

At-Risk Communities, including Immigrants

But You Look Like Me: Issues of Assimilation and Social Equity in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Thursday 2:15 pm; Panel 2

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Abstract: Nationally, the general assumption is that unfair treatment in areas of social services was based largely on physical differences, namely race. The Civil Rights Movement was instrumental in putting some of these wrongs to an end. Nevertheless, new waves of injustices have continued to play a role in unfairness among many groups of people. These groups include religious groups, ex-convicts, gays and lesbians and migrants. Unlike the physical difference that led to a separated nation, the U.S. Virgin Islands faced issues with unjust and unfair treatment of immigrants by locals of the same or similar physical characteristics. Large numbers of immigrants came from surrounding islands in the Caribbean to the US Virgin Islands during a boom in the economy as a result of tourism, oil refining and related industries during the 1960's. This influx has not decelerated, and has ultimately changed the composition of the islands. This current research examines the local problems of social equity in the small community of the Virgin Islands. The conclusion highlights the role of national and local policies in satisfying the legal and social responsibilities of the Virgin Islands. This presentation also looks at the equity challenges ahead for leaders and policy makers in the Virgin Islands.