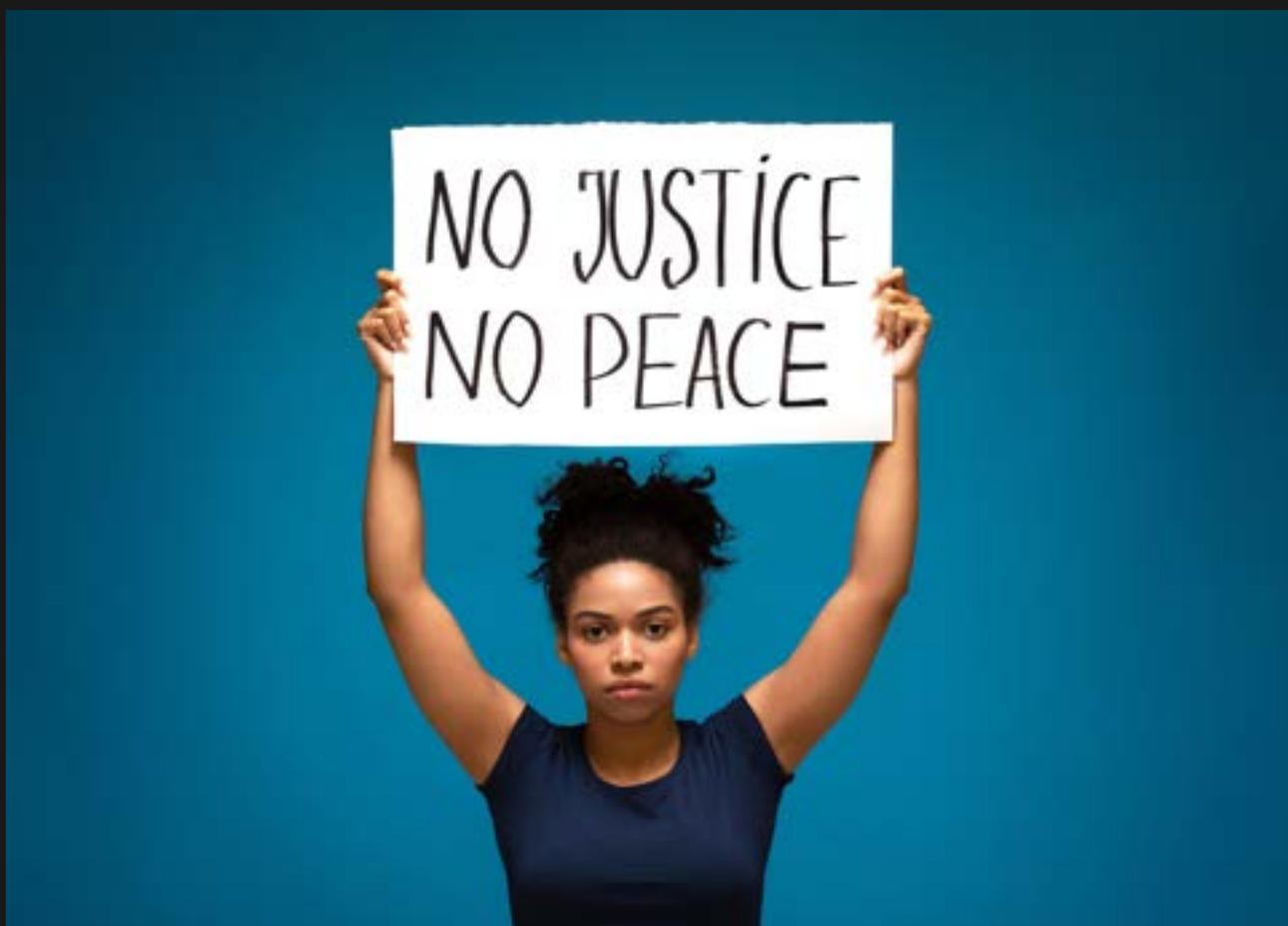


BLACK WOMEN IN THE U.S. 2021: PRIORITIES, POLICY AND POWER

REBUILDING HOPE, JUSTICE, EQUITY & EQUALITY IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC AND A NEW POLITICAL, RACIAL & SOCIAL JUSTICE ERA



POLITICAL POWER

And Rebuilding Hope

Electing Madam Vice President: Lessons From Black Women and Progressive Funders

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Dismantling Systemic Racism

We Need More Help: Black Women Leading the Movement Against the System Killing Them



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Melanie L. Campbell

President & CEO, NCBCP and Convener, Black Women's Roundtable
BWR Intergenerational Public Policy Network

Co-Editors

Avis A. Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.
State of Black Women in the US, 2021
Senior Public Policy Advisor, Black Women's Roundtable

Elsie Scott, PhD

Founding Director, Ronald W. Walters
Leadership & Public Policy Center @ Howard
University

Editing Assistants

Joycelyn Tate, Senior Policy Advisor, NCBCP/BWR
Joshua Gray, Vice President, Strategic Alliances
& Policy, NCBCP
Angelo Greco, Principal, Praxis Consulting

Design and layout provided by Trill Multicultural
www.ncbcp.org
www.blackwomensroundtable.org

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Melanie L. Campbell

President & CEO, NCBCP & Convener,
Black Women's Roundtable

“As we enter a new chapter in our nation's history, we have an unprecedented opportunity to shape the health and wealth of our communities.”

Dear Readers,

This past year has been one of immense challenges. It was one marked by loss, pain and a series of events that tested our nation's moral character. Despite the unprecedented turbulence, we also experienced glimmers of hope as our nation, led by Black women, elected the first Black and South Asian Vice President of the United States; and saw black women in Georgia, and throughout the country, lead a historic shift in political power.

Our 2021 BWR Report, “Black Women in the U. S. 2020: Priorities, Policy & Power,” is focused on lifting up the issues and policy priorities that impact the lives of Black women, our families and communities. The contributors represent an intergenerational group of some of our nation's most powerful Black women leaders and experts in their fields—who not only outline the problems facing Black women, but also share solutions and policies designed to address them at their core. This year's report also include a special section where Black women

share their personal stories of the impact COVID19 is having on their lives.

The findings of this year's report could not be any more timely. As we enter a new chapter in our nation's history, we have an unprecedented opportunity to shape the health and wealth of our communities. The Honorable Barbara Jordan once said “What the people want is simple. They want an America as Good as it's promise.” --The ideas and solutions laid out in this report are designed to deliver on that promise by recognizing our collective power to engage and shape the national agenda under the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's 45th Anniversary and Black Women's Roundtable 2021 Theme---Rebuilding Hope, Justice, Equity and Equality!

As we read through the various essays in this report, we are reminded of the influence of Black women's leadership, knowledge and political power that gives life to these policies. In the midst of an unprecedented public health crisis and nefarious

challenges to our democracy that saw our communities disproportionately impacted, we stood together to protect our communities and exercise our right to vote. We advocated for the issues that were most important to us and we executed strategies to lift ourselves and overcome the policies that have left us marginalized and disenfranchised.

This report is published with the knowledge of what we accomplished over the past year and optimism for the new opportunities that present themselves in the New Biden-Harris Administration and 117th Congress. As you read this report, know that we stand at the beginning of a new chapter. The decisions we make, the policies we commit to and the strategies we design, will set a trajectory for our nation and the world community for decades to come.

If this past election has confirmed anything, it is that whenever there is a crossroads in history---black women will always come to the frontlines and answer the call. Not only did

Black women show up, but we also organized, led, advocated and shifted power.

So, as we look to change the world, let's follow the ideas and influence of Black women.

In Solidarity,

Melanie L. Campbell
President & CEO, NCBCP & Convener,
Black Women's Roundtable
@coalitionbuildr

...

A. Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.
Co-Editor, 2021 BWR Annual Report
Board Member and Senior Policy
Advisor, NCBCP/BW
CEO, The Exceptional Leadership
Institute for Women

Dr. Elsie Scott
Co-Editor, 2021 BWR Annual Report
Secretary of the Board, NCBCP
Founding Director, Ronald W. Walters
Leadership & Public Policy Center @
Howard University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Black Women Rebuilding Hope, Justice, Equity & Equality in a New Political, Racial and Social Justice Era is the Black Women's Roundtable's (BWR) Eighth Annual Black Women in the US and Key States, 2021 Report. This year's report continues BWR's ground-breaking series which each year, provides in-depth analysis, insights, and policy-centered recommendations, all meant to illuminate the needs and conditions of Black women throughout the nation while also providing direction on how to improve the overall well-being of Black women and families across a wide array of issues.

This year's report captures the history of a uniquely distinctive year. It includes an analysis of Black women's leadership and game-changing impact on the 2020 elections, ultimately leading to the first Black and South Asian woman Vice President of the United States. Additionally, it shares perspectives on how the COVID19 Pandemic has uniquely impacted Black women's lives and the lives of those they love. It also provides perspectives on the continuing fight for justice in every segment of society from criminal justice and policing, to voting rights, to economic rights and beyond.

Specifically, this year's contributors provide insights on the following seven categories:

- **Category 1:** Black Women Owning Their Political Power & Rebuilding Hope
- **Category 2:** Racial, Gender & Criminal Justice, Dismantling Systemic/Structural Racism
- **Category 3:** Racial & Gender Justice, Equity & Equality in Education
- **Category 4:** Racial, Gender & Economic Justice, Equity and Equality
- **Category 5:** Racial, Gender & Health Justice, Equity and Access
- **Category 6:** Saving Our Democracy & Building Black Political Power
- **Category 7:** Special Section -Sisters Telling Our Stories (COVID19 Pandemic)

Our vision, our voices, our wisdom and magic, the 2021 edition of the BWR Black Women in the US Report shares our distinct perspectives on how to change the world.

Black Women Are Owning Their Political Power & Rebuilding Hope

- Black women contributed to the record voter turnout in the 2020 election, helping to elect the first African American Vice President who is also the first woman, the first African American woman and first Asian American woman Vice President.
- Hard work, coalition building, strategic targeting, leveraging all resources, grassroots organizing, rigorous get-out-the-vote efforts and relentless focus on the election goals by Black women-led Georgia coalitions, achieving historic victories in Georgia.
- Now that the Biden-Harris ticket is in office, Black women are expecting a return on their investment in policy changes and appointments.
- During the first 100 Days of the Biden Administration and beyond---Black women expect to have seats at the tables of governance and to have their policy concerns addressed and acted upon in concrete, substantive ways.

Black Women and Girls Face Hidden Challenges in the Criminal Justice System

- Mass incarceration is often viewed as a Black male issue, but as the number of Black women and girls incarcerated increases, this has become one of the criminal justice battles that Black women are waging.
- Black women are expecting strong support for programs addressing violence against women and funding for such programs from the Biden Administration since Biden sponsored the Violence Against Women Act in the Senate in the 1990s.
- The School-to-Prison Pipeline has been viewed as more of a Black male issue than a Black

girls' issue, but Black girls are significantly over-represented in the rates of suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement than white girls.

Black Women are on the Front Lines of the Pandemic

- Black women have disproportionately put their health at risk on the front lines of the Pandemic. Fully 45% of Black private-sector workers are employed in the following essential industries: healthcare, retail, and accommodation and foodservice. Further, one survey found that 51% of employed Black women describe working on the frontlines of the pandemic as essential workers, compared with 38% of white women.

When it Comes to Affordable Home-Ownership, Black Women and Families Remain Far Behind

- While the top quartile of income earners can buy homes under \$100,000 with cash, underwriting and biases around credit-worthiness create barriers that pick up where codified redlining left off--preventing Black prospective homebuyers from buying affordable homes.

Telehealth and Artificial Intelligence May Exacerbate Health Disparities

- The COVID19 Pandemic has greatly increased the demand for digital health care services. Yet AI tools are built from biased data reflecting biases in the healthcare systems. As a result, Black patients have been found to be less likely to receive or be referred for additional health care services than their white counterparts, even though Black patients were typically sicker than white patients

Black Women Hit Especially Hard by the COVID Economy

- The labor force participation rate of Black women workers dropped from 63.9% in February 2020 to 59.7% in February 2021, but even with a 7% drop, Black women continue to have the highest labor force participation rate among women.
- Although in 2019, women overall earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men, Black women earned only 63 cents to the dollar compared to 79 cents earned by white women.
- According to Pew, 73% of Black Americans said they did not have funds to cover three months of expenses while businesses were laying off employees and shutting down in-person jobs, including offices, restaurants, and other jobs that are typical amongst people of color.
- To women need policies such as paid family and medical leave, paid sick leave and high quality, affordable child care. They also need robust enforcement of discrimination laws, including combating pay discrimination specifically.

Black Women Value and Fight for Our Democracy

- As American democracy has been and continues to be under attack, especially the right to vote, Black women will not stop fighting to restore the Voting Rights Act and to prevent draconian state legislation from being enacted.
- The increasing rise of hate and white supremacy groups and incidents such as the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol Building should continue to motivate Black people to vote and to use every means possible to fight for a true democracy.

Black Women Share Their COVID19 Stories of Challenges and Triumphs

- I was excited to find out I was pregnant with my third child in August of 2019, well before anyone had heard of COVID19. And then: pandemic pandemonium. The world shut down in March of 2020 when I was two months away from giving birth. Honestly, for a while, I shut down too. Because everything I had planned went out the window.
- My journey began in early March of 2020 with a COVID-19 diagnosis for my daughter who lived hundreds of miles away. Little was known or understood about the disease—other than it was indiscriminate and a killer. She survived, but it was clear to me it was by the grace of God and not by human intervention.



**BLACK WOMEN
OWNING THEIR
POLITICAL POWER &
REBUILDING HOPE**

ELECTING MADAM VICE PRESIDENT: LESSONS FROM BLACK WOMEN AND PROGRESSIVE FUNDERS

BY HOLLI HOLLIDAY, PRESIDENT, SISTERS LEAD, SISTERS VOTE



“I am speaking” has become an iconic moment in politics. It symbolizes the rising political leadership of Black women. By repeating these three simple words, Vice Presidential candidate Kamala Harris stopped then-Vice President Mike Pence from interrupting her on the debate stage. She stood up to the second most powerful man in the world and later replaced him.

Barrier-busting moments came fast and furiously in the 2020 election:

- The Biden-Harris ticket won a “massive landslide victory.” This was the first presidential ticket to receive more than 80 million voters.
- Vice President Kamala Harris brought a series of historic firsts to her White House office -- the first Black, first South Asian and first woman.
- In the middle of the coronavirus and economic crises, this election was the most expensive one ever, costing nearly \$14 billion. Presidential candidates spent \$6.6 billion. The Biden-Harris campaign raised more than \$1 billion from individual donors alone.
- The number of African Americans eligible to vote hit a record high of 30 million, nearly 33 percent of which live in battleground states, such as Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Black voters helped to break all these records. Imagine what would be possible if funders made significant investments in Black women leaders working in African American communities?

Recapturing the 2020 energy for other elections will be no easy feat. But it is possible.

What Black Women Did

Some observations deserve a review. First and foremost, Black woman as voters, organizers and donors played a decisive role in the nomination of Joe Biden as a presidential candidate and selection of Kamala Harris as the 49th Vice President of the United States.

Presidential candidate Joe Biden said that “the African American community in South Carolina can make a judgement about who the next president of the United States is gonna be.” Refinery29 echoed Biden’s sentiment with the headline, “How Black women’s votes will determine the South Carolina primary.” In the Palmetto state, 55 percent of voters are Black, women make up the majority of this group.

If news is the first draft of history, this past election was a turning point. A Fortune headline read “Black women voters will be central to the 2020 presidential election, experts predict.” USA Today published a slightly more accurate headline, “Black women’s groups exercising new political power going into 2020 presidential campaign.” CNN went further, “Black women are the backbone of the Democratic Party. And they fell the heavy burden of this election.”

How Black Women Did It

Before voting, Black women organize. For the Obama-Biden reelection, Black woman took their families to the polls, contributing to victories in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida. In 2016, the choice of more than 9 out of 10 Black women voters won the popular vote by 3 million but lost the White House. The lesson was clear: the next win must be bigger. The entire community must cast a ballot.

To marshal community enthusiasm, African American activists pushed hard for a Black woman in the number two spot on the presidential ticket. Thousands petitioned the Biden campaign in blogs, articles and petitions. Tens of more thousands joined several Zoom calls and events on the veepstakes.

When Biden selected Harris as his running mate, inspiration struck. On August 20, 2020 enthusiasm and energy followed. Black woman contributed to one of the highest fundraising surges. The campaign received over 22,000 donations from Harris’s sorority sisters.

Harris cemented the Democratic ticket’s connection to the Black community. Biden’s number two was not only battle-tested during the primaries, but also had deep community roots as a graduate of a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority – one of the Divine Nine Black sororities and fraternities – and a member of The Links, a Black women’s community service group with chapters in many states. Community connections only go so far. Biden-Harris had the agenda that fit community needs. Before dropping out of the presidential race, Harris had advocated for issues of concern to activists, such as racial equity and criminal justice – coming to terms with past mistakes as a prosecutor.

Unsurprisingly, the circle of community collaborators quickly grew. HBCU alumni, sorority sisters and Links in California organized events, phonebanks and textbanks to other states. It came together magically.

Investing in the Future

At the same time, the Biden-Harris ticket won by more than 7 million votes, unexpected losses occurred among Democratic statewide candidates and in congressional and state legislative races, prompting important questions. In the Georgia runoff, how did the third candidate on the ballot below Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff lose? What happened in 13 congressional districts to shrink the majority from 36 seats to 10? Did redistricting go from bad to worse?

For some answers, look no further than capacity. Presidential and Senate races vacuumed up much of the organizing talent and donations of Black women.

To expand capacity, Black women leaders and groups need investments. Without additional resources, the 2020 level of organizing is episodic and unsustainable.

The drivers of energy and enthusiasm, Trump and Harris, are not on the 2022 ballot. Now is the time to build sustainable infrastructure among proven community organizers and organizations.

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“‘I am speaking’ has become an iconic moment in politics. It symbolizes the rising political leadership of Black women.”

THE POWER OF THE SISTER VOTE: GEORGIA BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE MAKES HISTORY

BY FELICIA DAVIS, HBCU GREEN FUND MANAGING
DIR. & CLAYTON COUNTY BWR CONVENER

HELEN BUTLER, THE GEORGIA COALITION FOR THE
PEOPLES' AGENDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Black women in Georgia have been working for decades to turn out the vote. Almost 50 years ago, Black women were instrumental in the election of Maynard Jackson as the first Black mayor of Atlanta, and Jimmy Carter would never have left Georgia without the strong support of Black women educating and mobilizing Black voters. The 2000 Census sheds light on emerging demographic shifts in Georgia that accelerated in 2010. The high-profile campaign of Stacey Abrams in 2018 confirmed that Georgia was changing, creating new possibilities. Black women understood that the 2020 Census would reveal major changes in the makeup of suburban counties, setting the stage for a wider and deeper mobilization of Black voters.



The Georgia Black Women's Roundtable is a coalition led by Helen Butler, executive director of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda; Deborah Scott, executive director of Georgia Stand Up; and Felicia Davis, managing director of the HBCU Green Fund and convener of the Clayton County BWR. The trio serve as co-conveners of the Georgia BWR, sharing areas of intersection, as well as distinctive issue expertise, enabling a strong issue-driven outreach in metro Atlanta and in Black areas throughout Georgia. With early support from the national office, Georgia BWR was positioned to significantly increase outreach to potential Black voters for the General Election. The additional resources were especially critical given the adjustments required due to COVID-19.

The Georgia 2020 voter empowerment effort launched with the theme “R U Vote Ready?” The first goal was to make sure voters understood that absentee voting was secure and to make sure that voters checked to make certain that they were registered. Touching and serving are hallmarks of the BWR community engagement. All Georgia BWR organizations conducted strategic phone banking, and Georgia Stand Up expanded their signature call center with the capacity to reach statewide. Stand Up made more than a million calls supporting absentee, early and in-person voting in advance of the November election.

The Georgia Coalition for the Peoples’ Agenda (GCPA) is widely recognized as the anchor organization for voting rights advocacy in Georgia. GCPA has expanded to seven offices throughout Georgia, including Albany, Athens, Augusta, Columbus/LaGrange, Macon, Savannah and Metro Atlanta. Each office has a local coordinator knowledgeable about the areas that they serve.

“It was hard work together with strategic targeting that made the difference. Georgia BWR combined data analytics with grassroots organizing expertise, maximizing and leveraging all available resources.”

GCPA employed a COVID safety director to ensure that all activities met rigorous standards for masks, social distancing, surface cleaning and sanitizing. Additionally, regular testing was a requirement for workers, and temperatures were checked daily. GCPA also assembled and distributed more than 25,000 PPE kits that included a mask, water, a snack, and GOTV literature.

GOTV by the Numbers

GCPA hosted at least two statewide Zoom meetings every week where issues were discussed, and all candidates were invited to share their platform with the audience. Understanding that it can take more than one touch to motivate potential voters, and given the heightened concern over COVID, emphasis was placed on reaching

voters at home. GCPA utilized earned and paid media, including print, radio and social media to provide accurate information about absentee and early voting. Emphasizing personal contact, GCPA conducted 16,807 phone conversations, sent 839,976 text messages, mailed 651,999 pieces of literature, knocked on more than 100,000 doors and provided 400 rides to the polls to achieve a turnout rate of 61.01% in the General Election and a remarkable 60.84% in the Senate Runoff, a full twenty points above the statewide average of 40.46%.

GCPA logged 944,965 voter contacts and of those contacted 574,901 voted for a conversion rate of 60.84%. Fully 97% of those contacted were People of Color, and the majority were Black. More Black women were contacted, and their turnout rate was more than 10% higher than their male counterparts.

Getting voters to the polls is critical and making certain that once they arrive, they can cast a ballot is equally important. To ensure that voting rights are not violated and to contribute to a free and fair election, GCPA recruited 800 poll workers and trained 1300 Election Protection poll monitors covering 93 Georgia counties and well over 600 precincts. This work helps to dissuade, catch, resolve, and document problems encountered.

The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation was the only national organization to target funds specifically for Clayton County, a large predominantly Black suburb of Atlanta. Clayton County BWR is unique in that the focus is on a single county, but the full force of the Georgia BWR was brought to bear in Clayton County. Employing some 50 workers from the IATSE Local 834, every door was knocked at least once for the General and twice for the Runoff Elections. Clayton County BWR distributed doorhangers across all seven cities in the County. On November 3rd it was Clayton County that put the Biden/Harris ticket over the top and sent the two Georgia senate races to runoffs, shocking the nation.

It was hard work together with strategic targeting that made the difference. Georgia BWR combined data analytics with grassroots organizing expertise, maximizing and leveraging all available resources. BWR worked in

collaboration with numerous coalition partners to knock on every door, call and/or text every phone, hold out of the box events like motorcycle rallies, food truck mini gatherings, park events and celebrity rallies. Nonpartisan candidate and issue forums were held online and reinforced with canvassing and phone banking.

Georgia BWR coordinated with other women-led, voter engagement organizations active in Georgia including Black Voters Matter, Fair Fight and the New Georgia Project among others.

SENATE RUNOFF 2021

In addition to funding, BWR conveners from around the nation were activated to assist, vastly multiplying the impact in Georgia. Phone banking was underway from BWR call centers in Michigan and Pennsylvania. Social media was utilized for the General Election, but it was maximized for the runoff. BWR sisters across the South turned up with energy from Florida, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. The DMV added in issues like paid family leave and fight for fifteen helped inspire turnout. Georgia BWR was also an active participant in the Win With Black Women collaborative that mobilized celebrity support ranging from Kerry Washington and Oprah to Maxwell and John Legend. The NCBCP comms team helped to maximize media coverage, reinforcing local efforts by DogonMedia.

GCPA coined the slogan, "Let's Do It Again" and more than 1000 signs were posted in Clayton County alone along with "Stand Up and Vote" signs throughout Metro Atlanta and beyond. The resources that seemed to be pouring into Georgia were needed to overcome an election during the Christmas holiday when large segments of the population were unemployed and the coronavirus was spiking. BWR conveners worked closely with rank-and-file members of Georgia labor unions, civil rights and civic organizations. With less time than in the General Election and in spite of all of the very real challenges, Georgia BWR produced remarkable numbers, more than doubling the number of voter contacts.

Black voter turnout was strong, particularly among women. Rigorous voter engagement resulted in Runoff turnout closely approximating that of the General, overcoming the

typical falloff when presidential candidates are no longer on the ballot.

A review of turnout in counties with high numbers and percentages of Black voters explains the Biden/Harris and Warnock/Ossoff victories. It also illustrates the potential for changing the Georgia political landscape and signals possibilities for other states, particularly southern states. The fact that the Black vote is credited with "flipping Georgia from red to blue" sent shock waves that reverberate across state legislatures. One scholar refers to the current assault on ballot access as, "The Empire Strikes Back" given the draconian bills introduced and passed by the Republican majority in the Georgia legislature. These voter suppression tactics will rollback access with the obvious intent to disenfranchise voters of color.

Georgia Black Youth Vote, co-led by two young women and one male, worked hard to mobilize their peers to vote. These young organizers mobilized a national Stand With GA virtual march protesting voter suppression bills. They are committed to working for the long-haul and determined to increase voter participation and ultimately expand voter access. Working together, Georgia Black Women's Roundtable and Georgia Black Youth Vote are determined to increase Black voter turnout in 2022 no matter the obstacles from the legislature.

Georgia General Election 2020

COUNTY NAME	COUNTY CODE	BLACK MALE			BLACK FEMALE		
		Reg #	Voted	%	Reg #	Voted	%
CLAYTON	031	62318	31130	49.95	80950	50662	62.58
DEKALB	044	129022	69206	53.64	161379	107031	66.32
FULTON	060	160468	73955	46.09	191082	113438	59.37
COBB	033	64208	38582	60.09	83820	58410	69.69
GWINNETT	067	77095	46988	60.95	96189	68008	70.7
HANCOCK	070	1869	1099	58.80	2249	1657	73.68
DOUGHERTY	047	18186	7947	43.70	24659	14159	57.42
CLARKE	029	9172	4223	46.04	12043	7109	59.03
MUSCOGEE	106	26825	13391	49.92	36545	22676	62.05
CHATHAM	025	35698	16988	47.59	44329	27997	63.16
BIBB	011	25940	12771	49.23	33525	21582	64.38
HENRY	075	34930	22027	63.06	45669	33745	73.89
TROUP	141	6211	2993	48.19	8755	5525	63.11
RICHMOND	121	33603	17733	52.77	43925	28625	65.17

Georgia Senate Runoff 2021

CLAYTON	031	63456	29278	46.14	81976	46826	57.12
DEKALB	044	130783	65016	49.71	162705	100141	61.55
FULTON	060	163259	69443	42.54	193381	104851	54.22
COBB	033	65026	35401	54.44	84503	53460	63.26
GWINNETT	067	78428	43907	55.98	97409	62814	64.48
HANCOCK	070	1876	1030	54.90	2249	1513	67.27
DOUGHERTY	047	18918	7481	39.54	25052	12751	50.9
CLARKE	029	9393	3764	40.07	12154	6402	52.67
MUSCOGEE	106	27359	12240	44.74	36956	20274	54.86
CHATHAM	025	36544	15599	42.69	44832	25394	56.64
BIBB	011	26395	11567	43.82	33763	19260	57.04
HENRY	075	35488	20383	57.44	46296	31014	66.99
TROUP	141	6407	2706	42.24	8904	4882	54.83
RICHMOND	121	34288	16139	47.07	44470	25469	57.27

THE PATH TO VICTORY IN THE DEEP SOUTH RUNS THROUGH TENNESSEE

BY CHARLANE OLIVER, CO-FOUNDER, THE EQUITY ALLIANCE AND CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EQUITY ALLIANCE AND THE EQUITY ALLIANCE FUND

“Pundits will have us believing that the Deep South is a foregone cause of red states, but the organizing power of Black women in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama tells a different story.”

Tennessee is one of a few southern states exempted from the Section 5 preclearance requirement of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which has allowed the state to fly under the radar and slowly erode our democracy. A lack of investment in the past 20 years from national progressive donors and institutions has opened the door for conservatives to gain partisan control of the Tennessee General Assembly and have a trifecta supermajority since 2010. Strict voter ID requirements, archaic 30-day voter registration deadlines, felony disenfranchisement, poll taxes on poor people, gerrymandered districts, and the absence of polling locations on college campuses have all played a role in creating institutional barriers to voting for BIPOC communities, low-income low propensity voters, college students, returning citizens with past felony convictions, the elderly and the disabled. As a result, Tennessee consistently ranks in the bottom five states for voter participation and is the 3rd hardest state to vote in.

Pundits will have us believing that the Deep South is a foregone cause of red states, but the organizing power of Black women in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama tells a different story.

Thanks to the organizing work of Black women, Black voters in Georgia, yet again, swooped in to save America from itself by electing Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff to the U.S. Senate. No less than 24 hours later, the political pendulum swung from triumph in Georgia to tragedy at our nation’s Capitol. We witnessed on live television an angry mob of white supremacists and insurrectionists storm the U.S. Capitol in a last-ditch effort to overturn the election results in what they believed to be a country being stolen from them.

As we have learned repeatedly throughout American history, whenever Black people assert our self-determination and make progress towards equality and civil rights; whenever we force America

to live up to its constitutional ideals of 'We the People'; and whenever there are landmark victories that place Black people closer to an equal playing field with white Americans, there will almost certainly be an immediate whitelash of the most violent kind.

To understand this hyper-polarization of political forces, look no further than Tennessee. Birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan. Battleground of the Civil War. Home to 105 Confederate monuments. Where Ida B. Wells was exiled for writing about lynching. Where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Where civil rights icons planned lunch counter sit-ins, bus boycotts and freedom rides. And now ground zero for voter suppression.

Organizers and activists have been attempting to turn the pages of history and build people power through long-term organizing and electoral wins. Much like Stacey Abrams, Nsé Ufot, Helen Butler and Felicia Davis in Georgia, The Equity Alliance, co-founded by Black women in 2016, has been on the front lines leading the fight to end voter suppression in Tennessee. In 2018, The Equity Alliance led a statewide voter outreach project, in partnership with BlackPAC, that registered more than 91,000 Black Tennesseans to vote and resulted in a 413% increase in turnout among Black voters for the 2018 midterms.

In 2019, Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett retaliated against our success and passed legislation that would criminalize our efforts to conduct large-scale voter registration drives by instituting the stiffest civil and criminal penalties in the nation – up to a year in jail and \$10,000 fines. We protested this law, filed a lawsuit to repeal it, and won in federal court.

Protests in Nashville, organized and led by Black women, erupted in the wake of George Floyd's murder. Shortly afterward, local Black activists launched a 60-day protest in front of the Tennessee Capitol to demand the removal of the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust, a monument erected in honor of a slave trader and the first grand wizard of the KKK. To silence this dissent, Republican lawmakers called a special session to pass anti-protest legislation. The headline-grabbing law made protesting overnight on state property a Class E felony, punishable by up to six years in

prison and ultimately resulting in loss of voting rights.

When the 2020 presidential election approached, The Equity Alliance sued the Secretary of State and won our lawsuit to expand absentee ballot access so that every Tennessean, particularly Black residents who were dying from Covid-19 at three-times the rate of white residents, could vote safely by mail during the pandemic.

Political polarization reached new heights in 2021. Tennessee lawmakers introduced bills to abolish early voting, give business owners voting power, and remove liberal judges from the bench who ruled in favor of expanding absentee voting. The backlash is real, but these attempts to suppress votes have all failed, thanks to grassroots organizing.

Organizing in the Deep South is hard work; organizing in Tennessee is even more difficult. If we are going to give our movement a fighting chance to win victories that remove Jim Crow's grip on the Deep South, we must not overlook the battles being won in non-battleground states. With Black-women-led organizations building power and organizing in communities of color, we are laying the groundwork so that Tennessee, too, can go like Georgia.

The road to structural change and democracy reform is long, but we are inching closer in Tennessee. 2020 saw our state's first Black woman, Marquita Bradshaw, receive the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate. In 2020, 4.4 million Tennesseans registered to vote, and over 3 million turned out to vote in November. Tennessee is no longer 50th in voter turnout. We are electing the most progressive municipal governing bodies in history. More people are motivated to take action beyond Election Day, and a new power is rising, led by Black women and the New American Majority. Do not count Tennessee out. There is more work to be done to secure democracy and freedom for our people.

CENTERING THE NEEDS OF BLACK WOMEN AND WOMEN OF COLOR IS HOW WE BUILD POWER

BY TAMIEKA ATKINS, EXECUTIVE DIR., PROGEORGIA

At ProGeorgia, our state's non-partisan civic engagement table, we work daily to support a bold, trusted, and diverse collaborative of organizations that champion an equitable and inclusive democracy for and with traditionally underrepresented communities. We develop infrastructure, execute joint strategies, and employ new tools and technology to assure a government that is more responsive to the needs of our constituencies.

Whether through raising awareness about the ways the democratic process can be wielded as a tool for collective liberation, or by registering and mobilizing voters to more fully access the ballot as a means of affecting change, our work is rooted in community first. While major media coverage has focused on the dramatic outcomes of this most recent election cycle, what those of us on the ground understand is that it has taken years - decades in some instances - of non-transactional relationship building to achieve the results of these latest elections. Our work centers community-based

investment and leadership development among grassroots organizations and leaders. By creating and implementing people-centered empowerment strategies we are able to consolidate the political power of the unvoiced masses to produce improved social and economic outcomes for us all.

Central to the power shift we are creating is our ability to uplift and center the needs of Black women and girls. Over the years, what we have learned at ProGeorgia, particularly through our Women of Color Initiative is that Black women and women of color are critical to the work of civic engagement, keeping our communities together and holding our leaders accountable. The more we are able to speak to and address the issues that matter to them, the more effective our organizing can and will be.

At the top of 2020, days before COVID-19 was declared a public health crisis and the world as we knew it began to shut down, we released the results of a survey of more than 1100 Black women and women of color from across the state. We discovered that the most pressing issues facing these women related to healthcare costs and services, economic and employment practices, education, LGBTQ discrimination, and immigrant rights. This first-of-its-kind documented political agenda created by Black women and women of color across the state provided critical context to connect with people where they were, spurring increased voter education, registration, engagement, and mobilization.



Even amid a global pandemic whose detrimental impact was disproportionately felt by people of color, and members of low-income, rural and immigrant communities, our on-the-ground organizing, and amplification strategies resulted in some of the highest voter turnout the state has ever seen. As much as community-based relationships mattered to the effectiveness of our mobilization efforts, so too did the power of collaborative coalition building. Our state consists of a rich pastiche of people, hailing from different places around the globe and representing a variety of ideologies, identities, and perspectives. Contrary to “conventional political wisdom” that tends to paint voters of color with a broad brush - seeking only to capture their votes without fully understanding the nuanced perspectives of the people in various communities - we understand that celebrations and acknowledgement of our differences are effective organizing tactics.

We also realize the profound power that Black women and women of color possess as organizers for community impact. Elevating the voices and narratives of women plays a pivotal role in demonstrating cultural competence and the ability to connect with would-be voters. Our partners are uniquely positioned to engage with people where they are because they represent the very communities they are trying to help mobilize and uplift.

Now that the federal elections are behind us, we find ourselves even more deeply ensconced in the work of trying to protect voter rights and engage the masses anew beyond major political contests. Voter disenfranchisement and suppression are things we are all too familiar with in Georgia, and following the record turnout and results of this cycle, many of our state legislators have turned their sights to undermining democratic participation. What is happening here in Georgia is emblematic of attempts across the country to rollback voting rights and curtail civic engagement, but we shall not be deterred.

We are on a mission to shift power to new decision makers. Using the same principles of non-transactional, community-based relational organizing that we have been cultivating for years, we are determined to fight back against these attacks on our democracy. Protecting the right to vote is not the win we are looking for; it is how

we collectively use our right to vote as one means of transforming our communities and shaping our policy, politics, and our country. There is an African proverb that says, “if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

Together, we are building power by elevating the thought leadership and centering the lived experience and expertise of Black women and women of color.

Sources:

Conversations & Connections: Unpacking Georgia Women of Color’s Collective Voice, Power, and Civic Engagement, Women of Color Initiative, <https://www.womenofcolorinitiative.org/tool-kit> (March 2, 2020) (last accessed March 20, 2021)

BLACK WOMEN OWNING THEIR POLITICAL POWER: ANGELA ALSOBROOKS, COUNTY EXECUTIVE, PRINCE GEORGE' COUNTY, MARYLAND

BY DR. SHIELA HARMON MARTIN,
UNIVERSITY OF THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA



Angela D. Alsobrooks, elected in 2018, is the first woman and Eighth County Executive of Prince George's County, Maryland, one of the nation's wealthiest majority-black counties. She represents a breed of young progressive African American women leaders who have exemplified proactive leadership and transparent, evidence-based decisions in their local response to the deadly COVID-19 virus. Reaffirming her reputation of being firm, fair, and consistent in carrying out her responsibilities, during the pandemic crisis, Ms. Alsobrooks has enacted measures demonstrating that the health and safety of every Prince Georgian is her top priority.

On March 5, 2020, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, declared a catastrophic health emergency after three people in the state tested positive for the virus.

Ms. Alsobrooks, in a news conference, declared a state of emergency in the County as COVID infections increased, hospitalizations rose, and Maryland's first coronavirus death was announced. Within weeks, Prince George's County became the epicenter of the coronavirus in the Washington region with the most coronavirus infections and some of the highest death rates.

Prince George's County has the highest rate of cases in Maryland, 19.4% and deaths, 17%. African Americans, who constitute the largest racial group in the county at 61.7%, also reflect the most COVID-related statistics as shown in the chart below.

	Total Cases	Hospitalizations	Deaths
	75,735	7,654	1,333
African Americans	30,105 (40%)	4,400 (58%)	836 (66%)
Hispanics	18,677	2,017	259
Whites	3,715	532	158

From the beginning of the pandemic, there was a coordinated and collaborative response between Ms. Alsobrooks and Maryland state officials in efforts to control and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Her executive orders, issued in tantamount with those of the Governor, were designed to follow all Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention guidelines while ensuring enforcement of a myriad of mandates from banning large gatherings, closing non-essential businesses and schools, stay at home orders, to mask wearing. Ms. Alsobrooks firmly displayed her resolute to enforce the county's "no gathering policy" when she ordered the closing of two hotels for COVID violations. Despite previous police warning, large groups of young people, mostly without masks, were holding large parties in the hotel rooms.

Preparing for a worse-case COVID scenario, Ms. Alsobrooks executed a surge plan that included 1) triage tents at Medstar Southern Maryland, Doctor's Hospital and the University of Maryland Prince George's Hospital Center and preparation of the Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex as a potentially large alternative care site; 2) a request to the state for additional beds, PPE, ventilators, and other critical supplies; 3) a quarantine facility for first responders; and 4) cross training of public safety employees.

The county established four COVID testing sites, 26 private partnership sites that included the stadium for the Washington Football team and pop-up testing sites throughout the county. Six Flags Amusement Park, a state testing site, was also located in the county. Testing continues in the county, with over 500,000 tests administered to date, despite the recent conversion of the Six Flags' state site into a state vaccination site.

Ensuring that all Prince Georgians are vaccinated is the primary focus of Ms. Alsobrooks, county leaders, and health officials. They have launched a coordinated community outreach effort, that includes tele-town hall meetings, news conferences, and press releases to discuss the COVID vaccines and encourage vaccination. Community partnerships include pharmacies as well as mega-churches serving as vaccinations sites. Modeling their vaccination appeals, Ms. Alsobrooks and county leaders publicly received their vaccinations. However, the initial launching of a state-run vaccination website requiring an internet sign-up and pre-registration process for vaccination appointments, resulted in frustration and complaints from residents who could not access the site. In response, a county website was created for vaccine pre-registration based on a phased, equitable approach beginning with most at-risk populations. Prioritizing senior citizens, vaccination distributions have occurred throughout the county at nursing care and assisted living facilities as well as using mobile health units, targeting senior housing facilities. The County operates five vaccination clinics and has three mobile vaccination units.

Ms. Alsobrooks has had both problems and criticism with the vaccination distribution efforts. Recent criticism by Maryland Governor Larry Hogan that Prince George's County was lagging in its vaccination distribution efforts (13.7% first dose & 5.8% second dose) drew the ire of Ms. Alsobrooks. Pushing back, she publicly asserted to state officials that vaccine hesitancy among Black and brown communities in the county was not an issue, because about 118,000 people were on the county's waiting list. She noted that the problem is the insufficient number of vaccine doses allocated to the county (nine vaccine doses allocated for every 100 people), the third lowest in the state, ahead of only Harford and Anne Arundel counties. She also noted other problems such as an insufficient number of trained healthcare workers available to administer vaccinations, and the continuing inability of county residents to obtain appointments at the Six Flags State site. Recent discussions with Governor Hogan's team resulted in an initial set aside of 2,100 priority appointments for county residents at the Six Flags State site and a graduated increase to 10,000 priority appointments. Additionally, the assistance of school nurses, Maryland National Guard and the vaccination of frontline workers are addressing the personnel shortage issue. As of March 2021, over 100,000 residents have received at least one dose of a vaccine, and over 50,000 residents are fully vaccinated. The present weekly capacity of 15,000 vaccines per week is predicted to ensure the achievement of the County's goal of vaccinating all residents by summer 2021.

