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Domestic Policy Summary

The chapter starts off with the detailing of a story of Edward James Clay, an African American, who in 1994 pleaded guilty to possession of 70 grams of crack cocaine and was facing a federal sentence of at least 10 years in jail. This 10 year minimum is required by federal drug law and would subsequently take 100 times the amount of powder cocaine to receive the same sentence. This is significant because African Americans are more likely than whites to be arrested for possession of crack, therefore this legislation is essentially racial discrimination. This is the motive behind Judge Clyde Cahill's, the African American judge presiding over the case, ruling to disregard the rule and reduce Clay's sentence to 4 years. This decision painted the media's picture of crack being a "Black problem" and shed light on the racial disparity. However, Clay's sentence was later repealed and the 10 year sentence was reattached. As a result, from the pressure of civil rights organizations, the Fair Sentencing Act was passed to help stop situations like this. However not much has changed since then. This scenario exemplifies the mass incarceration disparity in America along with the larger theme of the importance of legislation and how it affects different groups, especially African Americans.

Policy making consists of two main categories, Domestic and Foreign Policy. Domestic Policy is legislation and programs that affect people within the United States while Foreign policy concerns relationships externally. In this summary I chose to focus on Domestic Policy because I wanted to see how It affects me and my people today and throughout our history. This

includes economic and fiscal concerns, infrastructure, criminal law, health care, housing, education, civil rights, and civil liberties.

Policymaking is a complex and lengthy process for policy to be put fully into place. This entails media stigmatization and public opinion on how said legislation is received. Just because something is enacted doesn't necessarily mean that rule will be followed. If proper action is not taken outside influences are often brought in to enforce the decision. This chapter also details how political institutions such as the Congress, Presidency, Judiciary and Bureaucracy effect, implement, and regulate these policies.

Agenda setting, often the first stage of the policymaking process, is when certain issues from the public build up enough pressure to the point that the government has to address it. However, these ideas have to be socially acceptable, unlike the ideas of some hate group organizations such as the Neo-Nazis. Systematic agenda refers to the ideas that legislators deem physically feasible and worthy enough to address. After this test, it then moves to the institutional agenda. Due to the government's finite time and resources many ideas don't get past this point. For the final stage, the decision agenda, the government moves to take said action. The main goal of this process is to move an issue from an idea to the decision agenda. This is where politics comes in. Political parties push their political agenda, which essentially has to go through this agenda setting process. Despite of political institutions power to pass and implement agendas, social movements and interest groups are the main drivers of this process.

A major goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to set domestic policy to ensure that African Americans shared the basic rights of all Americans and that these rights were protected by the government. Members of the Movement participated in demonstrations such as the Montgomery Bus Boycotts in 1955 and the March on Washington in 1963 to bring awareness to

their cause for many who were unaware of their plight. Interest groups can also participate in this process in ways other than protest. Many groups such as the NAACP have brought up legal litigation to influence and change laws that affect African Americans.

The media is another significant influencer when it comes to policy agenda. Reporters, editors and publishers essentially dictate what is heard and seen by the masses. To get your agenda out there it is vital for the media to deem your cause worth covering to get your policy on the political docket. This is a major reason why the Civil Rights Movement was as effective as it was during events such as the desegregation of the Central Highschool in Little Rock Arkansas and the Selma march. However, some believe that the media's role in the Movement has been somewhat overstated and not enough credit has been given to the organizers and protesters.

Once policy has captured the eye of politicians it moves to the next stage, policy enactment. During this stage legislators consider the possible alternatives to solve this problem. The first part of this process is policy formulation. Here they chose a course of action out of the many possible options to implement. During the policy adoption stage, the policy is actually put into place. Once again Government institutions play a key role in implementation and interest groups, social movements and the media provide a lot of influence. However, many propositions that reach the agenda setting stage don't quite make it here. This is exemplified by the disaster of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Though it received extensive media attention and racial disparities were clearly highlighted, racial discrimination that led to the impoverishment of many African Americans in this area was still not addressed, if not ignored.

After alternatives are assessed and a solution found, legislation then moves to the policy formulation stage. Whether its executive orders, bills, or opinions this process mostly takes place outside of the public's view. The enactment of policies that positively affect minorities and

people of color largely depends on representation within the government institutions. More than often minorities are more concerned with the plights of people of color than their white counterparts. Despite policy formations closed nature, outside opinion often find their way in, with parties often pushing to implement popular policy. For example, in 2016 the Democratic Party pursued policy that protected minority voting rights. They also hoped to help close the wealth gap, give DC its statehood, provide more resources for minority dominated colleges and end systematic racism. The 2016 Republican Party platform opposed many of these propositions.

Just because a policy is formulated doesn't necessarily mean it comes into existence. The policy has to be approved. This process often takes compromise. During the 1980's a key foreign policy issue concerning apartheid in South Africa caught the eye of African Americans who were virally against this institution for its resemblance to American segregation. The policy banned imports and exports between the two nations and without compromise wouldn't have passed. Similarly, in the 1978 case of Regents of the University of California v. Bakke which concerned affirmative action, also entailed key compromises to be rendered. If a compromise cannot be reached, policy will not be passed.

Through the many obstacles a policy may face, there are some that do become established policies. However, these policies cannot accomplish their directives unless they are upheld thoroughly through policy implementation and evaluation. For example, the 2001, No Child Left Behind Act required testing to improve the education of schoolchildren. Unfortunately, the executive branch underfunded this program. As a result, many schools had to divert money from other programs to compensate. This shortcoming greatly affected more impoverished schools.

Policy implementation is also important for the Supreme Court. Once the court makes a ruling it relies on others like the executive to carry it out. For example, after the Brown v Board of Education decision, many districts in the south did not immediately comply. To enforce the decision the Eisenhower and Kennedy administration sent federal troops to integrate the schools. This helps display the concept that local governments are key in policy implementation. The specificity of the policy also influences how it is introduced. The policymaking process doesn't just stop at the implementation stage. To see if a policy is truly effective and doing what it's supposed to, policy evaluation must take place. However, this also leaves effectiveness to the reviewer's discretion which can cause ambiguities. This process is done through congressional oversight.

Policymaking consists of what the government physically does and consists of several stages. Starting with agenda setting, moving to policy enactment including formation and endorsement and finally the post enactment stages of implementation and evaluation. Minority groups rely on interest groups and the media as well as racial representation within the government to push political institutions to enact policies that provide and protect their basic civil rights and civil liberties. This chapter details the importance of policy making for African Americans as shown through the countless examples provided and many other situations seen throughout history.