

Intro

so i made a video about race in america

it kind of went viral

and people asked a lot of follow-up

questions i want to mention

four questions that have come up a lot

and also talk about

one more topic that is really

interesting so what are the four

questions

number one what about the black family

too many black families have no fathers

why didn't you talk about that

number two what about the welfare state

the war on poverty didn't the welfare

programs of the 1960s do serious damage

to black communities

number three why do you say we did this

i didn't do any of this stuff

and number four beyond caring what can

State of Black Families

we actually do

okay let's jump in so what about the

state of black

families isn't that a big part of the

problem well let's take a look

in 1965 daniel patrick moynihan prepared

a report for president johnson on

the negro family as part of johnson's

war on poverty that report

included the stunning statistic that 25

of babies born to african-american

mothers were born

outside of marriage were non-marital

births

25 at that time the rate of non-marital

births for white

american mothers was less than 5 percent

moynihan believed that there was a

crisis in black families that required

intervention on a national scale

if black men couldn't find meaningful

work that could support families

black marriages and two-parent

households would continue to decline

non-marital births would continue at
this shockingly high rate of 25 percent
or more
and poverty would remain a large-scale
problem
the report declared that black
communities were suffering from
a tangle of pathologies that were
impeding progress
the moynihan report was not well
received to many it sounded like
moynihan was
blaming the victim martin luther king at
that time working for the passage of the
voting rights act
expressed fears that the problems
described in the report
would be attributed to innate negro
weakness
and used by racists to justify
opposition to voting rights
the moynihan report was kicked under the

table

since 1965 we've discovered a couple of

things

first we've learned that healthy

families are even more important than we

thought

or as the washington post declared 21

years later in 1986

moynihan was right intact families with

two involved parents are hugely

beneficial to kids

the collapse of marriage is in fact a

really big deal

but second we've discovered that the

decline of marriage is not a uniquely

black problem

traditional two-parent families are not

in crisis only in black communities

they're in crisis everywhere today the

non-marital birth rate for white

americans has

passed 30 percent that's higher than the

rate for african americans that shocked america in 1965. and what is the non-marital birth rate for african americans today a staggering 70 percent but let's back up and unpack the figure for white americans and see what we learn according to data from the cdc the non-marital birth rate for white women with college degrees is less than 5 percent exactly where it was for all white women way back in 1965. now take away the college degree and the non-marital birth rate for white women with only a high school diploma jumps up to 40 percent take away the high school diploma and the non-marital birth rate for white women without a high school diploma is 65 percent virtually matching the crazy

high non-marital birth rate for african
american women

so what do we learn from this upper
class and upper middle class americans
still value marriage regardless of race
it is in the working class especially
the working poor
where the institution of marriage is
collapsing but why are the overall
numbers so much worse in
african-american communities
because african-americans are two and a
half times more likely to be living in
poverty than
white americans and the non-marital
birth rate among african americans was
already
16 points higher than among white
americans way back in 1940
so african american communities started
at a much higher rate
since 1965 the non-marital birth rate

has actually been growing at a faster
rate among white americans
than among black americans marriage
isn't collapsing
in black america it's collapsing in
State of Working Class Families
working class america
now why marriage is in crisis among the
working class is a tricky issue but
think about it this way
you're a working class boy growing up in
a working class neighborhood
you see your dad go to the steel mill or
the car factory or the coal mine every
day and come home with a paycheck to
take care of his family
you assume you will grow up to do the
same then the steel mill closes
the car factory moves overseas the coal
mine
shutters how can you do what your father
did how can you take care of a family
that's what you've seen men do your

whole life that
as far as you can tell is what it means
to be a man
and you can't do it and the whole
pattern
school job marriage children breaks
whether you're african-american on the
south side of chicago or working class
white in ohio or west virginia
what you've always assumed you would do
grow up to be a man like your father
is suddenly undoable you lose
hope and if this repeats for another
generation or two
pretty soon there are little boys
growing up in these communities
with zero memory of a time when men went
to work with their hands and came home
and built families the chain is broken
the institutional knowledge of marriage
and
family is lost this is an incredibly

hard problem to address and today it is becoming as big an issue in working class white communities as it has been for several generations in working class black communities without the hope of being able to support a family men give up on the idea of fatherhood and families collapse when the moynihan report was issued in 1965 just as dr king feared many americans took it as a sign that african americans were somehow morally inferior irresponsible they've abandoned god's design for families we said and now they're suffering the consequences was there something unique about african-american morality that created the breakdown of families interestingly there's another ethnic