In addition to her focus on the impact of the Coronavirus on the health of the citizens of the county, Ms. Alsobrooks simultaneously initiated measures to address the impact of COVID on the economy and businesses. Along with the PGC County Council, several programs were established (including public-private partnerships) to provide financial assistance to local small businesses and residents who lost jobs due to the pandemic. Prince George's County was also the recipient of \$158,641,920 in funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). These funds have been distributed to the various agencies as designated by the legislation and have aided in maintaining the economic solvency of the County and its residents.

CONCLUSION

Since COVID-19 became a visible reality, its impact has been both devastating and challenging. However, progressive African American women leaders, such as Angela Alsobrooks became the model of proactive and transparent political leaders enacting policies and measures to ensure the health safety of their constituents and temper its social and economic impact. Following CDC guidelines and the impact data of COVID-19 for her county and state, Ms. Alsobrooks is a visible advocate and activist for her constituencies. She continues to expand the capacity of the County's healthcare system in COVID testing and vaccinations and prioritizes care for vulnerable populations. Cognizant of the impact of COVID on the economy of the County, her private/public partnerships and funding programs support small businesses, county employees, and residents. Addressing the challenges of COVID-19, Ms. Alsobrooks continues to reaffirm her reputation of being firm, fair, and consistent in her service to the residents of the County and the challenges of COVID-19. She is a Black woman leader who through her service is ensuring the health and safety of Prince Georgians while instilling hope for a brighter future.

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WHAT BLACK WOMEN WANT FOR THEIR VOTE FROM THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION: A SOCIAL WEALTH FUND FOR REPARATIONS

BY MARIAH LICHTENSTERN, FOUNDING PARTNER OF DIVERSECITY VENTURES & WIN' '20 ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB FELLOW



“Now is the time to prioritize investment in Black women in a way that pays a dividend for comprehensive reparations.”

With the Covid-19 pandemic taking an unprecedented social and economic toll, Black women have been hit the hardest. Black Americans have Covid-19 mortality rates that are double those of Whites. Black women are harder hit by unemployment, and while Black women were the fastest-growing demographic of business owners before the pandemic, 41% of Black-owned businesses were shuttered by Covid-19. The deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and most explicitly, George Floyd, have put a blazing spotlight on the collective, multifaceted, systemic, and persistent preponderance of anti-Black racism.

Now is the time to prioritize investment in Black women in a way that pays a dividend for comprehensive reparations. Reparations include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. This should be carried out using Presidential reorganization authority to establish a Racial Atoning Compensation Endowment (RACE) and corresponding RACE Funds.

While RACE should be centered on atonement for anti-Black racism, it should also inform policy to address broader historical and persistent harm caused by White nationalist ideology. This may, at some point, include the harm suffered by all Americans (e.g., universal basic income). However, it should begin with funding for education, skilled trades, upskilling, homeownership, debt relief, mental and physical health care, childcare, social safety nets, and equitable access to entrepreneurial training and funding for American citizens and permanent residents of Black African descent.

How would RACE be funded?

The fund should be established through a private partnership - not unlike the National Endowment for the Humanities. The newly formed RACE should be a management arm that oversees subsidiary funds. These funds can be regional, theme, and domain specific. Capitalization of the funds can be deployed by the Treasury Department, Congressionally approved appropriations, tax-deductible donations, commitments/pledges from major tech companies and financial institutions, and co-investment by limited partners. It should thereafter be sustained through returns on investments and equity pledges from early-stage beneficiaries.

What would the economics look like?

Imagine RACE Fund I contributes \$100 billion to a \$1 trillion fund, which, deploys \$100 billion per year. The management arm collects 1.2% (\$12 billion) per year for assets under management which goes to operations and reparations programs. After ten years, assuming a 3X return at the wind-down of the fund, the US Government's return would be 10% of \$3 trillion, or \$300 billion, plus carry (performance fees rolled up to the management arm). Assuming a 20% carry on the \$2 trillion in profits (\$400 billion) and \$120 billion in cumulative management fees, the return would be \$820 billion. While far from the trillions of dollars economists estimate Black Americans are owed for reparations tied to slavery, these economics are sufficient to initiate reparations for modern day harm Black people in America continue to suffer due to systemic anti-Black racism.

Fund Size	U.S. RACE Contribution	Return at 3X	Carry	Management Fee	Total ROI
\$1T	\$100B (10%)	\$300B	\$400B	\$120B (10 yrs.)	\$820B

How should investments be allocated?

Emerging managers across the nation are ready and willing to invest in the entrepreneurs who will lead our economic recovery. However, emerging managers need the funding to do so. With family offices and high net worth individuals uncertain about the investment climate, it is imperative that the U.S. government steps up to de-risk and jump-start the next generation of fund managers.

Priority should be given to Black female fund managers

with demonstratable access to deal flow. Currently, Black women are less than 1% of fund managers, and Black female founders receive a fraction of 1% of venture capital. To ensure efficient deployment, funding could also go to fund managers who commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion through initiatives like the Tech Funding Equity Opportunity Pledge.

In Summary

The top ten tech companies in the United States have market values of hundreds of billions to trillions of dollars. By making strategic investments in funds and venture studios employing Black executives to commercialize government-funded intellectual property, the US has the ability to become a major shareholder in the next generation of trillion-dollar companies while, at the same time, addressing and course-correcting its dark racialized past.

While the U.S. has responded to Covid-19 with trillions of dollars in aid (with no path to recoupment in sight), Black women have been largely left behind. Some private companies have pledged to address issues faced by Black people, including a \$10 billion commitment by Goldman Sachs earmarked for Black women in entrepreneurship and beyond. While these commitments are promising, Black women deserve what Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Pauli Murray, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, Betty Shabazz, Maya Angelou, and so many others deserved, but never saw manifest: comprehensive reparations for anti-black racism.

Sources:

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THINGS THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION CAN DO IN THE FIRST 100 DAYS TO THANK BLACK WOMEN

BY KAREN CAMPER, TENNESSEE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF BLACK ELECTED LEGISLATIVE WOMEN



“The Biden Administration must take a closer look at the ways they can help Black women that have been impacted by COVID-19.”

In the 2020 elections, Black women outperformed every demographic of voters and voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic nominee. They helped to elect Vice President Kamala Harris, the first women Vice President who is also the first Black and south Asian women to serve in this position. The Biden Administration is also set to have the most diverse cabinet and appointees of any other Administration, and Black women are a large part of the reason for this victory. With that, it is essential that Black women across the country hold this Administration accountable for campaign promises and make sure that the first 100 days include a specific agenda for Black women.

It is no secret that COVID-19 has revealed many of the veiled disparities that people of color know and understand on a personal level. Black women were already suffering with higher rates of domestic violence, sexual violence, and police violence. The pandemic began to make the conditions for Black women of all socioeconomic status worst. Black women are disproportionately represented in low-income jobs that are now described as essential workers. They also have food deserts, generational living and other living conditions that make them more vulnerable to interaction with a COVID-19 carrier. The Biden Administration must take a closer look at the ways they can help Black women that have been impacted by COVID-19. They can do this by working to ensure the vaccines are getting to these communities, that direct payments are consistent, and more benefits are provided for essential workers. In addition to this, the administration should consider the amount of debt that Black women have taken on during

the pandemic. About half of Black women are the main source of income in their homes. They are also the largest growing demographic of small business owners. This is important because many Black women have lost their jobs during the pandemic and hundreds of thousands of small businesses have had to shut down due to the pandemic. It is critical that Black women who have been affected by this have resources to cover any student loans debt, housing and rent cost, utilities, and childcare.

Like economic disparities, health and wellness disparities for Black women did not start with COVID-19. Black women are more at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS and autoimmune diseases like Lupus, and they are more likely to suffer with reproductive illnesses like uterine fibroids and infant mortality. Because of stigma, a lack of resources and racism in the medical industry, black women are often left to struggle on their own while taking care of loved ones. For women who are the breadwinners for their family, these health factors limit the ways they can show up for themselves and their families. It is vital that the Biden administration focuses on the health disparities that black women have had to manage for centuries. They also must invest in mental health services, address malnutrition and work to ensure more Black women can have access to affordable healthcare.

Another area that requires special attention is connectivity and access to affordable broadband. Black communities are disproportionately impacted by the lack of access to the internet. They have done their best to fill in gaps caused by the digital divide, but there has not been enough work done to ensure that communities have what they need to survive in an online world. Things like remote learning, grocery shopping, telemedicine and remote jobs depend on reliable internet. The country's current infrastructure is not meeting the needs of Black families in urban and rural areas. With that, the government must provide innovative relief that makes sense for where Black women and their families are now. That means adding resources to the lifeline program, including broadband coverage in the COVID-19 relief packages, and helping close the digital divide across the board.

In her Democratic National Convention speech, Vice President Harris said, "The litmus test for America is

how we are treating Black women." This means that this administration has a responsibility to meet the needs of every Black woman. In many ways, these women pushed through one of the most blatant attacks on voting rights and even a global pandemic to do what they felt was best for the future of our nation. They did that expecting the new Administration to center their needs and come up with tangible solutions to the problems that Black women face. This is an opportunity for the Biden Administration to continue to make history as the administration that intentionally centered the needs of those at the margins to make change for generations to come. When Black women are well, the entire country is well!

Resources

- "Lifting As We Climb" Black Women Lead Voter Turnout Despite Barriers – Nielsen
- Black Women Formed the Democratic Backbone That Helped Joe Biden and Kamala Harris Win (msn.com)
- Black Women & Domestic Violence (blackburncenter.org)
- Black women, the forgotten survivors of sexual assault (apa.org)
- SAY HER NAME | AAFP
- Black women workers are essential during the crisis and for the recovery but still are greatly underpaid | Economic Policy Institute (epi.org)
- Essence study reveals how black women are affected by COVID-19 (nbcnews.com)
- Women as Breadwinner: Black Women Already Fill Role in Family (slate.com)
- Black Women Were Among the Fastest-Growing Entrepreneurs—Then Covid Arrived (forbes.com)
- December-Jobs-Day.pdf (nwlc.org)
- Yelp data shows 60% of business closures due to the coronavirus pandemic are now permanent (cnbc.com)
- HIV hits black women hardest, CDC report says (nbcnews.com)
- Here's What You As A Black Woman Should Know About Autoimmune Diseases | MadameNoire
- Reproductive health inequities for Black women in America - The Spot by LOLA (mylola.com)
- Positive Women's Network Wants You to Celebrate and Honor Black Women in the HIV Movement (thebody.com)
- African Americans and the Internet | Pew Research Center

BLACK WOMEN RAISING THE STATES: BUILDING GROUND POWER

BY GWEN MCKINNEY



Gwen McKinney, the creator of Suffrage, Race, Power – Black Women Unerased and president of McKinney & Associates communications firm.

The power of Black women organizing coalitions on the ground is timeless.

In earlier periods, sharing collective space was so intimidating that the very act was outlawed and codified into slave codes. Despite the threats of lashes and banishment, Black women connected, conspired and collaborated. Their convenings were a sacred tradition of resistance and survival. The Black Women’s Roundtable follows a well-paved path. With affiliates and partners across the country, our new initiative, Black Women Raising the States, is a logical seed in the ground power, growing and elevating tested and new warriors.

When Black women organize, movements created social change. It’s the art of doing what we do with our secret sauce to make a way out of no way, standing on the shoulders of our ancestors and emerging with an alchemy that translates into Black Girl Magic. These building blocks have been cobbled together over the ages, from farming collectives to washer women cooperatives; from benevolent societies to church deaconess boards; from colored women’s service clubs to Greek-letter sororities. Celebratory or solemn, Black women circles are the spark to intersectional and mutual aid, embodied in the first national Black organization. A collection of doers, faith leaders and troublemakers, they unified 125 years ago in the toolshed of activism and civic engagement.

In 1896, Boston journalist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin joined with Washington, DC suffragist and educator Mary Church Terrell to launch the largest gathering of Black women leaders and activists ever convened in the 19th Century. Adopting the slogan “building as we climb,” they would eventually claim the title National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC). They embraced

the far-flung interests of their people including women's suffrage, education and human rights for emancipated citizens. The early anti-lynching campaigns and philanthropic work for food, literacy and land were supported by this emerging body.

Never given its rightful accolades, the NACWC would lay the blueprint for the NAACP (founded in 1909) and the sororities and fraternities established nearly a decade later. By 1924, the Women's Club membership swelled to over 100,000. And until the Great Depression, the organization was an umbrella for some 100 local clubs and federations.

They mentored the next generation of movement shakers, inspiring stellar leadership nurtured by the likes of Anna Julia Cooper, Mary McLeod-Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Rosa Parks, Harriette Moore, Dorothy I. Height and Septima Clark, to name a few. They lowered their shoulders, to give solid footing on which so many Black women leaders stand today.

Fast forward to the 21st Century. From Philadelphia, PA to Philadelphia, MS, BWR stalwarts are leading state and local civic engagement, moving the ground and reshaping the politics where they live, work and thrive. They flexed their muscles during the 2020 Presidential Election, pushing the status quo to new frontiers. Confronting pandemic turbulence – a deadly virus and toxic white supremacy – the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's BWR affiliates and partners remain a force with their own political might, reckoning with the needs of the

community and the unfolding narrative of Black women in the political moment.

While the high-stakes Georgia senate runoff elections were ground-zero, the earth was moving wherever local members of the BWR dare to stand. Scoring down ballot wins – from unprecedented numbers of Black women judges in Ohio to Black women prosecutors and first-time ever Black sheriffs throughout the South. Black women are raising the stakes on the ground, often without the recognition, resources and exposure they deserve.

“Black Women Raising the States – a partnership with BWR and SRP Black Women Unerased digital initiative – is committed to shining light and voice on the role of Black women in the long march to democratic change.”

Feeling the sting of backlash, a wave of reactionary voter suppression measures will present new challenges to the BWR coalition to organize and be heard in their communities and across the nation like never before. They will meet those challenges, forged by strategic partnerships mixed with advocacy and narrative.

Black Women Raising the States – a partnership with BWR and SRP Black Women Unerased digital initiative – is committed to shining light and voice on the role of Black women in the long march to democratic change. We'll focus on lifting the narrative and telling stories distorted or erased from both our historical and contemporary annals. We expand the meaning of democracy beyond the act of casting a ballot, to higher principles tied to command of our choices, our voices and our destiny. This makes for a fitting activism at a time when narrative, spotlight and ground power movement are essential components for social change.

Our initiative is being incubated in a pilot project shining light and love on BWR leaders in seven states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio and Pennsylvania. We are connecting with the BWR leadership pool with an emphasis on showcasing civic engagement milestones, core values and intergenerational collaboration. We are tapping into existing and shared BWR/SRP projects coming off the drawing board, informed by political challenges and opportunities facing BWR leaders. They will be featured in multimedia content including podcasts, social media and storytelling.

Visit the inaugural launch of www.RaisingtheStates.org.

WHAT BLACK WOMEN WANT FOR THE FIRST 100 DAYS OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

BY MELANIE L. CAMPBELL, BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE NATIONAL CONVENER AND PRESIDENT & CEO OF THE NATIONAL COALITION ON BLACK CIVIC PARTICIPATION.

“Black women therefore expect a national plan to be implemented in the First 100 Days of the Biden Administration, one that is laser-focused on reducing the pervasive racism.”

The 2020 presidential election was a history-making moment in the United States. It marked the first presidential election ever held in the midst of a deadly pandemic and the first election in which a Black woman, U.S. Senator Kamala Harris, was nominated by a major party. History was made again when the California Senator was ultimately voted in as the first woman of color to become Vice President-Elect.

But while the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris victory was unprecedented, much like the times, one thing remained consistent: Black women continued to exert our leadership and influence as one of the most powerful voting blocs in the nation. According to the NBC 2020 Election Exit Poll, 90 percent of Black women voted for the Biden-Harris ticket; and this was key to delivering the White House to the Democrats. Black women were also pivotal in securing victories for Democrats in traditional battleground states,

including Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. We even helped to serve up a Democratic victory in the southern state of Georgia, where a Democratic nominee had not won since Bill Clinton took the state in 1992.

During the first 100 Days of the Biden Administration—and beyond—Black women expect to have seats at the tables of governance and to have our policy concerns addressed and acted upon in concrete, substantive ways. We want to see an agenda from a White House committed to performance-based goals with tangible outcomes for Black women, our families and our communities.

Several of the Biden Administration's immediate priorities—COVID-19, economic recovery, racial equity—align with what Black women identified as issues they want the next president to commit to acting on, based on the 6th-Annual Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) and

ESSENCE's 2020 Power of the Sister Vote Poll. Specifically, the poll results revealed that Black women would support a presidential candidate with a plan to reduce structural and systemic racism (49%); address policing and criminal-justice reform (45%); and implement plans to eradicate COVID-19 (30%). Black women therefore expect a national plan to be implemented in the First 100 Days of the Biden Administration, one that is laser-focused on reducing the pervasive racism in our society and restoring the health of our communities.

For more than four centuries, Black people have been disproportionately surveilled, unfairly detained and unjustly sentenced. Black people are consistently subjected to prosecutorial and judicial abuses in the name of public safety. The police and vigilante killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Michael Brown, Atatiana Jefferson, and so many other Black men and women elevated the Movement for Black Lives to a global force for racial reckoning and social change. Now, Black women want to see an agenda from the Biden Administration that includes a comprehensive approach to hold police accountable, end racial profiling and institute sweeping reforms of the criminal-justice system, so that it operates fairly and equitably for all.

Affordable healthcare is also a priority for Black women. The consequences of a lack of adequate medical care have been exacerbated by the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the health and economic security of millions of Black people, who are dying from the virus at a rate twice that of white people. And with over 13 million people already infected nationwide, and more than 250,000 dead, the possibility of an upcoming Supreme Court ruling that could repeal or gut the Affordable Care Act during a deadly pandemic is reprehensible. Black women want the Biden Administration to present a plan during its first 100 Days that will preserve and increase access to affordable health care, helping Americans to protect themselves and their families during this deadly time and in years to come.

Though the issues stated here are by no means an exhaustive list of the concerns of Black women, we do expect the Biden administration to give all of our priorities the focused attention they deserve. We intend to see that the administration honors the promises made to Black America, because Black women will continue to be powerful leaders who can significantly influence the policy agenda of this country. And so, for the first 100 Days of the Biden Administration and beyond, we must hold our government and the incoming 117th Congress fully accountable. The future of our families and our communities depends on our commitment now.



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**RACIAL, GENDER
& CRIMINAL
JUSTICE,
DISMANTLING
SYSTEMIC &
STRUCTURAL
RACISM**



RESISTANCE AND RESTORATION: ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS

BY KARMA COTTMAN, EXECUTIVE DIR., UJIMA:
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

“Racism and stereotypes continue to contribute to the failure of the legal systems, crisis services, and other programs to provide adequate resources and assistance to Black survivors.”

Since March 2020, Ujima, Inc. has been tasked with addressing violence against Black women and girls in a deadly confluence of events. The COVID-19 global health and economic pandemic laid bare the disparities in health and treatment in Black communities; racial justice uprisings vocalized our resistance to harm by state actors, and the lockdowns, that while critical to curbing the coronavirus, saw survivors and their children sheltering in place with those who use violence and being cut off from life-saving resources. The economic consequences of COVID-19 will reverberate for generations. Black women were most likely to lose housing and their jobs and become full time caretakers for elders and children without adequate financial stability. The 24-hour news cycle constantly sensationalized Black deaths and re-victimized Black women with no way to heal. Compound, complex trauma at the intersections of race, class, and gender was the theme of 2020 and Black women bore the brunt of it.

The statistics on violence against Black women and girls remain alarming, and we fully expect year-end data to reveal that COVID-19 increased violence exponentially. Nationally, 45% of Black women experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking in their lifetime. Particular attention needs to be focused on coercive control and psychological aggression, as 53.8% of Black women have experienced psychological abuse and 41.2% have experienced physical abuse. Coupled together, psychological and physical abuse create a lethal trap that isolates survivors and prevents access to safety nets (e.g., family and friends, community and/or legal resources, faith-based guidance, etc.). Consequently, Black women still experience high rates of domestic violence homicide compared to other racial and ethnic populations. In 2018, Black women were murdered at a rate nearly three times higher than white women. Statistics are slightly lower for rape by an intimate partner, at 9%, and sexual violence by

an intimate partner, at 17%, during a lifetime compared to other racial and ethnic populations. Nearly 1 in 5 Black women experienced stalking in their lifetime.

In more than 80% of intimate partner violent victimizations, the victim did not receive assistance from victim service agencies in 2015. This is significant because for a Black survivor, oppression, implicit/explicit bias, and racial loyalty/collectivism directly impact how female survivors perceive, react to, and report intimate partner violence. Racism and stereotypes continue to contribute to the failure of the legal systems, crisis services, and other programs to provide adequate resources and assistance to Black survivors. The dearth of statistics on foreign-born survivors from the African diaspora and survivors who identify as LGBTQIA+ creates a non-response or underwhelming response to the needs of these marginalized populations within the Black community.

Ujima, Inc. is encouraged by President Biden's legacy in addressing prevention and intervention strategies for violence against women and girls and his administration's commitment to advance racial equity. To that end, Ujima has prioritized the following legislative initiatives to bring hope, restoration, and reconciliation for Black women and girls:

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (COVID-19 Stimulus Package)

- \$50M for culturally specific programs addressing domestic violence and sexual assault to address the gaps in services and resources due to COVID-19.
- Cash assistance to help survivors with actual needs.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021 – H.R. 1620

- \$40M authorization for Culturally Specific Services programs
- Economic justice programs that include access to unemployment insurance
- Protections for all survivors accessing services to prevent discrimination based on race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and abilities.
- Enhanced housing provisions.
- Protect victims of dating violence from homicide committed with firearms.

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Reauthorization Act of 2021

- Establish a grant program for culturally specific programs to enhance access to shelter services and/or supportive services.
- Invest in the cultivation of leadership in culturally specific programs.
- Increase the authorization for culturally specific resource centers to provide enhanced support, training, and technical assistance.

The Victims of Crime Fix Act of 2021

- Redirects monetary penalties from deferred and non-prosecution agreements to the VOCA fund an increase the federal government's contribution to state victim compensation funds to offset the decrease in funding due to reduced prosecutions and convictions and postponed cases due to COVID-19.

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ENDING MASS INCARCERATION MUST INCLUDE DISMANTLING SYSTEMS OF PROBATION & PAROLE

BY JUDITH BROWNE DIANIS, EXECUTIVE DIR. AND
ASHLEY CARTER, DEPUTY DIR. OF JUSTICE PROJECT,
ADVANCEMENT PROJECT NATIONAL OFFICE

The mass incarceration crisis facing this country uniquely impacts women and girls navigating the residual effects of time behind bars. More than 2 million women and girls are released from jail and prison each year in the United States. Black women are disproportionately represented in jails and prisons and are incarcerated at 1.7 times the rate of white women. Unfortunately for many women incarceration is not the end of their entanglement in the criminal legal system, and re-entry is not designed for their success.

Once incarceration ends, many women are placed on probation or parole, systems of incarceration that receive less scrutiny than jails and prisons but have disastrous effects on the lives of women ensnared in their unrelenting grasp. Probation is a type of surveillance that can be used as an alternative to incarceration, or in some cases after term of incarceration. Parole is a type of surveillance implemented after a prison term. Both require monitoring by law enforcement agencies, usually departments of corrections, requiring regular reporting to an officer, payment of costly fines and fees, and adherence to oppressive stipulations that can make normal day-to-day functioning nearly impossible.

While not technically incarcerated, these sentences come with the constant threat of reincarceration with even the slightest misstep. The primary obstacles facing individuals working to re-enter society after incarceration are the conditions that must be satisfied in order to maintain freedom, nonsensical restrictions on movement and social behaviors, and mandates for securing education and employment. All of these requirements exist with no meaningful support for the women expected to meet these impossibly high standards.

The stress of compliance, coupled with the challenges of building a life with little to no community support make finding and securing employment, housing, and other necessities significantly more difficult. These conditions include curfews, restrictions on housing and travel, even for work, electronic shackles, also called tethers and required consent for searches by law enforcement in violation of the 4th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

In most states, in addition to the funding of discriminatory fixtures of systemic oppression like jails and prisons, state and local governments funnel hundreds of millions of dollars into the surveillance of people who have been convicted of crimes. Probation and parole officers are paid to oversee the day to day lives of the people under their watch, and to punish them when they fail. Many people who are released from prison have no place to live and are assigned a placement in a state-funded residence, commonly referred to as a halfway house. While provided a roof over their head, many of these facilities provide nothing more than a place to sleep. Individuals are expected to find food, clothing, transportation, and other necessities, like costly feminine products, without any support. In addition to the struggle of trying to survive, many halfway houses provide an additional layer of surveillance and rules that must be adhered to. Women in these houses are subjected to the discretion of house managers who have the power to weaponize the vulnerability of people already under state surveillance. There are very few oversight mechanisms for both halfway houses and probation and parole officers, leaving women and girls under their monitoring susceptible to different types of abuses, including coercion, sex abuse, and extortion.

Calls to dismantle systems of mass incarceration must include demands to defund probation and parole systems. Support networking and resources should be public health responses. More holistic services should serve as a mechanism to support women as they return home from incarceration, and to address issues before they lead to criminalization. Many incarcerated women have histories of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse: 73% of women in state prisons report having a mental health issue, and 98% of women in jails report being exposed to trauma. Many others struggle with addiction and substance abuse. The most recent data available shows that 70% of women serving a sentence in jail or prison “struggled with drug abuse and dependence.”

Women and girls returning home after incarceration should be welcomed back with community supports and resources to foster the establishment of healthy, safe, productive lives. These resources must meet their needs. Eighty percent of women in jails are mothers, and many others impacted by the criminal legal system are the primary caretakers for other family members. Upon entry into jail and prison, 72% of incarcerated women come from impoverished backgrounds with annual incomes less than \$22,000, and simultaneously, formerly incarcerated women are more likely than formerly incarcerated men to be homeless. There are few existing re-entry programs specifically designed for women released from prison, and even fewer for women released from jails.

Communities have the power to demand real re-entry supports led by communities and those directly impacted by mass incarceration. Women returning home from jail and prison should have support of trauma-informed counselors to address their experiences, and job training and education resources to help them build lives that ensure they are never criminalized for being poor. Our goal should be the empowerment of women and girls so that the root causes of behaviors that are criminalized are addressed and eradicated. Organizations doing this work already exist. Operation Restoration in New Orleans focuses on supporting women after incarceration. They provide GED programming, temporary housing, employment workshops, and an incredible community closet of clothing and feminine products available to the women who need them.

A New Way of Life in Los Angeles has created a housing network for women coming out of prison that has replaced much of the outdated halfway house system. The participants have access to mentoring, leadership development, and career and educational programming to help them navigate the process of re-establishing themselves after incarceration. Both programs are led by directly impacted women and have success rates that far outpace any state administered system.

We are positioned to build the world that we know is possible. We have the power to reduce the stigma experienced by women who have spent time behind bars, bringing them out of the shadows, and providing tools to empower formerly incarcerated women to advocate on their own behalf. We must work for the systemic changes and policy solutions that move us away from punishment and towards a system of supports. Real public safety is achieved when communities have what they need to thrive. In many families, women are the backbone. By supporting women who are navigating re-entry, we are ultimately supporting the community at large.

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MASS INCARCERATION'S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON BLACK WOMEN & FAMILIES

BY SHEENA MEADE, MANAGING DIR.
OF CLEAN SLATE INITIATIVE (CSI)

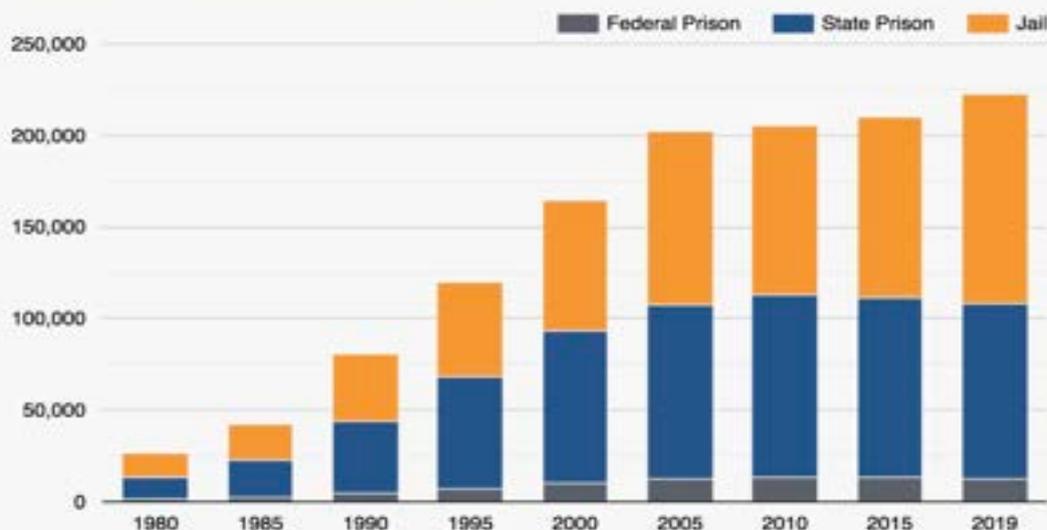
Mass incarceration is an epidemic that disproportionately hurts Black people and their families. The sheer vast number of Black men who have been incarcerated since 1970, the start of the mass incarceration era, have obscured another dangerous trend: the increased policing and incarceration of Black women that has long-standing negative consequences for generations of our families.

Although there continue to be more men in prison than women, the incarceration rate for women has been twice as high as that for men since 1980. While incarceration rates for men have been falling over the past decade, the numbers for women have barely changed. By 2019, there were over a million women in prison, jail or on probation or parole but over twice that number women pass through the jail system every year.



Between 1980 and 2019, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 700%, rising from a total of 26,378 in 1980 to 222,455 in 2019.

Rise in Women's Incarceration, 1980-2019



*Prison figures are from year-end 2019 while jail figure is from year-end 2018, the latest available data from the sources used.
Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics: Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States 1850-1984 (1986); Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Series (1997-2018), Prisoners Series (1986-2019), Washington, DC.

Today, women of color are the fastest growing group of people behind bars. Black women make up only 13 percent of women in the country but represent 30 percent of the women's prison population and 44 percent of women in jail. Black women continue to outnumber their white counterparts in rates of incarceration by two to one. Among young women, the numbers are even more striking: Black women ages 18 to 19 are three times more likely to be incarcerated than whites. If that trend continues, 1 in 18 Black women will be imprisoned at some point in their lifetime.

Women are more likely to be incarcerated in a jail than a prison. From 2009 to 2018, the number of women in city and county jails increased by 23% while the men's jail population decreased by 7.5%. The increase in women behind bars has largely been driven by drug arrests: drug related arrests over the past 35 years increased nearly 216% for women, compared to 48% for men.

Data show that from 2016 to 2017, the number of women in jail on a given day grew by more than 5%, even as the rest of the jail population declined. Many women are trapped behind bars awaiting trial without even having been convicted of a crime. More research is needed, but a key reason women get stuck in jail is because they have more obstacles in affording bail than men.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, the median bail bond amount across the United States comprises about eight months of income for the typical detained defendant, making freedom far too expensive for many people to access on their limited incomes. Black women, who have the lowest median income of any group, face the greatest challenges in affording bail, trapping them behind bars for longer, separating them from their families and creating more negative collateral consequences for many.

	People in jail unable to meet bail (prior to incarceration)		Non-incarcerated people	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	\$15,598	\$11,071	\$39,600	\$22,704
Black	\$11,275	\$9,083	\$31,284	\$23,760
Hispanic	\$17,449	\$12,178	\$27,720	\$14,520
White	\$18,283	\$12,954	\$43,560	\$26,136

Figure 2. Median annual pre-incarceration incomes for people in local jails unable to post a bail bond, ages 23-39, in 2015 dollars, by race/ethnicity and gender. The incomes in red fall below the Census Bureau poverty threshold. The median bail bond amount nationally is almost a full year's income for the typical person unable to post a bail bond.

Over 80% of women in jail have children and are the primary caretakers for those children. Having an incarcerated parent creates trauma and a range of barriers for children that impact their health and future well-being. Black children are six times more likely to have an incarcerated parent as white children. Justice impacted people end up with criminal records that then create new impediments to opportunity, whether it is getting a job, procuring an occupational license, getting an education, etc.

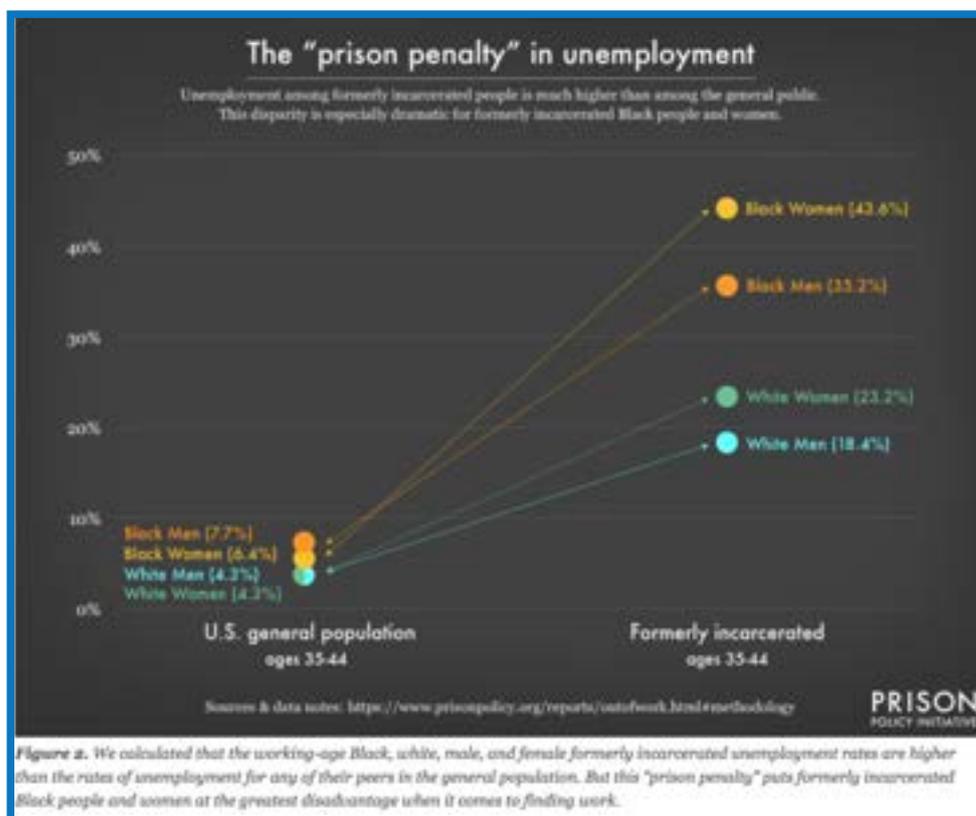
In terms of employment, Black women, who already face significant challenges which have only increased because of the pandemic are also disproportionately held back by a criminal record. While formerly incarcerated white men are 14 percentage points more likely to be unemployed than the general population, Black women are 37 percentage points more likely to be unemployed.

Moreover, new research shows that mass incarceration and greater contact that Black women have with jails, prisons, and the criminal justice system has negative potential consequences for future children, even contributing to increased levels of Black infant mortality. According to a recent report from the Center for American Progress that connects structural racism to health outcomes, “Black women are far more likely to be imprisoned than their white counterparts; they are also far more likely to have an imprisoned family member. As discussed above, direct contact with the system increases the risk of sexual violence and infectious illness, loss of connection with family and friends, and trauma from cruel prison policies and practices. Indirect contact can cause emotional distress, loss of income and property, and residential instability. These stressors ultimately harm women’s health and undermine birth outcomes—especially for black women.”

Not only are women an increasing proportion of people behind bars, but teenage girls are now making up a greater share of juvenile arrests. Just like with adults, Black girls are more likely to be incarcerated than whites, Asians, or Latinas.

Policies that limit incarceration and directly challenge structurally racist policies that target Black women and

girls for over-policing, arrests, conviction, and incarceration are long overdue. We need meaningful policy changes that address every phase of the system, including those that prevent incarceration and those that mitigate the negative collateral consequences of encounters with the criminal justice system. An arrest or conviction should not be a life sentence to poverty and trauma. Instead, states should adopt bail reform policies that do not punish people for poverty, clean slate automatic records expungement that enable people to get jobs, housing, and education without being hampered by a criminal record, and expanded health care and support services for women and their families.



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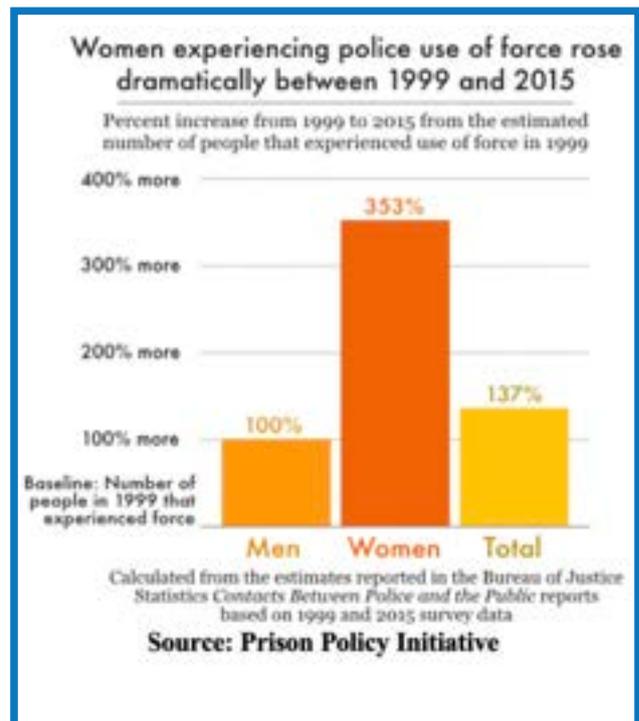
WE NEED MORE HELP: BLACK WOMEN LEADING THE MOVEMENT AGAINST THE SYSTEM KILLING THEM

BY OLAJUMOKE OBAYANJU, J.D. DIRECTOR, NATIONAL RACIAL EQUITY INITIATIVE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOUNDATION

In 2021, Black women remain leaders and activists of the grassroots efforts around policing reform and racial justice, standing at the forefront of a movement that routinely leaves them out of the social justice perspective. Policing in America is part of our country's larger criminal justice system that is inextricably linked to a long history of racism. From the amplified criminalization of Black boys and girls to the pervasive implicit bias permeating our courts and law enforcement, race is an integral part of the disproportionate dysfunction in our criminal justice system.

While much of the national attention on policing reform focuses fundamentally on race, gender is often forgotten as an influential factor. Black men and boys indeed are more likely than Black women and girls to be stopped, arrested, and killed by police, but killings of Black women like Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Bettie Jones, Rekia Boyd, Alteria Woods and Cynthia Fields remind us that women are still victims. In her book, *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*, attorney Andrea Ritchie illuminates how Black women are also subject to racial profiling, police brutality, use of excessive force, and a number of other police violations, in ways that differ from the experiences of men. Further, a 2018-2019 Prison Policy Initiative annual report revealed that the experiences of women and girls with police are still overlooked. In fact, since 1999, the number of women experiencing police use of force has quadrupled, a staggering statistic compared to the doubling for men.

