

Douglas, C.C. Outlook for Young Black Males Called Bleak. (1985, May 19). [New York Times](#).

OVERVIEW

This article covers a panel of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#) (NAACP) Legal Defense and Education Fund's annual Civil Rights Institute (May 1985) which "painted a gloomy picture of economic and educational progress for most blacks in recent years." The panel, entitled "Young Black Males: An Endangered Species," described the especially bleak prospects of one segment of the population. The panel was composed of a clinical psychologist, two political scientists and a labor leader.

Statistics were presented by Jewelle Taylor Gibbs, acting associate professor of the [School of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley](#):

- 50% of young blacks are unemployed.
- 25% under age 25 have never held a job.
- More than 10,000 black males ages 15-19 die each year in homicides, which is their second highest cause of death.
- Over 70% of New York City black males drop out of high school.
- Among blacks ages 20-24 there are only 45 "marriageable males for every 100 females—largely because of unemployment and incarceration."

William Lucy, Vice-President of [A.F.L.-C.I.O.](#), noted that it costs \$25,000 to imprison a person—money that could be better spent in creation of public works jobs. Pointing to urban decay, Lucy indicated that there was no shortage of tasks available and suggested practical job training beginning in high school.

Most panelists laid the blame for regression on Reagan administration policies—treating young black males as the "economically expendable." Barbara Jordan, former Democratic representative from Texas, said that our nation is experiencing "a resegregation into the two societies" and cited federal Justice Department opposition to affirmative action and busing. Leslie Dunbar, political scientist and "Scholar at Large" at [Shaw University](#) said that the Reagan administration's position that economic

growth would relieve unemployment did not apply to black males: "The economy as it is now structured has no use for this underclass. The government's policy is simply to do no more for them than is necessary to keep them alive."

Panelists "proposed remedial programs ranging from a revival of the large-scale public works programs (of Depression times)...to experiments with 'creative sentencing' of certain young offenders." Zachery Carter, executive assistant to the Brooklyn District Attorney, suggested that first offenders with minor crimes be sentenced to remedial education or community service with threat of incarceration hanging over them as motivation. Carter was not optimistic for any outpouring of public or administration concern for blacks ages 16-19 who account for 51% of all arrests for violent crime. "There is no issue like crime that makes reactionaries of us all. That makes it difficult to use the criminal justice system as a creative tool to stop the hemorrhage of young blacks into jail."

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