group in america that matches african
americans on almost
every metric unemployment for this group
is even higher
non-marital births are nearly as high
single-parent homes
nearly as high what ethnic group is it
native americans think about it these
are the only two
groups of people that weren't given a
choice whether or not to live in white
america
the only two groups that have been
actively and consistently treated
unjustly by european settlers since
before there even was an america
and today they are the two groups whose
communities are marked the most
by poverty unemployment and addiction
is it just a coincidence that we see the
most dramatic breakdown of family
structure

in the two communities that have faced
the most historic injustice

the other reason i didn't bring up
family structure in my video on race is
because on the surface it seems like an
easy fix

simple if you don't want to be poor get
married do things in the right order

The Root of the Problem

and there is truth in that but what's
killing families

in working class america including white
working class america

isn't unwillingness to do things in the
right order

it's hopelessness yes two-parent

families are much better for kids the
data on that is clear

but the root of the problem isn't

irresponsibility the root of the problem

is that we have millions of men who do

not believe they can do what their

fathers and grandfathers did

go to work bring home a paycheck support

a family

the root of the problem isn't a loss of

responsibility

it's a loss of hope children need dads

and dads need to believe they live in a

society where it is

possible for them to succeed moynihan's

phrase a tangle of pathologies is the

most

quoted line from his report on the black

family but he said something else

that has been largely forgotten

something as true for native americans

as it is for african americans three

centuries of

injustice have brought about deep-seated

structural distortions in the life of

the negro

american the cycle can be broken only if

these distortions

are set right three centuries of

injustice have brought about deep-seated
distortions that need to be set right
it's tempting to say just get married
and everything will be better
but undoing the impact of three
centuries of injustice
injustice that was enforced by violence
is way more complicated than that
we need to resist overly simplistic
solutions
to very complicated problems

The War on Poverty

second question isn't the welfare state
responsible for the mess we have today
i've had people point to the welfare
policies of the 1960s
president johnson's war on poverty and
say
that's why african-americans are poor or
that's why african americans are
unemployed
or that's why african-american families
fell apart

if the government hadn't tried to help
they'd be doing much better
today we sometimes use this to argue
against any additional government
intervention on behalf of black
communities because we tried it in the
60s and it only made things worse
so is it true did the war on poverty
make
things worse let's take those questions
one at a time
the first one is easy did the welfare
programs of the 1960s
increase black poverty well in 1959 the
poverty rate for black americans
was 55 percent more than half of all
african americans lived below
the poverty line by the end of the 1960s
after the implementation of johnson's
policies the poverty rate for african
americans had dropped to 32
almost by half now that's not

necessarily because
of johnson's policies the 1960s was a
decade of growth in american
manufacturing
and a period where many black americans
moved from low paying agricultural jobs
in the south
to higher paying factory jobs in the
north so the reduction in poverty isn't
necessarily a result of the new policies
but the argument that the war on poverty
increased
poverty is plainly false did the war on
poverty increase black
unemployment well that's really hard to
say one way or another since we didn't
start keeping track of black
unemployment until 1972
after the policies were in place but
since 1972 black unemployment has
tracked fairly
tightly with white unemployment just

typically

twice as high when white unemployment

goes down

because the economy is growing so does

black unemployment

and vice versa with the exception that

recessions that affect

white americans generally affect black

americans

much more but there is no evidence in

unemployment data that the welfare

policies of the 1960s

are responsible for higher black

unemployment today

Family Breakdown

so what about family breakdown well this

one is trickier

americans have always been rugged

individualists we've always believed

that any able-bodied man should be able

to provide for a family and we tend to

look down on men who can't

because of this belief that men should

be able to provide
most of the welfare policies of the
1960s were written with a no man
in the house clause meaning if a benefit
was offered to a poor family
the family was immediately disqualified
if there was an able-bodied man living
in the household
the problem was that even though many
black fathers were able-bodied
many were also poorly educated and as
unskilled manufacturing jobs began
disappearing to the suburbs
or overseas or to automation there
simply weren't enough jobs left that
could allow an
unskilled laborer to support a family so
if a black father was unable to find
work that could support his family
the only way his wife and kids could
receive assistance
surplus government cheese and peanut