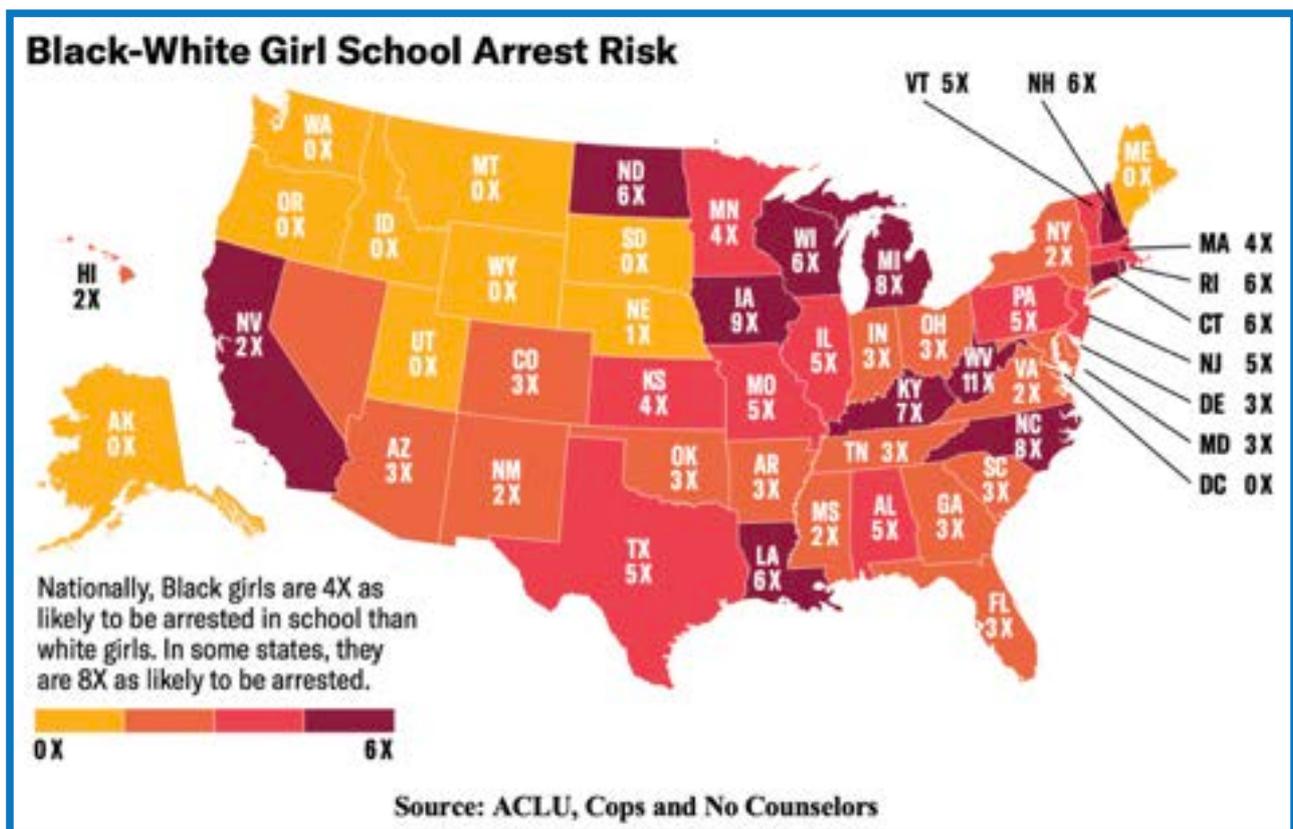
- Black women are most likely to be stopped in traffic, arrested during a stop, and subjected to police force than other women.
- In 2019, the imprisonment rate for Black women was over 1.7 times the rate of imprisonment for white women.



- Black women are about 1.4 times more likely to be killed by police than white women.

Similarly, Black girls face startling disparities, with studies revealing that Black girls are more likely than girls of other races to be suspended from school.

- Black girls make up only 16 percent of the female student population but are 39 percent of girls arrested in school.
- Black girls are 4 times likely to be arrested in schools than white girls.
- Black girls are more than 3 times as likely as their white peers to be incarcerated.



Despite the launch of the 2014 #SayHerName campaign that brought and refocused awareness to the names of Black girls and women who have been victimized by police violence, the lack of a political effort in dismantling the structural racist forces that uniquely affect Black women remain. More importantly is the disconnect between the efforts of Black women in social justice reform and the intersectional disparities that Black and LGBTQ women face in the criminal justice system. A 2020 study published by the American Psychological Association, showed that “Black women may be harmed when their unique experiences of both racism and sexism go unappreciated by larger movements.” Because large scale social justice movements are framed around singular identity or oppression, Black women are often marginalized in these efforts. In other words, Black women experience intersectional invisibility when the movements that are supposed to help them hinder them.

Since the twentieth century, Black women have led almost every movement in the quest for social change. The names of Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ida B. Wells are rooted in history. And today the names of Alicia Garza, Tarana Burke, Angela Davis, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Sherrilyn Ifill ring as the voices of reform. Black women for years have shown up in ways that not only exemplify their leadership and strength, but also their willingness to fight for the greater good and the interest of all—for educational equity, for democracy, for economic and wealth parity, for gun violence reform, for racial justice—for America.

But Black women need help too.

Here are a few suggestions of how to assist Black women in fighting for policing reform:

1. Join Black women in their fight: Collectively, communities of color, men, and white allies who support #BlackLivesMatter, must help move forward policing reform and initiatives of justice that specifically and uniquely impact Black women. From utilizing media platforms to propose legislative reform, others must stand as proxies for every Black mother, sister, child, and friend.
2. Restructure policy agendas: When addressing policing reform, activists must employ both an intersectional gender and racial lens to provide comprehensive solutions that impact the lives of all Black people.
3. Dismantle sexist policies and practices that reduce the number of Black women from becoming police officers and moving up into leadership positions. Women only make up about 13% of the police officers in the United States, and factors such as lack of targeted recruitment, the old boy's culture and lack of family friendly policies serve as factors to prevent more women from joining police departments. There are no accurate statistics on the number and percentage of Black female police officers, but their numbers are lower than Black males and only 12% of police officers are Black. Today, the U.S. police force appallingly, but unsurprisingly, lacks minority—both racial and gender—representation. We must hold police departments accountable and compel them

to improve the recruitment, hiring, and retention of Black women, as well as increase their opportunities for promotion and leadership.

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BLACK WOMEN AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

BY FELICIA DAVIS, MANAGING DIRECTOR, HBCU GREEN FUND

Examined alone or in the abstract, climate change might fall rather close to world peace on a long list of priorities for Black women. Add justice to the equation, and these women lean in for a closer look. The memory of Hurricane Katrina, where too many Black women perished and those that survived were slower to recover, prompts outrage especially when reminded that a generation later, many women remain displaced. The Katrina tragedy frames the Black perspective on climate change. It is well documented that Black women were less likely to be insured, more often renters, and rebuilding meant gentrification and more displacement. Virtually no resources have been devoted to addressing mental health issues associated with the loss of family, homes, and whole communities.

In the same moment that Black women are lauded for their political prowess and organizational savvy, they are suffering disproportionately from the impacts of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. When reporting outcomes from Black focus groups about climate change, Third Way noted that at the start of their project, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks were alive, a powerful reminder that Black communities “are confronted daily with excessive police force, educational inequities, disproportionate unemployment, and a lack of access to quality healthcare.”

With so many urgent challenges confronting Black women, the potential for catastrophic wipe out elevates climate, but it still lags behind on a long list of immediate problems. The examination continues with a look at health impacts. The high incidence of asthma is noted as a byproduct of poor air quality, more extreme heat waves causing heatstroke and death is a concern, but it is the impact of climate on Black women’s maternal health



that intensifies the review. The same intense temperatures that compromise the health of older Black women can undermine pregnancies of young Black women. This fact layers on top of the reality that Black women are twice as likely to die in childbirth. Black women are painfully aware that twice as many of their newborns die compared with white newborns. Looking through a justice lens begins to reposition climate change on the Black women’s agenda.

COVID-19 ravished Black communities first and hardest. Months into the pandemic, Black people were three times as likely as whites to die from coronavirus. In the shadow of Black Lives Matter marches, the lens focused intensely on racial justice, the lens through which Black women experience America.

Black youth have redefined sustainability, incorporating a more sophisticated intersectionality where reproductive justice, criminal justice, economic justice, and climate justice are intertwined. Weary of incremental appeasement, youth demand systemic change, wealth redistribution and an

end to activity that is not environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable.

Black women often lead frontline communities hardest hit by disasters, neighborhoods characterized by disparity, disadvantage and health, income, and food insecurity. From this vantage point, climate justice is about equity. How can policies to address climate change improve life outcomes for Black people and other vulnerable populations?

Black women know that the economy is undergoing a massive transition accelerated by a year-long national shut down. As the nation gets vaccinated and prepares to reopen, Black women are determined to move from struggling to survive to charting a course to thrive. Climate justice has real meaning for Black women when resources and investments are targeted to Black communities. A just transition to a regenerative clean energy economy requires a new set of priorities that will elevate ownership, investment and empowerment for communities that have been oppressed by extractive economic policies and centuries of systemic racism.

Climate justice means that environmental concerns are not prioritized at the expense of economic considerations for vulnerable communities. Workforce development and robust training programs are imperative in the national transition to renewable energy. In a just transition, work will be reimagined with high regard for the dignity of every employee, mindful of family and contributing to community well-being. In addition to life-affirming principles, Black women bring enormous talent and a wealth of experience to contribute to the effort to address climate change and build resilient communities. Black women envision a future where a vibrant healthy commons connects communities that value all members.

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IMMIGRATION IS A BLACK WOMEN'S ISSUE

**BY PATRICE LAWRENCE,
NATIONAL POLICY AND
ADVOCACY DIRECTOR,
UNDOCUBLACK NETWORK**



We are on the cusp of a transformative moment in our society. The country, and Black immigrant communities in particular, have lived through tremendous pain. Shut out of the medical system and stymied by racism, the consequences of the pandemic for undocumented and Black communities have been catastrophic. According to the Institute of Policy Studies and National Domestic Workers Alliance, 93 percent of Black immigrant workers surveyed lost their jobs or had hours reduced during the pandemic, and that number was higher for undocumented workers. So many of us are frontline workers who were used to keeping this country running--all while governments and society at-large refused to even acknowledge our existence.

And yet, I have hope that we can rebuild in a way that recognizes all of our full humanity. This hope stems not from the systems of governance and changes in leadership, but in the brilliance and resilience Black women have already brought forward.

In 2019, I shared in these pages the struggle for dignity for Liberians living in the United States. This community had lost administrative advocacy battles, court cases, and was living in constant fear of being thrown out of their homes here. And, in the era of Donald Trump, fighting for citizenship for Black undocumented immigrants might have seemed hopeless.

It wasn't. The UndocuBlack network, in community with Black women across the country, raised its collective voice for relief for Liberians. After months of lobbying, media work, and organizing, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) tucked the Liberian Refugee Immigration and Fairness Act into the Defense Reauthorization Bill, and Donald Trump signed it into law.

It had been more than two decades since a legalization measure had been enacted. Our community got it done. It is not lost upon me that the tool for relief for Liberians comes in the vehicle that has caused destruction for so many others.

As a result, Liberians are earning their green cards, and soon, the right to vote. These new permanent residents include freedom fighters like Louise Stevens of Brooklyn Park, MN. Louise has called the United States her home for over 18 years. She works two jobs and is the breadwinner for her family. Louise is a pillar of her community, has bought a house, and is paying for her daughter's education. Louise's green card isn't just a piece of paper; it is life changing. It provides the freedom to travel, the security of permanent work authorization, and the dignity afforded to those who can count their futures in years, and not in weeks or months.

“As Black women, we are no stranger to our civil rights being taken from us. We also know that we--immigrant and native born alike--are the backbone of this nation's democracy. We do so much with a fraction of the resources devoted to other groups.”

We--Black women--did that. Here at UndocuBlack, we have grown from 65 members at our founding in January 2016 to more than 600 today. We are leading the fight for a radical re-envisioning of our nation's immigration system, one that tears down the silos we have built between native born and immigrant communities and eradicates the racist criminal justice system upon which detention and deportation practices are built. Key votes on important pieces of immigration legislation are happening in record time in the House of Representatives, and the Senate will follow. But as we learned from winning our fight for dignity for Liberians, we will not win if we use the old playbook.

It matters how we fight, and it matters what we win. But what is also important is the care we offer after those battles. The reality is that Black undocumented populations and immigrant communities have not had enough to sustain themselves for a long time. This is because of systemic racism and because of the bones of unjust laws that were passed decades ago that still allow and dictate injustice against Black people.

This is why we are calling for a truly multi-racial and multi-issue approach toward

immigration that centers Black immigrant communities. While the struggle begins with the fight for citizenship for all undocumented people in this country, it must not end there.

As Black women, we are no stranger to our civil rights being taken from us. We also know that we--immigrant and native born alike--are the backbone of this nation's democracy. We do so much with a fraction of the resources devoted to other groups.

Black women found a way to secure justice for Liberians in the middle of the Trump administration. Imagine what we can do if we simply hold the Biden-Harris Administration to account for the promises they have already made to our communities.

Legalization and citizenship have been written off before, but the last few years have reminded me of the resilience of our communities. We are the epitome of collective liberation, and this means that citizenship for all is only the start.

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SYSTEMIC RACISM, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

BY FAYE ANDERSON



In an opinion piece published on Sept. 11, 1967 in the Los Angeles Times, "Computerize the Race Problem?," NAACP Executive Director Roy Wilkins asked whether computer technology could "turn its impersonal, unprejudiced magic upon our agonizing race problem? ... Cannot the computer become a guidepost to interracial justice and peace?" Fast forward to today, we know computer technology is not unprejudiced magic. Computer-assisted decision making is perpetuating systemic racism. Algorithmic bias in Artificial Intelligence (AI) undermines efforts to build a more just and equitable society.

Algorithms are automated instructions. AI uses human-designed algorithms to process and analyze data. The definition of AI depends on whom one asks. A People's Guide to Artificial Intelligence notes "pointing to exactly what counts as AI and where it is being used is a surprisingly hard thing to do. This is because many examples of AI aren't about the creation of entirely new things. Instead, they are about adding AI to existing things. Adding AI can speed up a process, eliminate the need for humans to do something, or make a system more efficient."

Princeton University Prof. Ruha Benjamin, author of *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, said, “Zeroes and ones, if we are not careful, could deepen the divides between the deserving and the undeserving – rusty value judgments embedded in shiny new systems.”

AI processes range from the benign to the consequential. Predictive algorithms include Netflix recommendations and Gmail grammar suggestions. AI is used in health care allocation, credit scores, hiring practices, property assessments, and home financing. In the early 2000s, AI bias steered Black borrowers who qualified for a prime loan into a subprime mortgage. Wall Street’s predatory lending practices led to the loss of half of Black wealth.

Congress may be on the brink of passing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021. But life is imitating art. Instead of Tom Cruise “pre-visualizing” crime in “Minority Report,” the tech industry is designing AI policing technologies that threaten efforts to reform policing and end mass incarceration. Encoded prejudice is baked into AI policing systems that are deployed to predict and identify suspicious persons and places before criminal activity occurs.

“Encoded prejudice is baked into AI policing systems that are deployed to predict and identify suspicious persons and places before criminal activity occurs.”

AI-powered facial recognition compares suspicious persons’ photos to mug shots and driver’s license photos. MIT Media Lab’s Gender Shades Project found that facial recognition performed the worse on darker-skinned females and males. Police in New York City and Miami used facial recognition to track down and arrest Black Lives Matter protesters. Private security forces also use facial recognition. During the 2021 Big East Men’s Basketball Tournament, Georgetown University Head Men’s Basketball Coach Patrick Ewing said he was stopped multiple times by security at Madison Square Garden. Ewing said, “I thought this was my building. ... Everybody in this building should know who the hell I am.”

AI bias in predictive crime mapping leads to over-policing of Black neighborhoods. Driving while black, walking while black, reading while black, sitting in Starbucks while black – living while black – can lead to an arrest. Police reports, false arrests and arrests stemming from War on Drugs,

illegal stop-and-frisk and #SayHerName protests are included in the data that AI analyzes to make predictions about the future. One does not have to be a computer scientist to know that garbage in, garbage out.

Pretrial, courts use AI to assess the risk of flight. AI risk assessment tools determine whether a defendant must post cash bail. Post-conviction, AI is used to set sentences, assess the risk of recidivism, and establish the conditions of probation or parole. Predictive algorithms are programmed by predominately white and Asian men. To fix the harm caused by algorithmic bias, we first must fix the tech industry’s diversity problem.

The tech industry’s homogenous workforce is not a bug in the recruiting process. It is a feature. The Washington Post reports that before the Justice for George Floyd protests, Google’s recruiting department used a college ranking system for hiring new engineers. Stanford University and MIT were in the elite category. Schools like Georgia Tech and Drexel University were assigned to “tier 1” or “tier 2.” Historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were not even ranked. HBCUs graduate nearly half of the nation’s Black engineers, and large percentages of Black computer

scientists and technologists. Almost 30% of Black graduates of science and engineering PhD programs began college at an HBCU.

Researcher Joy Buolamwini, founder of the Algorithmic Justice League, was the lead author of the MIT facial recognition study. In the documentary “Coded Bias,” Buolamwini warns, “If we fail to make ethical and inclusive artificial intelligence, we risk losing gains made in civil rights and gender equity under the guise of machine neutrality.” In the Age of Automation, we ignore algorithmic bias at our peril.



**RACIAL & GENDER
JUSTICE, EQUITY
& EQUALITY IN
EDUCATION**

THE EDUCATION OF BLACK GIRLS: SHUTTING DOWN THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

BY DELISA SAUNDERS, PH.D., AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS HUMAN RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

“Make this an issue with candidates who want to earn our vote in their race for school boards all the way to the White House.”

Education has long been the North Star for Black folks, an essential tool for our liberation, survival and success. Something that our oppressors can never take away from us.

The journey has been long. Before the Civil War, educating our ancestors was legally banned out of fear that black literacy would prove a threat to the system of enslavement. Today, as the result of relentless struggle, nearly 95% of all African American children receive their education from public schools.

Today's challenge, however, is that while the laws have changed, the attitudinal barriers that created a separate and unequal society persist. As a result of resistance, systems of oppression, de facto segregation and an unlevel playing field, public schools continue to be a pipeline to prison instead of a pipeline to college, careers, and success for our Black girls.

The disparities between educational opportunity, equity and access for Black girls are alarming. Research has shown that they are up to six times more likely to be disciplined in schools than boys or girls of any other race. Due to racism and sexism, they are at more risk of being pushed out of schools onto a pathway to the criminal justice system. These same barriers contribute to only one quarter of Black women going on to get a four-year college degree after high school. When they reach college, they are more likely to be misguided to, or need predatory student loans which they have more difficulty paying back.

But wait! Our public schools which are supported by our hard earned tax dollars should be a place where African American girls are pushed up to be prepared for college, careers and life. Not the criminalizing environments that push them out, oftentimes on a

pathway to prison, low-paying jobs and a daily struggle to survive. Our job is to unapologetically take action that will make a lasting difference. We know what works: equitable access to resources and opportunities such as early education, smaller class sizes, wrap-around supports, fair school discipline, well-supported Black teachers and equitable school funding.

We also know the power of Black girls entering schools with teachers who look like them. Numerous studies point to the benefits which include being less likely to be expelled or suspended; more likely to be recommended for gifted education, less likely to be misplaced in special education and more likely to graduate from high school on time. Sadly, Black women make up about five percent of the U.S. teacher workforce.

What can you do? Remind Black girls in your neighborhood, family, network and organizations that they can make a difference by becoming an educator. Encourage these same folks to use their power to provide critical support. Start a "future teachers" club, make some noise--- online, with newspapers, radios, churches, sororities and other outlets---to raise awareness and the dire sense of urgency. Make this an issue with candidates who want to earn our vote in their race for school boards all the way to the White House. Demand salaries and working conditions so they stay. And by all means support HBCUs, which to this day persist as the number one place that prepares Black teachers. My Beautiful Black Sisters, we got this!!!

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IN AN INNOVATION ECONOMY, WE NEED MORE BLACK STEM PROFESSIONALS AND ENGINEERS

BY MARIE SYLLA-DIXON, CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER,
RAYTHEON TECHNOLOGIES



“Though Black people account for 13% of the overall population, we only hold 4% of the nation’s engineering degrees, according to the National Society of Black Engineers.”

Since the emergence of the commercial internet in the late 1990s, we have gradually transitioned into becoming a more innovation-centric society. That transition has been hastened over the past year as we sought to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are we increasingly dependent on gig economy workers to help us navigate the contours of each day - from grocery and pharmacy pick-ups to increased e-commerce deliveries - but we are ever-more dependent on virtual learning and remote work enabled by internet accessibility. At the same time, advancements in robotics and artificial intelligence are being used to streamline workflows and innovate our ways toward a more technology-reliant society. And yet, amid all this change, notably absent from the picture are Black STEM professionals and engineers. While we are deeply reliant on new technologies, we are being excluded from opportunities to create, maintain, and operate the networks and tools of the future.

A 2018 study from the Pew Research Center found that while Black workers were 11% of the nation’s overall workforce, they made up just 9% of all STEM professionals. Employed Black adults with a bachelor’s degree or higher were just 7% of the STEM workforce. Inclusion in the high-tech sector is even more sparse with Black STEM workers making up even smaller percentages of the total employee base - when we do see increases in representation, it tends to be in retail or other non-technical roles.

Contrary to this trend of lackluster employment, we need more Black professionals in STEM to drive the innovation that continues to shape our society and to ensure a more

inclusive future. While there are certainly many sources of consternation accounting for our gaps in participation in the STEM workforce, one of the places we could look is to the prevalence of Black STEM professionals being trained in our national colleges and universities. After peaking in the early 2000s, STEM degree attainment by Black college students is on the decline. While everything from diverse recruitment efforts to changes in affirmative action policies impact the matriculation of Black students in college and STEM-focused programs, issues of income inequality and college affordability are also at play.

Black college graduates on average hold \$25,000 more student loan debt than their white counterparts, and four years after graduation, Black borrowers owe an average of 12.5% more than they initially borrowed. Faced with a 10:1 wealth gap as compared to their white peers, Black students often face an uphill battle when it comes to being able to finance and afford a college degree.

It is hard to address the question of how to increase STEM recruitment and inclusion in the modern-day workforce without first addressing the issue of how much it actually costs for Black students to attend college. Black students face higher rates for student loans than other students, and according to a recent study by JP Morgan Chase & Co. Institute, are twice as likely as their white counterparts to never have the means or ability to pay off their student loan debt. This is a fundamental crisis and a hindrance that will keep Black degree holders from closing the racial wealth gap and building generational wealth.

The times require that we begin to develop new strategies for increasing college affordability, especially to the extent we view college as an entry-point to well-paying innovation economy STEM jobs. Though Black people account for 13% of the overall population, we only hold 4% of the nation's engineering degrees, according to the National Society of Black Engineers. One strategy forward is to accelerate investment in organizations like the Thurgood Marshall College Fund and the United Negro College Fund, and increase partnerships with and endowments to HBCUs, which graduate Black students at a higher rate than PWIs.

When it comes to specifically seeding new talent in the STEM fields, we might also begin to look anew at certificate programs that provide employable skill sets without requiring the investment of time and accumulation of student loan debt that colleges often do. Google, for instance, recently announced a new professional certificate program that it will use to directly source some of its hiring needs. Companies like Bayer, Deloitte, Verizon, SAP, Accenture, Intel, and Bank of America are said to be considering similar certificate programs in lieu of traditional degrees as well.

Like most things, the connection between race and higher education opportunity is nuanced and requires an all-in approach if we truly expect to effect change. We must both address the current and pervasive challenge of college affordability while at the same time exploring other, perhaps non-college routes, for inclusion in this space. The sky is the limit, but we will only obtain our goal of diversifying the innovation economy if we are truly deliberate and intentional about our path forward.

READY FOR NOW, READY FOR THE FUTURE: A NATIONAL PLAN TO ENSURE DIGITAL EQUITY FOR OUR CHILDREN

BY MICHELE G. COBER, DIRECTOR,
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS VERIZON

It has been a year since schools closed and millions of K-12 students started attending classes from home. The shift to at-home learning was sudden and abrupt, and for those lacking high speed internet, an electronic device, or both, the transition was fraught with problems. Many states and school districts stepped in to help these students by using emergency federal CARES Act funding and through partnerships and discounts offered by the private sector. The FCC also changed some of the requirements of the E-Rate program, an FCC program to help schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband to provide relief to schools and libraries in need of additional connectivity. In addition to providing more funding for the E-Rate program to facilitate distance learning, Congress has provided \$3.2B in funding for an FCC-administered Emergency Broadband Benefit program to provide financial assistance to low income families to help them afford broadband.

These measures are commendable. However, most of them are related to the pandemic and do not address the post-pandemic support for low income families stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide. The federal government needs to reimagine and reassess how it provides support to vulnerable communities to assist them in obtaining access to internet service. That support will need to last beyond the pandemic because we know that the digital divide will remain unless we take action. We need policymakers to adopt a national coordinated and comprehensive strategy to close the digital divide.

Why should the federal government re-double its efforts to close the digital divide? Because the pandemic has reinforced that the educational model of the future is rooted in



technology. Lack of broadband connectivity can exacerbate existing educational disparities in our schools. Students must have access to broadband and teachers should have the proper training necessary to optimize the use of technology in their curriculum. While there are multiple barriers to broadband adoption, we know that cost is one significant challenge for low income households. We need to ensure that all children, regardless of income, have the technology and digital literacy skills they need to thrive in a digital economy.

Congress should provide long-term financial support for broadband in three areas, affordability, adoption, and access, to ensure that low income communities are afforded every opportunity that internet access and technology provides.

- **Affordability:** To help low income families afford broadband, Congress should supplement the existing Lifeline program with a new long-term broadband benefit of \$20-\$50 per month. People who are eligible for Lifeline can elect to receive the new monthly benefit (or remain in the existing Lifeline program), and they should be able to choose whatever plans, services, or equipment that best meets their needs. To ensure this new-federally funded broadband benefit has a consistent and predictable funding source, Congress should make

clear that the program is funded through mandatory directed spending like other entitlement programs. Finally, we should empower low-income households by having the new benefit go directly to them in the form of an electronic debit card cards (similar to those used as part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other government benefits) and we should allow people to select any broadband technology or service offering they choose.

- **Adoption:** To encourage more households to adopt or sign up for and use an internet service, the federal government should support digital literacy education. Even people who have access to and can afford broadband may not have the digital literacy skills to use technology for education. The federal government should support local, state, and nonprofit organizations that provide digital literacy training and education.
- **Access:** To make broadband accessible in all areas of the country, Congress should continue its good work of providing funding to build out broadband networks in rural America.

Verizon has long recognized that closing the digital divide is critical to help facilitate greater equity in education. In 2012, we launched the Verizon Innovative Learning program to help students achieve, learn, and create more with free internet access, free devices, and innovative next-gen technology-infused lesson plans for teachers. We have delivered technological solutions into vulnerable middle schools where greater than 65% of kids qualify for free and reduced lunch.

While advocates have for years pushed for government programs to help bridge the digital divide, fortunately, post-pandemic, there is broad recognition within the business community, including companies outside of the tech sector, that ensure all people have the ability to connect to broadband is a critical component of the country's recovery from the pandemic and future economic growth. In January, the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs representing the largest companies in the country, called on Congress to establish a new broadband benefit program that would provide low income families with a subsidy payment to help them obtain broadband service.

The current economic, social, and public health crises, along with the new Congress and Administration, has created a rare political and social opportunity for a bipartisan solution to substantially accelerate closing of the digital divide. We must seize this moment to urge policymakers to adopt a new national strategy to help more hard-working families get connected. The emergency measures that have been put in place are a step in the right direction for our children, but we also need lasting solutions. A post-pandemic strategy to close the digital divide for good and in a timely manner will make learning more equitable, flexible, and accessible, and break the cycle of poverty for so many.

Now is the time for Congress to take bold action to ensure the future of our children. The pandemic has turbo-charged the shift to a virtual world. It is essential to ensure digital equity among America's students. Connecting all of America's children and families is a major effort that requires a strong commitment from the federal government. An innovative, new national broadband strategy to better support vulnerable communities is crucial to get more school-aged children connected to the networks that will help them thrive.

WORKING HARD & FIGHTING BACK – RACE & GENDER IN K-12 EDUCATION

BY CAMARA STOKES HUDSON, GRADUATE STUDENT, NYU
SCHOOL OF LAW

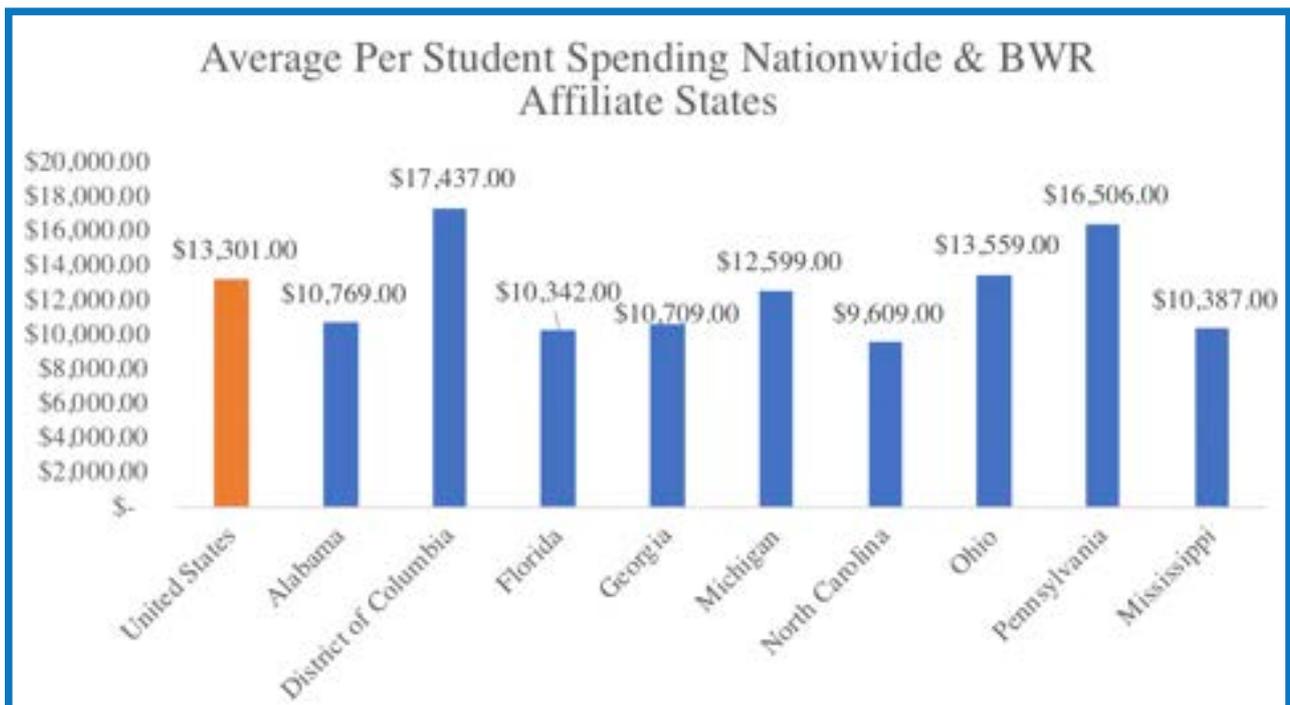
Despite the apparent disparities in educational resources in Black communities, Black children, in general, are doing increasingly better academically nationwide. Black girls succeed in school despite an incredibly hostile school climate which often penalizes them for being Black and female at the same time. Black girls have not chosen to be silent; they see themselves as leaders in their communities have picked up the mantle in the fight for safe, successful educational spaces.

Access to Resources

Limited access to school resources and essential educational experiences can prevent even the most dedicated Black girl from receiving their education's full value. While disparities in school resources are tracked by race but not by gender, there is growing research that



attending high poverty, racially isolated schools, and lack of access to equitable resources magnifies experiences of poverty and racism. Several BWR states have per-student spending that is lower than the nationwide average. Black children are more likely than other groups of children to live in racially isolated, high-poverty school districts that cannot afford to provide them with the resources they need to succeed.



For example, there is significant evidence that children who attend high-quality early care programs have better educational outcomes and are more likely to be healthy and prosperous in adulthood. While Black children enroll in early childhood programs at about the same rate as their white peers, they are far less likely to be enrolled in high-quality programs. While only 15% of Black children were enrolled in a high-quality early care programs, 24% of white children were. The implication of this gap is clear; when beginning kindergarten, Black children are on average seven months behind their white peers in reading, and nine months behind them in math.

The disparity in resources became even more apparent in the last year when school closures nationwide showed how unprepared school districts and communities were to support Black children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, many school districts stopped providing free breakfast and lunches, posing real concerns for Black students. As of December 2021, 25% of Black households with children reported that they sometimes did not have enough food to eat compared to only 9% of white families. Similarly, a lack of technological infrastructure in Black communities made it even more difficult for Black girls to get online for remote school. For example, at the start of the 20-21 school year in Michigan, 91% of white households had access to a reliable internet connection, only 75% of Black households did.

“While only 15% of Black children were enrolled in a high-quality early care programs, 24% of white children were. The implication of this gap is clear; when beginning kindergarten, Black children are on average seven months behind their white peers in reading, and nine months behind them in math.”

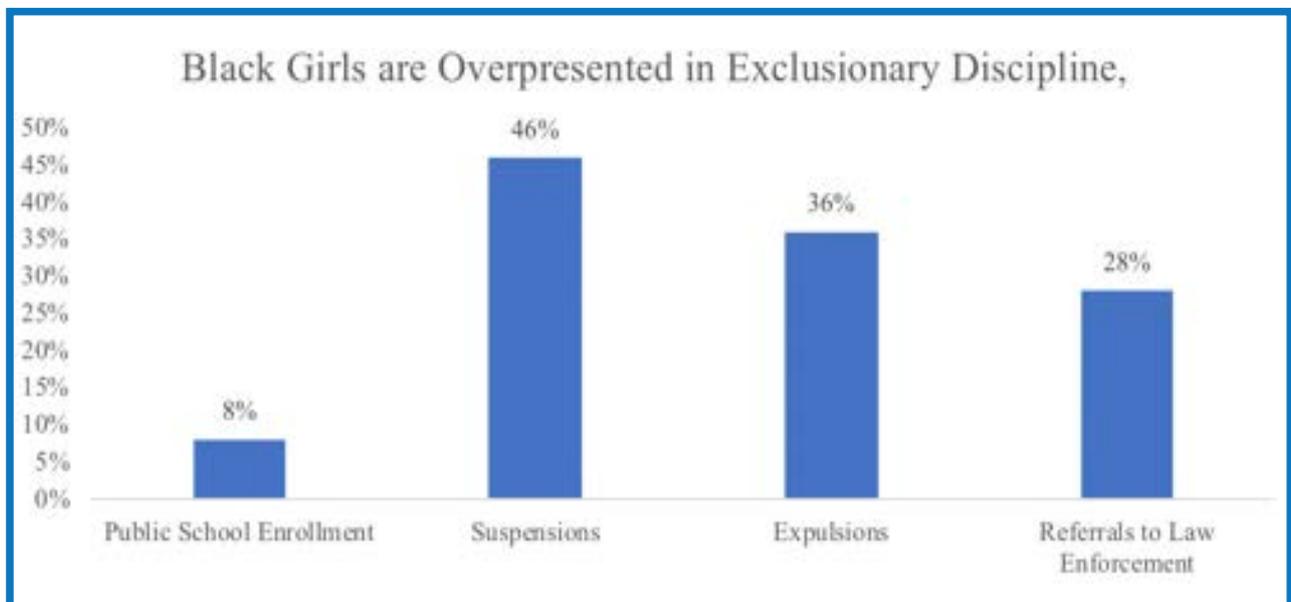
Academic Achievement

Specific analyses of Black girls' academic achievement are challenging to find as education statistics are rarely reported by race and gender. Looking at two relevant academic success indicators, 4th-grade reading and 8th-grade math proficiency, there is a clear positive trend. Between 2005 and 2019, the percentage of Black students nationwide who were not proficient in 4th-grade reading dropped from 88% to 82%. In 8th grade math, the rates of students who were not proficient dropped from 92% to 87%. Additionally, Black girls are significantly more likely than Black boys to graduate from high school and attend college. While only 63% of Black boys graduate from high school in four years, 74% of Black girls graduate from high school. Similarly, most recent statistics show that while 41% of Black women aged 18-24 are enrolled in college, 33% of Black men are.

School Climate

Unfortunately, despite their increasing academic success, Black girls still experience an extremely hostile school climate. A recent study of adult beliefs about Black girls showed that study participants saw Black girls as needing less protection and nurturing at nearly every age group than white girls. This assumption seems untrue when 35% of Black girls report racial harassment in school and 16% report gender-based harassment. When Black girls experience bullying, and harassment, teachers may be less likely to provide them protection

and support and more likely to tell them to “get over it” because they perceive Black girls as needing less protection and being more mature than white girls. While the school-to-prison pipeline has often been described as an issue for Black boys and men, there can be no doubt that Black girls also experience the negative impacts of school discipline and a punitive school climate. Black girls are significantly over-represented in the rates of suspension, expulsion, and referral to law enforcement. For example, while Black girls only make up 8% of the public school population, they make up 46% of all female students who have been suspended. Additionally, Black girls are more likely to be suspended and expelled for being disobedient or disorderly and displaying signs of trauma. Eliminating the use of exclusionary discipline and arrest is important because research has shown that the likelihood that a student ends up in the juvenile justice system is three times higher for students who were suspended or expelled than students who misbehaved but were not.



Black Girls as School Leaders

Despite the negative experiences in schools, Black girls are committed to being leaders in their communities. In a survey of high school girls about leadership, 53 percent of Black girls expressed a desire to be a leader compared to 34% of White girls. 75% of Black girls considered themselves leaders already, and 78% reported having leadership experience. Many Black girls have taken their leadership and turned it into decisive action to dismantle and improve an education system that has structurally ignored them. Look no further than Girls for Gender Equity, Black Swann Academy for examples of Black girls mobilizing in support of improving their educational spaces and outcomes!

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“Many Black girls have taken their leadership and turned it into decisive action to dismantle and improve an education system that has structurally ignored them.”

RACE, COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY AND HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

BY SHEILAH VANCE, ESQ., CHIEF OFFICER FOR EEO AND COMPLIANCE, STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Black women have the highest student loan debt of all demographic groups. Black women owe \$37,558 compared to \$35,665 for Black men, \$31,346 for White women, \$27,029 for Latinx women, and \$25,252 for Asian American women. This was the situation before the coronavirus pandemic; now Black women's economic condition has worsened.

Black women still have lower persistence, meaning progression, from semester to semester, in higher education than White women and White men. Only 39.8 percent of Black women were likely to graduate in six years, compared to 65.3 percent for White women, and 55 percent for Latinx women.

Black women have also suffered disproportionately from unemployment during the Covid-19 pandemic. The percent of employed Black women between February 2020 and December 2020 dropped by 9.5 percent, compared to 3 percent for Hispanic women, 7.2 percent for Black men, 6.8 percent for Hispanic men, 5.2 percent for White women, and 5.1 percent for White men. Employed Black women still suffered vastly unequal wages, with Fourth Quarter 2020 weekly earnings of \$764, which is only 68.8 percent of the \$1,110 earned by White men, compared to \$830 for Black men, and \$905 for White women.

This pool of unemployed and underpaid Black women is both a tragedy and an opportunity. It is an opportunity to correct some of the inequities in higher education, enroll more Black women, and create more higher education opportunities and higher earnings for Black women.

The Biden Administration is on the right track with the higher education provisions of its American Rescue Plan. While the Plan does not contain a provision to forgive student loan debt up to \$50,000, which many have called for, it exempts all student loan forgiveness from taxes through 2025. This tax, often thousands of dollars, surprised many borrowers with another bill that they could not pay.

Many observers see the student loan debt forgiveness provision as a prelude to the federal government just outright forgiving student loan debt. This is significant because students who drop out before completing their degrees are twice as likely as graduates to default on their student loan debt, leading

to bad credit scores and other negative economic consequences.

Other provisions in future federal legislation that could be helpful to Black women are debt-free college, which President Biden has announced support for, at least as it applies to community colleges and HBCUs, as well as an increase in the amount of the Pell Grant so students can incur less student loan debt.

Higher education institutions must also make structural and policy changes and adopt proven programs that support Black women's enrollment and graduation. Institutions should examine their policies in equity audits to learn which institutional policies and practices impede Black women enrollment and graduation and eliminate or change them.

For example, Stockton University, a public 4-year institution in New Jersey, has implemented a number of structural and policy changes with good results in admissions, financial aid, and advising. Since 2016, Stockton increased the enrollment of first-time undergraduate Black women students from 44 in Fall 2016, to 75 in Fall 2017, to 99 in Fall 2018. At the start of the Spring 2020

semester (pre-Covid), the university had retained 80.8 percent of the Black females who entered the first-time undergraduate class in Fall 2018.

Since 2019, the SAT and ACT, proven to be culturally biased and not predictors of academic success for Black women, is optional for admission. Also, beginning with the Fall 2019 first year class, the university awarded more need-based as opposed to merit aid. It used more need-based funds to “close the gap” of the individual or family contribution that is a part of the student aid calculation and a frequent barrier to enrollment.

