators' ignorance and lack of concern for the students' futures can be seen in a report released by The New York State Department of Education in 1985. The report found proprietary schools, where you get your GED, to be involved in violation on entry requirements, questionable recruitment practices, high dropout rates; low standards; insufficient record keeping; and failure to offer instructional programs approved by the State Department of Education (Fine, 1991, p.91).

Michelle Fine sums the idea of purging, and how it reaffirms the idea that our society reproduces inequality by means of the education system, up when she says, "the ease with which *most* of these students were accorded educational outcomes likely to guarantee them poverty and unemployment, enacted by well-intentioned educators; offers sobering evidence of the smooth functioning of public education as a system of injustice" (Fine, 1991, p.100).

"Still Separate, Still Unequal"

The problem of educational inequity has not gotten any better in recent years. The following are some statistics from Teachforamerica.org (2009) that illustrate how bad it has become:

- 4th graders from low-income areas as are already three grade levels behind those from high-income areas
- Approximately 50% of them won't graduate high school by the age of 18
- Those who do graduate will perform on average at an 8th grade level
- Only 1 in 10 will graduate from college
- Spending in the richest 5% of schools is more than twice the spending in the poorest 5% of schools

The students from low-income areas usually do not have parents that went to college making it that more difficult to have someone to go to for advice on how to apply for college. The

problem also persists as a result of the societal belief that education cannot rise above the socioeconomic disparities the children face. This ideology must change.

In interviews conducted by Michelle Fine she asked the students- "How is it that some people are rich and others are poor?" By a large margin the most common response (30%) described "education" as the way to "economic success." But, 27% said a diploma is neither necessary nor adequate for achieving economic "success". These students felt that getting a good education didn't always amount to monetary success because of things such as bad economies, troubled family lives getting in the way, or are lazy and won't get far no matter what. Despite the students' disagreements above, 57% believed the biggest obstacle to mobility to be racism. Of that 57%, they all depicted moments where they felt race was an issue either in classrooms, during job interviews, on the streets and subways, or in their personal lives (Fine, 1991, p. 108). The interviews with the above students reveal that racism and segregation are still alive and prevalent in our society. Racism is integrated into the problem of educational inequity, in that the students that are receiving the unequal education are those of color.

Racism is apparent in the following current statistics: In the United States, we spend approximately \$900 less per year on each student from the poor school districts than we do in the more affluent communities; a gap that is unchanging. In addition, \$614 less is spent per student in districts that have a majority of students of color compared to districts with a large white population (Education Trust, 2005). It's unfathomable that the government, rich people, the media, etc can say that everyone in our society has equal opportunities to succeed when the funding alone shows how polar opposite the schools in varying income areas are. What makes that much more difficult for these underprivileged children is to see a school near their own house with a brand new playground and other children going to school with their own books.

One comparison between two schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) found a difference of almost \$1 million in school budgets for teacher salaries (The Education Trust, 2005, p. 4), leaving the low-income schools with either inexperienced teachers, or a constant change of teachers who leave for higher salaries.

Hand-in-hand with the purging effect seen in "Framing Dropouts" zero tolerance policies have begun to also contribute to the purging of race and low-income students from the school system. With zero tolerance policies the ones that typically get busted are students of color who have lower tests scores and come from single-parent homes. Zero tolerance can be fought, but it is not advertised. In addition, the parents that know about the policies and how to get around them are usually the ones in PTA that don't work two jobs. Unless you are a very active parent you won't know all your options (Ender, 2009). Significant numbers of students are being pushed out of school as a result of "zero tolerance" school discipline policies. Often referred to as 'school-to-prison' pipeline and has been worsening school climate and thus leading to teacher burnout (Brownstein, 2009, p.59). Not only do zero tolerance policies affect the students, but they affect the teachers as well. Brownstein discusses ineffective discipline policies, like zero tolerance, clearly play a role in driving teachers out of the profession (Brownstein, 2009, p. 60). According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, nationwide, African American students are suspended at nearly three times the rate and expelled at 3.5 times the rate of white students, (Brownstein, 2009, p.61). A student is also more likely to drop out if he or she has been retained for a grade-a common consequence of multiple suspensions (Brownstein, 2009, p.60) The zero tolerance policies are clearly not policies set up to help the underprivileged and only further perpetuate the inequalities.

