**To what extent should volunteering organizations and academic institutions provide educational equity among minority youths of color in South LA?**

The rise of the educational divide amongst minority youths of South Los Angeles resurfaces due the pandemic. Rooting back since the early 1900s and the “Pursuit of Equality Era,” statistically male students of Black/Hispanic descent have the lowest percentage of enrollment in higher education (*Encyclopedia of Race and Racism,* Sharpe and Swinton). Despite historical efforts of equality in education, concerns of the increasing “digital divide” and “systematic racism” recur as the pandemic majorly impacts students of color and low-income households based on personal, financial, and environmental factors (Galperin, Aguilar, and Beatty). Because of the augmenting educational gap, authors, researchers, organizations, and impacted students underscore the urgency of narrowing the “digital divide” in order to improve overall academic performance of low-income students of color in LA, to help academic institutions and volunteering organizations to provide equal education amongst minority youths of color, but also to reverse the negative trends of racial and gender inequities overtime.

The California Department of Education lacks discourse on finding solutions to the increasing “digital divide” heavily preventing minority youth groups from achieving proficient/advanced grades based on California’s Standards of Learning. This is due to the ignorance and the lack of awareness on the ongoing institutional and societal microaggression targeted towards students of color, low-income, and certain disabilities. In order to reduce the academic performance gap of certain demographics during the pandemic, it is necessary to address this issue by providing sufficient findings and grants focused on supplying “computers, tablets, and hardware” to “expand broadband access” and provide equal opportunity for academic success and to pursue higher education amongst financially disadvantaged students (Korn, 2018). Ultimately, because the “digital divide” will continue to rise, researchers strongly suggest that academic institutions, law enforcements, and even volunteering organizations continue to spread awareness of this issue, but also to fight for more grants, quality yet accessible resources and staff, and offer programs to help South LA students gain confidence and break their communities’ negative tropes.

By analyzing historical trends and comparing it with contemporary data focused on students who take part in distanced learning and engage in volunteer partnerships/organizations such as 826LA, I argue the necessity of educators to build empathy and patience for the minority youths when they fail to turn in assignments or pass the course. This is because their family situation, environmental factors, peers, and lack of resources demotivates and makes it challenging for the students to focus on their assignments. Thus, academic institutions and volunteering organizations should creatively collaborate, reevaluate the extent of their involvement of addressing educational equity issues, and develop a well-rounded curriculum that provides high-quality resources (staff and technological devices) that meets the eye-level of minority students with the goal of making them pursue higher education and enter the professional workforce.

**Works Cited**

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Hernán Galperin and Stephen Aguilar at the University of Southern California researches and compares the academic success between students of color/low-income households versus students who are from more affluent families during distanced learning. To test their debate, they survey over 1,000 families in South and East LA (mostly of color and are on free or reduced-price meals) to find that most under these conditions lack the appropriate technology and environment for virtual learning. Furthermore, their survey reports that students of low financial stability and of color are more likely to perform poorer than the affluent students because parents often are too busy to help students or provide an appropriate, quiet and private space for the student to work alone. The researchers underscore the urgency of narrowing the "digital divide" in order to improve academic achievement among low-income students of color in LA and show concern for these minority students once they move on to higher education.

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