Stockton also moved away from awarding student grants-in-aid, which covered only two years of tuition and expenses, and towards the Stockton Award, which covers four years, to provide students needing security in their upper-class years. Further, some expenses that used to be categorized as fees are now included under tuition so that they can be covered by certain types of tuition-only aid. To help students persist until graduation, the university created a retention working group within its Strategic Enrollment Management Council that developed an early-alert form to help faculty identify at-risk students and provide early intervention for academic challenges.

As this nation rebuilds its economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, it must help Black women rebuild their lives because they have been disproportionately and negatively affected by the pandemic in so many ways. Black women understand the value of education. Let us make sure that our governments, legislators, and higher education institutions implement policies to increase the enrollment, retention, and graduation of Black women—debt free.



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150 YEARS LATER – THE RADICAL SUCCESS OF HBCUS

BY OLAJUMOKE OBAYANJU, J.D.,
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL RACIAL
EQUITY INITIATIVE
CONGRESSIONAL BLACK
CAUCUS FOUNDATION

“So, where did you go to school?”

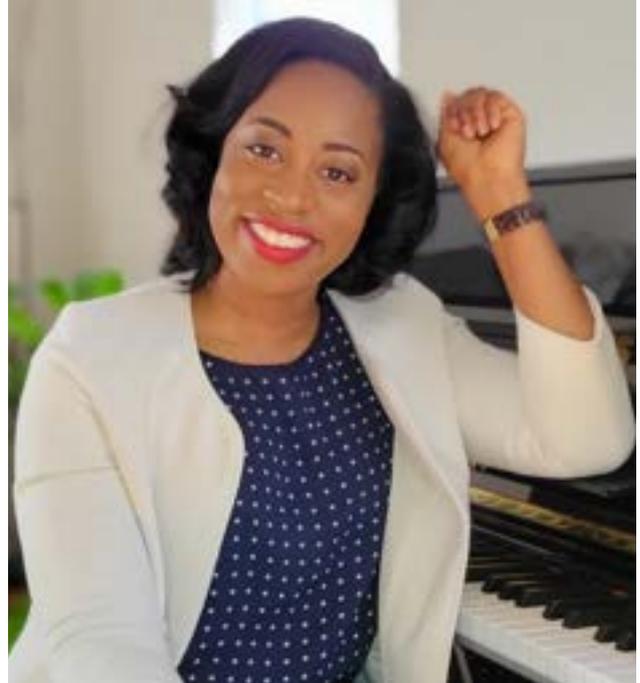
“I attended Howard University in Washington, D.C.”

“Oh cool, very cool!”

I must have had this conversation a dozen times. It would seem genuine in the moment, but I would later learn after similar reactions to my named alma mater, that this response was not a true appreciation of my four-year education. It was instead, often, an involuntary, automatic response of unfamiliarity, tinged with perhaps, a faint recognition of the name. Many had no idea where Howard University was, or even more terrifying, a Historically Black College and University (“HBCU”).

In its Higher Education Act of 1965, the U.S. Department of Education defines an HBCU as:

“...any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans, and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education] ...”



However no mere definition could encompass all that HBCUs have become. They are historical pillars, sacred places from which ingenuity and progress continue to be birthed. HBCUs are to credit for the massive Black talent and influence we see in every sector of the American and global society. From entertainment to law to medicine to technology, the emblazoned, Black handprint of an HBCU alumnus can be found.

The founding of the first HBCU was a political act.

In pursuit of justice.

Established in 1837, African Institute (now Cheyney University of Pennsylvania)—the nation’s first HBCU—opened its doors. With a mission of educating people of African descent, the University’s curriculum focused on preparing students to become teachers. It provided training in trades and agriculture, then, the predominant skills of the general economy. Because American higher education was deeply rooted in racism, the founding of the

first HBCU was a political act. Founder Richard Humphrey unlikely knew that his \$10,000 bequest to establish Cheyney University would launch the creation of similar institutions, but he did recognize that African Americans were disenfranchised and discriminatorily prevented from educational advancement. His resolve to combat that was a statement of justice. Until then, African Americans were routinely barred admission into higher education institutions. The first African American to earn a college degree from an American university was Alexander Lucius Twilight in 1823 from Middlebury College, and it would take nearly three decades for an African American woman, Mary Jane Patterson, to earn her bachelor's degree from Oberlin College. Twilight and Patterson, however, were outliers. Because of HBCUs, daughters and sons of free-born and emancipated slaves, traditionally denied scholastic advancement, were afforded "an educational foundation to support economic independence and self-sustainability."

In 1854, Wilberforce University became the first college run by African Americans. This was a historic feat, considering that the Civil War, a war waged over the enslavement of Black people in southern states, would not conclude until 1865. Fifty years later, in 1904, Mary McLeod Bethune with five other students would open a vocational school, Bethune-Cookman College. The creation of Wilberforce and Bethune-Cookman were the embodiment of an unwillingness to wait for a seat at the table, and instead the act of walking into the room, lugging the table with your own hands.

Attending an HBCU is a political act.

In pursuit of equality.

Today, the decision to attend an HBCU is a vocalization that HBCUs are still relevant. It is a declaration that thousands of Black students remain marginalized in classrooms as singular faces learning curricula that do not reflect their own history. It is a protest demonstrating that even when presented with the option of attending an Ivy League or a predominately white institution, attending Xavier University or Delaware State is just as prestigious. A 2015 Gallup-Purdue Index study found that 55 percent of Black

students who graduated from HBCUs reported that the school prepared them for life after graduation, compared to 29 percent of Black students who did not attend HBCUs. HBCUs act as the citadel of activism, from the Jim Crow era to Jena 6, to the Black Lives Matter movements. They provide a space for freedom, community, civil rights, and the fight for equality.

150 years later—HBCUs still succeeding is a political act.

In pursuit of hope.

In 2021 there are 102 accredited HBCUs still standing strong. I remain inspired by the institutions that have endured accreditation battles, insecure funding, and decreased enrollment. I remain encouraged by the foundation of multidisciplinary talent in HBCU alumni, assured by those who precede us and the pipeline of talent ahead. And as an African American female graduate of an HBCU, I remain especially hopeful for Black women. Since 1976, female enrollment at HBCUs have been higher than male enrollment in every year, growing from 53 percent to 62 percent in 2018. Undeniably, HBCUs are to credit for the legacy of brilliant Black women who have led movements through history and continue to break barriers. In 2021, we witnessed history as newly minted Vice-President Kamala Harris approached the Eisenhower Executive Office Building—her ceremonial office—becoming the first Black, South-Asian, woman in office. Certainly, Vice President Harris' status as a Howard University alumna gave new recognition to the school, but, importantly, it deservedly gave credit to the over one hundred other HBCUs. It also gave due credit to the backbone of our American society—Black women. While Harris became the first HBCU graduate in the White House, she is not the first Black woman who has accomplished incredible achievements while waving an HBCU flag.

A few notable HBCU Black women include:

- Ruth Simmons, a 1967 graduate of Dillard University, the first Black President of an Ivy League school.
- Lillian E. Fishburne, a 1971 graduate of Lincoln University, the first Black woman promoted to Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy.

- Joyce Beatty, a 1972 graduate of Central State University, the first woman Democratic House Leader in Ohio history.
- Stacey Abrams, a 1995 graduate of Spelman College, the first Black woman to win a major-party gubernatorial nominee in the U.S.
- Marilyn Mosby, a 2002 graduate of Tuskegee University, the youngest Chief Prosecutor of any major U.S. city.
- Hadiyah-Nicole Green, a 2003 graduate of Alabama A&M University, the first person to cure cancer in mice using laser-activated nanoparticles.

In an era that, even now, refuses to hire Black women, dismantle unequal pay, or fight for the promotion of Black women in professional spaces, Black women continue to shatter glass ceilings. HBCUs cultivate Black women in ways unmatched by any other institution and are a reminder to little Black girls that they can grow up to become whoever they imagine—the personification of justice, hope, and equality.

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“In an era that, even now, refuses to hire Black women, dismantle unequal pay, or fight for the promotion of Black women in professional spaces, Black women continue to shatter glass ceilings.”

HBCUS: ADVANCING HOPE, JUSTICE, EQUITY AND EQUALITY

BY IRELENE P. RICKS, PH.D.



“There are many women who are HBCU graduates that are changing the world and advancing hope for the generations that will follow them.”

Plessy on the Ropes

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) produce leaders who champion social justice causes that impact the lives of underserved and underrepresented communities. Women graduates of HBCUs have often led the charge for civil and social justice causes since the establishment of HBCUs in 1837. A major reason for the proliferation of HBCU leaders in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century was the imposition of de jure segregation laws that sought to restrict higher education participation by African Americans to HBCUs. Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), particularly in the “Jim Crow” South, were largely off-limits to African Americans until Supreme Court cases, such as the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* (impacting K-12 public education) and *Meredith v. Fair* involving James Meredith’s 1961-62 attendance at the University of Mississippi, disrupted what was an illegal and morally untenable practice of academic discrimination based on race. In a ‘one-two’ punch, from 1954 to 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court, working with civil rights groups and advocates, helped to unravel the most pernicious vestiges of *Plessy v. Ferguson* that endorsed ‘separate but equal’ access to public accommodations.

The HBCU Mantle of Ethical Leadership:

Dr. N. Joyce Payne

From 1837 to the present day, HBCUs have played a significant role in shaping the African American response to racism in the U.S. The first HBCU, Cheyney State University in Pennsylvania, was established for \$10,000 in 1837 by Quaker Richard Humphreys. The creation of the first HBCU preceded the end of the Civil War by almost

thirty years, a testament to African American resolve for self-improvement. Founded by a Quaker, Cheyney State University set an institutional precedent of conservative religious ideology that remains the cornerstone of many HBCU campuses that are committed to the pursuit of social justice as a moral imperative.

On January 20, 2021, the country watched as the first HBCU graduate, Kamala Harris, was sworn in as Vice President of the United States. It was an especially proud moment for HBCU alumni and students, particularly for African American women.

There are many women who are HBCU graduates that are changing the world and advancing hope for the generations that will follow them. In step with this HBCU tradition is Dr. N. Joyce Payne who received her undergraduate degree from the former D.C. Teachers College (now the University of the District of Columbia) and her masters and Ph.D. degrees from Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University). She has successfully advanced efforts to engage students at HBCUs throughout her impressive career at higher education think tanks, such as the Association for Public and Land-grant Universities and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. However, it was her establishment of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF) in 1987 that set a high bar of excellent HBCU stewardship. TMCF represents public HBCUs and Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs) through a challenging funding and public policy environment.

Dr. Payne built TMCF to promote higher education and build next generation leaders in a variety of fields and disciplines. As such, after more than thirty years, TMCF has solid roots in a higher education community that has a long history of developing HBCU women as dynamic and visionary leaders. It has awarded over \$300 million in assistance to students and the institutions they serve.

In her honor, the TMCF created the Dr. N. Joyce Payne Center for Social Justice in February 2021 to encourage interdisciplinary research promulgated by HBCU faculty and students. With the current social and racial climate in the U.S., the new Center will provide intellectual and moral

leadership on issues of social justice, equity, and equality that are at the heart of current congressional legislation being championed by the Congressional Black Caucus under the leadership of Rep. Joyce Beatty. H.R. 1 - For the People Act - seeks to protect the inalienable rights of eligible citizens to participate in the electoral process and H.R. 7120 - George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 - demands equitable treatment of minorities, particularly African Americans, at the hands of law enforcement and the U.S. judicial system. The Center for Social Justice is poised to extend our nation's ongoing HBCU legacy of championing justice and equal rights in the U.S through research and the training of the next generation of leaders, researchers, and activists.

HBCU women luminaries like Dr. Payne continue to carry the demanding torch of equality. In less than two hundred years since the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, descendants of former enslaved Africans have pushed the boundaries of principled HBCU education to leadership at the highest levels of state and national government. From the classroom to the boardroom, the work of Dr. Payne proves that HBCU women graduates continue to make their moral mark on our national character.

EDUCATIONAL GAPS CAUSED BY LACK OF SOMETHING

BY MCKENYA DILWORTH

Since our invisible agitator's onset, an enemy to our society as we knew it (COVID 19), generally people have been divided about the importance of teachers to education. That may sound illogical. Allow this explanation. Consider the amount of time and energy invested in and on social media platforms villainizing teachers who spoke out against reopening schools. Then, add in the politicians who carried the water for interest groups with their 60 seconds of fame on television networks, reminding teachers of their chosen martyrdom of a profession. The claim made is not far-fetched and without reasoning and evidence.

Last March, COVID tested systems of our society that we deemed secure. Specifically, with education, we turned to e-learning to rescue ourselves. However, we were not as prepared as we should have been to usher in the engaged instruction needed to capture (and hold) the young minds that are accustomed to being entertained with the latest technological "newness." This pandemic tested teachers' and administrators' abilities to teach and lead compassionately and competently. It also tested parents.

The situation exposed our community's Achilles heel, parental engagement, and involvement. While this is not necessarily a new revelation, it is relevant to confront why Black and Brown children may be left behind educationally. The pandemic has reiterated the importance of one's home in the success equation of education. Now, some are dismissing this assertion as blaming the victim. However, in the time it takes to be dismissive, we could be engaging in a conscious and courageous conversation about accountability for our children's education from teachers, administrators, the larger community (and society), and yes, from our parents. I had the unique opportunity to virtually substitute for a German teacher in Villa Park, Illinois (a predominantly White middle-class city). Since I teach German at a local community college, it was a nice reprieve from young adults to eager adolescents.



There was a stark contrast to my students' participation rate (in Gary, Indiana, a predominantly African-American, low to the middle-income city), class engagement, and yes, parental involvement. When confronted with the dogmatic assertion that Black and Brown children will be left behind because of this pandemic, I wonder where the blame is being laid. Perhaps I am assuming that the blame will be laid at the feet of institutionalized and systemic racism. I am not foolish enough to believe or even offer up the opposing claim that institutionalized and systematic racism doesn't play a role in Black and brown children's overall education. The part that to me is hopeful is that we are aware of what is completely broken within the education and are poised to fix it. In doing so, parental accountability has to be addressed in a more meaningful and strategic way.

A Tale of two cities

Gary and Villa Park are cities some 50 miles apart and leap years away in resources and educational leadership. One city, Gary, Indiana, is low to middle income, has been devastated by its lack of economic diversification, and

as a direct result, has allowed its educational system to deteriorate. Interestingly enough, educational management has ushered back in-person learning. Then, there is Villa Park, revelling in resources, enjoying the local economy's property taxes. Gary's school system struggles to remain relevant while competing with the proliferation of school choice in charter schools. Both manifestations are not working, but parents remain optimistic about the future of education and how their children and youth will eventually benefit.

The response to COVID 19 has been a point of interest because I have taught in both school districts, as stated before. I found it odd that the Gary schools were adamant about the return to in-person instruction even with COVID 19 cases at its highest. At the same time, Villa Park decided to commit to e-learning for the remainder of the school year but was equipped with a hybrid school re-entry strategy. What else is different in Villa Park was the talk about the impact of e-learning on education. What is the same is the technology available to the students.

In both Gary and Villa Park, students have the technology needed to receive e-learning. There are additional hotspots through the city of Gary and other resources available to families without internet accessibility. According to the Gary School Corporation's public information office, their families were given information to obtain internet connectivity through a unique partnership with Infinity/Comcast.

The gaps predicted about Black and Brown children will not be because of the lack of technology accessibility or other resources, but rather in many cases, it will be because of the lack of parental involvement. This is the reason that school administrators and teachers alike need to become more creative and innovative when teaming up with parents. Gone are the days of the schools being solely responsible for the education of children and youth. We need to embrace parents as co-teachers, on a team, supporting their children.

Let's engage in an honest conversation about parental

“The part that to me is hopeful is that we are aware of what is completely broken within the education and are poised to fix it. In doing so, parental accountability has to be addressed in a more meaningful and strategic way.”

accountability and culpability with the gaps that we interject in national talks and roundtables while recognizing and re-examining the attitudes and postures school administration and staff take towards parental involvement. Parents are the secret weapon against educational gaps, student engagement and helping with student performance. We, as educators, need to show them just how special and important they are.



**RACIAL, GENDER
& ECONOMIC
JUSTICE, EQUITY
AND EQUALITY**

EQUITABLE WORKPLACES ARE CRUCIAL TO AN EQUITABLE RECOVERY FROM THE PANDEMIC: A SNAPSHOT OF BLACK WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

BY JOCELYN FRYE

“Black women have experienced enormous job losses – in February 2021, the unemployment rate for Black women aged 20 and over was 8.9 percent compared to 5.2 percent for white women, 6 percent for Asian women, and 8.5 percent for Hispanic women.”

For Black women, the fight for racial and economic justice, equity, and equality has been at the heart of their fight for fairness in the workplace for generations. Black women in the United States have always worked, from the nation's earliest days to the present day. But their work experiences have been shaped by societal and workplace realities that too often have limited their job opportunities, depressed their wages, devalued their work, and perpetuated biases about their skills, attitude, and work ethic. Creating workplaces rooted in equity and equality is essential to combatting these barriers head on and improving Black women's employment and our economy overall.

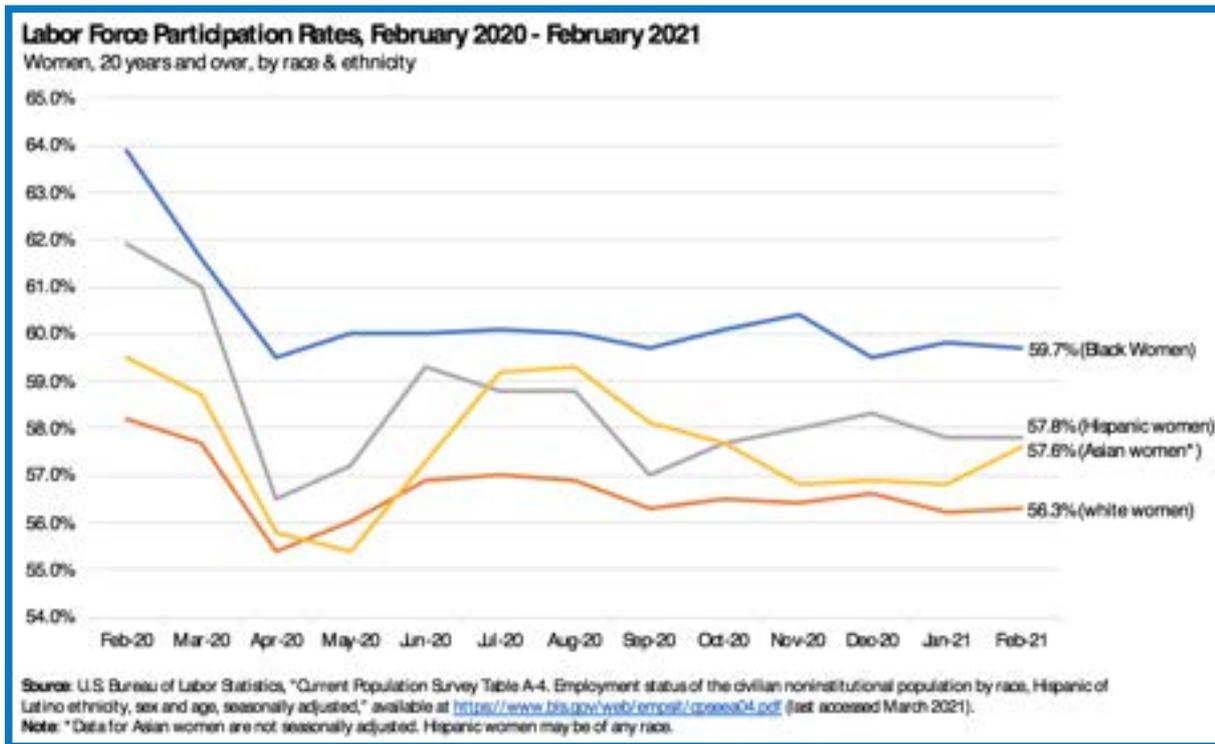
Two factors help put into context the challenges that have confronted Black women workers since the early days of the pandemic. First, when Black women enter the workplace door, they do so through the intersection

of race and gender. Black women's workplace posture reflects their reality that race and gender are inextricably linked in their everyday lives and experiences. The pandemic has created enormous volatility in the labor market for all women, but there are racial and ethnic differences that call for focused solutions to address unique barriers facing Black women and other women of color workers.

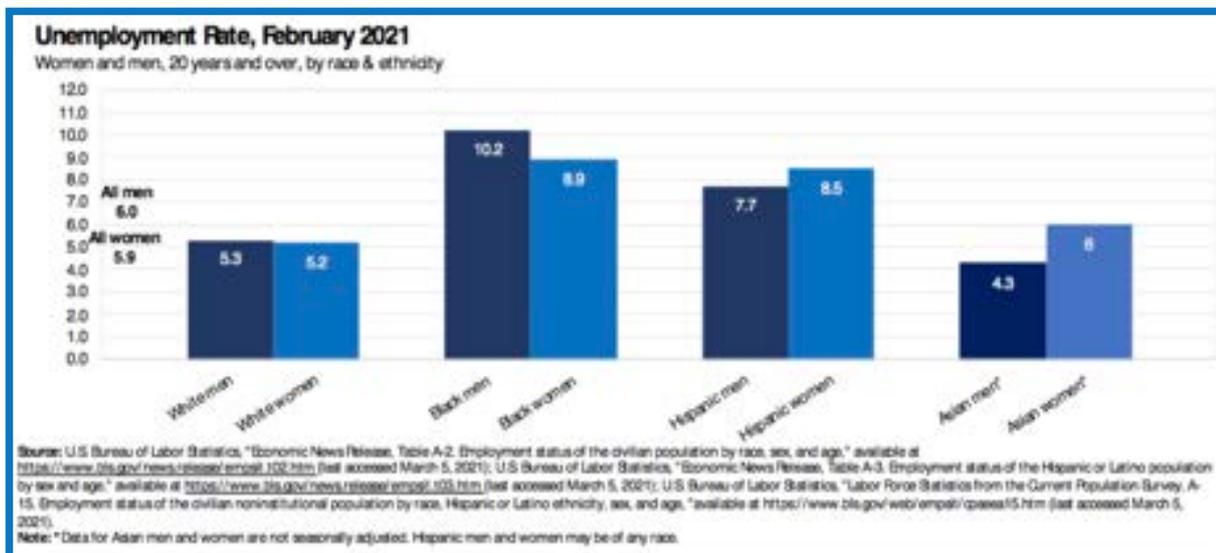
Second, Black women have a long history of fulfilling caregiving roles, at work and at home. Like other women, they often assume the bulk of caregiving responsibilities for their families which can mean pitting their job and their family needs against each other. Black women are also a disproportionate share of paid caregivers, too often being paid low wages and lacking benefits to address their own caregiving needs. The lack of strong policies to help workers with caregiving has been a persistent problem throughout the pandemic

and illustrates how care needs, and the mostly women who perform care work, have largely been disregarded.

The numbers tell the story of the Black women workers on the pandemic front lines, both those who continued to work in many essential jobs and those who lost jobs. The labor force participation rate for Black women workers dropped from 63.9 percent in February 2020 to 59.7 percent in February 2021, a nearly 7 percent decline, but even with that change they continued to have the highest labor force participation rate among women.



At the same time, Black women have experienced enormous job losses – in February 2021, the unemployment rate for Black women aged 20 and over was 8.9 percent compared to 5.2 percent for white women, 6 percent for Asian women, and 8.5 percent for Hispanic women.



Furthermore, more than one quarter of the 2.3 million women aged 20 and older who left the workforce between February 2020 and February 2021 – an estimated 606,000 workers – were Black women, a nearly 6 percent decline for Black women. All of this has occurred as Black women continue to experience longstanding wage disparities. In 2019, although women overall earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men working full time, year round, Black women full-time workers only earned 63 cents for every dollar earned by white male workers, compared to 79 cents for white women, 55 cents for Latinas, 85 cents for Asian American and Pacific Islander women, and 60 cents for Native American women.

“Black women need policies that enable them to fulfill their responsibilities at work and at home without losing crucial income, policies such as paid family and medical leave, paid sick leave, and high-quality, affordable child care.”

The interventions needed to address these disparities and disproportionate effects of the pandemic are clear. Black women need policies that enable them to fulfill their responsibilities at work and at home without losing crucial income, policies such as paid family and medical leave, paid sick leave, and high-quality, affordable child care. They need robust enforcement of employment discrimination laws, including new resources to combat pay and other forms of discrimination. They need intentional strategies to raise wages such as increasing the minimum wage, eliminating sub-minimum wages, and improving wages of care workers. They need employers committed to reviewing their own internal practices and to evaluating hiring and promotions broken by race, gender, and other demographic measures. The pandemic has revealed with stark clarity the policy failures that have caused economic hardship for Black women and undermined Black women's employment. The solutions are long overdue – Black women cannot afford to wait.

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FAST TRACKING AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

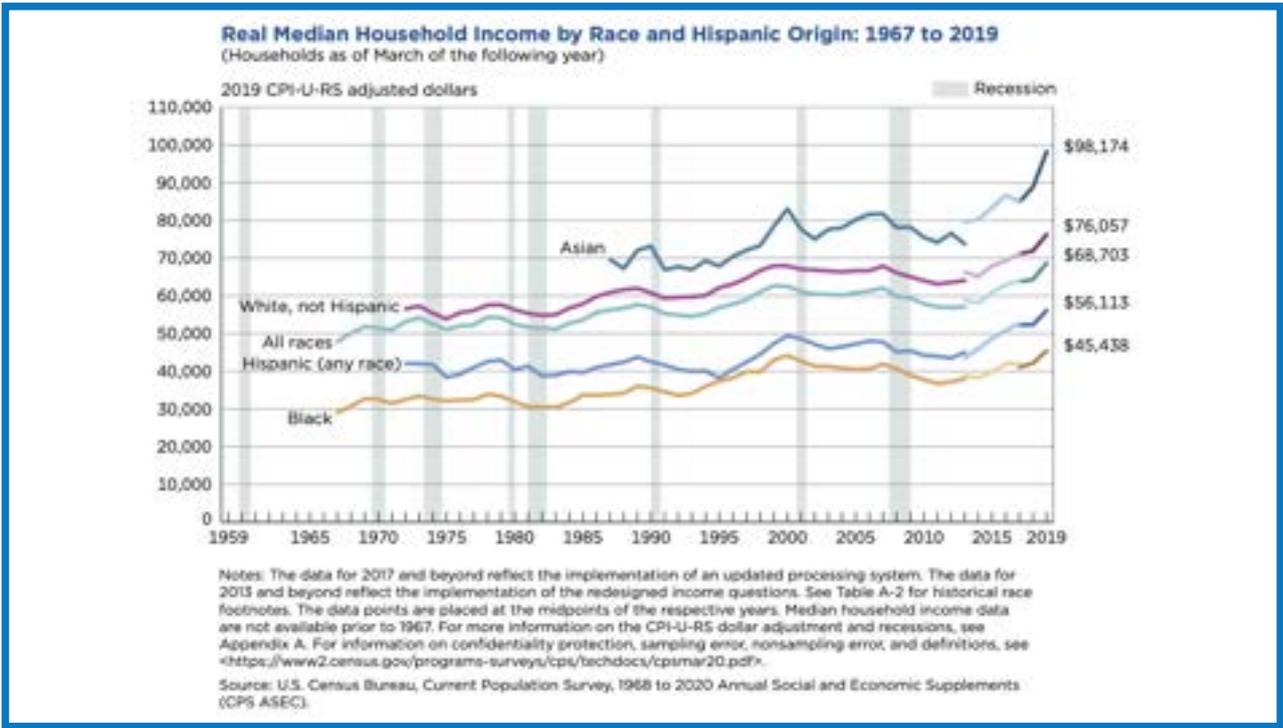
BY MARIAH LICHTENSTERN, FOUNDING PARTNER OF DIVERSECITY VENTURES AND WINTER '20 ASPEN TECH POLICY HUB FELLOW



“Black women are the highest educated U.S. demographic, but education does not close homeownership or wealth gaps.”

According to Jada McLean, Co-Founder of Hurry Home, an affordable homeownership marketplace and investment management platform, modern-day ownership is still out of reach for too many Black households. The median income of the average first-time buyer is \$80 thousand, while the median income for Black households is \$45 thousand. Even though thousands of homes are listed under \$100 thousand in top U.S. cities, underwriting and biases around credit-worthiness create barriers that pick up where codified redlining left off - preventing Black prospective buyers from owning affordable homes.

A former Banking Analyst, McLean believes that the core problem is that approximately 1/3 of US housing stock is inaccessible to aspiring homeowners because of the regulation and profit structure of the banks. While piloting their startup in South Bend, Indiana, McLean and her Co-Founder, John Gibbons, found that 12% of houses were under \$50 thousand. There was also a surprising number of rent-to-own or land contract buyers - both suboptimal for prospective homeowners. Many would-be homeowners had income, credit scores, and savings sufficient to qualify for a mortgage on an affordable home, but still could not get approved. Gibbons cites misaligned incentives driven by the Home Ownership and Equity Protection Act (HOEPA), which caps mortgage closing costs at 5% of a borrower's loan. For an affordable home below \$100K, appraisals, loan fees, and other processing vendors can quickly exhaust this limit, dipping into banks' revenue. Since banks generally are paid 1-2% of the loan amount but have to do the same amount of work whether a loan is \$50 thousand or \$500 thousand, small loans are disfavored. Many of these sub-\$100K houses are bought with cash by institutional or "fix and flip" investors before becoming rental properties.



While the top quartile of income earners can buy homes with cash and charge rents, 58% of Black households are left renting with 56% of Black renters paying more than 30% of their monthly income in housing costs. These costs continue to rise, despite stagnant wages, leading to displacement and gentrification. Compounded by the impacts of Covid-19 and a widening wealth gap, Black communities are extremely vulnerable.

“Most of Hurry Home customers are minority women. A lot of Black women have transitioned to homeownership with us. They are 38-45 buying their first home. Even though they’ve been amazing renters, they’ve never been able to make the jump to homeownership - through no fault of their own. They pay their rent on time, they operate in cash, they are a good credit risk, but they are not ‘seen’ by the credit system. They don’t have equitable access to generational wealth or traditional mortgage products.” - Jada McLean, CEO, Hurry Home

Black women are the highest educated U.S. demographic, but education does not close homeownership or wealth gaps. In fact, Black women are disproportionately negatively impacted by student loans, particularly when pursuing graduate / professional degrees that produce higher wages. Student loans contribute to high debt-to-income ratios (compounded by the wage gap), which make it more difficult to qualify for higher loan amounts. Women also encounter more bias and social barriers to accessing credit. Barriers to homeownership close doors on valuable tax deductions and access to equity for education, investments, withstanding emergencies, and starting businesses. As housing costs continue to rise, affordable home loans are a key stepping stone to economic stability and wealth creation.

To make affordable homeownership more accessible, HOEPA could be amended to cap costs at a percentage of the average or mean loan amount. Banks could be incentivized to make smaller loans with rebates for closing costs. Student

Banks Disfavor Affordable Loans

		
Loan Amount	\$100,000	\$250,000
Processing Costs	\$2,000	\$2,000
Loan Origination Fee (1%)	\$1,000	\$2,500
5% Cap on Closing Fees (HOEPA*)	\$5,000	\$12,500
Appraisal / Escrow / Title Insurance, etc.		Exceeds 5% HOEPA Cap

*Home Ownership and Equity Protection Act

loans, which are exempted from bankruptcy, could be excluded from debt-to-income calculations on FHA loans. In this way, those whose lack of generational wealth leaves them with a greater debt burden can have a better shot at wealth creation, instead of going deeper into a hole of debt peonage.

National Rent Increasing Despite Stagnant Wages

Single Dwellings

- 0-BR: **\$1,602** (-2.7%)
- 1-BR: **\$1,588** (+1.7%)

Co-Livable Units

- 2-BR: **\$1,861** (+4.7%)
- 3-BR: **\$2,051** (+4.5%)

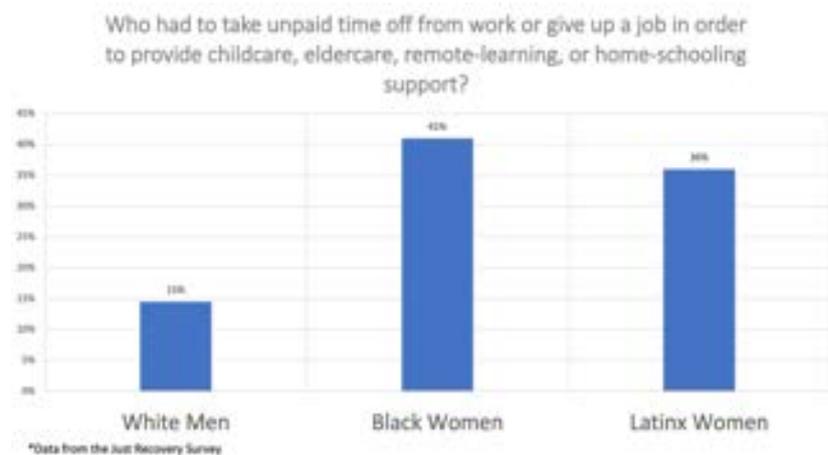
The Biden administration is making the redress of discriminatory housing policies and practices a priority. While driving awareness of affordable homeownership inequities and advocating for fair housing policy, Black women can be proactive by pooling resources to fund clusters of cash purchases in Black communities. These portfolios can be sold via wrap-around contracts to lower-income owner-occupants. Investors can secure commercial grade loans for these portfolios within special purpose vehicles (SPVs) so that pooled funds can be invested again and again. Properly structured and managed, these investments can produce wealth-generating cash flow while supporting buyers in accelerated homeownership. With technological advances available to support such strategies, and Black women positioned to address historical wrongs, the American dream of affordable homeownership can become a reality for Black women.

VALUING BLACK WOMEN AND LATINAS MEANS VALUING CAREGIVING

BY MONIFA BANDELA, COO & VICE PRESIDENT, ADVOCACY & SURVIVOR INITIATIVES

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic upheaval on women's well-being has been thoroughly documented, including one factor that has had an outsized effect: unpaid caregiving responsibilities.

Caregiving — spanning child care, elder care, and care for a loved one with a serious illness or disability, at all stages of life— has trapped women, particularly Black women and Latinas, between outdated gender norms that expect women to shoulder this work without compensation and the need to financially support their families.



In real-time, women are experiencing the consequences of an economy that treats care as an individual, and highly gendered and racialized, responsibility, rather than important social infrastructure that should be valued and well-compensated. Many Black women and Latinas specifically are employed as paid caregivers, an industry that often pays poverty wages, while also taking on unpaid care responsibilities because of our underdeveloped care infrastructure.

Our economy cannot reach its full potential without women, and women cannot reach their full potential without a reimagining of care. Importantly, 90% of voters agree that providing caregiving infrastructure will provide support and stability for millions of people. We can make this a reality but doing so will require a multi-pronged approach; we must change the cultural narrative around who is responsible for care, encourage and enforce

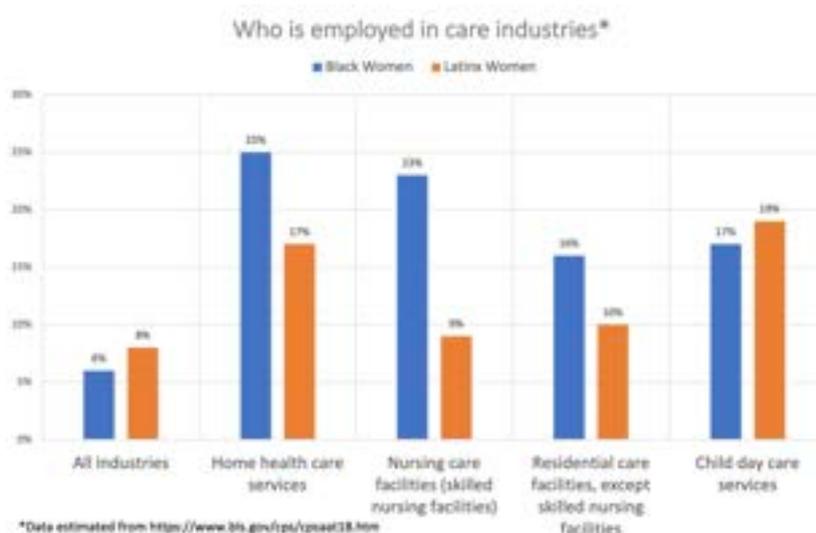
equitable caregiving benefits from the private sector, and demand public sector investment in this crucial social infrastructure that undergirds the entire economy.

Any public policy fixes being considered as part of relief and recovery conversations must center the Black women and Latinas who are so often balancing paid employment and unpaid caregiving by providing sustainable solutions for both paid and unpaid caregivers. Investing in care as infrastructure makes good economic sense while advancing TIME'S UP's mission of safe, fair, and dignified work for all women, across our multifaceted identities.

Drawing on Time's Up, Measure Up's research, below are four policy prescriptions for addressing the caregiving crisis:

Expand the care conversation beyond child care and invest in it.

Investing at least \$77.5 billion per year (an amount in line with a proposal from the Biden-Harris Transition Team) in the child care, residential care, and home health care sectors could lead to \$220 billion in new economic activity annually, almost a 300% return on investment, according to a new paper from TIME'S UP Foundation. This investment would support over 2 million new jobs, with about one-third of those jobs coming from increased economic activity. Women are 76 to 94% of the workers in the child care, residential care, and home health



care sectors; additionally Black workers comprise between 18 to 31% of the employees in these sectors, while Latinx employment ranged from 13 to 22%. This investment would immediately provide employment for many Black women and Latinas in industries that have been deemed essential during the pandemic.

Make care jobs, good jobs.

Making care jobs desirable and sustainable employment options are essential to creating a durable and equitable care infrastructure, and 80% of voters agree that care workers deserve better. For workers in the child care, residential care, and home health care sectors, the median hourly wage is \$13.34, more than \$3/hour below the \$16.54 estimated living wage in the US. Increased wages and benefits, access to and the ability to use paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, access to training, certification, and career pathways, and a choice to advocate for themselves by joining a union or other worker organizations will increase the standard of living for millions of Black and Latinx care workers, while ensuring legal status by way of a path to citizenship is also key to making their jobs sustainable for undocumented workers.

Make care affordable for all.

When care is unaffordable, it is often women who reduce their work hours or leave the labor force to meet the unpaid caregiving needs. A recent Time's Up, Measure Up study showed that Black women and Latinas were respectively 3 times and 2 times more likely than white men to say that unpaid caregiving responsibilities had caused them to take unpaid time off from work or give up a job. However there is a cost to all of us: absenteeism, shifts to part-time work, staff turnover, and workday interruptions cost businesses over \$30 billion annually in 2006 dollars, to say nothing of the lost talents and ambitions of these caregivers. Another analysis suggests that for every three elders who make the switch from informal care provided by a daughter to formal home care, one daughter returns to the workforce full-time. Investing in care allows

women to re-enter and remain in the workforce and will future-proof our economy as the population continues to age. This could be done through strengthening and modernizing Medicaid and Medicare to create universal home and community-based services and supports.

Ensure paid leave and paid sick days for all.

Eight-four percent of Black women and 76% of Latinx women in a recent TIME'S UP/LUNA poll reported needing paid sick days for financial and health security, and 69% and 60% respectively needed paid leave to care for a family member or loved one. Establishing these benefits nationally will take some burden off of unpaid caregivers who are trying to balance paid and unpaid work and allow some women to re-enter the workforce. The gender norms that place caregiving responsibilities mostly on women, and often unpaid women and women of color, could result in women losing \$64.5 billion in wages per year if more caregiving support isn't provided; this has knock-on effects for women throughout their lives and to the public in terms of lost tax revenue and the lost ambitions and achievements of these women.

In the last 80 years, we have come close to universal child care twice. Today, in the midst of intertwined health, economic, and racial justice crises, investing in a robust caregiving infrastructure is one way to boost our economy and reshape our society in an equitable way, something that economic leaders are discovering. The way we think about care has compelled over two million women to quit the labor force in the past year and forced women of color to endure crisis levels of unemployment. Now the time is ripe to get the job done. We must support our caregivers, particularly the Black women and Latinas who take on so much paid and unpaid care work, and do so in a way that moves us towards an equitable future.



In this brief we focus specifically on Black women and Latinas, who shoulder many of the paid and unpaid caregiving responsibilities in this country. We also want to acknowledge that many Asian immigrants and American Indian/Alaska Native women face similar care burdens and decisions; unfortunately, the data we have access to do not allow us to draw conclusions about

these groups. While labels such as Black and Latinx encompass many different identities and experiences, the policies we advocate for here will lift up all women as we continue to push for better, more nuanced data.

