

Policies That Adversely Affect Black Fathers Episode Guide

Focus: Examining how policies related to child support and social welfare impact Black fathers

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Key Findings

- When we think of families, particularly Black families, we often think of women and children, while men are left out of the picture
- There are many systemic and structural reasons for the negative stereotypes and misconceptions regarding Black fathers, including policies related to the enforcement of child support
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is a cash assistance program that requires women with children who sign up for cash assistance to also sign up for child support
- Child Support currently functions as a reimbursement program. Many states target fathers who they feel are not involved in the lives of their children, to reimburse the state for the funds that they provide to families
- Many of the men who owe child support are severely impacted by poverty and begin to accumulate debt that cannot be removed through bankruptcy, debt that men of color often carry until they die
- Because we live in a very patriarchal society, men are thought of as less than if they do not have jobs. However, there are many forms and instances of oppression that prevent men of color from obtaining and holding employment
- Failing to pay child support can lead to arrests
- Child support should be seen as a right to a child, not a punishment

Key Recommendations

- If you are working with fathers who have a child support order, particularly those who are poverty impacted, connect them to a child support office
- Pay anything that you can to avoid extensive legal issues

- Provide space for men to talk about the challenges and issues that they are facing
- Look at the whole person; consider the impact of other stressors such as mass incarceration,, poverty, racism