butter for example

was if he literally walked out the door

and abandoned them

Unintended Consequences

this would be an example of unintended

consequences

and yes it probably did have an impact

on the increase in single-parent

households

in working-class communities but

remember the high non-marital birth rate

that shocked america in 1965

was recorded before johnson's welfare

policies had gone into effect

did the welfare programs of the 1960s

have some unintended consequences that

affected black families

yes did they create the situation we

find in black communities today

no most of the trends we see today were

established before

the war on poverty the notion that inner

city african-american communities were

doing just fine
until the government came along and
messed everything up is
entirely false we forget sometimes that
when johnson launched the war on poverty
the majority of impoverished americans
were white
the majority of the money spent on
benefits to the poor
went to white families typically rural
white
families and yet today when we think of
welfare we think almost exclusively of
black families in urban america
why is that this is the interesting part
i mentioned at the beginning of the
video
researcher martin gillins asked this
question and came up with an ingenious
way to look for an answer
he studied 40 years of back issues of
the three major news magazines

time newsweek and u.s news and world
report
he cataloged every article about poverty
in america across
40 years of issues and noted the race of
the families in the photos accompanying
each article
when america talked about poverty what
color were the families
they were picturing the results were
striking
before 1960 more than 80 percent of the
photos accompanying stories about
poverty
were of rural white families america's
poor
at least as the media represented them
were mostly
white and rural even in 1964 the year
president johnson announced the war on
poverty
roughly 75 of the accompanying photos

were of rural white families then
something happened the very next year
in 1965 pictures of poverty in america
were suddenly
50 percent black two years later in 1967
photos of poor americans in the three
major news weeklies
were 70 percent black so what made the
change
was there a sudden explosion of black
poverty
not at all in 1960 around 25 percent of
america's poor
were african-american in 1967 the figure
was slightly higher but still
under 30 percent so there weren't more
poor black americans
instead what had changed was a new focus
by civil rights leaders on
economic justice with a burst of news
stories accompanied by pictures of
impoverished black

americans and a focus on the state of
inner cities
brought about by an explosion of protest
marches and riots
the news about poverty had swung in just
three short years
from being predominantly about rural
whites to predominantly about
urban blacks the tone of the articles
was also changing
in 1964 the national impression of
johnson's war on poverty
was generally positive we were the
richest nation on earth
why should children be starving but a
year later there was a burst of
journalism about mismanagement of funds
and programs
and an increase in stories about welfare
fraud at the same time attitudes toward
welfare were growing more negative
the accompanying photos were growing

more black

politicians noticed changing attitudes

toward welfare programs and jumped in

during his 1976 run for president ronald

reagan repeatedly told stories of the

welfare queen

a chicago woman who had cheated the

government out of hundreds of thousands

of dollars

by filing welfare claims under false

names campaigning on a platform critical

of social programs

the welfare queen became a frequent

theme of reagan campaign events

and radio addresses even today the term

The Welfare Queen

welfare queen

brings to mind an african-american woman

sitting home

having babies and collecting chicks the

true story of the woman reagan was

describing

is a little different the chicago

welfare queen was a woman named linda
taylor though no one knows if that was
her real name since she used more than
30

aliases in addition to defrauding the
government through various elaborate
welfare schemes

linda taylor is also believed to have
stolen babies from hospitals to sell
them

and is suspected of having murdered at
least two female acquaintances

so far from a lazy grifter linda taylor
was actually a very sophisticated
and very dangerous criminal oh and

according to the 1930 census records
she was white back to martin gillan's
research

from 1970 through 1990 black americans
continued to make up roughly 60
of representations of poverty in the
media even though they seldom made up

more than
30 percent of america's poor there were
exceptions though as in 1982
and 1983 when pictures of white families
suddenly spiked all the way up to 70
percent
what happened in 82 and 83 the worst
recession in a generation
combined with threatened cutbacks to
social programs by the reagan
administration
suddenly middle class families were
falling into poverty
with less of a safety net to help them
and who did editors choose to feature in
photos
to generate sympathy for these newly
poor families
white families as soon as the recession
ended
journalistic focus returned to stories
of wasteful spending

and portrayals of poor urban black families

poverty in america went back to being black why does this matter because poverty in america isn't a uniquely black problem to this day african american families make up less than 30 percent of america's poor and receive only about a third of government spending on poverty programs 70 percent of our spending goes to white and latino families

yet when we think about helping the poor we think of handouts to african american mothers with multiple kids and no husbands living in the inner city why because those are the images we've been shown over and over and here's the sad reality of lingering racism