About TIME'S UP Foundation

The TIME'S UP Foundation insists upon safe, fair, and dignified work for all by changing culture, companies, and laws. We enable more people to seek justice through the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund. We pioneer innovative research driving toward solutions to address systemic inequality and injustice in the workplace through the TIME'S UP Impact Lab. And we reshape key industries from within so they serve as a model for all industries. The TIME'S UP Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Time's Up, Measure Up

This is the first quarterly brief for Time's Up, Measure Up. Time's Up, Measure Up is a five-year initiative to study and report on the impact of gender and racial inequities that have only grown with the COVID-19 crisis. The initiative fills critical knowledge gaps, drawing on quantitative data, qualitative research, and personal stories to help us understand — and solve — these problems. We are keeping women front and center in policy conversations in the short term, as well as challenging the deeply embedded sexist and racist attitudes that have held women back in our economy and our society for far too long. This initiative was funded with the early and critical support of Pivotal Ventures, an investment and incubation company created by Melinda Gates.

BUILDING THE CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

BY CAROL JOYNER, LABOR PROJECT DIR., FAMILY VALUES AT WORK

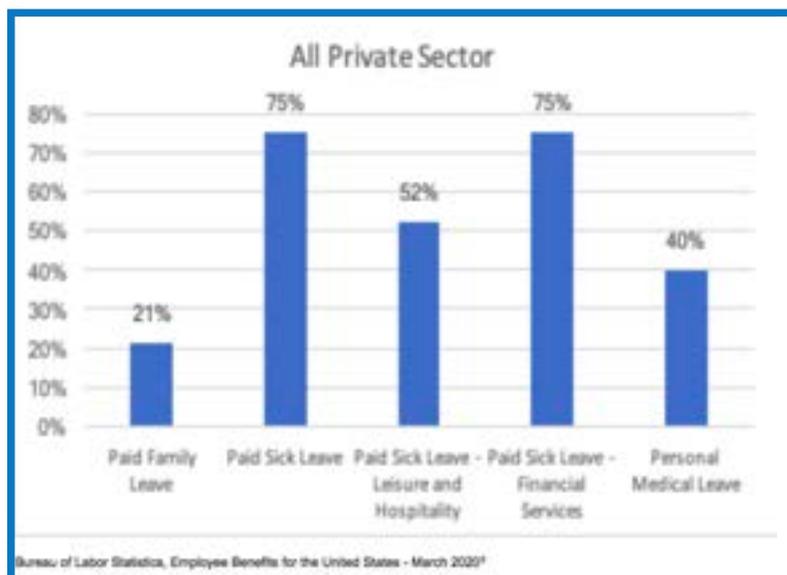


COVID-19 has ripped through our lives, taking up space in our hearts, literally and figuratively, and teaches us lessons as we reckon with its presence and the calamity that it will leave behind. The numbers alone tell a story fraught with devastation and loss. In one year, 30 million Americans contracted COVID-19, and a half million people have sadly lost their lives. Native American, Alaska Native, Latinx and Black people have borne the brunt of this pandemic, in both exposure and deaths, for reasons that are complex and deeply rooted in economic inequality and racism. Add to this the structural inadequacies in our social safety net, including healthcare and childcare services, both remnants of a racialized and gendered caregiving system.

There were many reasons that COVID has spread across the nation with such devastating results. One important reason is our lack of paid time to care. A recent study indicates that where paid sick leave statutes existed prior to the pandemic as many as 13,000 fewer people per day contracted COVID-19. There's a reason for this. Paid sick days were used to quarantine, stay home, get treatment or care for others. Beyond paid sick days, workers with access to paid family leave were able to take extended recovery and care for children during remote learning. A major lesson learned is that, just like bridges, roads and broadband, our nation must build a care infrastructure that takes into account paid sick and family leave, childcare and support for aging adults.

Access to Paid Leave

In March 2020, only 21% of private sector employees had access to paid family leave from their employer and 40% had personal medical leave through employer-provided temporary disability leave. Access to shorter-term paid sick leave seems higher but varies significantly based on employment sectors. For example, workers in leisure and hospitality jobs have less access to paid sick leave than those working in financial services, where salaries are higher. By looking at the types of jobs they hold, one could glean where Black women sit in the constellation of leave taking. Higher wage earners who work full-time are more likely to have access to leave than those working part-time or in service sector jobs, and Black women are overrepresented in the jobs that lack paid time to care.



Higher wage earners who work full-time are more likely to have access to leave than those working part-time or in service sector jobs, and Black women are overrepresented in the jobs that lack paid time to care.

According to a report by McKinsey & Company, 45% of Black private sector workers are employed in three industries:

healthcare, retail, and accommodation and food service. This is underscored by a survey in which 51% of employed Black women describe working on the frontlines of the pandemic as essential workers, compared with 38% of white women. Black women employed in these industries are providing functions that keep the general public safe and secure. Yet tragically, they are also the same sectors with less access to leave.

The National Response

The federal government responded quickly to the pandemic by passing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), the CARES Act, the Consolidated Appropriations Act and most recently the American Rescue Plan. These laws handled leave taking in different ways. The FFCRA provided mandatory paid sick days for COVID-related reasons and paid family leave for the care of a child due to school or childcare closures. Although it offered immediate relief for some workers, it unfortunately excluded up to 106 million people, including millions of Black women, who were among those needing paid time off the most: those working for large employers, essential and health care workers, undocumented workers and others. Once again, these exclusions left the most vulnerable workers exposed to the virus with no chance of quarantining, recovering from the illness or caring for loved ones without missing pay. No one should be surprised that the pandemic overtook our nation.

Subsequent coronavirus responses further weakened access by dropping the requirement that employers offer paid leave, substituting tax credits for employers that choose to grant paid time off. Eliminating the requirement for employers to provide leave will result in even more workers on the frontline having to choose between their health, caregiving responsibilities and their jobs.

Although the American Rescue Plan also continued the voluntary tax credits, it is a monumental law that stands to bolster our response to COVID-19, resuscitate the childcare industry, bring needed funds into state and local governments, shore up the unemployment system and send new direct payments and child tax credits to millions of families. While we realize the comprehensive paid leave proposal in the original bill draft was gutted to adhere to Senate procedures, it is clear that a full recovery

is impossible without comprehensive, permanent paid family and medical leave and paid sick days. Thousands of advocates, elected officials, and the public at large will continue to fight for #PaidLeaveforAll.

The Care Infrastructure

As we collectively see the light at the end of this sorrowful tunnel, the following recommendations are offered to ensure that we build a nation that is better than before the pandemic, one in which care is a central part of the vision. Institutionalizing care in this economy will transform our nation for all people, especially Black women and members of other marginalized communities.

Policy Requirements for Building the Care Infrastructure

- **Paid Family and Medical Leave:** Economic recovery proposals must include robust, permanent paid family and medical leave that provides an adequate period of paid time off for personal and family caregiving and bonding with a new child. To ensure that all workers are covered, the policy must have job protection, an inclusive family definition, progressive wage replacement and coordination with states that have previously passed paid leave programs
- **Paid Sick and Safe Days:** Are required for shorter illnesses and periods of care for loved ones and should cover all workers regardless of employer size, immigrant status and employment sector.
- **Comprehensive Childcare and Eldercare Services:** Are needed to ensure that every family has access to high quality, affordable child care and elder care that is community based, pays teachers and caregivers living wages and provides a professional career ladder for all employees.
- **Unionization:** The right to join a union and bargain collectively without interference from employers, elected officials or others is required for building a workforce that has care as a mission and purpose.

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HELPING BLACK WOMEN REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL IN THE WORKPLACE

BY JOAN HARRIGAN-FARRELLY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, WOMEN'S BUREAU AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

On March 4th, 2021, my husband and I finally managed to secure an appointment for the vaccine. Joy!! There was new found joy in our home. We knew we, like the rest of the nation, indeed the world was tense during this pandemic. But, we didn't realize how tense until after many hours, days, weeks and months of trying to secure an appointment for the vaccine, we finally saw "available" on the website and exhaled when we were able to book an appointment. Just the ability to make an appointment, not get the shot, brought us some release. We had been registered in Virginia since January. Then on March 8th and 9th we got the shot. One shot, and we are exhilarated. The pent up fear has retreated. Not totally, as the pandemic still rages, and as my older brother who lives in New Jersey with his wife, both with health challenges that even if it was not for their age should have moved them to the front of the line are still waiting for an appointment. We are still scouring all the websites, looking for availability in their neighborhood, trying to secure them their "shot" at avoiding the virus and staying healthy and being able to freely associate with family and friends and go to church.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black men and women are almost three times more likely than their white counterparts to know someone who has been hospitalized with COVID-19 and two times more likely to experience the loss of a loved one from the virus. My big sister has lost two brother's-in-law to the pandemic. This has a serious impact on families. Losing a loved one is always difficult. Losing a loved one during a pandemic is even more so, as distance is placed between the sick and the dying, and funerals and memorials are almost non-existent. The impact of deaths and illness from the pandemic is compounded by the economic consequences the pandemic is having on families.

The dramatic job losses of the pandemic serve to amplify the much longer-standing struggles that Black women have faced and continue to face within the U.S. economic system. Black women have historically participated in the labor force at a rate higher than other women, and are also more likely to hold multiple jobs than other women or men. Yet, they have endured the highest unemployment rates among women during the pandemic, driven in part by their concentration in industries hit the hardest by COVID-19.



Joan Harrigan-Farrelly is the deputy director of the Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor.

In 2020, as in all years prior, Black women's earnings substantially lagged behind those of white men. Black women who were full-time wage earners had median usual weekly earnings of \$764, or only 68.8 percent of the \$1,110 median usual weekly earnings of white men. This year, it will take until August for Black women to earn what the average white man earned last year.

In addition to relatively low earnings, Black women are less likely than others to have access to paid leave and telework. Prior to the pandemic, 39% of black working women lacked access to any paid leave, and 35% reported that they had neither paid leave nor an option for telework. Not coincidentally, in the absence of paid leave and job flexibility, black women were the most likely to report that in the prior month they had needed, but not taken time off – 15% said as much. The largest share of these women needed that time off to tend to their own illness or medical needs, and 18% said they didn't take the leave because they could not afford to lose the income.

Low wages, coupled with limited job flexibilities and paid leave is particularly troubling given that 52% of Black mothers are raising children on their own. The pandemic has increased child care and remote schooling obligations that have contributed to an employment loss of 1.6 million mothers of children under 18 since January 2020. Black mothers experienced the steepest decline in employment between January 2020 and January 2021. Among mothers with children under the age of 13, Black mothers' employment rate declined by 7.3 percentage points compared with 4.3 percentage points among White mothers. The economic security of Black families depend on the ability of Black women to earn good wages and access job flexibilities and benefits.

The Women's Bureau was created by Congress more than 100 years ago, and is the only federal agency to work exclusively on issues affecting women in the workplace. We have always been at the forefront of advocating for working women, including supporting racial equity and inclusion in the workplace through our initiatives and research. This work goes as far back as 1922, when we published a detailed statistical report revealing inequities in working conditions for Black women.

We've been at the center of the push for working women's rights, ensuring that women were included in the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938; and playing an instrumental role in the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. We carry on this tradition through research, policy analysis, grant-making, education and outreach, focusing on key issues for working women such as child care, paid leave, apprenticeship opportunities and closing the wage gap.

While these policy reforms have advanced women's employment prospects and working conditions –they have not proven to ensure equity for Black women in the workforce. It is incumbent on us at the Women's Bureau, and indeed, on all of us, to recognize and remedy the structural and systemic inequities, the implicit bias, and sometimes the unvarnished racism that constrain women of color from reaching their fullest potential in the workplace and in many other arenas. We want to do

more than return to the pre-pandemic “normal”, which was not working for many women, specifically Black women. We want to reimagine and rebuild, creating a system that works for everyone. We encourage you to follow us on Twitter at @WB_DOL as we continue to elevate research regarding these inequities and mount programmatic responses to combat them.



For more information about the Women’s Bureau, please visit www.dol.gov/wb.

This is a modified version of a Department of Labor blogpost from February 2021.

COVID-19 RELIEF & ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR BLACK AMERICA... NOT YET! “OUR STRENGTH IS GREATER THAN OUR OPPRESSION”

BY ROHNIQUE DAVY AND RENE REDWOOD

On March 13, 2020, the fate of African Americans took another downhill turn when Donald Trump declared the United States in a national emergency due to Coronavirus. College students all over the country were sent home with nothing but a one-day warning. Workers were sent home with no guarantee that their jobs would still be there the next day. Although COVID-19 has affected all Americans, the undue burden of perpetual economic disparities between Black America and white America exacerbated. Once again people of color, specifically Black communities are thrust onto the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis. It has been particularly difficult and devastating economically for African Americans due to employment discrimination, a gap in benefits, and the sustained racial trauma fueled by displays of hate and the impact of COVID-19.

It is nothing new that America is rigged against Black

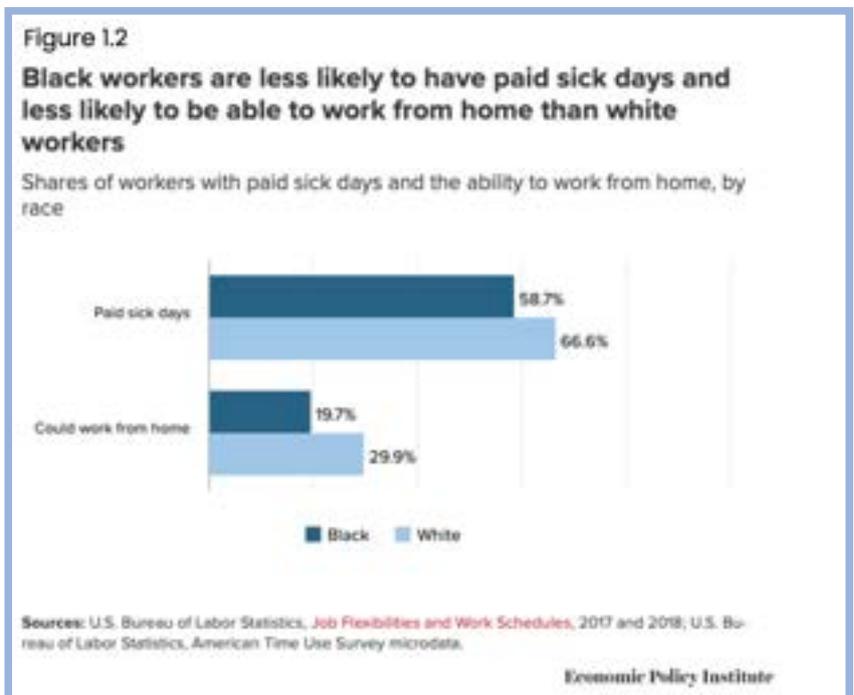
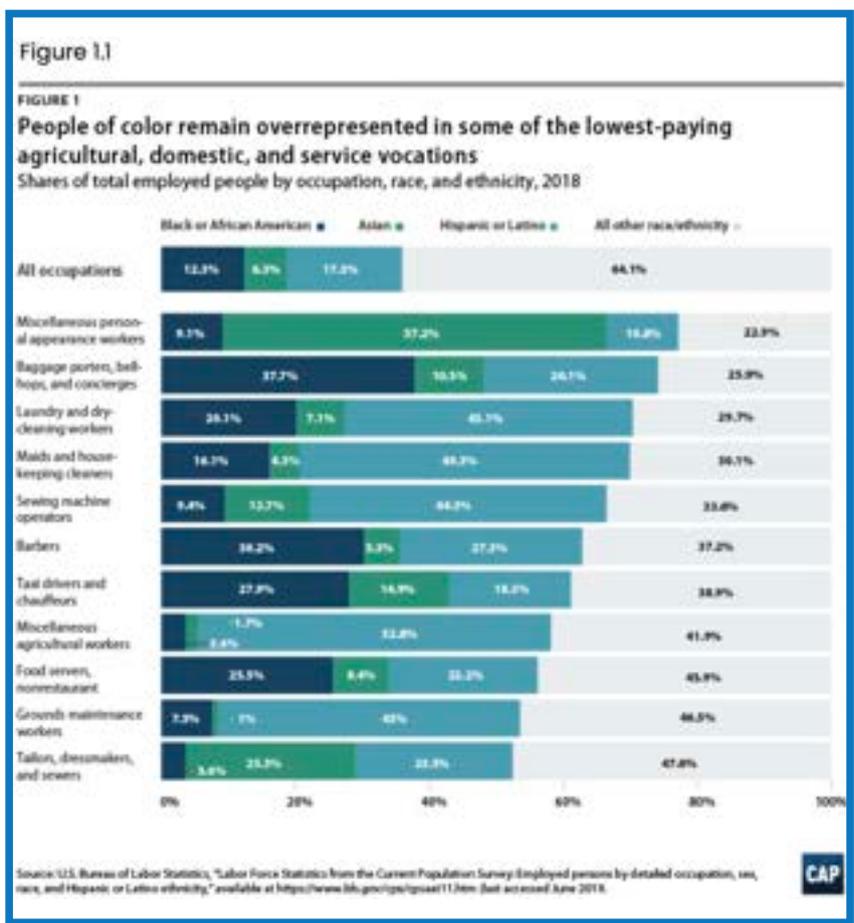
people, COVID-19 has shed a planet-size spotlight on systemic racism and the inequities laced into America’s economy and society as a whole. The economy’s structure has been exposed to the virus, specifically institutional bias in banking, housing, food security, and more. Those who hold low-wage jobs are more susceptible to the effects of coronavirus because they lack the essential workplace benefits. High-wage jobs are inaccessible to many Black Americans forcing us to be overrepresented in jobs such as service, domestic, agriculture, and allied healthcare leaving us vulnerable (see Figure 1.1). Americans with high-paying jobs are provided stability during this pandemic that is not afforded to the majority of Black families. The biggest disparities in employment benefits between higher-paying jobs and lower-paying jobs are in health insurance, paid sick days, and the ability to work from home (Figure 1.2).

The U.S. government has offered relief for Americans during this pandemic, however said relief failed to meet the needs of Black America. Despite relief and recovery for some African Americans, disproportionately what is being provided cannot remedy the gap that was created and reinforced through structural racism, a system of oppression based on race. For example, the federal government passed The Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) in December, which provides paid sick leave days and expanded family and medical leave for reasons related to COVID-19 (Note: after nine months of economic devastation). Although this is an important first step, about 6.8 to 19.6 million private-sector employees are not included. With African Americans accounting for 15 million, or 12%, of the private sector, the exclusion of the private sector from the FFCRA aid leaves too many Black families unable to meet the demands of their jobs and take care of their families during COVID-19. The demand and requirement to work remotely, with limited or no broadband and access to internet comes at a price to the Black Community. The FCC just approved \$50-a-month emergency broadband subsidies as a relief fund.

African Americans are not only more likely to be hospitalized due to COVID-19, but they are also one of the most vulnerable to unemployment, loss in wages, trouble in paying bills, and more (Figure 1.3). According to Pew Research Center, in April 2020, 73% of Black Americans said they did not have funds to cover three months of

expenses whilst businesses was laying off employees and shutting down in-person jobs, including offices, restaurants, and other jobs that are typical amongst people of color. Whilst in comparison, 47% of white adults said the same. Over our time here in America, Black people have learned the importance of community and the ability for us to rely upon one another. COVID-19 is just another trial of our endurance and strength, so we utilize all our possible resources to get through this pandemic together. There are resources that can help Black families find benefits and jobs that are not ordinarily easy for them to find. Like always Black people will prevail and rise above the obstacles that are placed before us because our strength is greater than our oppression.

“If we can close the racial gap income and opportunity, all Americans stand to benefit. We will add \$5 trillion to the economy over five years and create six million new jobs for everybody.”
– Susan Rice, White House Domestic Policy Advisor



Resources for Black Americans to reduce the income and opportunity gap:

- **Benefit Finder:** Take this questionnaire to find benefits your way be eligible to receive and be directed to the agency to apply. www.benefits.gov/benefit-finder
- **Unemployment Assistance:** www.benefits.gov/categories/Unemployment%20Assistance
- **Disaster Financial Assistance with Food, Housing, and Bills:** You may qualify for additional help with food and bills. Learn about mortgage and rental relief. And find out how the Cares Act and other stimulus packages can help your family. www.usa.gov/disaster-help-food-housing-bills

Figure 1.3

Financial pain points during coronavirus outbreak differ widely by race, ethnicity and income

% saying they have ____ since the coronavirus outbreak started in February

	Used money from savings/retirement to pay bills	Had trouble paying bills	Gotten food from a food bank/organization	Had problems paying rent/mortgage
All adults	33	25	17	16
White	29	18	11	11
Black	40	43	33	28
Hispanic	43	37	30	26
Asian*	33	23	14	15
Upper income	16	5	1	3
Middle income	33	19	12	11
Lower income	44	46	35	32

*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.
 Note: White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Family income tiers are based on adjusted 2019 earnings.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 3-16, 2020.
 Economic Fallout From COVID-19 Continues To Hit Lower-Income Americans the Hardest

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- **NAACP Coronavirus Resources:** www.naacp.org/coronavirus/coronavirus-resources/
- **Small Businesses and 501C3 organizations:** You can apply for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), a SBA backed loan to help businesses maintain their employee during the ongoing COVID crisis. www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/coronavirus-relief-options/paycheck-protection-program

About the Authors:

Rene Redwood, CEO of Redwood Enterprise LLC and Rohnique Davy, CEO of R.Davy Consulting Services LLC, Junior at Colby College

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WE NEED MORE BLACK WOMEN IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY TO COMBAT BIAS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

BY MADISON COLE AND RENÉ REDWOOD

“The digital divide is real; in 2019, 58% of African Americans reported having access to a computer in their household.”

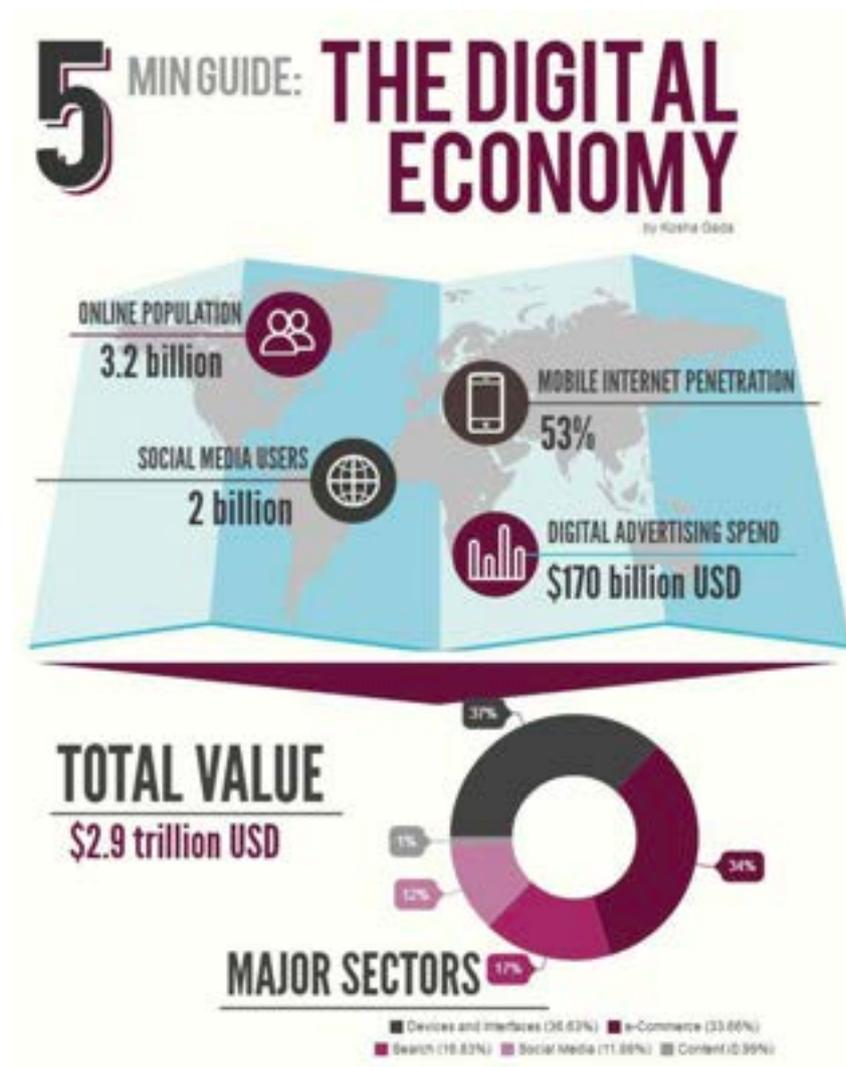
Over the past decade, the number of Black women owned businesses has grown over 150%; this is more than three times the growth rate of women owned businesses over the same period. Historically, Black women became entrepreneurs due to necessity. Commonly unappreciated, underestimated, and undervalued by employers, Black women looked toward themselves for additional and/or alternate forms of income. Despite removing some of the barriers to entry for the next generation of Black women entrepreneurs, issues of inequality and inequity are still present. The utilization of technology and the internet has begun to shift Black female entrepreneurship into a new era where the digital economy is an opportunity and not just an escape.

The digital economy is a broad term that encompasses the intersection of business and digital technology. Originally coined in Don Tapscott's

1995 best seller, *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence*, the meaning of the term has expanded to recognize the development of new technologies and new firms based in data collection and analysis.² This includes everything from traditional technology and media to modern technologies of the past few decades like e-commerce sites, automation, mobile and online banking, and more.² The digital economy exists based on hyperconnectivity, or “the growing closeness and interdependence between people, firms, and machines that comes from the internet, the internet of things, and mobile technology.” The Internet of Things refers to the network of devices that are connected to the Internet. Forbes estimated in 2016 that the digital economy was worth \$3 trillion. That same year it accounted for just under 9% of the GDP in the United States. The digital economy is a huge market that continues to grow

infinitely alongside the development of new technological innovations and systems. So, what does this mean for Black women entrepreneurs?

Taken at face value it would seem that the digital economy would be a champion for inclusion by allowing access to business resources to anyone on the internet. Anyone is able to start and expand their business from home, right? Wrong. Unfortunately, the internet isn't as wildly accessible as it seems. The digital divide is real; in 2019, 58% of African Americans reported having access to a computer in their household. African American households are statistically less likely than their white counterparts to have internet access. Additionally, even once Black women open their businesses, they are slated to earn less than 20% of women owned businesses.² In 2012, Black woman owned businesses averaged \$27,752 in annual sales. This same year the averages for all women was \$143,731 and white women was at \$170,587.² Despite the increase in numbers, Black female business owners still face discrimination. While the digital economy can't eliminate these obstacles, it can provide new methods and opportunities for Black women to overcome them.



Three ways Black women can take advantage the digital economy:

1. **Branding:** For better or for worse, one of the impacts of hyperconnectivity is consumers growing closer to firms. For small business owners this translates to you being your brand. Take advantage of social media and the internet in order to convey a personalized and professional image to potential customers. Utilize brand ambassadors, or other people who will use their personal brand and following to promote your business. The Internet of Things allows for Black woman to bring cultural competency and awareness to the marketplace and to better reflect the needs of our community.
2. **Accessibility:** The Internet of Things (IoT) allows businesses and consumers 24/7 access to each other. Use it. People are flooded with information on a daily basis from news feeds, social media, online subscriptions and more. Be conscious of how you can use this as a tool to increase visibility and generate revenue. Focus on making sure the content you're putting out to potential consumers is targeted, organized, and eye-catching so that when people wake up and scroll through their Instagram or their email, your content is the one that stops them.
3. **Access New Resources:** Many companies are beginning to recognize the importance of engaging with Black Women. Google announced in February of 2021 that it plans to provide 100,000 Black women with trainings in career development and digital literacy over the next year. They are offering these training programs in partnership with six other groups led by Black women including the National Pan-Hellenic Council. The MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth also has a program targeting toward helping women entrepreneurs. These are just a few examples that you can take advantage of that offer free business insights and training.

While the digital economy still reflects biases from the business world, the increased accessibility it allows for represents a glimmer of hope for Black women entrepreneurs. It presents an opportunity for us to

introduce our talent, style, and perspective into existing markets, and to create new ones.



About the Authors

Madison Cole is a junior International Business major at Temple University and president of the Fox African American Business Association. René Redwood is the CEO of Redwood Enterprise LLC.

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THE POWER OF BLACK WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

BY REV DR. AMBASSADOR SUZAN JOHNSON COOK, FAITH LEADER, ENTREPRENEUR, DIPLOMAT, FOUNDER & CEO, GLOBAL BLACK WOMEN'S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE GLOBALBLACKWOMENCC.ORG



“When the slogan “BUILD BACK BETTER” became “live” during the 2020 Been Harris Presidential campaign, Black women entrepreneurs were already doing just that: building.”

As a third-generation Black women business owner, I stand on the shoulders, and side by side, shoulder to shoulder, with Black women who have been the front lines and back bones of our communities and our global nations-for years. For example, the nation's first female self-made millionaire was a Black woman, Madame C.J. Walker, who employed Black women and earned her fortune in the early 1900s with cosmetics and hair care products for Black women. In Los Angeles during the 1850s and 1860s, Bridget “Biddy” Mason — founder of the city's first AME church — was one of the country's first Black real estate entrepreneurs and philanthropists. And in the 1960's my own mother, Dorothy “CJ” Johnson was the first Black woman millionaire I knew. The sole Black woman to own a watch guard security agency in the State of New York, she is credited with founding the longest running Black family owned business in the Bronx, New York, now in its' 57th year of successful. operation.

When the slogan “BUILD BACK BETTER” became “live” during the 2020 Been Harris Presidential campaign, Black women entrepreneurs were already doing just that: building. Building, but not always receiving the “better” treatment when it comes to gender relations, access to capital, mentoring and garnering the huge government contracts. Many of us had been successful, but didn't know how to scale, so when it came to the “huge” deals, they either went with men, Black and white, or white women, who jumped in to claim “minority” female owned status. Just as Black women have been at the forefront of equality and justice in every arena in America, so too are we rapidly continuing the legacy of entrepreneurship, building and strengthening the global economy. The late CBC Sister

Founder, Hon. Shirley Chisolm, once said “If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair”. Well, I'd like to add, as Beyonce once said, “Not only must we come to the table, but Black women entrepreneurs have had to “get the wood and Build the table.”

The Guidant report shows, “There are more female African-American small business owners than the general population of business owners. In the American small business universe, 27% of small businesses are women, among African-American owned businesses, 35% are women. And according to the NYC Small Business Office, New York City is “home to the largest concentration of women-owned businesses nationwide. These businesses are vital to our city's economic growth - and in 2019 employed 321,000 people, generating \$71 billion annually.”

Certainly the pandemic has wreaked havoc on the entire economy. Not only has the light been shone on racial injustice, but also economic injustices.

**Black women start
763 new businesses
every day.**

According to Janice Hayes Keyser, “Black women are fueling the fight for economic justice”, and according to the annual American Press report, Kaya Dantlzer, a grassroots organizer states “When Black women-owned businesses are supported, communities fair better because women think more holistically about all members of the community.” And the fight for economic and gender rights is not limited to those in urban America.

The Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic and Social Justice (SRBWI) promotes the first human rights agenda in the United States aimed at eradicating historical race, class, cultural, religious and gender barriers experienced by southern rural black women.

Black women-led Chambers of Commerces are bursting at the seams all over the US., and now globally, In Washington DC, we've created the Global Black Women's Chamber of Commerce.(GBWCC) According to founding Chair and CEO , Suzan Johnson Cook “We gave birth. We were pregnant during a pandemic and, during COVID, GBWCC was born.

We are the only Chamber that deals solely with Black women business owners worldwide, that means anywhere in the world where Black women are owning businesses. We have already created 25 new Black women business owners, distributors of PPE equipment, and are connecting with and collaborating with Black women business owners in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, South America and Canada. Hosting a quarterly STATE OF BLACK WOMEN™VIRTUAL SUMMIT series, we are bringing together business owners, thought leaders and others who are instrumental with running businesses in the public and private sectors.

Janice Heyser's article stresses “ While researchers say Black women are using their gifts and grit to uplift their communities, the struggle is real. According to the U.S.

Census, on average, Black women were paid 63% of what non-Hispanic white men were paid in 2019. In addition, systemic racism means it is harder for Black women to get funding and access the tools, resources and mentors they need to be successful, experts say.

And Angela Gibson Shaw, President of the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce (GLAAACC) states,“The businesses Black women open and the corporate ladders they climb are not just for themselves, They are for the good of the community. They are central to the ongoing fight for power and parity.”

Black women start 763 new businesses every day. In fact, they're the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs in America, yet they still lack access to the resources they need to grow their businesses. (American Express 2020 report)

- Being “ready to be my own boss” was the primary reason African-American survey respondents started their businesses (34%). This was followed by a “desire to pursue my own passion” (29%), “dissatisfaction with corporate America” (13%) and “the opportunity presented itself” (10%).
- What's most exciting are the new partnerships and affiliations Black women entrepreneurs are having

with one another and with other groups. For example, the GBWCC distributorships came from a partnership between the EBW (Empowering a Billion Women), who had a distribution center, and gave the mentoring and training to the newly minted Black women entrepreneurs. Other groups like Greek House Davos, and ethnic, racial and religious groups, are also finding their way to partnerships and sponsorships.

- With the pledge by major corporations to close the wealth gap, both in America and Abroad, we hope we will see a surge in Business dealings and relationships with Black women entrepreneurs globally.
- It is important that the new White House administration not only invite Black women business owners for engagement and dialogue, but together with Congress initiate important policies and legislation that will broaden the reach, with specificity to Black women entrepreneurs.

BLACK WOMEN AND THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

BY DR. JOHNETTA B. COLE, PH.D., CHAIR & 7TH NATIONAL PRESIDENT AND JANICE MATHIS, ESQ., EXECUTIVE DIR., NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

Black women have been in the vanguard of defending democracy over the past several years. We voted, registered voters, organized Souls to the Polls, wrote checks, sent texts and tweets, trained poll workers, knocked on doors, gave interviews and urged the nomination of a woman of color to be Vice President – all in order to repel a specific threat to the basic tenets upon which our government is built. We succeeded – the Constitution held, the insurrection was repelled, the Union survives. But Black women want, need and deserve more than mere survival.

One concrete result of all that work is that there is now a unique opportunity to make progress and move forward. We have been doing the very hard work of holding the forces of sexism racism and exclusion at bay. In this season, we must take advantage of every opportunity to expand what is meant by justice – on our jobs, in the streets, courts, legislatures and polling places. Defending democracy is one thing – expanding it is something else.

We have the opportunity to advance the cause of justice with the potential ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It is not a coincidence that Black women earn less, see a lower return on their investment in education, suffer higher levels of poverty and have less wealth than White people. The structure of our government and of the economy almost guarantee that these disparities will continue into the indefinite future, unless we take on the gargantuan task of erecting legal protections as bulwarks against a seemingly never-ending tide of racist, sexist and violent systems of oppression.

One of those bulwarks is ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. This is not a new issue. Future First Lady Abigail Adams wrote to her husband in 1776 structuring the government of the new nation, "...I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

Well, John Adams did not heed Abigail's advice. There is no mention of women, sex or gender in the United States Constitution, and we should not have to wait another 245 years to remedy that omission.

This is what ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment would accomplish:

- Give women and men equal legal rights
- Create consistent legal protections for all genders in the 50 states
- Outlaw discrimination based on gender, for everyone
- Protect equal pay – Black women earn \$.62 for every dollar earned by a White man
- Strengthen workplace protections against sex discrimination in hiring, firing, promotions, and benefits – especially in the public sector.
- An ERA will eliminate sex discrimination in the armed services
- Help to ensure that Social Security does not discriminate against Black men, whose average life expectancy barely reaches retirement age
- Protect women from arbitrary and capricious work requirements relating to pregnancy, childbirth and hair styles
- Protect all citizens from rights being rolled back by repeal of statutes, political trends or changes in the courts.

The time is ripe. The U.S. Congress is poised to extend the time period for ratification of the ERA. The last state to vote to ratify was Virginia, in 2019. Both President Biden and Vice President Harris are on record in favor of removing the deadline for the states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment.

During Dr. Dorothy Irene Height's tenure as President of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) she supported the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and she also supported adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment, working alongside activists like Molly Yard and Elie Smeal of the National Organization of Women (NOW).

"We could always count on Dr. Height – she was very strong and effective on the issue of equal rights for women," indicated Ms. Smeal.

Living as we must at the intersection of race and gender, it is understandable that Black women, cis or trans, at times feel conflicting allegiances, wondering whether their Black consciousness can be reconciled with agitating for women's rights. We saw that ambivalence last year in the observance of the adoption of the 19th Amendment in 1920, because it did not confer a full measure of equality on Black women. We also feel it from men who sometimes see all women as unworthy competitors.

But we need not be hesitant to support gender equity and an end to gender discrimination. The ERA will significantly strengthen the right to equal pay. Black women's earnings are critical to Black family survival. Half of all African American female workers are mothers, compared to 44.5 percent of White female workers. More than two-thirds of all African American working mothers are single, making them the primary, if not sole, economic providers for their families, compared to 29.6 percent of White working mothers.

To be in favor of the ERA and equal rights for women and all marginalized people is a pro-Black agenda of which we can be proud.

SOCIAL SECURITY: ESSENTIAL IN THE LIVES OF BLACK WOMEN

BY EDNA KANE-WILLIAMS, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER, AARP

“Without this vital program, poverty rates for Black women would more than double, rising from 26% to 61% for Black women 75 years and older, and for Black women 62–64 years of age poverty rates would rise from 16% to 36%.”

Over the years, Social Security has proven itself to be a critical component of the nation's safety net. To date, the program has reduced poverty among the elderly from 40% in the 1950s to just 9% by 2016. In fact, no program in the history of this nation has been more effective at reducing poverty in America than has Social Security.

For the Black community in particular, for many, Social Security is the last line of defense from complete destitution. Especially as it relates to the financial well-being of Black women.

During their working years, Black women have the highest labor force participation rate of any group of women in America. Yet the double disadvantage of both race and gender wage discrimination, leave Black women significantly behind other demographic groups when it comes to being able to save for retirement or invest robustly into wealth-building vehicles. In fact, according to the National Women's Law Center, over a 40-year career, Black women lose

\$964,120 due to the wage gap alone. That's nearly one million dollars that Black women could have used to invest in wealth-building vehicles and save for their golden years.

To exacerbate the problem, Black women carry more student loans debit than any other demographic in America. They are also less likely to marry, and are more likely than others to take on the responsibility of child rearing alone. Additionally, they are disproportionately likely to serve in the role of primary caregiver to elders. Due to these realities, in spite of Black women's propensity to work, and in addition to the wage gap they face while working, these additional significant financial responsibilities that many bare alone, most start their retirement years financially way behind.

This makes Social Security especially critical for the economic survival of Black women. In 2017, over a third (35%) of married Black seniors and over half (58%) of unmarried Black

seniors received 90 percent of their income from Social Security. This lifeline is nothing short of essential for Black singles and many of Black couples in their elder years.

For Black women specifically, fully three out of four Black women (74%) who are 75 years of age or older rely on Social Security for at least half of their income, while half (51%) rely on it for all of their income. Among Black women in their early to mid 60's, a third (33%) rely on Social Security for more than half of their income, while one out of five (20%) have Social Security as their only source of income. Without this vital program, poverty rates for Black women would more than double, rising from 26% to 61% for Black women 75 years and older, and for Black women 62-64 years of age poverty rates would rise from 16% to 36%.

With the employment of Black women disrupted during the Pandemic, it is that much more important that moving forward, Social Security is not only maintained but is strengthened to help make up for the negative financial impact that will most certainly be reflected in future Social Security benefits which will reflect the implications from extended bouts of unemployment experienced by Black women today.

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“During their working years, Black women have the highest labor force participation rate of any group of women in America. Yet the double disadvantage of both race and gender wage discrimination, leave Black women significantly behind other demographic groups when it comes to being able to save for retirement or invest robustly into wealth-building vehicles.”

**RACIAL, GENDER &
HEALTH JUSTICE,
EQUITY AND
ACCESS**



THE RACIAL DIVIDE AND HEALTH CARE EQUITY: “SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED”

BY CLAYOLA BROWN, PRESIDENT, PHILIP RANDOLPH



Three years prior to her delivering the speech in 1964 from which her mantra, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired”, would emerge, civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer had been given a hysterectomy without her consent by a white doctor as part of Mississippi’s plan to reduce the number of poor blacks in the state. She was nearly beaten to death in a jail cell in 1963 for encouraging blacks to register and vote. Although Sister Fannie Lou lived to see the Voting Rights Act become law in 1965, she never recovered from that beating and died of complications from hypertension and breast cancer at age 59.

No wonder she was sick and tired.

Black women can relate. Anyone who knows Mrs. Hamer’s story understands that she was not talking just about her physical health when she spoke of being sick. In fact, she was tired of the day-to-day racism and struggles she constantly faced-- with no relief in sight.