Not only do the zero tolerance policies reveal the institutionalized racism in our school systems, but the curriculum that glamorizes white culture, as well. Standards for a U.S. History and Geography course had no mention of slavery anywhere even though it lasted in the U.S for 400 years. An example from the standards that truly illustrates how ethnocentric the system has become, "they learn that the United States has served as a model for other nations and that the rights and freedoms we enjoy are not accidents, but the results of a defined set of political principles that are not always basic to citizens of other countries. Students understand that our rights under the U.S. Constitution are a precious inheritance that depends on an educated citizenry for their preservation and protection." In the entire U.S. History book only two pages are devoted to slavery out of approximately 600 (Ender, 2009). When the curriculum doesn't relate to the children of low-income areas they cannot relate to the curriculum either. The end result is these students will have no interest in school and they will begin to look for other outlets to put their energies into. No Child Left Behind is an example of a program our government implemented to make it look like they were helping the children in our society.

No Child Left Behind

How beneficial is this program really? No Child Left Behind is a great example of how government plays a role in regurgitating inequality in our society via the education system. First of all, money is taken away for students that don't pass the exam. Typically these are the students that NEED the money. On the other hand, the government gives money to the schools that do better than they did the year before. Somehow the more affluent schools find ways to work the system and make sure they get the highest scores. If your class continues to do badly then your job is at stake. Students are dropping out because classes are getting larger due to

layoffs and they can't keep track of who their teachers are. Also, if you are a student at one of the schools that isn't doing well and thus receiving less funding, you have the option to transfer schools and the government will pay for the cost of transportation but they don't usually advertise this. The parents that do find out are predictably PTA parents, not single parents working two jobs. Due to this program, a dollar amount is put on every students head. An example of a school that is being hurt more than it is being helped is a junior high in National City, CA. For every 2 students, they have to share a chalkboard just to do class work and there is shockingly 45 students in a classroom. There is no paper and no technology whatsoever. And this is equality? If so, I think our nation needs to redefine what equality means and I don't think they would be too happy with the result.

Institutionalized Racism

It is hard to say what is to be done to solve this problem when it seems that the root of it all is an invisible racism. Beliefs are difficult, if not impossible, to change. But they can change over the years. The first step would be to enhance awareness of the topic. After reading all the statistics and depictions of what classrooms in low-income areas look like compared to more affluent areas it is mind-blowing that people would ever think that educational opportunities are equal for everyone. In our society, it is a sad truth that there must be poor people in order for there to be immense wealth. The rich, the ones typically in power, make sure this stays true. If these legislators had children, or even knew children for that matter, in the low-income schools I am positive they would approve of more money being sent in that direction. This is the tragedy of segregation which prevents the wealthy from seeing the realities that most face. In Kozol's "Savage Inequalities" a resident of East St. Louis, where there is extreme poverty and no regular trash collection, discusses...

The ultimate terror for white people...is to leave the highway by mistake and find themselves in East St. Louis. People speak of getting lost in East St. Louis as a nightmare. The nightmare to me is that they never leave that highway so they never know what life is like for all the children here. They *ought* to get off that highway. That nightmare isn't in their heads. It's a real place. There are children living here (Kozol, 1991, p. 18).

In Chicago, suburban residents voted against all propositions to provide more money for the low-income schools with a nine-to-one ratio (Kozol, 1991:67.) It is obvious that we are not a "United" America when the upper-ranked classes have the tendency as a whole to dehumanize the poor to make it easier on their conscious that there is someone down the street from them severely suffering and we have the capabilities to help them.

When the people of the United States say education inequity is our nation's greatest injustice (Teach For America, 2009) it is a true statement. The children are never even given a chance to achieve social mobility. Although there are exceptions to the rule, Julie Bettie argues "school, culture, and society, more generally, loves stories of exception, of people who defy the odds. These students are held up as models to which all should aspire, and so much attention is paid to the exceptions that it is easy to forget those who make up the rule," (Bettie, 2003, p. 81). The stories of exceptions can either motivate the children or further hurt their self-esteem when they realize that they are stuck. Research in the area of educational inequity needs to be largely publicized so that these children can get out of the sinkhole that they are in. The children of our society are our future, so why aren't we helping them?

Class Consciousness: Models of Improvement

A class consciousness is formed and taught in the classroom and on the school grounds.

