

Coates' Main Ideas in "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration"

Thesis: ?

1. Coates argues that the federal government has given up on creating programs to help poor people and instead turned to mass incarceration to address the problem of inner-city poverty. Coates cites the 1965 Moynihan Report on the problems with the African-American family to justify blaming the victims of poverty for their situation.
2. The mass incarceration of black men has made the problem of poverty worse in city neighborhoods because once a person is in the criminal justice system, that stigma follows them through life and affects later generations.
3. The prison industrial complex inflates prison sentences, exposes inmates to violence and sexual abuse, and makes many prisoners into more violent and hardened criminals. Those people who have served long sentences for violent crimes are denied parole even if they have demonstrated good behavior. This policy punishes their families as well.
4. Throughout American history, the government has sought to justify white supremacy by vilifying the supposed "savage and animalistic nature" of the black man. The failure of police to investigate and prosecute black on black crime has resulted in blacks resorting to vigilante justice in their communities.
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