Those words uttered by Fannie Lou Hamer more than 50 years ago have become symbolic of the fatigue that black women experience...when they are physically sick, when they are emotionally drained, when they are mentally exhausted...

THEY ARE JUST SICK AND TIRED!

Sick of inadequate, inaccessible and unaffordable healthcare...and, tired of the excuses.

Fifty years later, diabetes, hypertension and cancer remain common health problems among African-American women.

Although there have been significant advances in the treatment of these health issues, the ability to pay for or receive adequate healthcare services still remain unattainable in some underserved communities.

Hope for an equitable healthcare system began to surface in March 2010 when President Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (the Act or ACA), which is felt to be the most comprehensive reform to health care in the United States since the enactment of Medicare/Medicaid in 1965.

An article published in March 2020 by the Center for American Progress outlines the following benefits of the ACA; and ways in which it has changed Americans' lives.

"Ten years ago this month, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law. Since then, the law has transformed the American health care system by expanding health coverage to 20 million Americans and saving thousands of lives. The ACA codified protections for people with preexisting conditions and eliminated patient cost sharing for high-value preventive services. And the law goes beyond coverage, requiring employers to provide breastfeeding mothers with breaks at work, making calorie counts more widely available in restaurants, and creating the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which helps the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state agencies detect and respond to health threats such as COVID-19."

"Although there have been significant advances in the treatment of these health issues, the ability to pay for or receive adequate healthcare services still remain unattainable in some underserved communities."

However, systemic racism continues to reign as a prominent factor in the disparities in healthcare for African Americans in the United States. This has been especially noted during the COVID 19 pandemic.

For years, various factors have been studied which are attributed to the health disparities that African Americans are now suffering. The June 18, 2020 edition of Forbes magazine states it in this manner: "A long and well-documented history of systematic discrimination against Black people regularly leads to worse underlying health conditions for African-Americans that make it more likely they become severely ill during this pandemic and die from the disease."

The article goes on to state that these disparities "are neither a reflection of genetic or behavioral differences, but of policies that often harm Black communities." Those policies range from living in food deserts and exposure to polluted air and water; to the lack of or inadequate hospital facilities or medical personnel; to inaccessible and affordable internet services; and to racial disparity in the criminal justice system. All of these exacerbate stress, anxiety, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and heart disease.

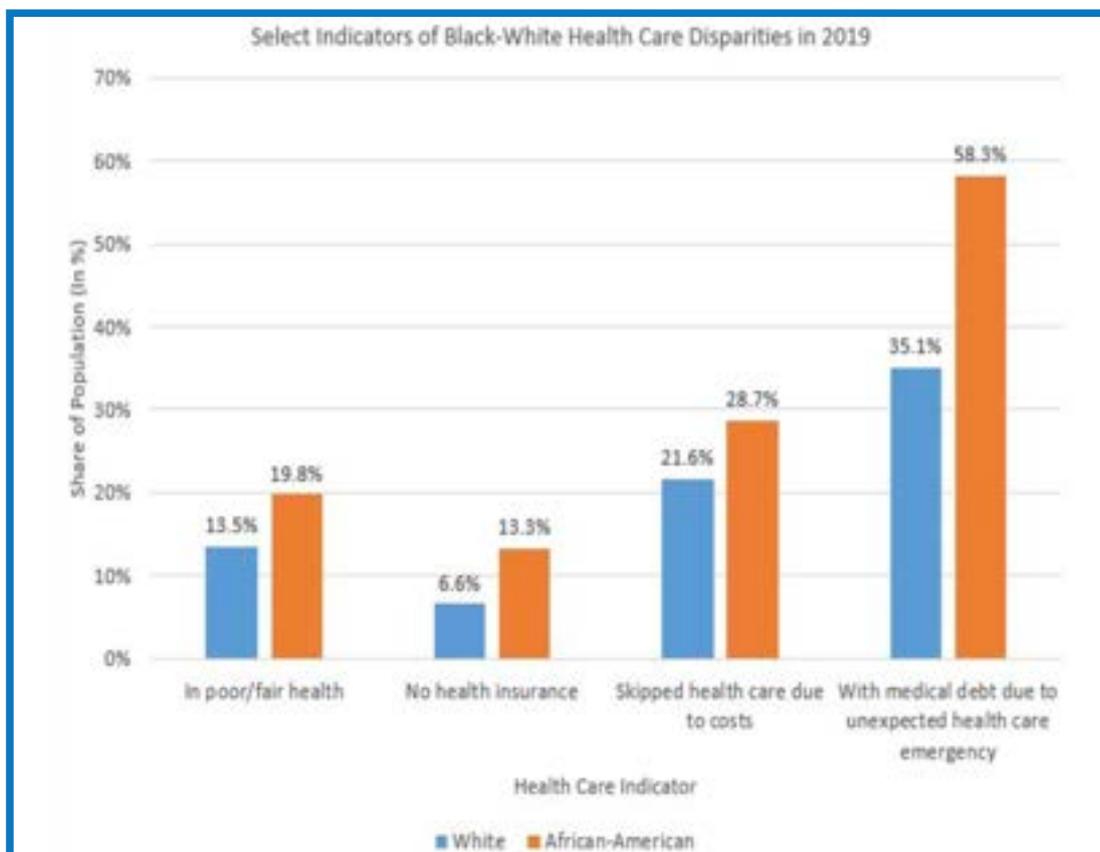
It is no wonder that if and when a Black person is able to take the vaccine for the COVID-19 virus, many refuse and shake their heads in despair, “Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired.” If you can’t get to a hospital or a clinic; if you cannot get help via overtaxed telephone lines; if you can’t get “online” because you don’t have access to the internet, you can’t receive health treatment—including a vaccine for COVID-19. And, many continue to be haunted by the memory of the plight of the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in Negro Men, and don’t trust the medical system. But, despite well-meaning advances in healthcare, racial disparity and the role that politics play in healthcare issues have prevented African Americans from benefiting from achieving their full Civil Rights in this country. Health Care is a Civil Right.

It is time that those whom we give our Vote, act in a manner to eliminate the disparities that continue to divide this country, and work to ensure that all Americans achieve the “promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

African-Americans Are at Greater Physical and Financial Risk in The U.S. Health Care System.

CALCULATIONS BASED ON FEDERAL RESERVE, SURVEY OF HOUSEHOLD ECONOMICS AND DECISIONMAKING

African-Americans end up paying more for health care because of worse health insurance, but they have less money to pay for such care because of lower wages and fewer savings. African-Americans, for instance, are more likely to end up with medical debt in case of an unexpected health emergency than is the case for whites (see figure below).



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TELEHEALTH AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A COMBINATION THAT COULD WORSEN RACIAL HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES FOR BLACK WOMEN

BY JOYCELYN TATE, JD
CO-FOUNDER, MAKE IT FOR
CHANGE INNOVATION HUB &
SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR, BLACK
WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE



As the coronavirus spread across the United States, the demand for digital health technologies has skyrocketed. The COVID-19 pandemic forced healthcare providers and government to support the swift rollout of telehealth technologies and accelerated the development and approval of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to scale up their use in healthcare.

For over a decade, the reluctance of health insurance companies and medical providers to embrace telehealth, caused it to move at a snail's pace. The COVID-19 pandemic provided the spark that telehealth needed to take off.

Now, the federal government ensures that Medicare and Medicaid pay for telehealth visits, and all fifty states and Washington, D.C. have followed suit. Private insurers have done the same, either voluntarily or because state governments have required them to provide coverage during the pandemic.

The unprecedented pace of efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic has also leveraged AI models and algorithms to sort patients and target care to those most in need. There is great promise in using advanced analytics and AI to help healthcare providers organize and optimize complex healthcare decisions that need to be made on a daily basis.

In many ways, telehealth and AI may be a panacea for access to healthcare and treatment, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is concern whether telehealth and AI will actually live up to their promise of leveling the healthcare playing field by providing equitable access to healthcare and treatment for Black women and families.

Healthcare Centers and Black Patients Lack the Adequate Technology and Technology Literacy to Engage in Telehealth

Community health centers, which disproportionately serve Black women and families, are less likely to provide robust telehealth services. Over the years, many healthcare centers have reported difficulties establishing their telehealth practices due to a lack of funding for equipment, and a lack of training in providing telehealth services. Now, the rapid shift to telehealth leaves many

community health centers behind during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Black women and families may also have more difficulty using telehealth technology because of less access to a high-speed broadband internet connections and less digital literacy than their White peers, along with lower rates of smartphone adoption among Black patients who are 65 and older. The lack of reliable internet connections, technology access and literacy, can result in Black women and families forgoing or delayed medical care.

Acknowledging that many patients are unable or unwilling to access telehealth by videoconference, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services responded by raising payments for audio-only telephone visits to match the rates for office and outpatient visits. However, a telephone call does not allow doctors to make a visual assessment of a patients' medical problems—which may result in a less accurate diagnosis or treatment for Black patients who use audio-only telephone visits.

Black Patients Express Distrust in Telehealth

Two of the major barriers to telehealth use – poor financial reimbursement and low healthcare provider willingness – were eliminated. But a third barrier that has yet be addressed is Black patients' reluctant to use telehealth services. Studies have found that Blacks people are substantially less likely to use online telehealth portals than their Whites peers.

Patient surveys have shown Black

people to be less satisfied with their telehealth experiences than their White peers and more likely to express concerns about confidentiality, privacy, and the physical absence of the healthcare provider. This low level of trust in new health care innovations may stem from the generations of historical abuses Black women and the Black community have experienced at the hands of the U.S. medical system.

Bias in Artificial Intelligence Data Algorithms May Increase Healthcare Disparities for Black Women and Families

Algorithms used in AI are increasing being embedded into the healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced healthcare providers and governments around the world to accelerate the development of AI tools and scale up their use in medicine, even before they are proven to work.

The use of these algorithms is intended to remove the human flaws and biases from the process of administering healthcare. Unfortunately, both the people who design these data systems and the massive sets of data used have historical and human biases built in. This biased data leads to biased models, inevitably resulting in biased healthcare, which may further the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on Black women and families.

Researchers have warned the danger of regarding AI as intrinsically objective, particularly when building AI models for optimal allocation of COVID-19 resources –such as

ventilators and intensive care unit beds. These researchers noted, "These [AI] tools are built from biased data reflecting biased healthcare systems and are thus themselves also at high risk of bias..."

The biases in AI algorithms used for healthcare is not a new phenomenon. A study published by Science in 2019, concluded that an algorithm widely used in U.S. hospitals to allocate healthcare to patients had been systematically discriminating against Black people. The study found that the algorithm was less likely to refer Black people, who were equally as sick as White people, to programs aimed to improve care for patients with complex medical needs. This algorithm and others like it were being used by hospitals and health insurers to help manage healthcare for about 200 million people in the United States each year.

The study found that people who self-identified as Black were generally assigned lower risk scores than equally as sick White people. As a result, Black people were less likely to be referred to programs that provided more personalized care.

A closer look at the data revealed that the average Black person, who was substantially sicker than the average White person, had a greater prevalence of conditions such as diabetes, anemia, kidney failure and high blood pressure. Additionally, the data revealed that the care provided to a Black person cost an average of \$1,800 less per year than the care given to a White person with the same number of chronic health problems.

Because this algorithm assigned people to high-risk categories based on costs, those biases were passed on, which resulted in the end result being that Black people had to be sicker than White people before being referred for additional help. Furthermore, only 17.7% of patients that the algorithm assigned to receive extra care were Black people. The study's researchers calculate that the proportion of Black people to receive extra care would be 46.5% if the algorithm were unbiased.

Conclusion

The healthcare community is increasing reliant on telehealth and AI as key tools to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic and manage healthcare. For Black women--who are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than White women and are disproportionately impacted by conditions such as uterine fibroids, diabetes, stroke, heart disease and breast cancer--the promise that telehealth and AI can provide equitable access to healthcare and treatment would be a welcomed reality. But without proactively addressing the racial biases involved with incorporating these technologies, their ability to deliver on the promise of equitable healthcare for Black women remains to be seen.

“The use of these algorithms is intended to remove the human flaws and biases from the process of administering healthcare. Unfortunately, both the people who design these data systems and the massive sets of data used have historical and human biases built in.”

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HOW DO WE GET OUT OF THIS? CENTERING BLACK WOMEN'S NEEDS AND LEADERSHIP: THE CLEAR AND CRITICAL PATH TO BUILD A HEALTHY FUTURE FOR BLACK WOMEN, OUR COMMUNITIES, AND OUR NATION

BY L. TONI LEWIS, MD, RETURNING
CONTRIBUTOR, BWR ANNUAL POLICY REPORT,
FOUNDER, LIBERATION HEALTH STRATEGIES, &
CO-FOUNDER, HEALTH EQUITY CYPHER

“Although it is now common knowledge that the rates of illness and death disproportionately affect Black communities, early in the pandemic, Black Women leaders in Healthcare raised alarms about how data was not being reported about the impact on our communities.”

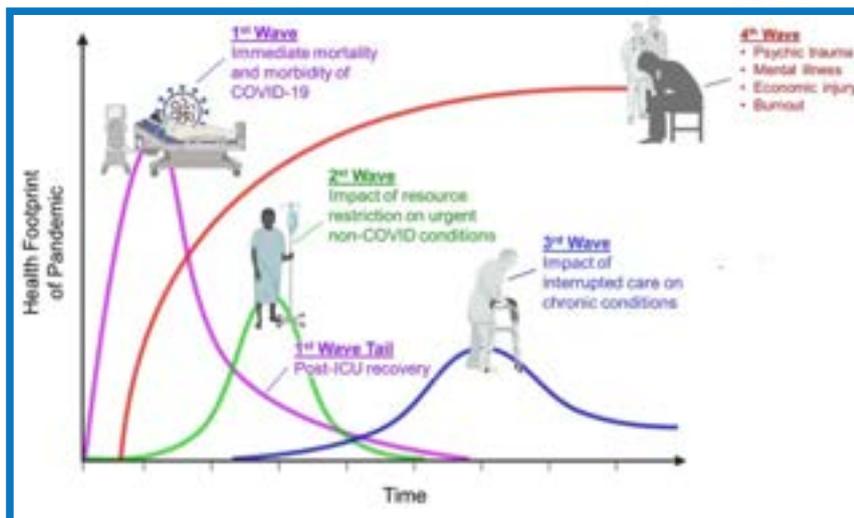
An objective review of the year from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021 yields an unfortunately predictable snapshot of the lives of Black Women in the United States. While the political power and strategy of Black Women lead us to end the terror of an administration focused on inequity, and the innovation and creativity of Black Women allowed us to have opportunities to address and heal during this COVID pandemic, Black Women still disproportionately carry challenges to our minds, bodies, and spirits - our health and well-being - that are the result of generations of exploitation and violence. These challenges existed in the years preceding the pandemic and were exacerbated by the historic crises during this time.

In order to ensure that we build the next chapter that rights the injustice of this moment, it is critical to acknowledge our wounds - including those systems, policies, and practices that support this injustice. It is also essential that we amplify, nourish, and protect the lives and contributions of Black Women - an overdue equitable acknowledgment that may save us all.

Enduring The Historic Dual Pandemics of Covid-19 and Racial Reckoning - Exposing the Continued Cycle of Neglect and Exploitation

Although it is now common knowledge that the rates of illness and death disproportionately affect Black communities, early in the pandemic, Black Women leaders in Healthcare raised alarms about how data was not being reported about the impact on our communities. After many of us raised this issue, including Dr. Aletha Maybank in the NY Times article entitled "The Pandemic's Missing Data," we now have a clearer picture of the increased impact on Black communities. This data confirms the deep knowing of Black women organizers and caregivers around the country who have been on the frontlines, answered calls, fought for care, and mourned with many of our loved ones. Several articles have been published about the burden of grief that accompanies this knowing - including this poll by ESSENCE published in May 2020 on the "Impact of COVID-19 on Black Women" which also addressed the emotional well-being and mental health concerns.

Black women as essential workers have experienced so many challenges during this time. In webinars focusing on



Black workers across the United States, it has been clear that there has been a fight at every stage of this pandemic for everything from adequate PPE to support for housing and transportation, while risking exposure to access to emerging vaccines. While heralded as Healthcare Heroes with various campaigns, the lived experience of many has been challenging beyond measure.

With the toxic, racist, and anti-science rhetoric led by the

previous administration leading up to the pandemic and continuing as the pandemic emerged, violent behaviour associated with this atmosphere often fell at the feet of Black Women. The murder of Breonna Taylor, an ER Technician and EMT in Louisville, Ky, facilitated by white plainclothes officers while she rested hit many of us hard. As a Black Woman and essential worker, the erasure of Breonna Taylor's life and contributions as an essential worker added an additional layer of trauma to this already overwhelming season.

What to Expect

As of March 2021, we, as a community, are clear that our experience of this moment is far from over. While remaining hopeful with the introduction of vaccines, the additional variants add additional challenges to our predictions of our future. We also must consider and continue to address 1) the inequities in health that existed for Black women prior to the pandemic, many of which have been exacerbated by the stress of the moment, (Illustration 1) 2) the long term mental, physical, and spiritual recovery for those who contracted COVID-19, 3) the mental, physical, and spiritual effects of grief and trauma due to racism

and COVID in 2020, especially as we approach the 1-year anniversaries that will return these, (illustration 2) and 4) the appearance of burnout and fatigue in ways we've not recorded in our history.

Recalling the words of our sister, Dr. Joia Crear-Perry, "It's racism, not race," it is important to recall that the racist policies and practices that gave rise to the inequity and injustice seen and felt by Black Women in this pandemic

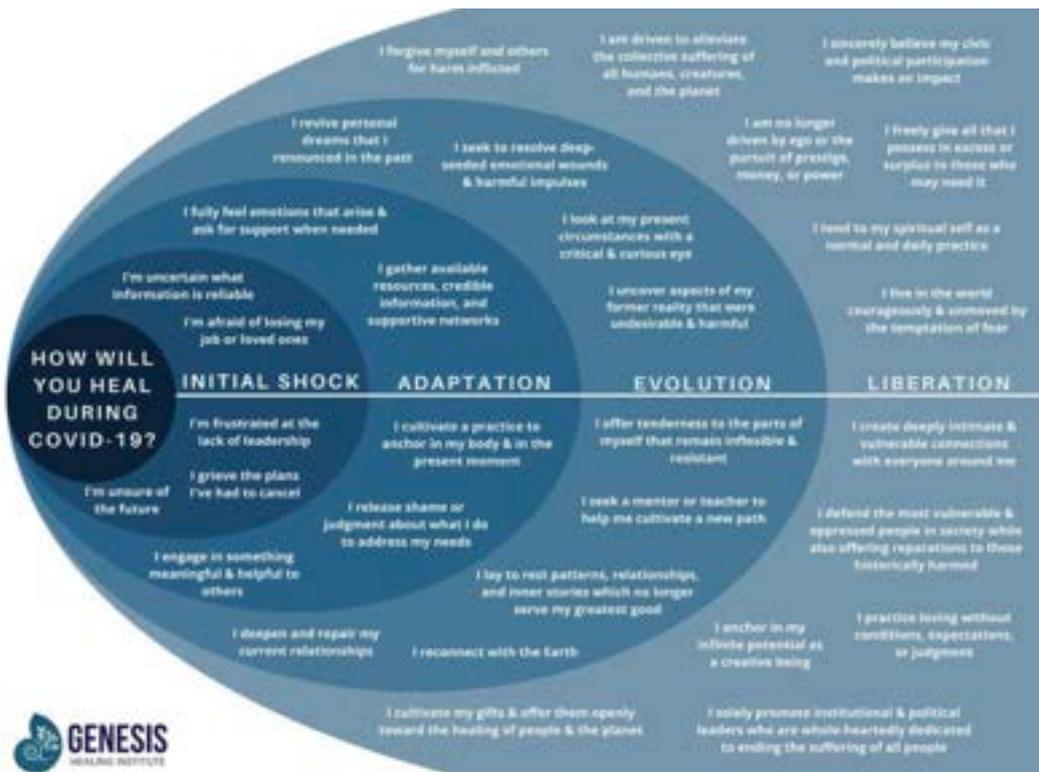
MUST be addressed in order to get out of these times and on to building towards Black Liberation and Joy.

Black Women Leaders and Innovators in Healthcare and Wellness

Black Women have continued to lead by calling out injustice and pushing for policy and practice that is equitable and just. Among the many Black Women leaders and innovators, the Black Women's Roundtable has played an essential role. Aletha Maybank, MD, MPH, Chief Health



Equity Officer, Group Vice President at the American Medical Association continues to call out racism and call for equity. Leader Cora Masters Berry, legendary siSTAR, is a Senior Social Influencer working to educate seniors about the vaccine and support access. Kizzmekia “Kizzy” Corbett, PhD, served as the scientific lead and only Black Woman on the Coronavirus Vaccines & Immunopathogenesis Team at the National Institutes of Health, and was at the helm of the world’s first clinical trial of a COVID-19 vaccine and helped develop the Moderna vaccine. Black Policy Lab, a project of Pink Cornrows founded by Ifeoma Ike, M.A., J.D., LL.M., and The National Black Justice Coalition led an initiative to gather data on one of the most vulnerable populations in the COVID-19 pandemic, Black LGBTQ+ and same gender loving (SGL) people. Dr. Joia Crear Perry, Founder of the National Birth Equity Collaborative, continues to push for Black Mothers and Babies to have safe, respectful, and joyful births. Ala Stanford, MD launched the Black Doctors Covid Consortium in Philadelphia, PA, and has provided more than 25,000 vaccinations



as of March 14, 2021. In February 2021, the United State House of Representatives Black Maternal Health Caucus chaired by Lauren Underwood (IL-14) and Alma Adams (NC-12) unveiled a historic legislative package - The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021- to address the United States' urgent maternal health crisis. Erica Bland-Durosinmi, Executive Vice President of SEIU Healthcare Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Kansas lifted ongoing Q&A sessions with union members and healthcare practitioners and current fights for justice for essential workers.

Many Black Women leaders are organizing to address the scope of encounters around COVID vaccines. Whether providing education and answering questions, organizing around equitable vaccine access, or advocating for a comprehensive approach that respects the urgency AND the lived experiences of our communities. Rhea Boyd MD MPH, a pediatrician and community health advocate, recently spoke about the campaign called "The Conversation: Between Us, About Us" and discussed the need to continue to focus on and account for the systemic racism that has led to inequity in vaccine distribution.

The Importance of Healing, Self Care and Sister Circles

Hear me SiStars. I appreciate you. I honor that in this critical and historic time, you are HERE.

Give yourself a little grace and peace.

This moment has pulled many of us to the edges of our existing practices to maintain the physical, mental, and spiritual energy to live deeply in our purpose. And, we have a ways to go.

Self-care is a way that serves you, whether it's 9 minutes of quiet at sunrise or an hour dancing or sitting with your sister peeps in the virtual space. At last year's "Wellness of We" Conference, Sonya Renee Taylor suggested that we find ways to nourish ourselves so that in this life we are "pouring from our overflow, not from our dregs."

Whew.

Many sisters have been holding us in this space, including our team at Liberation Health Strategies, Gina Breedlove at the Acorn Center for Restoration and Freedom, The

Nap Ministry founded by Tricia Hersey, Shawna Murray-Browne LCSW-C founder of Therapy That Liberate, GirlTrek founded by T. Morgan Dixon and Vanessa Garrison, and many many others.

List your resources and pull from them as you need. And then pull a little more.

Here's to your overflow.

Policy Recommendations

Black Women's Roundtable Policy Statement:

"BWR supports health policies that deliver quality health care for all, strengthens the safety net for America's most vulnerable communities, and addresses disparities in care -- particularly for children, the elderly, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and low-income families. BWR encourages prevention policies that increase research for diseases adversely impacting women and communities of color. BWR supports wellness policies that increase access to physical fitness and mental health services."

- Preservation, protection, and improving on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- Equitable Responses to Public Health Emergencies
- Sufficient Diversity in Clinical Trials and Healthcare
- Establish the White House Office of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Wellbeing (OSRHW), under the Domestic Policy Council
- Support the The Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021
- Strengthen Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Regulations and Enforcement on COVID-19
- Provide All Essential Workers with Paid Sick Leave, Health Insurance, and Appropriate Vaccination Prioritization
- Invest in, support, and create policies that address the disproportionate burden of racism on Black Women by providing additional investment, time, and support to reckon with the history of injustice.

Resources:

- Black Women's Roundtable - Annual Policy Reports
- #WinWithBlackWomen
- Black Women Vote: National Health Policy Agenda for

- 2020-2021 - Black Women's Health Imperative
 - Protecting Black Workers During the COVID-19 Recession." The Thurgood Marshall Institute at Legal Defense Fund
 - Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust Lead by Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL)
 - Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls Co-Chairs Rep. Robin Kelly (IL-02), Rep. Yvette Clarke (NY-09), and Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12) The State of Black Women and Girls in 21st Century America: An Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities
 - Higher Heights For America - Issues
 - Black Mamas Matter Alliance - Resources
 - National Black Justice Coalition - Health and Wellness dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender loving (LGBTQ/SGL) people, including people living with HIV/AIDS.
 - Movement for Black Lives - Policy Platform
 - Caring Across Generations - Policy
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INFANT MORTALITY IN FRESNO COUNTY: A CALL TO ACTION

BY VENISE C. CURRY, M.D., DIRECTOR
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, EMBRACE

“Among race/ethnic groups in Fresno County infant mortality rates for African American remain higher, while representing just 5.5 % of the Fresno County births, they accounted for 17.7% of preterm births, and 15.0 % of infant deaths.”

The conditions in which we are conceived, born, grow, live and work cumulatively impact our health, wealth and life span. Despite living in a state rich in agriculture and ethnic heritage, Fresno County has the dubious distinction as home to one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the United States. Nowhere in Fresno is that more evident than the Southwest neighborhoods of Fresno, where residents are among the most economically divided and isolated of any large American city. This in turn affects the viability of communities -the children and families for generations.

The 2010 US Census reported a population of 50,131 for Southwest Fresno. Residents of this community are approximately 60% Hispanic, 17% African American, 11% White, 9% Asian (mostly Southeast Asian), and 2% all other ethnicities.

For decades, Southwest Fresno has been absent in the city's consideration for quality neighborhood development and the current landscape is a consequence of this pervasive and persistent disinvestment of resources. The impact of these structural drivers of inequity and disadvantageous social

determinants of health are no better exemplified than by Southwest Fresno's poor birth outcomes.

In the 93706-zip code, infant mortality rates and preterm birth rates are 11.4% and 13.3 %, respectively compared to rates of 7.1% and 9.6 % for Fresno County. Further, among race/ethnic groups in Fresno County infant mortality rates for African American remain higher, while representing just 5.5 % of the Fresno County births, they accounted for 17.7% of preterm births, and 15.0 % of infant deaths. Through the community's determination and focus on change, West Fresno wide community assessments, organizing efforts and strategic actions resulted in the adoption of the Southwest Specific Plan by the city in 2017. This community led endeavor provides guiding principles, policies and implementation strategies to begin the most comprehensive and earnest investment effort to create more viable community spaces which reflect quality, forward-focused strategic investments.

Addressing the health of the Southwest Fresno community and achieving birth equity is more than access to medical care. To address the underlying social, economic and environmental factors, innovative

opportunities with public private partnerships like The Best Babies Zone (BBZ) Initiative aims to improve birth outcomes for African American families by working with residents and non-traditional partners to transform a historically disinvested neighborhood into one of health and economic vibrancy. Fresno GROWS (Growing Real Opportunities for West Fresno) is a cross-sector, place-based effort with the goal of reducing infant mortality. The 93706 zip code area covers a total of eight census tracts; however, these four: 2, 7, 9.02, 10 have the highest African American infant mortality rates and are the focus of this place-based project. Using data for the period 2013-2017, the four-year trend for the African American population includes 1596 births and an average infant mortality rate of 20%.

Another innovative community driven project is The Black Child Legacy Campaign, started in Sacramento, California to reduce African American child deaths, and now adopted as part of the Fresno County Blue Ribbon Equity Panel's work to prioritize interventions and opportunities for African Americans at the neighborhood level.

How did the people of Fresno County manage to incubate multiple community initiatives with investments totaling more than \$450,000 to address disproportionately high black infant mortality and child deaths? Seeded by several community-academic partnerships that connected local university grant-funded efforts with long-standing community/neighborhood activists, the local university convened an African American Infant Mortality Community Advisory Council. The Council helped to bring widespread attention to the disproportionate impact of infant mortality in the black community and worked to understand the impact of systemic racism on birth outcomes.

The Council subsequently recruited African American women who had experienced an infant loss to better understand the impacts of family, neighborhood, health care and other factors that may have impacted the infant loss. With discussion groups facilitated by BWOPA/TILE (Black Women Organized for Political Action/Training Institute for Leadership Enrichment), women with lived experience brought greater understanding of the intersectionality of racism, gender bias, poverty and

family dynamics on birth outcomes.

With the combined input of African American community activists, researchers, social services providers and faith leaders, priority strategies to reduce black infant mortality were developed, as follows:

1. Anti-racism and cultural responsiveness training for health care providers
 2. Heal trauma tied to racism, sexism, judgmentalism and family conflict
 3. Strengthen family resiliency through life skills education and effective communication
 4. Reduce economic stress through livable wage jobs and equitable employment
 5. Improve access to grief counseling and other mental health supports
 6. Provide reproductive health education, particularly regarding birth spacing
- Build African American leadership, empowerment, advocacy skills, and engagement in grassroots organizing.

These recommendations have translated into the many scaled-up community building and revitalization efforts currently underway in Fresno County.

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HOW TO GET MORE BLACK WOMEN INTO CLINICAL TRIALS: FIRST, ACKNOWLEDGE OUR HISTORY OF EXPLOITATION

BY JOYCELYN TATE, CO-FOUNDER, MAKE IT FOR CHANGE
INNOVATION HUB SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR, BLACK WOMEN'S
ROUNDTABLE



Clinical trials are an essential step in bringing new drugs to market. To determine a drug's efficacy with diverse populations, it is important to have participants representing those populations as clinical trial participants. But, even in clinical trials that focus on diseases which disproportionately affect Black women (e.g. breast cancer, fibroids, and diabetes), Black women have drastically low rates of participation.

The medical research community has an infamous history of exploiting Black women in clinical trials and research. This has led to distrust in the Black community. This distrust, coupled with the lack of diversity in the medical research community,

results in drastically lower rates of Black women participants in clinical trials.

Medical Research Has a Long History of Exploiting of Black Women

For centuries, Black women have been the subject of exploitive medical experiments. In fact, many of the successes in medical research were achieved at the expense of the health of Black women

In the 19th century, Dr. James Marion Sims, known as the Father of Modern Gynecology, performed experiments on Black slave women without the use of anesthesia. It is reported that he performed his operations on Black women without using anesthesia because of his belief that Black people do not feel pain. Furthermore, many doctors used Black women who were slaves to perform experimental cesarean sections and ovariectomies. They used these Black women to perfect procedures that would later be used for all women.

Medical experiments on Black women continued into the 20th century. In 1951, while Henrietta Lacks, a poor tobacco farmer, was being treated for cervical cancer at Johns Hopkins University, her doctor harvested her cancer cells without her knowledge. These cells became one of the most important tools in medicine as a critical tool in the development of the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, in vitro fertilization, and more.

In 1972, 20, mostly poor Black women suffered unintentional abortions as a result of the super coil. The super coil was a device that caused uncontrollable bleeding and, in some cases, led to hysterectomies, abdominal pain, and anemia. The doctors who performed these experiments also filmed the procedures without the consent of the women.

Many lower-income Black women also underwent unnecessary hysterectomies as practice for medical

students at select teaching hospitals. This exploitation of Black women became routine and perpetuated the eugenic movement, which excludes people and groups determined to be inferior.

How to Increase Black Women's Participation in Clinical Trials

The first thing the medical research community must do to increase Black women's participation in clinical trials is to acknowledge the pain and brutality it has imposed upon Black women for generations. The road to reconciliation between the medical research community and Black women can only begin when this acknowledgment occurs—and the medical community may have to apologize multiple times before Black women will perceive the apology as sincere.

Second, the medical research community should engage with Black women to learn who we are and the best ways to reach and recruit us, rather than making assumptions about what recruitment and messaging resonates with us.

Third, the lack of diversity in the medical research community is another reason for the lower participation of Black women in clinical trials. The reason White men participate in clinical trials in larger numbers than any other group is because White men are dominant in medical professions. People tend to recruit people who look like themselves. Having more Black women medical researchers could lead to more Black women who are clinical trial participants. If Black women see other Black women in medical research, they relate better to them and view these researchers as more of a trusted voice based on the belief that they both have shared experiences and commonalities.

And fourth, medical researchers must be completely transparent with Black women and our families about every aspect of the clinical trial process. Educating Black women and our families is an essential step toward developing trust between Black women and medical researchers.

Black people are dying from COVID-19 at a rate over twice that White people. This is why it is essential that Black women be included in COVID-19 clinical trials so that medical researchers can learn the effects of these vaccines on Black people.

The medical community needs to commit to creating diverse and equitable trials that welcome Black women as participants in innovative and potentially life-saving research.

As many medical researchers look for more balanced representation in clinical trials, they must first recognize as priority the preliminary efforts to engagement and garner the trust of Black women. With the right focus and commitment, clinical trials can and should be inclusive, leading to improved studies and access to experimental medicines for Black women.



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**SAVING OUR
DEMOCRACY &
BUILDING BLACK
POLITICAL POWER**

REIMAGINED DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE LENS OF HERSTORY

BY GWEN MCKINNEY



Gwen McKinney is the creator of Suffrage Race Power – Black Women Unerased and the founder of McKinney & Associates, the first Black and woman-owned communications firm in the nation’s capital that expressly promotes social change advocacy.

As a former reporter fired from my first and only newspaper job for too much advocacy journalism, I've always been inspired by women writers whose battles in fomenting change have been untold or little known. In a tribute to Women's History Month, I celebrate four favorite truth-tellers. Projected through the lens of herstory, they are journalists, orators, and word wizards. But more, they are courageous pathfinders whose collective lived experience reflects reimagined democracy – the stuff that births good public policy and enduring social change.

Spanning more than a century, from the death of slavery to the birth of Jim Crow, they remind us of the difficult and still unfolding march through struggle to power. Sometimes validated, other times vilified, our women warriors must always be valued, teaching us lessons, and giving us the tools to build democracy.

“WOMEN! WOMEN! WOMEN! Particularly Negro Women, this call comes to you! It is up to us to DO something about our position in the body politic of this nation. Let us be aware that we have a glorious history in our land.... Many are the stories of heart rending courage that the Negro women of the slave period have handed down to us.... They were the mothers of a hundred rebellions, all of which our standard history texts have conveniently forgotten. Yet black women have a tradition which they must not forget and which they must not fail.”

Charlotta Amanda Spears Bass (1874 -1969) issued that call-to-arms in her "On the Sidewalk" column. The first Black woman to own a U.S. newspaper, she ran the Los Angeles-based California Eagle from 1912 until 1952 when she was tapped as the first Black woman vice presidential candidate with the California Progressive Party. Championing many of the intractable battles that we still wage today, she took on police brutality, housing discrimination and voter repression, spurring "respectable" folks to urge that she soften her tone. Never retreating from a fight, she was branded as a "dangerous security threat," by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover who reportedly monitored her well into her nineties.

**"WOMEN! WOMEN! WOMEN!
Particularly Negro Women, this
call comes to you! It is up to us to
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in the body politic of this nation."**

Black women have been undaunted by the powerful, and we have an unbroken history as activists chronicling our turbulent times. Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893) was the first Black newspaper publisher, operating the Provincial Freeman in exile from Canada after fleeing her home in Washington, DC to escape the vicious sweeps of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. That law unleashed wholesale "catch and capture" of Black people under the guise that any Black person was a runaway slave. Shadd Cary later returned to DC and received a law degree from Howard University. In an era when women were seldom seen and rarely heard, she spoke truth to power, urging Frederick Douglas and other exalted men leading the abolition movement to "talk less and do more."

If Shadd Cary projected the dual burdens of racism and male patriarchy, her contemporary Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) challenged both in the turbulent period of abolition, Reconstruction, and women's suffrage. A poet, author and lecturer, Watkins Harper is believed to be the first Black woman to publish short story fiction.

During the early days of emancipation, she traveled throughout the country connecting the cause of liberation

with washer women and sharecroppers. Perhaps best known for her suffrage activism, Watkins Harper reckoned with white supremacy embedded in the suffrage movement, rendering an impassioned oratory at the Convention in Seneca Falls, (NY).

Taking on the tricky contradictions of white feminists, Watkins Harper offered this: "[White women]...may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by prejudice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party."

Watkins Harper lived well into her 80s, but Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), journalist, playwright, and political activist, didn't see her 35th birthday. She, however, achieved more in three decades than most can imagine in multiple lifetimes. She was heavily influenced by poet Langston Hughes whose Dream Deferred inspired the title of her acclaimed A Raisin in the Sun. Hansberry, the first Black playwright on Broadway, opened the gates for August Wilson, Amiri Baraka and the next generation of Black (mostly male) playwrights and directors.

But Hansberry's sphere of influence surpassed Broadway. The Chicago native relocated to New York at 21, taking a job with Freedom, a Pan Africanist journal published by Paul Robeson. The budding reporter filed groundbreaking stories at the same time she was assigned "women's work" including "subscription clerk, receptionist, typist, and editorial assistant." When Paul Robeson's passport was confiscated by the U.S. government, he chose his young protégé to represent him at a major peace conference abroad. Hansberry, deeply centered in the Black Arts explosion, used her literary voice to inflict lashes against racism, patriarchy, and inequality worldwide during the surging African anti-colonial movement.

James Baldwin counted Hansberry among his trusted political comrades. He reportedly would not schedule a meeting in 1963 with then Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and 10 Black cultural leaders until he could confirm Hansberry's attendance. During that heated session Hansberry, defending the remarks of a disaffected Black youth freedom rider, told Kennedy, "If you can't understand what this young man is saying, then we are without any hope at all because you and your brother

are representatives of the best that a White America can offer; and if you are insensitive to this, then there's no alternative except our going in the streets ... and chaos" The meeting ended when Hansberry walked out with Baldwin and the others following.

Even if these sisters' sagas are new to you, the script is familiar. Black women, then and now, have fought fiercely against being maligned, marginalized, and erased. And still we rise!

Reflecting clarity and vision—these four women share more than bold strides in extraordinary times. History for Black women is not a backward glance but a resplendent light for our path today and into the future. The lesson for us is to embrace Herstory, trust their inspiration and follow the light.

SUPPORTING BLACK WOMEN WHO ARE RUNNING FOR STATE AND LOCAL ELECTED OFFICE

BY KRYSTAL LEAPHART

According to Higher Heights of America, Black women are running for office at historic rates.[1] Seventy percent of the Black women that serve in the United States Congress have been elected in the last 10 years. And in 2018 and 2020, Black women representation on a state level increased the most it ever had since 1994.[1]

Although there is a new energy and excitement around Black women in politics, they have been involved in the political process for centuries. Leaders like Fannie Lou Hamer, Dorothy Height and Ella Baker worked at the intersections of politics and activism to transform the nation. At least eleven Black women have been candidates for the President of the United States.[2] Even though they were one of the last groups to get the right to vote, Black women have recently outperformed everyone in their voting records.[3] Communities must be ready to support this shift and show up for Black women candidates the same way they show up for everyone else.

The best way to get more Black women to run for office is to ask them repeatedly. [4] This is because most women see themselves as supporters before they do as candidates. They also know that it is difficult to consider running for office while managing personal and professional lives. When you coupled that with imposter syndrome and misogynoir in electoral politics, it hard for Black women to consider running for office. Those in communities with Black women that they revere as leaders should encourage them to run. To be clear, Black women should not be pressured to run in hopes of continuing the superwoman stereotype and saving the country. Some may need an extra push. Telling a Black woman that you believe in her as a candidate, may help her build her confidence to compete.

When Black women raise their hands to pursue public office, there are elements of the campaign that must receive special attention. While trying to launch a campaign, Black women are less likely to have a "rolodex" of political contacts to lean on for guidance. [5] That is why training provided by groups like the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL Women) are essential to this work. The NOBEL Women Leadership Institute is the premier national program that caters its training to the specific needs of Black women who are interested in serving as elected officials, strategists, or political operatives. Other programs that are catered to women must do more to recruit and center the needs of Black women candidates. Once people invest in the leadership development of Black women that are interested in being elected, they will be

able to better understand the process, acquire new skills and gain the confidence to run a successful campaign.

As Black women transition from preparing to run for office to launching a campaign, fundraising is a key.

Black women tend to have varied experiences with raising funds for political campaigns. [6] In order to be competitive, most campaigns require funds to support the campaign operation. Those who want to support Black women running for state or local positions must donate to the campaigns and encourage others to support as well.

