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Offenders & Victims:

An Imbalance for Minorities

Name

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Abstract

This paper looks at the issues and causes of both Native American and gay and lesbian over-representation in the area of criminal activity, as well as an under-representation for victims. Issues in both include statistics; causes are looked at more on a personal experience level than statistics. No matter the issues or the causes, it appears that education and self-esteem are paramount to the discussions that need to be held in order for there to be change.

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There is a slang saying that says, “Way to represent,” and it is a way of showing pride, taking a stand, believing in oneself and one’s ability to do well, to create change. In this case, however, it is not a positive experience. Native Americans and the Gay & Lesbian community are two groups that suffer the greatest over-representation as offenders and the most under-represented population as victims in all of the United States and Canada. There needs to be a reason why, and there needs to be a way to change that.

**Over-Representation as Offenders: Issues & Causes**

There are many more Native Americans and gays and lesbians committing crimes than there are other cultures. In just one survey it was discovered that a huge amount of women in a same-sex relationship, 39.2%, “reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked” by their partner (Domestic violence, 2015). Native Americans in Montana, just one state, make up “20% of the men in…prisons” there, but there are only 7% Native Americans living in the huge state (Rave, 2009). Rave adds, “If you’re American Indian in Montana, you have a good chance of going to prison” (2009). Is that because Native Americans are actually committing more crimes, or is it possible that they are being targeted?

Education, or the lack of it, has a lot to do with over-representation of offenders. When kids are given hope for a bright future, and they have families that stand behind them and encourage them, they are more successful and less likely to get involved in criminal activity. Apparently this is not happening in Native American families or families with gay or lesbian

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members. Another cause could be police brutality or targeting, where police spend more time watching for minorities to commit crimes than they do the majority. This is pure speculation, but is a possibility.

**Under-Representation as Victims: Issues & Causes**

According to one site, “34% of American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped in their lifetimes” (Timm, 2013). Is it the lack of education that creates a mindset where this is accepted, or is it the lack of resources, the culture, or even how remote these locations are? In regards to the crime of stalking, “17 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native women are stalked in their lifetime, compared to 8.2 percent of white women” (Domestic violence, 2015). As for the gay and lesbian community, in 2003, there was an increase in the number of reported cases of violence within the home, “a 13% increase” over those cases reported in 2002: 5718 (2015). However, there are many more incidences that do not get reported.

All that is needed is a bit of inner reflection to figure out the cause. If there is domestic abuse or sexual assault that has been committed, usually the people who report these crimes are the ones who have healthy self-esteems and family support. They know they have been wronged, and they know at least in part that they didn’t deserve it. The rest of the healing comes with time and counseling. The fact that Native Americans and the Gay and Lesbian community are under-represented says a lot about how they are seen in the world, how they see themselves in the world, and if they value themselves in the world.

Another blatant cause of under-representation as victims could be because it was only a few years ago that “the House of Representatives passed the Violence Against Women Act” to now include “gay, lesbians, and transgender people, as well as Native Americans and

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immigrants” (Timm, 2013). It is hard to believe that two years ago these people did not have that protection. At least it’s a start in the right direction.

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