Edward Mills

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Professor Ineskul
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When thinking of low-income communities, the first thing that comes to mind for most people is how did this area became this way. Many things could be avoided for areas to become low-income areas. The people in these areas want a change to come so the area will be better for those currently living and those trying to get out. Many people want answers but their solutions. The solutions sound easy like community reform, building a relationship with the law enforcement, and many more. If there are solutions for these communities, change is possible.

The solutions that stand out the most are combating gang violence, low job openings, and relationships with law enforcement. If these three things change to a positive aspect for any low-income community, the change for those in the area would show. Those in the community would feel safer, the youth would be more active, and people would not have to rely on welfare. All of this sounds great, but changes like this must take time. An area I would like to focus on would be Norfolk Virgina. Due to ODU being near the heart of the city, writing about a community that can benefit from these changes sounds right. I feel like Old Dominion University is showing kids the area that they can make it out of their current situation. Whether it be athletics or education, these kids have opportunities to distract themselves from the violence around them. Whether it be at home or out in the area. Education or sports can be their escape. Sometimes they can become employed to start learning new responsibilities and learn how to finance their income. This leads to the first topic of new job opportunities in the community.

New job openings in Norfolk Virginia offer many Benefits for the city but it also brings challenges. On the positive side, job creation promotes economic growth and provides opportunities in diverse sectors, including healthcare, maritime logistics, advanced manufacturing, and education (Dollarsanity). These openings attract a skilled workforce and new businesses, fostering innovation and development. Additionally, Norfolk's low cost of living compared to the national average makes it an appealing destination for workers seeking financial stability (Dollarsanity). For residents, these jobs can lead to improved standards of living, reduced unemployment rates, and enhanced local infrastructure due to increased tax revenues (Life in Hampton Roads). However, the rise in job opportunities is not without challenges. Increased employment prospects can strain existing infrastructure, leading to traffic congestion, which is already a significant issue in Norfolk (Dollarsanity). Furthermore, educational and skill gaps between residents will arise limiting those to these new jobs. Housing affordability, while currently favorable, may face upward pressure as demand rises, potentially displacing low-income families. Additionally, the influx of businesses and workers could exacerbate environmental concerns, such as urban sprawl and pollution (Life in Hampton Roads). New job openings are nice, but they need to be able to match the current residential life. Therefore, if more jobs start to open, more housing will need to be built for those now looking to move into the area due to their jobs.

Dealing with gang violence in Norfolk to me seems to be the biggest issue. Reducing gang Violence can reduce crime, public safety, and help improve economic growth. Programs like Norfolk's community-based violence prevention strategies offer educational and employment opportunities for at-risk youth, which help break cycles of violence and offer alternatives to gang involvement. These efforts also support community trust by involving local organizations, law enforcement, and educators in collaborative solutions (Scott; Ceasefire Virginia). Although dealing with gang violence can leave many positives, it can also bring on many negatives. Some bring higher tension among law enforcement. Not only will law enforcement be involved, social stigmas and the "no snitching" culture in affected neighborhoods further complicate enforcement and rehabilitation efforts (WTKR; Ceasefire Virginia). Trying to achieve something like this will take a while. Both the community and law enforcement need to work together to limit these issues in the community. These approaches can make neighborhoods safer and more resilient, but only through ongoing collaboration and resources (Scott).

Building trust between law enforcement and minority communities has its benefits and challenges. On the positive side, better relationships can lead to safer neighborhoods and lower crime rates. Programs like community policing, which encourage open dialogue and mutual respect, have proven effective in easing tensions. When police officers actively engage with residents through outreach and listening sessions, they can address community concerns more effectively, making their presence feel less like an outside force and more like a collaborative partner. These efforts can break down harmful stereotypes on both sides, helping people see law enforcement as approachable and reliable while allowing officers to understand the unique dynamics of the communities they serve (Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute). But it is not that simple. Many minority communities have a long history of mistrust toward law enforcement, often rooted in experiences of racial profiling, excessive force, and biased treatment. These painful realities make some residents skeptical of outreach efforts, fearing they might be just for show or come with hidden motives (Alexander). Additionally, cultural barriers like the “no snitching” mindset, which discourages cooperation with police, can further complicate progress (Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute). On top of that, practical challenges—like underfunded programs, inconsistent training, and a lack of accountability within police departments—can make it difficult to maintain trust. Communities often feel that systemic issues, like over-policing or unequal resource distribution, are not being addressed seriously enough to make a real difference (President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing). While the challenges are real, building these relationships is key to creating safer, fairer communities. It requires not better communication but also real investment in education, accountability, and equitable practices to rebuild trust and create lasting partnerships.

In all honesty, I believe all communities in this position should have sit downs with law enforcement so that both sides can understand what is wrong and what needs to be fixed. With both sides doing this, the relationship between the two will grow stronger. And when that continues to occur, the community will also start to show signs of change. With the youth growing up in a time of change, the younger generation after them will follow and the trend will continue. Communities that want change will go out and find ways to do it. Other communities can say how they want change but will not take any action. Most of them fear that their idea will not be pushed or be approved by those around them. Other times it is due to the relationship of law enforcement being too destroyed. As 2024 ends, a lot of change has been promised. However, it is up to the communities to push for that change.

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