In addition to fundraising, the field team must be ready to go above and beyond to get to the voters. This kind of activation requires an aggressive field strategy

“The best way to get more Black women to run for office is to ask them repeatedly. This is because most women see themselves as supporters before they do as candidates.”

that includes traditional tactics like door knocking, canvassing and phone banking. It also requires newer methods of outreach like social media campaigns and text banking. Supporters should also feel empowered to use their special talents to support the candidate. For example, the campaign may need chefs to prepare meals for the volunteers or a childcare provider. There must be innovation in the ways that campaigns for Black women engage their communities. If this and the other elements of a campaign flow well, the candidate will be prepared for a competitive race.

One of the most effective ways to encourage Black women to pursue political office is to ensure currently elected Black women have pleasant experiences in office. Although there has been an influx of Black women running for office, it is not always a pleasant experience. Representative Emilia Sykes of Ohio has been stopped by her legislative building security for not “looking like a legislator”. Kiah Morris was the only Black woman in the Vermont legislature and chose not to run for reelection due to racist threats against her and her family. Black women may see how these women have been treated and may question if it is worth risking their safety and peace of mind to serve as an elected

official. Once a Black woman is elected to public office, it is important that other Black women see them thriving in office.

With the election of Vice President Kamala Harris, it is likely that we will see an even larger swell of Black women that are interested in running for office. As more Black women pursue public office, the public has an opportunity to reflect on tangible ways to support those that are stepping up to run for office. Now more than ever, it is vital that the support for Black women goes beyond a simple thank you. It is time that we elect Black women at all levels of government.

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OUR VOTE IS OUR VOICE: RESTORING VOTING RIGHTS FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED WOMEN

BY ADVANCEMENT PROJECT NATIONAL OFFICE

JUDITH BROWNE DIANIS, EXECUTIVE DIR.
SHARION SCOTT, SKADDEN FELLOW

Black voting rights and self-determination continue to be under attack. One of the oldest, most persistent threats to Black women voters is felony disenfranchisement, the stripping of a person's right to vote because of a felony conviction. Many of these laws were developed in the Jim Crow era to intentionally suppress Black votes, especially in the South, and they continue to rob Black women of a voice in what happens to their communities. Yet, Black women across the country lead organizations that are fighting to erase these laws and their legacy. Advancement Project National Office partners with these advocates to ensure our votes are never silenced. Ultimately, we must push for the elimination of these archaic, racist laws.

The founders of our country never intended for Black people, especially Black women, to vote. When Black people started to build power during Reconstruction through voting, Southern states quickly retaliated against them with a vengeance. At many states' constitutional conventions in the 1890s, they crafted language to eliminate the Black vote, and hence Black participation in politics. Felony disenfranchisement was one of the tools—anyone convicted of a felony would be unable to vote, either permanently, until they met certain requirements, or petitioned for restoration of their rights. Some states even created a list of crimes that targeted Black people, such as timber theft, to ensure this disenfranchisement.

Most of these antiquated laws remain in place today. Mississippi's constitution only allows for restoration of voting rights in two ways: an order from the governor or a bill of suffrage passed by the legislature for each individual. For those without knowledge of the process or connections

to politicians, it is almost impossible to restore one's rights. In the last five years, only 26 people have had their rights restored. Louisiana officials require two in-person trips to state offices to prove eligibility to register, even though the state has all the necessary records to confirm a person's felony history. In Tennessee, people cannot restore their voting rights until they pay modern-day poll taxes in the form of fines and fees imposed by the court. Virginia gives its governor full power to grant or deny restoration of rights, requiring every person to submit an application. States are sending clear messages to justice-involved Black women: if you do not have connections, transportation, or enough money, we won't let you vote.

The criminal legal system has been so adept at targeting the Black community that we are disproportionately stripped of our right to vote in every state; this is especially true for Black women. Since 1980, the incarceration rate for women has grown twice as fast as the rate for men, and Black women continue to be incarcerated at a rate 1.7 times that of white women. Some of the largest impact on Black voters is in Southern states such as Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia, where the effects of slavery, Jim Crow, and mass incarceration remain prevalent.

True to its intention, felony disenfranchisement persistently impacts the lives of Black women, their families, and communities. Justice-involved women that return home to their communities have their political voices silenced for years or even decades. Though they are under constant strain from low wages, poor healthcare, lack of housing, and over-policing, they are unable to elect leaders that represent their interests or vote on policies that impact

their livelihoods. Oppressive, outdated laws aim to stifle their political power to transform their communities.

In the face of this audacious attempt, Black women fight every day to challenge these schemes and rebuild hope and power. In Mississippi, Nsombi Lambright-Haynes at One Voice and Arekia Bennett at Mississippi Votes are pioneering the rights restoration process in the state. They conduct voter registration in jails and help people through the complex legislative restoration process. Advancement Project is working alongside them to publish a report featuring the stories of Black, justice-involved women and their recommendations on how to remedy the harms of the criminal legal system, including disenfranchisement.

“The historic tools of voter suppression continue to silence Black women who have been caught in the web of mass incarceration, but we resist every day.”

In Louisiana, Black women with Voice of the Experienced serve as lead organizers in the organization's work of helping hundreds navigate the complex voter registration process. Advancement Project assists in trainings and litigation to support the organization in challenging the restoration process. In Tennessee, Dawn Harrington at Free Hearts and Charlane Oliver at The Equity Alliance are building groups of justice-involved people that lead voter registration and help with a lawsuit challenging fines and fees. In Virginia, impacted leaders such as Sheba Williams of Nolef Turns boldly share their stories as part of a campaign for a constitutional amendment to remove restoration power from the governor and create a fundamental right to vote for all citizens in the state.

The historic tools of voter suppression continue to silence Black women who have been caught in the web of mass incarceration, but we resist every day. Black justice-involved women, executive directors, and organizers are finding ways to educate the justice-involved on their rights, advocate with local officials for greater transparency and

fairness, organize campaigns to amend constitutions, drive legislation to overhaul the law in their states, and file litigation to end longstanding practices. As more Black women gain awareness of the issue, we make a difference by educating others and supporting the movements working for change. Advancement Project believes that every Black woman, every Black person, should have an affirmative right to vote, and we commit every day to standing alongside the women that fight for this vision.

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FIGHTING RACISM AND WHITE NATIONALISM IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE JANUARY 6TH INSURRECTION

BY VANESSA BURGESS

White backlash in response to Black progress is as old as the Republic itself. While narratives that excuse or condone these outbursts have changed with the times, the driving force behind White angst has not. The insurrection on January 6th was but another episode in a long history of White mob violence whose roots are found in deeply entrenched American racism, from the Meridian Race Riots of 1871 (Mississippi) to the Colfax, Louisiana Massacre in 1873, to well-known atrocities such as the Red Summer of 1919, the 1921 Greenwood Riot in Oklahoma, and the Rosewood Massacre in Florida (1923). Each atrocity is inextricably linked to some form of Black advancement or perceived advancement. As historian and author Carol Anderson succinctly put it “The trigger for White rage, inevitably, is Black advancement.”

The link between the insurrection of January 6th and American racism may not be immediately obvious (provided one ignores the Confederate flag paraded around the Capitol that day, and the many racial epithets hurled at minority police officers during the melee). No matter how cleverly disguised, the link is incontrovertible

“The battle to end White Supremacy and racism in America has most successfully been fought in the courtroom and at the ballot box.”

Trump’s behalf, relied on widespread public acceptance of what has come to be known as “The Big Lie” posits that the only explanation for Trump’s electoral loss is fraud and it validates a view long held by White Supremacists and racists: Blacks are an inferior race; their achievements must therefore be the result of criminality, unfair favor, or some other nefarious means.

In the face of 250 years of unrelenting, unreasonable, and determined defiance of America’s drive toward a strong and fair democracy, Black America has remained stalwart and unbowed. Individual as well as group discipline, guided by strategic action have won the day in the past, and will continue to do so in the future. Indeed, the most explosive outbursts, the most glaring overreactions are in response to the most effective tactics used against White Supremacy and racism. The January 6th insurrection was at its core about two competing visions of America, and the only legal mechanism to bring one or the other to fruition: voting.

Whether Trump followers really believe The Big Lie is almost irrelevant. They surely know that White Supremacy and the values it espouses are steadily losing ground in 21st Century America. A summer of racial reckoning made that fact clear and undeniable. America's racists clearly understand that demographics are fast becoming an existential threat to White domination in America. A direct challenge to democracy and democratic values, the January 6th insurrection must be effectively addressed, or it will happen again. Decidedly voting Donald Trump out of office was perhaps the most urgent action and the one with the most immediate effect. However, Donald Trump is not the problem. He is merely a symptom of the larger one – the threat to democracy from entrenched racism and White Supremacy in America. Every person involved in the insurrection on January 6th must be held accountable to thwart the greatest threat to democracy to date. It must be a transparent process that makes clear political violence, irrespective of its cause, is unacceptable in American life. The very survival of American democracy depends on it. In the absence of a full, fair, public accountability for the sacking of the Capitol, attacks on democratic governance will not only continue they will increase. For America's White Supremist movement to be defanged and returned to obscurity. The aim is to make White Supremacy reprehensible again. Donald Trump must be held accountable for his destructive and divisive leadership, including deliberately putting in place known violent forces in motion, literally, to storm the citadel of democracy.

In the immediate post-2020 election cycle period, state legislatures across the country are rushing to pass laws to suppress the vote, and specifically those of Black and Brown citizens. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, since the presidential election in November 2020, no less than 253 bills have been introduced in 43 states that, if passed, will suppress voters' ability to cast a ballot.

This represents a 4- fold increase, as compared to a year earlier, in the number of restrictive voter bills introduced in state houses across the country. The timing is not a coincidence: what White Supremacists failed to achieve through violence they are attempting to achieve through the legal process.

In a true democracy, the power to vote is one of the most potent and effective tools to fight racism. America's racists have always feared a free and fair vote and have acted accordingly. Only now in the 21st Century has Black America succeeded in sufficiently dismantling systemic barriers to voting to realize a substantive impact. In Georgia, the 2020 senate elections flipped a reliably

“conservative” state. Moreover, the winners were two young men: a Jewish community leader and a Black man hailing from the very pulpit of Dr. Martin Luther King. The results are in, supporters of justice and equality in America can successfully thwart attacks on democracy and the racism that underpins it, through strategic use of the ballot box. Recently introduced in Congress, House Resolution 1, is a controversial bill intended to blunt the most egregious voter suppression laws around the country. It will be an uphill battle to pass this legislation. The ballot box is the most effective

means to end White Supremacy, so the battle for equality and to end racism must continue to target the right to vote.

In no uncertain terms, the 2020 electoral cycle revealed the power of local organizing. Georgia's two senate elections were important in so many ways, but none more so than providing a blueprint for mobilizing Black and Brown voters going forward. Winning elections allows those who would fight White Supremacy and racism to operate from a position of power and influence. It is clear, the “Stacey Abrams Effect” must be replicated across the nation to marshal the raw political power needed to suppress racism fully and sustainably in America.

“In the immediate post-2020 election cycle period, state legislatures across the country are rushing to pass laws to suppress the vote, and specifically those of Black and Brown citizens.”

White Supremacy can be defeated. Racism and racists can be contained and controlled, but not without an exhausting, seemingly never-ending struggle. The past 150 years of progress can be accurately characterized as “one step forward, two steps back.” Progress for Black America has always been subject to challenge by White Supremist – violent or otherwise. True American patriots, those who believe in freedom, equality, and justice must remain vigilant. Every means possible must be employed, including social and economic pressure, to remove those with racist views from power. Americans, White, Black, and Brown must continue to lift their voices to protest racist incidents loudly and forcefully. Most important, Americans must never accept the vision for the country espoused and promoted by racists and White Supremacists.

The insurrection of January 6th, the latest manifestation of the scourge of racism in America, must be answered by expanding the voting revolution Stacey Abrams engineered in Georgia. It includes not only registering new voters, but it also includes getting Black and Brown voters out to the polls for local as well as national elections. It includes devising effective means to oppose unfair voter restrictions. It includes focusing on local elections and directly challenging suppressive voter legislation as it arises.

The battle to defeat racism and White Supremacy in American can only be won through control of the environment, which controls racism’s ability to thrive and grow or wither and die.

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**SISTERS TELLING
OUR STORIES**

CORA MASTERS BARRY ON COVID-19

BY CORA MASTERS



“I had a divine vision that our sense of urgency and level of participation as a people had to change.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a very personal and profound experience which has awakened every fabric of my being.

My journey began in early March of 2020 with a COVID-19 diagnosis for my daughter who lived hundreds of miles away. Little was known or understood about the disease—other than it was indiscriminate and a killer. She survived, but it was clear to me it was by the grace of God and not by human intervention.

Across this country, Black people were being devastated. A host of longstanding inequities—including the denial of access to quality healthcare was taking a daily disproportionate toll. And in the best of circumstances hospitals—when and where available, were the equivalent of field medical units on a battlefield—where only the strong and/or lucky would survive.

This reality was brought home by a mentee and soror who is like family to me also contracted COVID-19. She was selfless—always working to bring about justice for her people. Her loss would have been unfathomable. But like so many—she was just a number. Had it not been for a black network of concerned colleagues along with an angel doctor who personally guided the process of her healing and recovery, my friend like so many others would have succumbed to this dreaded disease.

A few days later, I had a divine vision that our sense of urgency and level of participation as a people had to change. We had to work to achieve equity in prioritization

and administration of vaccinations that were enabling some to survive. It could no longer be the norm that others from throughout the city were coming into our community to get vaccinations that were allocated for our residents.

So, my advocacy began. I launched a campaign— “Don’t Miss Your Shot” to educate our people to step up and be vaccinated. I became a senior influencer, getting my shot early and sharing that information on social media.

I also began work to overcome the politics of vaccinations. While there is a genuine interest in getting our citizenry vaccinated, there is little insight into the granular processes that are required to make certain that all who really need vaccinations receive them.

So, I am striving to do what has not yet been done. I am mobilizing an array of longstanding partners and allies— community organizations, medical and health professionals to bring vaccinations to my Ward 8 community where we are experiencing the highest per capital COVID-19 death rate in the city, and the vaccination rate is less than 6%.

At the same time, we will address the systemic health concerns faced by our residents on a daily basis: food insecurity, preventive health, mental health services, health insurance, and health literacy by offering a broad array of wrap around services and tools

Our Pop-up Vaccination Site will administer vaccinations exclusively to those within the community’s zip codes; and to those without access to transportation; those in intergenerational households—all of whom need to be protected; those who are not in the mainstream of society; and those who lack technology and are difficult to reach. They are my neighbors, my friends, and my community.

I am providing access to a 20,000 square foot state-of-the-art tennis and learning facility—an open, and airy vaccination-friendly venue located in the heart of the community to host this event.

Through our outreach and engagement, I expect that 1,000 or more residents will come to be vaccinated and that countless others will become aware of the importance of not missing their shot.

The Pop-Up Vaccination site represents Phase I of our campaign. In Phase II, with the support of our premier local hospital and health care institutions, we will deploy mobile medical units and take our program to the people where they live. We will bring vaccinations and our entire health and wellness program to apartment complexes and multi-family housing units where the overwhelming majority of Ward 8 families reside.

I believe that this effort can serve as a model for communities, locally and nationwide, where health inequities limit the life potential and lifespan of our people.

So, when the questions arise—how do we overcome COVID-19 and restore our communities; how do we provide hope for our people? We do so by working together, by sharing information and resources. We do so by being persistent in our outreach and diligent in finding solutions that meet people where they are. We do it with an unwavering commitment to helping each and every one in our communities live out full and healthy lives.

A COVID JOURNEY FOR TWO

BY MICHELLE DUBOIS CO-FOUNDER AND
PRESIDENT, VALUES PARTNERSHIPS



Michelle DuBois is co-founder and president of Values Partnerships, one of the country's top social impact agencies. In her work at Values she helps companies including Sephora, Procter & Gamble, L'Oreal, Goldman Sachs and others launch new projects with diverse communities and solve complex challenges. She is also a wife, mom to three beautiful kids and one insane Yorkshire terrier, and advocate for maternal and child health especially focusing on moms of color.

My COVID journey was not just my own - it involved another life coming into the world.

I was excited to find out I was pregnant with my third child in August of 2019, well before anyone had heard of COVID19. Now mind you, I'm an experienced mom by this point, with two hospital births under my belt and two healthy, happy babies to show for it. I thought this was going to be another exciting but routine pregnancy.

I'm one of those moms who appreciates homeopathic, holistic care with minimal interventions, but also values hospitals and Western medicine. I anticipated that this pregnancy would balance the two - and that ultimately I would have prenatal care and labor and delivery in a traditional hospital setting.

And then: pandemic pandemonium. The world shut down in March of 2020 when I was two months away from giving birth. Honestly, for a while, I shut down too. Because everything I had planned went out the window.

Could my husband and my doula be at the hospital with me?

Would I have to take a COVID19 test on the way in, when I'm already in the throws of labor? If that test came back positive, would I be separated from my baby? The "tub room" at the hospital where I delivered my last baby was no longer an option. It wasn't clear that any of the supports I had planned on would be available. Less than 60 days from bringing a new life into the world, it was almost too much to bear.

Breathe Michelle. Pray. Lean on others, including your partner. Come up with a plan. Breathe and pray again.

We consulted with the medical staff at the hospital where I was planning to go. Even they seemed overwhelmed. They didn't have enough masks; the guidance they were given was changing by the day. They did all they could to assure me that my birthing experience would be fine, and I wanted to be confident in that. But I could hear in their voices and determine with my own discernment this was a situation with no guarantees. I believed they would do everything to bring my baby into this world safely, but what was on the table was the experience I would have. What kind of experience would that be? It felt like a slippery slope.

And then those two words that I might have considered in theory but never thought would practically be on the table for me: home birth.

In general, again, I didn't see myself as a "home birther." I had grown to learn more and embrace more holistic care, but the idea of doing all of this at home, without the option of doctors and medical interventions, entrusting one of the most sacred moments in my life - and the life of my child - to a midwife, a doula and my husband, a small team - just seemed too risky!

But was that actually true? My husband and I did extensive research on home birth statistics. We immersed ourselves in the details. We prayed, long and hard. And I also had to trust my Black woman instincts. Something about what I was hearing from those folks in the hospital just didn't FEEL right. It was right for me before, but not right now, not right for me. We determined that God had a homebirth in our future - and that we might actually be safer, more secure, and more likely to have a successful birthing experience at home.

Little did we know...we might have also saved our baby's life.

The big day came: May 5th, 2020. Cinco De Mayo. My labor started early in the morning and my birthing team was on site within minutes.

The experience was just beautiful. I was able to labor in my own room, and then my own bathroom (so glad we did that remodel last year!) in my own tub. Hour after hour proceeded and I never imagined that, even with

the pain, I would be this calm. And then it was time to push.

But there was a problem. For weeks and certainly in the days before birth, my baby had been in the "head down" position, which is a very good thing. As anyone who has had a baby or been a part of a birthing experience knows, if possible you want your baby to be head-down rather than head-up, a position that is known as "breech" that can be very dangerous for moms and babies. My little boy was head down up until labor, just like he should be.

In the final, penultimate moments: something happened. It became clear that this little guy had flipped. His head was up.

**"Little did we know...
we might have
also saved our
baby's life."**

In any traditional, hospital setting, this is a big, big problem. If I had decided weeks before to deliver in that hospital, I would have been rushed to an operating room to have an emergency c-section. And in this case, given COVID, it would have been a deeply frightening experience. Who knows what would have happened with a last-minute flipping baby, in an emergency breech position.

But I was home. With my homebirth team - a Christian midwife named Diane, her Jewish assistant Eliana, my Muslim doula, Tamoyia, and my husband - surrounding me. And with surgical precision Diane was able to free my baby from the position he

was in, literally guiding his chin from the womb into the world. And in the miraculous blink of an eye...he was here.

Abraham Antoni Auden DuBois - Auden for short, but Abraham because of the interfaith team of miracle workers who surrounded us - was born safely to me. In fact, he was made more safe because of the fact that I was home. This situation that I would never have fathomed - me, homebirth? - actually might have saved my child's life, and my own life too. It certainly made for a more empowering birthing experience.

COVID19 has taken many things from us. But it has also taught us many things. The importance of flexibility, and resilience. Trusting your instincts. Trusting God. And recognizing that the way we care for ourselves and allow others to care for us outside of a hospital can be just as meaningful and important as what happens inside a hospital setting.

I still believe in the importance of traditional medical care, and I don't know what I would do if I had to face the decision again. But what I can say to encourage moms and others out there is: COVID19 cannot rob you of your joy. It can't take your most special moments from you. However you adapt is your decision and yours alone. Trust God, trust those who love you, do your research and trust your gut. After the year we have all had, I believe there is a miracle at the end of your journey, too.

Black Women's Roundtable Report 8th Edition, 2021

Black Women in the U.S. 2021: Priorities, Policy
and Power



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APPENDIX



BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE (BWR)
10TH ANNUAL WOMEN OF POWER NATIONAL SUMMIT
Public Policy Education Day on Capitol Hill
Washington, DC
March 25, 2021

2021 BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE POLICY PRIORITIES*

BWR POLICY PRIORITY ISSUES	Related Issues and Policies
Coronavirus/ COVID-19 Relief	The American Rescue Plan Act passed the 117 th Congress and was signed into law by President Biden on March 11, 2021. This \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus package will help millions of Americans through provisions, such as larger stimulus checks, more aid for the unemployed, help for the hungry and those facing eviction, more child care funding, expanded health coverage, increased funding for vaccinations, additional support for state and local governments and schools, and more. As our nation continues to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BWR urges Congress to pass additional relief legislation as necessary to address the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, families, and businesses.
Protecting the Safety Net: Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP, TANF	Social Security: Social Security benefits play a vital role in reducing poverty and lifting more Americans above the poverty line than any other program. Without Social Security, 21.7 million more Americans would be poor. Although, most of those whom Social Security keeps out of poverty are elderly, 6.9 million are under age 65, including 1.2 million children. Social Security is particularly important for Black women, who have fewer retirement resources outside of Social Security. Congress must address all long-term shortfalls in Social Security benefits without reducing benefits earned by workers and retirees over their lifetime. The BWR urges Congress to support legislative action to ensure Social Security's adequacy and solvency, improvements in the administration of the Social Security program, and reintroduce the <i>Social Security COVID-19 Correction and Equity Act (S. 4986 and H.R. 9499)</i> , which would 1) modifies funding formulas, 2) extend eligibility for certain benefits, and 3) increases income thresholds used to determine the percentage of benefits subject to federal income tax.

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	<p>Medicare: According to projections from the Congressional Budget Office, Medicare's Hospital Insurance trust fund faces depletion in about two years. The BWR urges Congress to take immediate action to improve the program's solvency and avoid cuts in benefits before the Hospital Insurance trust is depleted. Over 58 million Americans count on Medicare for their health security. BWR continues to advocate for protecting the Medicare program's needed benefits, increasing quality and value, and improving health outcomes. This includes strengthening the program for beneficiaries through expanded coverage for needed services and protection from excessive costs. Moreover, BWR urges Congress to oppose any changes that weaken the Medicare guarantees or shift more risk and costs to older Americans.</p> <p>Medicaid: The Biden administration has signed an executive order to strengthen Medicaid and has currently revoked the previous administration's "work requirement" in two states (Arkansas and New Hampshire) because this requirement does not promote the objectives of the Medicaid program. As the Biden administration continues to move toward revoking the work requirement nationwide, the BWR will continue to advocate to protect individuals and families served by the Medicaid program. The BWR urges Congress to support policies that will: 1) allow more individuals to receive home and community-based services provided by Medicaid, 2) enhance Medicaid Expansion federal matching funds beyond COVID-19 relief funding to provide greater health care access to women in states that have refused Medicaid Expansion, and opposes efforts to cap Medicaid funding that will endanger the health, safety, and care of millions of individuals who depend on the essential services provided through the Medicaid program.</p> <p>Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP): Adequate food is the most basic of human needs. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides funding for needed nutritional assistance and critical investment toward addressing the rising hunger crisis associated with the pandemic and economic downturn. While the ARP extends a 15% increase in SNAP benefits through the end of September 2021, the BWR urges Congress to support a sustained increase in SNAP benefits and strengthen the program by reintroducing the Closing the Meal Gap Act (S. 3719, H.R. 1368)</p> <p>Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): Many Black women who are heads of household depend on the TANF program to provide the assistance their families need to survive—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For years, the TANF program has been a part of the safety net program. In recent years, TANF's combination of nearly unfettered state flexibility, fixed block grant funding, narrowly defined work requirements, and time limits provides a safety net to very few families in need, and it doesn't prepare parents for today's labor market. Now only 20% of TANF dollars are going toward providing struggling families economic assistance. The BWR urges Congress to take measures to ensure that TANF remains a separate program, with changes in federal law that eliminates time limits, and other barriers to participation and direct states to spend more of their unused TANF dollars for childcare, education, or workforce training programs.</p>
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Healthcare	<p>Affordable Healthcare: President Biden signed an executive order to strengthen the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The BWR encourages the Biden-Harris administration to continue to support and strengthen the ACA for those in need of affordable healthcare services and coverage. To further this effort to preserve the gains made by the ACA to provide affordable quality healthcare coverage, the BWR urges the House to pass the Health Care Affordability Act of 2021 (H.R. 369), which would revise the tax credit for health care premium assistance to expand the eligibility of low-income taxpayers for such credit and reduce the cost of health care premiums.</p> <p>Reducing Costs of Prescription Drugs: High and rising prescription drug prices are a key priority for the BWR. Black women are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases due to health disparities and earn less money with which to pay for our health care, including skyrocketing prescription drug prices. The BWR will continue to advocate for solutions that help to reduce drug prices – not just simply shift costs to other payers. We will continue to advocate for Medicare/Medicaid negotiation authority, greater access to low-cost generics drugs, improved competition, lower out-of-pocket costs, and greater transparency in drug pricing and information for consumers. The BWR urges Congress pass legislation to reduce the cost of prescription drugs and allow Medicare to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies to bring down the cost of prescription drugs for the more than 46 million Americans enrolled in Medicare Part D.</p> <p>Maternal Health: Lowering the disproportionately high maternal mortality rate among Black women continues to be a high priority. The BWR urges Congress to support the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021, which includes a series of 12 bills to save mothers' lives and end racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes and achieve maternal health justice for Black women and all birthing woman of color.</p> <p>Mental Health: Over the last several years, data has emerged indicating an alarming increase in the suicide rates for Black children and teenagers. In 2019, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman released the Congressional Black Caucus Youth Suicide Taskforce Report entitled, <i>Ring the Alarm: The Crisis of Black Youth Suicide in America</i>. The policy recommendations generated from this report include 1) increase funding to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for research into topics relating to Black youth mental health and suicide, 2) increase funding and resources for Black researchers who are focused on Black youth suicide, 3) demonstrate and promote evidence-based interventions and best practices for clinicians, school personnel, teachers, parents and others who interact with Black youth 4) funding a community engagement and awareness campaign, 5) create a national website and repository for data on suicidal behavior, and 6) engage state and local governments. The BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that would increase funding to NIH, NIMH, and other national and state-based programs and initiatives for research and interventions to address the rising suicide rates among black youth and combat this growing epidemic in the U.S.</p>

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	<p>HIV/AIDS: One in 48 Black women in the U.S. will acquire HIV in her lifetime. In 2016, Black women diagnosed with HIV represented 61% of HIV diagnoses among all women in the U.S. Among all women who were diagnosed with HIV in 2017, 59% were Black women. Although nine states in the Deep South account for 28% of the U.S. population, they account for 40% of new HIV diagnoses—and Black women accounting for 75% of all women living with HIV in Georgia. Community based organizations are a major factor in helping Black women at risk and those living with HIV because these organizations are intersectional and focus on all the aspects that affect Black women, not just HIV. The BWR urges Congress to increase federal funding for community-based organizations and research institutions involved in HIV/AIDS research, prevention, and treatment initiatives for Black women and girls.</p>
Criminal Justice/Police Reform	<p>Policing Reform: On March 3, 2021, the House passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. This legislation would for the first time ever create federal law that would: 1) ban chokeholds; 2) end racial and religious profiling; 3) eliminate qualified immunity for law enforcement; 4) establish national standard for the operation of police departments; 5) mandate data collection on police encounters; 6) reprogram existing funds to invest in transformative community-based policing programs; and 7) streamline federal law to prosecute excessive force and establish independent prosecutors for police investigations. The BWR urges the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to hold police accountable, change the culture of law enforcement, empower our communities, and build trust between law enforcement and our communities by addressing systemic racism and bias to help save lives.</p> <p>Gun Safety: Everyday 96 Americans, including children, are killed by guns and 12 are injured. In America, gun owners possess over 270 million guns. Twenty percent of gun owners own 65% of the guns. Over the last few years, gun control laws have passed in state legislatures. Now it's time for national gun control laws. The House has passed two background check bills: one extending the number of days to conduct background checks from 3 to 10, and another that extending checks to other private settings such as gun shows and on-line. The House has passed the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021 (H.R. 1446), which increases the amount of time, from 3 business days to a minimum of 10 business days, that a federal firearms licensee must wait to receive a completed background check prior to transferring a firearm to an unlicensed person and introduced the Gun Show Loophole Closing Act of 2021 (H.R. 1006), which require criminal background checks on all firearms transactions occurring at gun shows. The BWR urges the Senate to introduce and pass similar background check legislation, and we urge Congress support and pass legislation to ban bump stocks that turn semi-automatic weapons in to automatic weapons, limit the sale of high capacity magazines, and raise the age to 21 for the purchase of guns.</p>

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	<p>Ending Mass Incarceration: The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, but this practice of mass incarceration cannot be sustained. Black people are disproportionately represented in the prison population. Black women of all age groups were twice as likely to be imprisoned as White women, and Black women 18 and 19 years old are four times more likely than their White peers to be incarcerated. BWR commends Congress for passing the First Step Act, which reduces unnecessarily long federal sentences and improve conditions in federal prisons and the American Rescue Plan Act, which BWR urges Congress to fully fund the First Step Act and ensure that efforts are being taken to release people deemed to pose a minimum risk of recidivism from prison in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among the prison population.</p> <p>Eradicating Violence Against Women: The violence women experience comes in many forms: domestic and intimate partner violence, sexual assault and rape, sexual harassment in the workplace and on the street, and emotional abuse. Black women, women of color, and transgender women of all races and ethnicities experience the highest rates of violence. No place is safe – not homes, workplaces, and other public spaces, especially the streets where women are often forced to walk while receiving a gauntlet of unwelcome remarks. There has been tremendous progress in addressing the problem, but we are far from where we should be as a humane society. BWR urges the Senate to pass the Violence Against Women Act immediately. The BWR also urges Congress to reauthorize the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) with increased funding to provide enhanced services such as emergency shelter, counseling legal assistance, crisis intervention, domestic and dating violence prevention education, culturally-specific programs, and programs to reach underserved populations.</p> <p>Ending Human Trafficking: The BWR applauds Congress for the renewal of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). We will continue to advocate for initiatives in the TVPA and related legislation to receive full financial appropriations for FY 2022 and beyond. The BWR urges Congress to engage with the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security to ensure implementation of the new victim protocol and to fight to protect federal grant funding for trafficking victims’ legal services to ensuring victims have expeditious access to the services and support they need.</p> <p>Hate Crimes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been an alarming rise in groups and individuals spewing hate and promulgating attacks on minorities. The spike in domestic terrorism aimed at racial, ethnic, and religious minorities in the U.S. is troubling. The BWR urges the Senate to reintroduce the Justice for Victims of Lynching Act and for the House to reintroduce the Emmett Till Antilynching Act to make lynching a federal crime. • The United States faces a growing domestic terrorism problem that will likely worsen. Domestic extremism has become mainstream and could threaten American life for years to come. BWR urges Congress to take measures to reinstate the Department of Homeland Security’s Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program, which provided funding to organizations dedicated to countering white nationalist, neo-Nazi extremism, and other hate and violent extremist groups.
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<p>Economic Security & Workers’ Rights</p>	<p>Paid Leave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with other women in the United States, Black women have always had the highest levels of labor market participation regardless of age, marital status, or presence of children at home. Sixty eight percent of Black women are the sole breadwinners in their homes, yet Black women are among the 32 million private sector workers who do not earn a single day of paid sick leave. For these Black women and their families, if an illness strikes, they must risk their jobs and financial stability by staying home, or their health by going to work. As a result, for Black families, missing a few days of work can mean the difference between the ability to buy food or afford to pay the mortgage or rent for the month. The Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMILY) Act (S. 248, H.R. 804) establishes a social insurance fund that would ensure that every worker, no matter the size of their employer or if they are self-employed or part-time, has access to paid leave for every serious medical event, every time it is needed. The FAMILY Act would create a permanent paid family and medical leave program for all workers that provides up to 66% of wage replacement for 12 weeks, anytime they need it. The BWR urges Congress to pass the FAMILY Act because every worker should be able to take time to be there for their family, to care for themselves, or a loved one without risking their job or paycheck. • Black women are among the 32 million private sector workers who do not have a single paid sick day. This makes it impossible for them to attend to their own healthcare or that of their families. The Healthy Families Act (S. 840) would allow workers to earn up to 56 hours or seven days a year of paid sick leave to recover from short-term illness, care for a sick family member, seek routine medical care, or seek assistance related to domestic violence. The BWR urges the Senate to reintroduce the Health Families Act, which would guarantee paid sick days as a foundation of economic security for millions of working families that face real hardship if they lose a paycheck due to illness. <p>Childcare for Workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Childcare for Working Families Act (S. 568, H.R. 1364) would provide funds for the Child Care and Development Block Grant program and reestablishes it as a childcare and development assistance program. It would also allocate program funds for states to provide services and supports to infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities. The BWR urges the Senate and House to reintroduction the Childcare for Working Families Act provide childcare and early learning programs for low- to moderate-income families. <p>Workers’ Rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Protecting the Rights of Workers (PRO) Act of 2021 (H.R. 842) that recently passes the House, would, among other things, broaden the scope of individuals covered by the fair labor standards and extend protections to union workers and those trying to organize unions. The BWR urges the Senate to pass the Protecting the Rights of Workers (PRO) Act to expands labor protections related to employees’ rights to organize and collectively bargain in the workplace.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From 2011 through 2015, Black women filed 28.6% of pregnancy discrimination charges filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, despite making up 14.3% of the female labor force. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (H.R. 1065), which was reintroduced in the House, would require private-sector employers with 15 or more workers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees, which include an extra bathroom break, a stool, limiting contact with certain chemicals and a reduction in lifting requirements. This bill would also protect pregnant workers from retaliation after making such accommodation requests. The BWR urges the House to pass the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act to eliminate discrimination and promote pregnant women's' health and economic security. Unstable, unpredictable, and rigid scheduling practices, like placing workers "on-call" with no guarantee of work hours, scheduling them for "split shifts" of non-consecutive hours, sending workers home early without pay when demand is low, requiring workers to work the closing shift one day and the opening shift the next, and punishing workers who request schedule changes, make it all but impossible for Black women to balance professional responsibilities with individual and family needs. The Schedules That Work Act (S. 3256, H.R. 5004) would permit employees to request changes to their work schedules without fear of retaliation, ensure that employers consider these requests, and require employers to provide more predictable and stable schedules for employees in certain occupations with evidence of unpredictable and unstable scheduling practices. The BWR urges the House and Senate to reintroduce the Schedules That Work Act to provide Black women with the more predictable and stable work schedules needed to balance work, personal and family needs. <p>Workers' Pay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The federal minimum wage has not increased in more than a decade—which is the longest period in U.S. history. Black women are among the 32 million workers who earn the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour or below. Sixty-eight percent of Black women are the primary breadwinners in their households. Now, there is no place in America where a Black woman, who is a full-time worker making the federal minimum wage, can afford her mortgage or rent, food, and other essentials. The Raise the Wage Act of 2021 (S. 53, H.R. 603) that was introduced in the Senate and House would raise the federal minimum wage, in annual increments, to \$15 per hour by June 2025, eliminate the tipped minimum wage, and end the subminimum wage certificates for workers with disabilities. The BWR urges the House and Senate to pass the Raise the Wage Act of 2021 to lift Black women who are earning minimum wage out of poverty. Black women who work full time, year-round are paid, on average, only 62 cents for every dollar paid to White men. This results in a gap of an estimated \$23,540 less in median annual earnings for Black women over an entire year. The Paycheck Fairness Act (S. 270, H.R. 7) 1) would restrict the use of the bona fide factor defense to wage discrimination claims, 2) enhance nonretaliation prohibitions, 3) make it unlawful to require an employee to sign a contract or waiver prohibiting the employee from disclosing information about the employee's wages, and 4) increase civil penalties for violations of equal pay provisions. The BWR urges the Senate and House to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to help to close the discriminatory pay gap for Black women, eliminate the loopholes in the Equal Pay Act, break the harmful patterns of pay discrimination, and strengthen workforce protections for Black women.
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	<p>Workplace Safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For generations, Black women have been vulnerable to racial and sexual harassment in the workplace. This harassment includes unwanted touching, grabbing, stalking, and demeaning racial and sexual comments. Older Black women and women with disabilities also experience a barrier to employment or promotion to higher paying jobs. The Fair Employment Protection Act (S. 2287, H.R. 4015) restores workplace protections weakened by the Supreme Court's 2013 <i>Vance v. Ball State University</i> decision to ensure that Americans harassed on the job by their supervisors are treated fairly and receive the justice they deserve. The BWR urges Congress to reintroduce the Fair Employment Protection Act to ensure that workers have an opportunity to succeed.
<p>Economic Opportunity and Affordable Housing</p>	<p>Opportunity Zones/ Gentrification: The tax benefits provided by Opportunity Zones laws have spurred economic growth and development, and job creation in low-income communities. But this revitalization has come at the expense of gentrifying the very neighborhoods they were intended to revitalize—which is displacing Black working-class people from their homes and further destabilizing already vulnerable populations. The BWR urges Congress to support monitoring of the implementation of Opportunity Zones and Qualified Opportunity Funds and taking action to end the adverse impact they have on Black urban and rural communities.</p> <p>Home Ownership/ Affordable Housing: The American dream of homeownership and generational wealth is not a reality for a large percentage of Black women. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, homeownership for Black people was at a record low of 40.6% in 2019 and increased to 47% in the second quarter of 2020. Black people still have the lowest rate of homeownership compared to other racial groups. For Black women, housing assistance programs are more important than ever. The American Rescue Plan Act provides aid for homeowners who are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID, and funding for Housing Choice Vouchers, housing counseling services to renters and homeowners, and to promote and enforce fair housing. In addition, the Act provides funds to help homeowners and renters pay for heating and cooling costs. Housing is a basic human need. The BWR urges Congress to continue to support funding to increase homeownership and affordable housing options for Black women, and ensure that civil rights laws, such as the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act are enforced.</p>
<p>Business & Entrepreneurship</p>	<p>Black women are the fastest-rising entrepreneurial group among all women, but a lack of access to resources, opportunities, and capital poses challenges to Black women business owners to reach their full potential.</p> <p>To better gauge and address the needs of Black women-owned businesses, collecting data on race and gender would better quantify Black women-owned businesses, assess how they are faring, and specifically identify these businesses for funding opportunities and other assistance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BWR urges Congress to instruct the Small Business Administration to change the current way in which it collects and aggregates data from categories based on 'race or gender' to categories based on 'race and gender'.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BWR urges Congress to authorize the Small Business Administration to utilize the System for Award Management's (SAM.gov) race and gender data for small business certification. This data will help the SBA to quantify Black women-owned businesses and specifically identify any needs these businesses have for funding opportunities and other assistance. <p>With the increased speed and reliable mobility provided by 5G technology, Black women-owned businesses will be able to leverage new opportunities in their industries and better meet the demands of their customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BWR urges Congress to provide funding to the Small Business Administration for programs to educate Black women-owned businesses on strategies to utilize 5G technology to enhance their businesses and increase business efficiency and production. <p>In 2017, the Minority Business Development Agency released a report that found there has been very little growth in minority business participation in public contracts. To address the inequities in the federal contracting system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BWR urges Congress to increase Small Business Administration funding for federal contract set asides for minority- and women-owned small businesses and require 25% of all federal contracts to be allocated for minority- and women-owned small business subcontracting. • The BWR urges Congress to require prime contractors to develop and execute plans to increase subcontracting opportunities for Black-women-owned, small, and disadvantaged businesses. • The BWR urges Congress to require recipients of 5G Fund for Rural America subsidies to develop and execute plans to implement subcontracting opportunities for Black women-owned, small, and disadvantaged businesses. <p>Space is now a business. According to current estimates, the global space industry could generate revenue of \$1 trillion or more by 2040. Black women seek to embrace the opportunity to develop strong business models that can meet the demand for products and services in space.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BWR urges Congress to authorize the Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide funding, similar to the SBA's Small Business Innovation Research Program, to fund Black women-owned businesses at the critical startup and development stages to develop, commercialize and fulfill the demand for products and services in space.
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<p>Immigration Reform</p>	<p>The House recently passed the <u>American Dream and Promise Act of 2021 and Farm Workforce Modernization Act</u> to establish paths to citizenship or legal status for individuals eligible for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), and millions of undocumented immigrants, including those brought to this country unlawfully as children and workers in the agriculture sector. The BWR urges the Senate to support comprehensive immigration reform by introducing the American Dream and Promise Act and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.</p> <p><u>Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED)</u>: Temporary Protected Status for beneficiaries from Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Nepal, and Sudan has been extended to October 4, 2021. Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians will be terminated as of June 20, 2022. BWR urges Congress to support a permanent solution for TPS and DED holders.</p> <p><u>Diversity Visas</u>: The Diversity Immigrant Visa Program is a bipartisan effort created in 1990 to encourage immigration from underrepresented countries. It provides an opportunity to a limited number of immigrants from countries with historically low immigration rates to come to the United States. Since 40% of immigrants accepted for the Diversity Visa Program are from Africa, this is a Black issue. With an average of 20,000 new immigrants each year from the continent, this is the largest way for Black immigrants to legally migrate here. BWR urges Congress to protect the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program.</p>
<p>Quality Education for All</p>	<p><u>Public Education K-12</u>: The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$123 billion in critical funding for K-12 public schools. This is the single largest investment ever in public education funding. This funding will be used to provide students, educators, and school buildings with critically needed resources to 1) help schools operate safely and add student supports, 2) establish the COVID-19 Educational Equity Challenge Grant to support partnerships with school communities to advance equity and evidence-based policies to respond to educational challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and 3) help close the digital divide by purchasing technology (both devices and wi-fi connectivity) for students to aid in their digital learning interactions. BWR urges Congress to continue to support funding for public school and to oppose publicly funded private school vouchers.</p> <p><u>Financial Assistance for Higher Education</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For almost 50 years the federal Pell Grant program has been the cornerstone of financial assistance for students from low- and moderate-income families, helping millions go to college. Because of the skyrocketing costs of college, Pell grants do not go as far as they used to; in fact, the increased maximum grant of \$6495 for the 2021-2022 award year will only covers the lowest share of public college costs. The cost of obtaining a college degree has increased over 1,120% in the past three decades, about five times the rate of inflation. BWR urges the Congress to double the Pell Grant maximum to increase program reach to aspiring college students.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rising cost of college is making the dream of attending college unattainable for students from lower-income and middle-class families. In 2019, the House introduced the College Affordability Act (H.R. 4674) to tackle the rising cost of tuition and increase federal student aid so that every student can afford to attend college and earn a quality degree. The BWR urges the House to reintroduce the College Affordability Act to help make a college education an attainable reality for students from lower-income and middle-class families. • Students and graduates are currently facing over \$1.5 TRILLION in outstanding student loan debt. Balances of student loans have surpassed both auto loans and credit cards, making student loan debt the nation's largest form of consumer debt outside of mortgages. Private student loans have been particularly burdensome on students, as these loans often have higher interest rates and fewer consumer protections than federal student loans. BWR urges Congress to reintroduce the Student Borrower Bankruptcy Relief Act (S. 1414, H.R. 2648), which would eliminate the section of the bankruptcy code that makes private and federal student loans non-dischargeable, allowing these loans to be treated like nearly all other forms of consumer debt. • The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$3 billion for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), tribal colleges and universities, and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). This funding will help to stabilize these colleges and universities that continue to serve many economically underserved and first-generation college students during the pandemic. HBCUs continue to serve an important and critical role within the higher education community with programs that provide institutional and student support without exacerbating debilitating student debt. BWR urges Congress to support increased funding for Title III programs and other federal programs designed to support HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. Additionally, BWR also urges the House to reintroduce the HBCU Investment Expansion Act (H.R. 1080), which would allow municipal bonds issued by HBCUs to have "triple tax-exempt" status (local, state, and federal). • National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) and the Everyday Entrepreneur Venture Fund (EEVF) is a partnership with the joint mission to launch underfunded community college entrepreneurs (specifically women, people of color, immigrants, veterans, and those living in rural areas) into business, with a focus on community-based start-ups, scale-ups of existing businesses, and the implementation of proven replicable business models. This partnership is currently operating successfully across the nation in nine states. The BWR urges Congress to provide funding for the NACCE-EEVF partnership to expand it to all 50 states to provide Black women across the country with local resources to start and grow their businesses.
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<p>Democracy Reform</p>	<p>Democracy Reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This nation has been long in need of voting, elections, and ethics reforms, including ending partisan and racial gerrymandering, and expanding and protecting voting rights. The House answered the nation's call by passing the For the People Act (H.R. 1) a comprehensive democracy reform package that would end partisan gerrymandering and streamline the voter registration process by creating an online voter registration system, allowing same-day voter registration, offering at least 15 consecutive days of early voting, placing early voting locations near public transportation and ordering them to be open for 10 hours a day, automatically registering to vote any eligible unregistered citizens, restoring the right to vote to people who have completed their felony sentences, and stopping the purging of voters from registration records. This bill would also increase the security and integrity of our elections by requiring the use of paper ballots and cracking down on voter intimidation and the spread of disinformation. This bill also declares that Washington, D.C. residents deserve full voting rights and representation by supporting D.C. statehood. The BWR urges the Senate to introduce and pass the For the People Act to protect voting rights and election security. • The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (H.R. 4) responds to current conditions in voting today by restoring the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was last reauthorized by Congress in 2006, but key provisions of the Act were eroded by the Supreme Court in 2013. This decision led to numerous states passing new voter laws that restrict access to the ballot box, such as restrictive voter ID laws and polling place closures. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would reverse this trend by restoring the Voting Rights Act and strengthening the provisions in it to protect the freedom to vote for all Americans, particularly voters of color. The BWR urges Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act to restore and strengthen the right to vote for all Americans. • Digital Voter Suppression: During the 2020 presidential election, forms of voter suppression emerged in which digital advertising on social media was designed and specifically targeted to keep African Americans from voting. The Senate Intelligence Committee reported that during the 2016 elections, the Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Kremlin-linked, information campaign operation, overwhelming used Facebook advertisements to target and suppress the voter turnout of African Americans. The Committee reported that, "[N]o single group of Americans was targeted by IRA information operatives more than African Americans" The BWR urges Congress to support legislation which imposes sanctions on countries involved in voter suppression, applies the same requirements, limitations, and protections regarding political advertising in traditional media to internet or digital political advertising, and sets forth special rules for disclosure statements for certain internet or digital ads. • Foreign Interference in U.S. Elections: During the 2016 presidential elections, Russian attackers were able to hack into the election systems of two counties in Florida. Although it was reported that no data was tampered with and vote tallies were not affected, state and local election officials have since asked Congress for funding to address election security concerns. The BWR urges Congress to support legislation that imposes sanctions on countries that interfere in U.S. elections, and for the House to reintroduce the Securing America's Federal Elections (SAFE) Act (H.R. 2722), which addresses election security through grant programs, requirements for voting systems and paper ballots.
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<p>Equal Rights</p>	<p>Black women live at the intersection of racism and sexism and have experienced generations of discrimination in employment, housing, banking and finance, and other matters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House passed a resolution (H.J. Res. 17) that removes the deadline for states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, which would guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex. The resolution now heads to the Senate. The BWR urges the Senate to move post haste to pass the resolution to remove the deadline for ratification of the ERA to move it closer to becoming a reality for Black women. • The House passed the Equality Act (H.R.4), which would prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. The BWR urges the Senate to pass the Equality Act. • To advance gender equity and equality as a matter of human rights, justice, and fairness, President Biden signed an Executive Order establishing the White House Gender Policy Council. The BWR encourages and supports the Council and stands ready to assist the Council in addressing issues related to the intersectionality of gender and race and the specific issues and concerns of Black women.
<p>Plan for Black America</p>	<p>With the rise in white supremacist expression, the United States needs now more than ever to atone for its atrocities imposed upon generations of African Americans and to account for the brutal mistreatment of African Americans during chattel slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and the enduring structural and systemic racism endemic to our society. For these reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BWR urges the House to pass the House resolution Urging the Establishment of a United States Commission on Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (H. Con. Res. 19) to acknowledge, memorialize, and be a catalyst toward jettisoning the belief in a hierarchy of human value; embracing our common humanity, and permanently eliminating persistent racial inequities. • The BWR urges the House to reintroduce the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act (H.R. 40), which would establish a Commission to study and develop reparation proposals for African Americans
<p>Healthy Environment</p>	<p><u>Environmental Health:</u> The Black community is disproportionately impacted by toxic waste, water and air pollution including carbon emissions. To ensure climate and environmental justice accountability, BWR urges Congress to recognize the duty of the federal government to create a Green New Deal by reintroducing resolutions S. Res. 59 and H. Res.109 and to reintroduce the Climate Equity Act of 2020 (S. 4513, H.R. 8019) to advance environmental justice.</p>