in america the more we think of poverty

as a black

problem the less we want to help it

isn't us

after all it's them and very old tropes

about african americans being

lazy and irresponsible remember the

vagrancy laws

rear their ugly heads to make us less

compassionate

about america's poor and as christians

called time and time again in scripture

to care for the poor

this is nothing less than tragic

third question and this one's short why

do you say we

did these things i didn't do any of

these things i didn't own slaves or

redline neighborhoods or push for mass

incarceration

so what's with the we we defeated hitler

we put a man on the moon we won the cold

war

we horribly mistreated native americans
for centuries
hey wait i didn't do that one
you didn't do any of those things we
love to take collective ownership for
the great things america has done
and then completely reject any ownership
of the terrible things
america has done the bible talks about
individual sin
and individual repentance as highly
individualistic westerners we like that
we get it it makes sense
but the bible also talks about societal
sin
and societal repentance multiple times
in the old testament we see all of
israel the people of god
called to repent for sins they did not
all commit
in daniel 9 we see daniel repenting for
the sins of his forefathers

sins he did not commit in nehemiah 1 we

see nehemiah

doing the exact same thing we don't like

the idea of taking responsibility for

sins we did not personally commit

it isn't very american but it is very

biblical but you're making america sound

like a terrible place

no america is good and bad

virtuous and sinful selfless and selfish

why because america is us and we

are all those things i am all those

things

let's own the problem together that's

how america has always accomplished big

things

and finally many people have asked okay

this situation is depressing

i care so what can i do and the problem

the after effects of 400 years of racism

does

seem too big to solve but many things

have been tried and we know
some of them work for example preschool
we know that access to free preschool
has a dramatically positive effect on
low income children
any effort to provide preschool to
disadvantaged communities
should be supported by all of us it
works
and that leads directly to education
funding when whites fled cities to the
suburbs we took our property taxes with
us
we clustered into high-income mini
communities and funded extraordinary
schools for our own kids
leaving chronically underfunded schools
behind for minority kids
there have been many efforts at local
state and national levels to try to
balance funding between wealthy and poor
school districts

we should support those efforts even if
they make
our extraordinary schools ever so
slightly less
extraordinary we need to support efforts
to train more african-american teachers
we mentioned in the last video that due
to unconscious bias
gifted black students are half as likely
to be recommended for gifted programs
if their teacher is white the presence
of even
one black teacher during the school
years of a black student
has a demonstrably positive impact on
that student's educational
outcome why are there so few black
teachers
because when schools were integrated in
the 1950s and 60s
students were integrated but teachers
were not

because many white parents refused to
allow their children to be taught by
black teachers
thousands of black teachers lost their
jobs
the ranks of black teachers in america
were decimated
and have never fully recovered we need
to change that
we also need to support efforts to
provide mentors and role models to
low-income kids
we need to encourage not penalize
marriage and finally there are little
things that we can all do
in the old testament nehemiah was able
to get jerusalem's wall rebuilt
because he was in a position where he
could use his influence
to make a difference some of us are in
positions
or have resources that allow us to make

a difference too
not as saviors but as allies
for example my mother is a retired
college professor our lives
fell apart when i was nine and my
parents split up
for several years we ended up living
below the poverty line
but we had a house and she was able to
use that equity to move us to a suburb
of chicago
with great schools and ample opportunity
our house
funded our second chance realizing how
much home ownership had helped us
she recently wrote a check from her
retirement fund that gave an
underprivileged family in one of
chicago's poorest neighborhoods
the down payment towards their first
house our church was so inspired by that
idea that they're setting up a program

partnering with an inner city ministry
to do the same thing on a larger scale
not saviors allies a home
an education an opportunity changes the
course of a family
change the course of enough families and
you can change the course of a community
one last thing some christian friends
have said but what about the bible what
about the gospel don't african-american
communities need to hear about jesus
as a christian i believe we all need the
bible we all
need the gospel but to propose that
perhaps black americans aren't doing
well
because of a lack of christian influence
well we need to look at the data
black americans are more likely to
believe in god than white americans
more likely to say faith is very
important more likely to read the bible

more likely to pray every day black
americans are more likely to have
biblically sound theology than white
americans and
are more likely to look to the bible as
their primary source of ethics
in other words if we're looking for the
most devoutly christian group in america
that group isn't white so let's
summarize

families are in trouble not just in
black america in
all of america especially among the
working class

this is an extraordinarily difficult
problem to address but there are
churches and ministries
trying to do just that and we need to
support them

the welfare programs of the 1960s had
some unintended consequences
but they did not create the problems we

see today

let's not use that as an excuse to not

help

i say we did this because those of us in

the majority have been in the majority

since the very beginning

the policies that created inequality

came from the majority

and any big changes needed to address

that inequality

will need the support of the majority

that's us

and finally you can do things to help

big things

little things the impact of historic

racism

still echoes in america harming millions

of lives

it is a problem let's make it our

problem and let's do something about it