Teachers need to become more aware of the things they say, the lessons they create, and of their

students in general. If the teachers are not educated on what kind of behaviors children exhibit when they have a learning disability or don't understand a concept they could see absenteeism and boredom as a sign of delinquency instead of confusion. Because "by fifth or sixth grade, many children demonstrate their loss of faith by staying out of school" Summarize (Kozol, 1991: 57). Also if the teachers have never dealt with poverty first hand, seen a family member killed before their eyes, or known what it's like to go to bed hungry they need to take extra steps to try to understand what it's like to be in the children's shoes in order to know how to effectively teach them. They also learn a class and race consciousness from their peers which can be seen in Julie Bettie's case study:

A primary way students understand class and racial/ethnic differences among themselves is though their informal peer hierarchy, with cliques and their corresponding styles largely organized by racial/ethnic and class identities. The social roles linked to group membership include curriculum choices (whether a student was involved in what are considered either college-prep or non-prep activities). These courses and activities combine to shape class futures, leading some girls to 4 year colleges, others to vocational programs at community colleges, and still others directly to low-wage jobs directly out of high school (Bettie, 2003, p.49).

If teachers were better trained, not as many children would slip through the cracks. This ideology also ties in with blaming the individual which is hard to overcome because it has become so embedded within our society. We could start fresh with all the new incoming teachers, but the problem with that is the salary scale in the areas that need the most help is too low to keep the young, exciting teachers in the urban areas (Fine, 1991, p. 51). Without properly trained teachers the students in urban areas are again steps behind the more privileged children.

Although we live in a society that is so infected with ideologies that blame the individual for their life outcomes and people in power who keep our hierarchical

structure intact beginning with the education system, there are ways to combat it. For one, the lives and battles low-income adolescents face need to be taken seriously. Our society needs to recognize this and structure the schools accordingly. The schools need to take into account the students who are providing for their families. She would no longer be posited as the anomaly, but rather the template for restructuring. Coordinated social services, health care, and advocacy would obviously become essential to the tasked of educating (Comer, 1987) (Fine, 1991, p. 221). This would take care of all the students mentioned in Kozol's "Savage Inequalities" where he saw some of the sickest children of America.

Fine exemplifies how beneficial embracing diversity and raising the underprivileged to the forefronts of our concerns could be in the following quote,

"As the material conditions of adolescents' lives need to be coordinated smoothly and responsibly, so too the contradictory consciousness that low-income students bring to classroom discussions, evaluations, and action must be explored, critiqued, and respected inside schools. What is more typical today is the privileging of noncritical voices and the training of students within the seamless echoes of hegemony. Public schools deny young women and men an opportunity to interrogate cooperatively their own thoughts, their own contradictions, and their own marbled views of the world around them. Pedagogies and curriculum which seek the complexity, probe for the seams, and elicit collective disharmonies can facilitate an education that respects, challenges, and moves" (Fine, 1991, p.222).

We say we live in a melting pot and are a culture of diversity, now it is time to show that in our education system.

The problem of educational inequity is also largely due to the funding gap between low-income and rich areas. To help close this gap and give all children the opportunity to be on an even-playing field there are numerous actions that could be taken. First and most obviously states need to spend a sufficient amount on education as

a whole. Second, funding shouldn't rely so much on local taxes. Whoever came up with this idea, undoubtedly wanted to keep the poor where they are because wealth and property values are unequally dispersed. Also, education funding formulas need to take into account the challenges of certain districts and guarantee that higher-poverty districts get the resources they need. Lastly, states need to ensure that budgeting and resource allocation policies *within* school districts are fair (The Education Trust, 2005, p. 6).

It is a painful reality that brilliant children from low-income areas are being neglected by the educational system whether it be from funding, tracking, the power of the rich, or a combination of them all. After years of being told and shown that it is not possible for them to go to college by school administrators, teachers, government, media, peers, and society in general, they give up. The odds are against the low-income children of color. According to Dr. Parks, the superintendent of the East St. Louis schools, "gifted children are everywhere in East St. Louis, but their gifts are lost to poverty and turmoil and the damage done by knowing they are written off by society. Many of these children have no sense of something they belong. They have no feeling of belonging to America. Gangs provide the boys, perhaps, with something to belong to..." (Kozol, 1991, p. 34). It is so frustrating and heartbreaking that so many talented and creative children are lost in our education system. Our society is not only hurting these lost children, but also the society as a whole because we are missing out on ever getting the chance to witness what their brilliance could create. We need to embrace the challenge of making sure all children get an education that allows them access to college and to compete for good jobs. This is an ambitious goal, yet if we do not do something the United States will no longer be able to survive and thrive as a competitive nation if it does not have an educated society. We cannot afford to undereducate children from any socio-economic level. To meet our goals, we must

ensure that all children have access to the resources they need in order to learn to high standards.

Most importantly, it's about time we look out for one another and be a truly equal and united society.