	<p><u>Lead Contamination:</u> Lead contamination threatens public health and the development of children in cities across the nation. Urgent action is needed to ensure clean water. The US Military has declared climate change to be a threat to national security. The BWR supports aggressive action to limit carbon emissions, increase renewable energy and energy efficiency.</p>
<p>Technology</p>	<p><u>Online privacy, discrimination, and violence:</u> As Black women, our online data profiles determine our online search results. Based on algorithms that determine our race and gender, our online search results are steered to lower-paying job opportunities, housing advertisements that are restricted to only certain neighborhoods, and mortgages and loans with higher interest rates. Online personal data profiles are also being manipulated to advance voter suppression campaigns, target hate towards communities of color and religious minorities, and create division among communities. To combat online algorithmic bias, discrimination, hate speech and voter suppression, Black women want data privacy and content legislation that is based upon a civil rights framework that acknowledges the enduring political, economic, and cultural consequences of racial and gender discrimination, hate speech and voter suppression. The BWR urges Congress to pass legislation that is platform-neutral and 1) imposes restrictions on data monetization used by tech companies and third parties; 2) prohibits and protect against algorithm/data discrimination and bias; 3) requires tech companies to provide easily understandable and updated privacy policies; 4) accommodates consumers' right to access and delete their personal data; 5) requires clear opt-out procedures from predatory websites; 6) provides safeguards to protect victims of domestic violence; 7) requires notification of data breaches and provides adequate remedies; 8) protects children and adults from perpetrators of online human trafficking, and 9) holds social media companies accountable for user-generated content that enables cyberstalking, targeted harassment and violence, digital voter suppression, and discrimination on their platforms.</p> <p><u>Access to Broadband:</u> Access to broadband connectivity has become fundamental to daily life. Yet, 34% of Black adults do not have home broadband, and 30.6% of Black households with one or more children age 17 or younger lack high-speed broadband access at home. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated this digital divide and increased the need for widespread and affordable access to broadband services at home. Black women and families need affordable high-speed broadband at home to access vital online services (e.g. education and telemedicine) and participate in critical economic, social, and civic activities. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program provides eligible households up to \$50/month towards broadband service and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer or tablet to mitigate the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of broadband access to lower-income households. But this temporary solution is not enough. The current long-term Lifeline program's benefit of \$9.25/month for home broadband service does not sufficiently cover enough of the costs to be financially feasible for lower-income households to pay for broadband service. The BWR urges Congress to pass robust and comprehensive legislation that would provide a federally funded broadband benefit program that offers lower income households with increased long-term financial support.</p>

<p>District of Columbia Statehood (S. 51, H.R. 51)</p>	<p>The BWR supports the ideals of the U.S. Constitution and the tenets of democracy upon which it stands. It is within this context that the BWR believes that laws which impose federal taxation on U.S. citizens who are residents of the District of Columbia without allowing these same individuals full representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, denies such citizens of their constitutional right to full representation. The BWR urges Congress to pass the Washington, D.C. Admission Act (S. 51, H.R. 51), which would expand democracy to all U.S. citizens who are residents of the District of Columbia by admitting into the United States the state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, composed of most of the territory of the District of Columbia on an equal footing with the other states.</p>
<p>Shirley Chisholm Congressional Gold Medal Act (H.R. 1968)</p>	<p>In 1968, the Honorable Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress. She served as a Congresswoman until 1982. Congresswoman Chisholm inspired the political achievements of African Americans and others by running for president of the United States in 1972. Her presidential candidacy raised the profile and aspirations of African American women in the field of politics. The BWR urges the House to reintroduce the Shirley Chisholm Congressional Gold Medal Act (H.R. 1968) to posthumously award a Congressional gold medal to Shirley Chisholm.</p>
<p>Woman on the Twenty Act of 2021 (H. R. 503)</p>	<p>Harriett Tubman is an icon in American history. Ms. Tubman, an African American woman, self-liberated herself from slavery, and as the "conductor" of the Underground Railroad, led 19 trips back to the south to guide other enslaved African Americans to freedom, all while carrying a bounty on her head. Ms. Tubman was also a nurse during the Civil War, a Union spy, and played a pivotal role as an activist for women's rights and suffrage. Her legacy has inspired countless people from around the world. The BWR urges the House to pass the Women on the Twenty Act (H.R. 503) to require \$20 notes (bills) to include a portrait of Harriet Tubman.</p>
<p>Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act (S. 3167, H.R. 5309)</p>	<p>The U.S. society has burdened Black women and men to be forced to consider if their natural hair is appropriate or professional in their everyday and professional lives. The CROWN Act would prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle in federally funded institutions and in the workplace. The BWR urges the Senate and House to reintroduce and pass the CROWN Act (S. 3167, H.R. 5309) to 1) prohibit discrimination based on a person's hair texture or hairstyle if that style or texture is commonly associated with a particular race or national origin, and 2) prohibit this type of discrimination against those participating in federally assisted programs, housing programs, public accommodations, and employment.</p>

*2021 BWR Policy Priorities are subject to amendment and/or change.



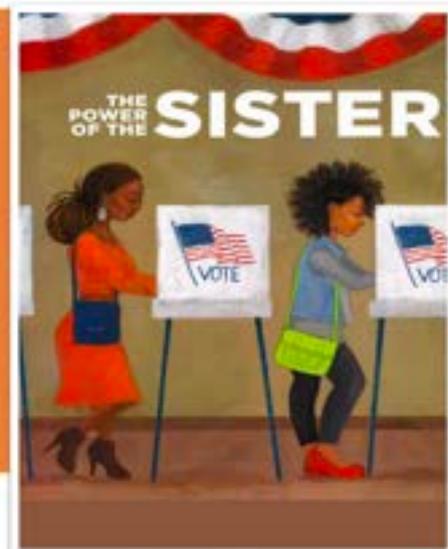
6th Annual Black Women's Roundtable/ESSENCE *Power of the Sister Vote Poll Results*

Source: 2020 BWR/ESSENCE Survey

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

2020 marks the sixth year the Black Women's Roundtable has partnered with ESSENCE to conduct the Power of the Sister Vote Poll to gauge the political concerns, attitudes, and opinions of Black women across the country.

- ◆ The survey was fielded between August 27 – September 28th.
- ◆ A total of 1001 ESSENCE Insiders participated in the survey of Black women, Age 18+.
- ◆ Fully 95% of respondents are planning to vote.
- ◆ The goals of the 2020 BWR/ESSENCE survey were to:
 - Collect feedback from Black women on their political outlook and issues important to their community.
 - Identify the top issues threatening Black women and their families.
 - Identify the top issues threatening to the U. S. democracy.
 - Voice their opinion on Trump's presidency.
 - Identify the priority issues Black women seek from 2020 presidential candidates.



BACKGROUND - PAST FINDINGS (2015 – 2019)

- For the past five (5) years, Black Women's Roundtable and ESSENCE have partnered on a survey with the objective to understand the political attitudes and concerns of Black women.
- In the first study in 2015, we learned that 64% of Black women viewed voting as an important responsibility given the history of Black people. Black women overwhelmingly (78%) believed the Democratic party best represented their interest in comparison to only 1% who had trust in the Republican party. We also learned that affordable health care was the top issue for Black women.
- In 2016, the second study was conducted during the 2016 Presidential Election Cycle, and the confidence in the Democratic party increased to 85% with no change in support for the Republican party. Also, affordable health care continued to be the top issue for Black women.
- In 2017, the third study showed most Black women were actively involved in their communities and many were interested in running for public office. There was a significant decline of 11% in confidence in the Democratic party, from 85% in 2016 to 74% in 2017, and President Trump received a failing grade from Black women in his first year in office. Further, affordable health care and criminal justice reform were tied as the top issues of concern for Black women, followed by, living wage jobs and quality public education tied as their top three issues of concern. Also, a third of Black women were concerned about the rise in hate crimes, a new issue that was added to the survey in 2017.
- In 2018, the fourth study identified Black women's concern about the rise in hate crimes as their #1 issue, rising 22 points over 2017. Affordable healthcare dropped from #1 and criminal justice/policing reform and gun violence/gun safety assumed the 2nd and 3rd priority.
- In 2019, the fifth study, Black women's top concerns had shifted a bit as Criminal Justice/Policing Reform had risen to the #1 issue, followed by Affordable Healthcare at #2. The Rise in Hate Crimes and Equal Rights and Equal Pay tied as their 3rd priority.

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2020 CURRENT KEY FINDINGS SUMMATION

- **Overwhelmingly, Black women plan to vote.** Fully 95% indicated that they plan to vote in the 2020 presidential election.
- **Black women priorities for the Black Community have strongly shifted.** In 2019, Black women's primary concerns were more evenly focused on Criminal Justice/Policing Reform as the #1 issue, separated by a mere 1% from Affordable Healthcare as the #2 issue. While the rise in Hate Crimes/Racism and Equal Rights/Equal Pay were tied at #3 as a key concern in 2019. **In 2020, far and away, Black women identified Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes as their #1 issue**, as fully 58% identified this as their top issue. This represents a 16-point increase from the 2019 Survey. In contrast, concerns around Criminal Justice/Policing Reform remained virtually the same between the two years, falling by only 1 (one) point from 2019 (47% vs. 48%). While ranking third, concerns about the Affordable Care Act fell by 19 points compared to 2019 (28% vs. 47%). We believe this is due to impact of COVID19 Pandemic and unemployment/underemployment that are included the 2020 BWR/Essence Poll.
- **Black women are overwhelming concerned about safety and stability when it comes to issues impacting the Black family.**
- **Black women lift up Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes, Corruption in Government and Voting Rights/Voter Suppression Tactics as key issues threatening our democracy.**
- **For the fourth year in a row, Black women give the president a failing grade.** In 2020, 80% gave President Trump an "F" and 10% gave him a "D".

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2020 CURRENT KEY FINDINGS SUMMATION

- **Black women's confidence in the Democratic Party dropped slightly and remain greatly impacted by generational divides.** Seventy-Three percent (73%) of Black women in 2018 and 2019 identified Democrats as the party that best represents their issues, in 2020, 71% of Black women. Also, strong generational divides remain.
- **For Black women 25-35 only 58% agreed that the Democrats best represented their interest** (although that represents a significant increase over those who agreed with this statement in 2019 (45%). **Black women 18-24 (Generation Z) were slightly more likely than their Millennial counterparts to express confidence in the Democratic party (60% vs. 58%).**
- **To win their vote, Black women identified reducing structural/systemic racism and policing and criminal justice reform (tied) as the #1 issues they want the Presidential candidates to commit to address as a priority.** Eradicating COVID-19 was #2, followed by protecting the safety net (Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security) was #3.
- **If the 2020 Presidential Election was held today, Black women would overwhelming support the Biden/Harris Ticket (90%) and they are especially likely to Vote by Mail/Absentee (41%) or Vote Early in Person (35%).**
- **Black women are even more enthusiastic to vote given that the Supreme Court hangs in the balance (63%).**

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2020 KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ **Black Women are Fired Up and Ready to Vote.** Fully 95% of Black women indicated that they plan to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election.
- ✓ **Black women indicated they will vote for the candidate that commits to the following key issues they care about:**
 - ❖ Plan to Reduce Structural/Systemic Racism (49%)
 - ❖ Policing and Criminal Justice Reform (45%)
 - ❖ Plans to Eradicate COVID 19 (30%)

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2020 KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ In 2020, the top concern of Black women was far and away **Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes (58%)**, followed by **Criminal Justice Reform and Policing Reform (47%)**. Coming in third was **Access to Affordable Health Care at (28%)**
- ✓ Concerns about the **Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes** has experienced a significant shift in recent years, rising a whopping 25% since 2017 and 16% from just one year prior, in 2019. On the other hand, concerns about the need for **Criminal Justice & Policing Reform** has remained relatively stable, having shifted only one point since 2019 (47% vs. 48%).
- ✓ Concern for **Affordable Health Care** dropped significantly in 2020 (to 28% vs. 47% in 2019) that is likely do to the **COVID19 Pandemic**, that is disproportionately impacting Black people who have higher mortality rates than any other racial/ethnic demographic. **Underemployment/unemployment** is also a major concern for Black women.

2020 KEY FINDINGS

When it comes to themselves and their families, Black women's top concerns are:

- ✓ Rise in Racism/Hate Crimes (58%);
- ✓ COVID 19 (45%)
- ✓ High Cost of Housing (38%)

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2020 KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Black Women continue to see Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes as the top threat to Democracy in 2020 (73%), although to a significantly lower degree than was the case in 2019 (85%).
- ✓ Corruption in Government ranked 2nd among Black women as a threat to democracy (63%), followed by Voting Rights/Voter Suppression Tactics (55%)

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2020 KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Black women's confidence in the Democratic Party has fallen slightly in 2020 (71%) vs 73% in 2018 and 2017 who indicated that Democrats best represented their issues.
- ✓ Most striking, Democrats face a significant generational challenge among Black women as only 58% of 25-35 year-olds believe the Democratic party best represents their issues compared to 87% of Black women 55 and older.
- ✓ Still, Democrats have made significant progress among younger Black women. Just 45% of 25-35 year-olds indicated that The Democratic Party best represented their issues in 2019, a full 13% below where perceptions of Democrats fall among this age demographic of Black women in 2020.

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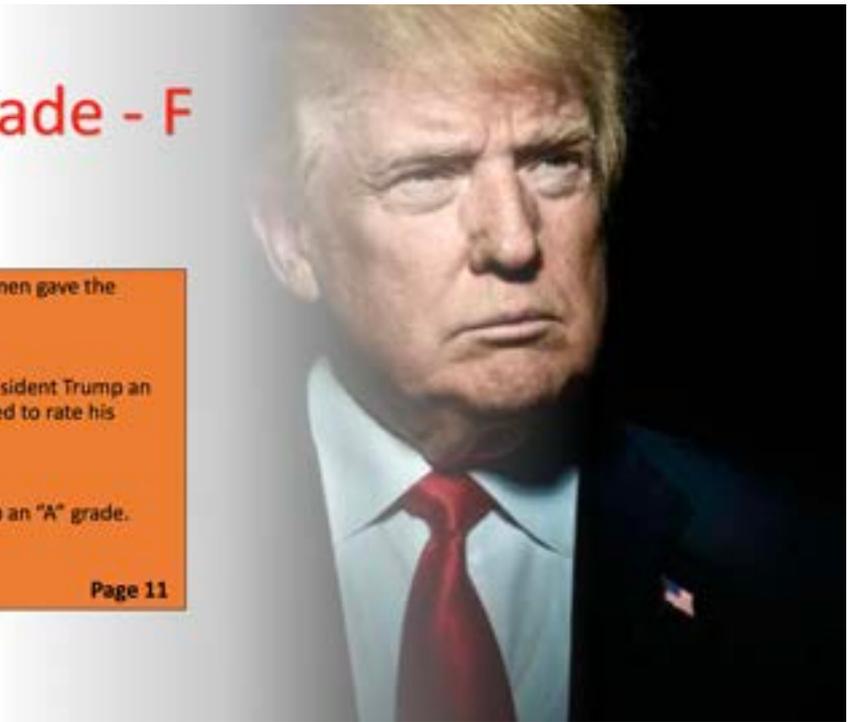


— Trump Grade - F

2020 Key Findings

- ✓ For the fourth year in a row, Black women gave the President a Failing Grade.
- ✓ In 2020, 80% of Black women gave President Trump an "F" and 10% gave him a "D" when asked to rate his performance.
- ✓ Only 1.5% of Black women gave Trump an "A" grade.

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— 2020 KEY FINDINGS

- If the 2020 Presidential Election were held today, fully 90% of Black women would vote for Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, while just 4% would vote for a Trump/Pence ticket.
- More than 3 out of 4 Black women plan to vote by mail/absentee or early vote (41%) or in person (35%).
- Nearly two-thirds of Black women are even more enthusiastic to vote given that the Supreme Court hangs in the balance.

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◆ Black Community priorities in the eyes of Black women has shifted even more starkly towards the need for survival. While the top three issues in 2020 are roughly the same as they were in 2019, the order and change in the level of intensity, suggests that Black women far and away perceive potential mortal threats as the top issues that threaten the community overall.

◆ Over the past 4 years (2017 - 2020) the poll reveals that Black women's priorities have shifted dramatically in the Trump Era. But under a Trump Administration, Black women are much more focused on base survival. Issues like Racism/Hate Crimes & Criminal Justice and Policing Reform are issues that literally cost Black lives.

◆ Under the Obama Era, the first 2 years of the poll (2015 & 2016) reveals that there was a greater focus on aspirational issues for Black women, addressing issues including - College Affordability and Student Loans, Quality Public Education and Paid Family Leave/Earned Sick Time.

Survival, Safety and Stability Top Black Community Concerns for Black Women

Most Important Issues (Participants Selected Top 3 from the List)	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
#1 Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes	58%	42%	55%	30%	--	--
#2 Criminal Justice and Policing Reform	47%	48%	51%	43%	--	--
#3 Affordable Healthcare	28%	47%	35%	48%	52%	49%
Equal Rights & Equal Pay	24%	42%	28%	58%	--	--
COVID 19	33%	--	--	--	--	--
Underemployment/Unemployment	23%	--	--	--	--	--
Affordable Housing/Gentrification	20%	31%	--	--	--	--
Gun Violence and Gun Safety	19%	35%	45%	--	--	--
Violence Against Women & Girls	14%	10%	--	--	--	--
College Affordability and Student Loans	12%	19%	14%	19%	30%	38%
Quality Public Education	11%	14%	26%	37%	31%	38%
Right to Reproductive Choices*	5%	8%	4%	3%	17%	17%
Quality Affordable Child Care	4%	3%	3%	--	--	--
Entrepreneurship Opportunity	4%	4%	8%	9%	8%	12%
Environmental Justice/Climate Change	2%	4%	3%	8%	--	--
2020 Decennial Census and 2021 Redistricting	2%	--	--	--	--	--
Immigration Reform	2%	3%	3%	--	--	--
Paid Family Leave/Earned Sick Time	1%	1%	3%	2%	11%	14%

Q: In your opinion, what are the top three (3) issues facing the Black community today? (Participants selected top three from the above list)

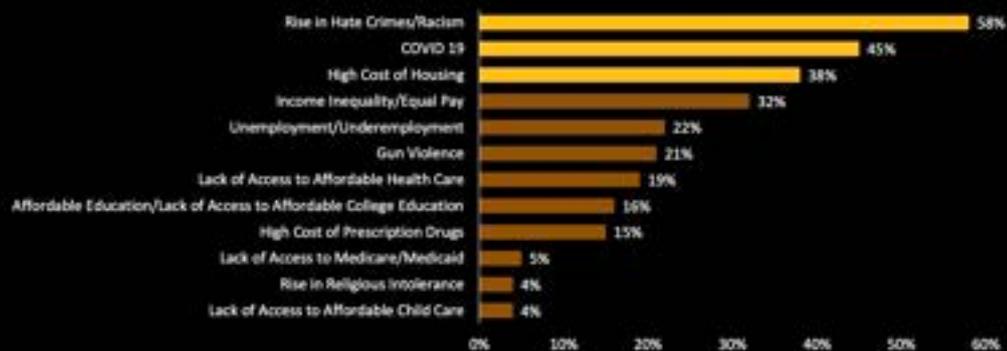
Young Black Women's Community Concerns

- ✓ Young Black Women 18-35 (Gen Z and Millennials) had similar priorities as their older counterparts.
- ✓ Racism/Rise in Hate Crimes was identified as the top issue of concern for both Gen Z's (57%) and Millennials (58%).
- ✓ Criminal Justice and Policing Reform were identified by Gen Z and Millennials as the second most critical issue. However, Millennials were significantly more likely than Gen Z to do so (45% vs. 33%).
- ✓ The two generations had different priorities for their third most important issue. For Gen Z, there was a three-way tie for 3rd priority including Affordable Healthcare, Unemployment/Underemployment and Violence Against Women & Girls (27%), while Millennials identified a singular issue as their third priority, Equal Rights & Equal Pay (37%).



Black Women Most Concerned About Racism/Hate Crimes, COVID19 & Housing

What are the top 3 things you believe are threatening you or your family?



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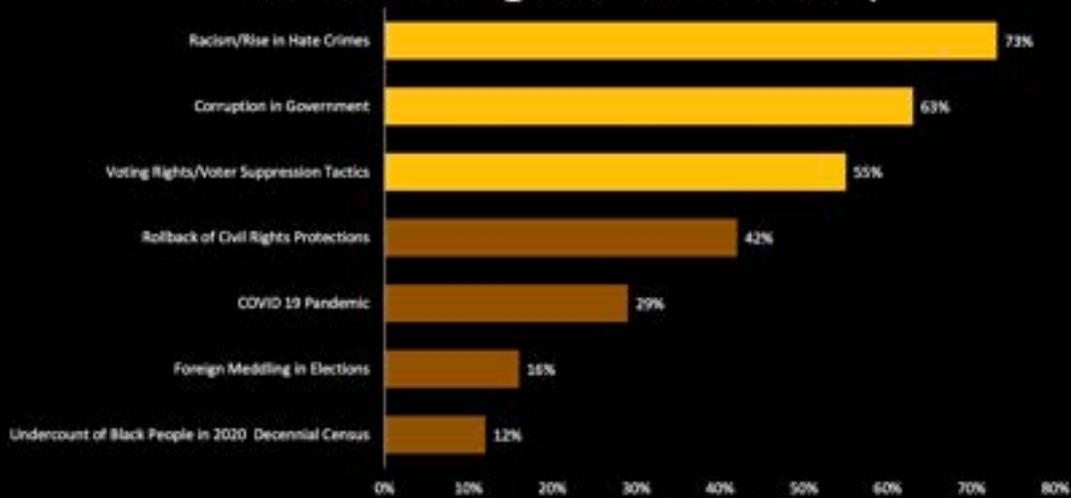
Young Black Women's Personal Concerns

- ✓ Young Black Women 18-35 (Gen Z and Millennials) had similar priorities as their older counterparts.
- ✓ The top issue of concern for Millennials is the Rise in Hate Crimes/Racism (52%);
- ✓ For Gen Z, the rise in Racism/ Hate Crimes & Lack of Affordable Housing were tied as the top issue (50% Respectively), followed by COVID (37%).
- ✓ Coming in 2nd For Millennials is Affordable House (46%) followed by COVID (39%).



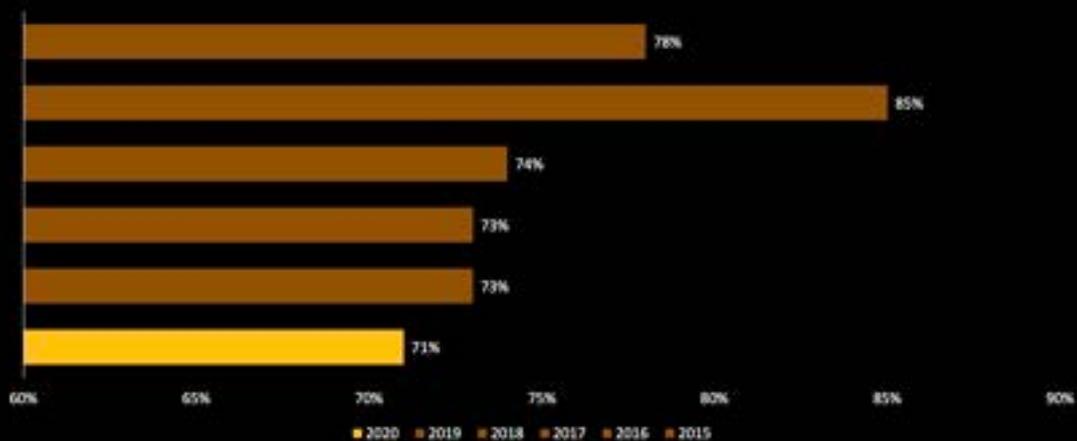
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Black Women Identify Top Challenges Threatening US Democracy



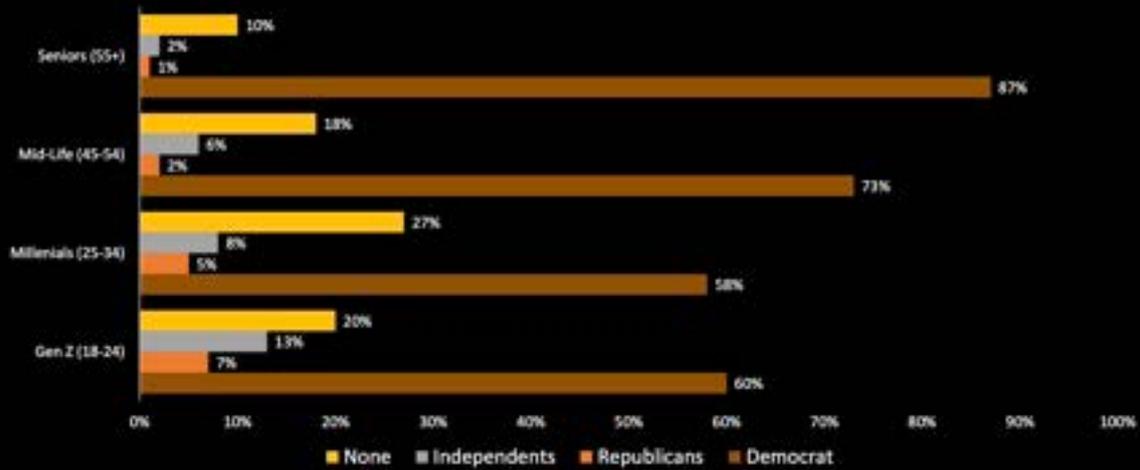
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Black Women's Confidence in Democratic Party Dropped Slightly



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Black Women's Confidence in Democratic Party Differ Significantly Across the Generations



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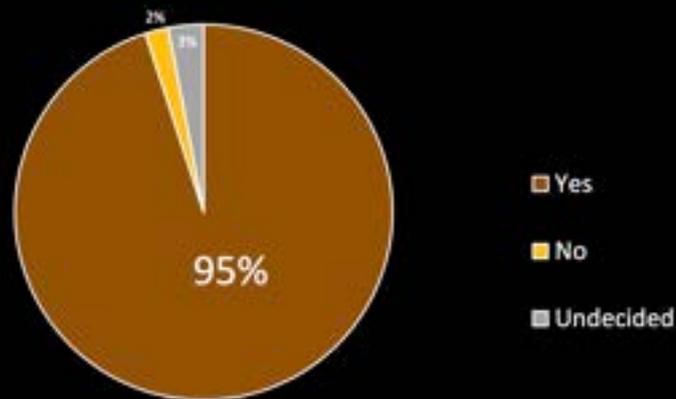
STILL FAILING, FOR FOURTH YEAR IN A ROW

*How would you rate President Trump's job performance over the past year?
What letter grade would you give him?*

Grade	2020	2019	2018	2017
F	80%	83%	82%	81%

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Black Women are Overwhelmingly Committed to Vote In 2020 Presidential Election



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Addressing Structural/Systemic Racism and Safety are Key Issues Driving Black Women Voters



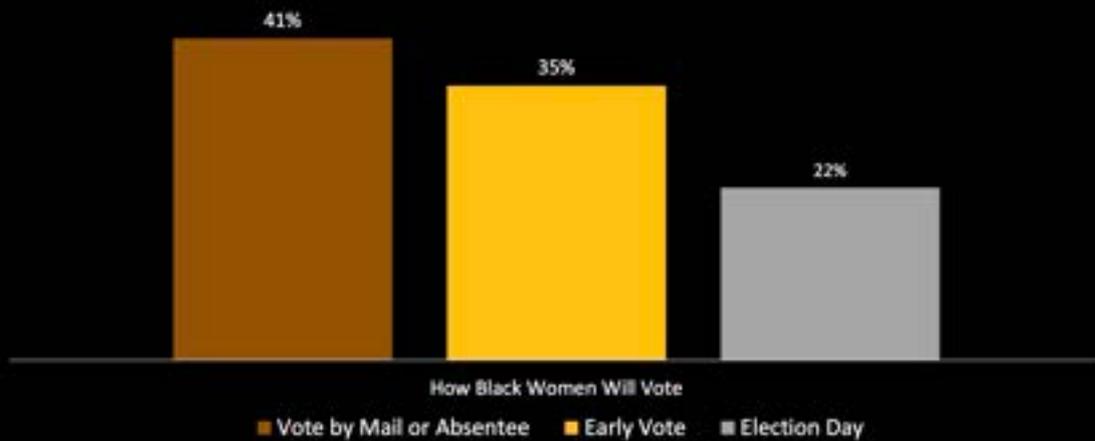
Key Issues Driving the Black Woman's Vote

Plan to Reduce Structural/Systematic Racism	49%
Policing/Criminal Justice Reforms	49%
Has Plans to Eradicate COVID 19	30%
Protect the Safety Net (Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security)	27%
Reduce Taxes for Low-income and Middle-income Families	23%
Reducing Unemployment / Underemployment	18%
Increase the Federal Minimum Wage to at least \$15 an Hour	16%
Address High Mortality Rate of Black Infants & Mothers	15%
Nomination of a Black woman to the Supreme Court	12%
Reproductive Justice / Healthcare Rights	10%
Adopt Common Sense Gun Safety Laws	10%
Support Reparations	10%
Support Full Funding of Violence Against Women Government Programs	8%
Policies to Protect Environment /Tackle Climate Change	7%

Q: I will vote for the Presidential Candidate that Commits to the Following Issues I Care About

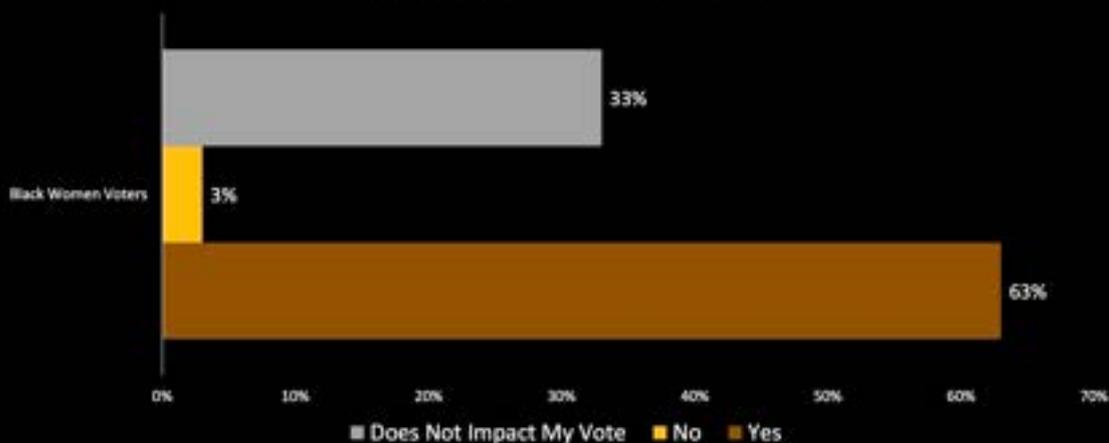
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Most Black Women Plan to Vote By Mail/Absentee or Early Vote in Person



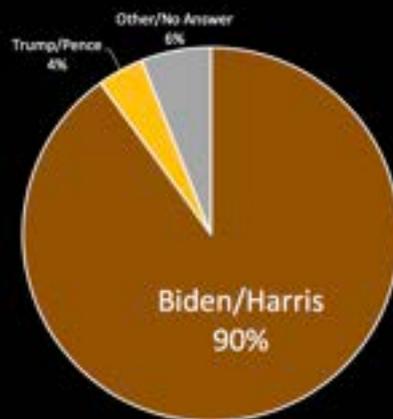
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Having the Supreme Court in the Balance Makes Black Women Even More Enthusiastic to Vote



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Black Women's Presidential Choice



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For more information contact:

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Black Women's Roundtable @
bwrunity@ncbcp.org or (202) 659-4929

Websites: unitycampaign.org

essence.com



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