



Writer: Patricia Sullivan, Communication Specialist

Email: [psullivan@scfirstseps.org](mailto:psullivan@scfirstseps.org)

Phone: 843-339-0819

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### Let's Talk About EQUITY

According to Merriam-Webster, equity is defined as “justice according to natural law or right; specifically: freedom from bias or favoritism.” Often times, the other “EQ” word, equality, dominates discussions but there is a difference between the two terms: Equity means people get what they deserve and equality means everyone gets the same things. The question rises as to who determines what others deserve, and the answer is history. Once we begin talking about equity, conversations and perspectives begin to shift.

For years people of color in America have been intentionally discriminated against and not considered when policy makers move on decisions regarding employment, education, health, housing, and many other subjects. We occupy a nation that is known as the land of the free but history has contradicted and demeaned some of its people because of sadistic ideals and greed.

When we take a look at America's history, we started completely wrong. Europeans settling the New World betrayed and attempted to exterminate indigenous people. Then, forced them to leave the land that they had been living on long before Europeans arrived. For hundreds of years, African Americans were enslaved to white masters who did not pay for labor. They continually collected profits and rarely shared any wealth with the ones who were actually doing the work. Once Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and slaves slowly began to taste freedom, they were sent off of plantations with not a penny left to their name. Meanwhile, their former masters were permitted to keep their wealth and unobligated to give slaves not one cent of their money. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Manifest Destiny took action which was an expansion of territory into the southwestern region. This led to a war with Mexico that later resulted in the dislocation and mistreatment of Native Americans and Hispanics. Events such as these began a cycle of generational poverty and disadvantages in more ways than one.

The 2016 Census Data on Poverty reports that 31% of black children, 21% of Hispanic children, and 11% of white children are living in poverty. Casey Foundation's *Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children* report stated, “Many children of color are growing up in communities where unemployment and crime are higher; schools are poorer; access to capital, fresh produce, transit and health care is more limited; exposure to environmental toxins is greater; and family supports and services are fewer.” This data is a result of hundreds of years of racial barriers and inequities. Factors like these do not make it easy for children of color to live a prosperous life. We must realize that issues among the disadvantaged are not theirs alone, but it is everyone's issue. Casey Foundation's Report makes some suggestions that could begin to level the playing field for families:

1. Keep Families Together and In Their Communities
2. Help Children in Immigrant Families meet Key Developmental Milestones (Invest in Early Education)
3. Increase Economic Opportunity for Parents

Just imagine the difference we could witness in communities where local governments put items like these on their priority lists and were held accountable.

This message is written not to bash our nation or its leaders, but to recognize how we all got to the place we are today and work toward ways that change the trajectory for people who haven't been served a just hand. We are only as strong as our weakest link so therefore, we must collaborate with each other to make a change for every woman, man, and child in our communities. Remember, children are our future and it's our responsibility to do our part and pave the way. Equity for all!