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BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE



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# STATE OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE U. S. & KEY STATES, 2019

Centering Black Women & Girls  
Leadership and Public Policy  
Agenda in a Polarized  
Political Era



**BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE**

A signature program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

## 6TH ANNUAL REPORT

*It's Our Time to Lead, Rise & Shine*



A signature program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# **Black Women in the United States, 2019**

*“Centering Black Women & Girls Leadership & Public Policy Agenda in a Polarized Era”*

## **Executive Summary**

Black Women in the United States, 2019, is the sixth in an annual series of reports released by the Black Women’s Roundtable, specifically developed to examine the overall conditions and concerns of Black women throughout the nation. This year’s report uncovers where Black women stand, juxtaposed between a historic electoral season which resulted in record-breaking political representation and the beginning of a high-stakes Presidential race that includes an exceedingly diverse slate of candidates, including the third Black woman ever to launch a Presidential bid. In many ways, this historic moment seems to be one in which Black women are asserting their power like never before. Yet, they still face substantial challenges related to a wide ranging of deeply entrenched issues that have seen little movement over the years. This year’s report takes a deep look at this dichotomy, and shares a multifaceted analysis of just where Black women are now, where we’ve been, and where we’re going. The following is a selection of key findings:

### ***Black Women Make the Shift from Leading Voters to Political Power Brokers***

- During the 2018 Mid-Term election, record numbers of black women ran for political office at all levels of government. Motivated by a negative political climate and a lack of candidates addressing their concerns and issues, and uplifted by other black women, hundreds of black women filed their candidacy for political office in 2018. The positions they sought ran the gamut from local commissioners to governors and U.S. Representatives.
- The first black woman was elected to Congress 50 years ago when Shirley Chisholm was elected from a Congressional district in Brooklyn, New York. Fifty years later, there are 25 black women serving in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Five of the new black Congresswomen were elected to the U.S. House during the 2018 midterm election:

Jahana Hayes (CT), a teacher; Lucy McBath (GA), a gun control advocate; Ilhan Omar (MN), a state legislator; Ayanna Pressley (MA), a City Council Member; and Lauren Underwood (IL) a nurse. All are Democrats, and all, but one is 45 or younger.

- Unlike most of the first members of the Congressional Black Caucus, none represents a predominantly black district. Pressley's district has the largest percentage of blacks in the population—26.7—and Underwood has the smallest percentage of blacks—2.9. Another difference between the new Members and many of their CBC colleagues is that except for Pressley, the new Members' constituents are more likely to be suburban residents than urban dwellers.
- For the first time, a black woman ran a very credible race for governor, garnering 1,923,685 votes, 48.8 percent of the vote. Stacey Abrams came within 55,000 votes of winning in a state where her opponent, the Secretary of State, was accused of using tactics to suppress potential voters. Still, Abrams received 56 percent of the women's vote and 63 percent of votes from young people (persons 18-29). Nevertheless, this race highlighted the continuing impact of race on elections in the United States. Only one-fourth of all white voters voted for Abrams compared to 88 percent of nonwhite people.
- Four African Americans won lieutenant governor's races, but only one of the positions was won by a woman. Illinois elected its third woman lieutenant governor, Juliana Stratton (D), but she is the first African American to hold that position. She joined two other black women who were already serving as lieutenant governors in New Jersey--Sheila Oliver (D) and Kentucky--Jenean Hampton (R). Another big state level victory for Black women was the election of Letitia James, an African American woman, as Attorney General for the State of New York.
- One of the most exciting victories for black women during the 2018 electoral cycle was the election of 17 black women as judges in Harris County, Texas after a campaign labeled "Black Girl Magic." The 17 joined two black women Harris County judges who lost races for the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, but retained their local judgeships.
- Currently, there are seven Black women mayors who over 7 of the 100 largest cities in America, and come April, the city of Chicago will be joining the list as two Black women advanced to a runoff election to become the next Mayor, only the second Black Mayor in the city's history, and the first that will be a Black woman.

## ***Why Black Women Vote and What They Want***

- As part of its Unity'18 Campaign, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation conducted its 2018 Election Day Exit Poll of Black Women Voters. Over 1800 surveys were collected in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Michigan, and Mississippi.
- In the 2018 Midterms, the country experienced its highest voter turnout in 50 years. Four years prior, in the 2014 Midterms, it experienced the lowest in 72 years. In both years, Black voters showed up in proportions consistent to their population. We attribute this consistency to the strong sense of responsibility that Black voters have to voting, in particular Black women. In 2014, 2016, and 2018, more than 74% of Black women voters reported voting out of a sense of responsibility rather than to support a specific candidate.
- In 2018, Florida provided the first deviation from the responsibility motivation for Black women voters. In Florida, 43% of Black women indicated they came out to vote for a ballot initiative, 18% for a particular candidate and 38% out of a sense of responsibility. We attributed this shift in voter motivation to the tremendous effort of Amendment 4, which not only received more than 5 million votes, the highest of any other item on the Florida ballot, but it was also led by trusted Black leaders with deep roots in the Florida community.
- In our 2018 Exit Poll, we asked two questions to ascertain Black women's priorities, the first to rate the overall importance of an issue and the second to identify specific federal policies priorities for the President and the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Over seventy-percent (70%) of Black women surveyed rated the following issues as very important: Affordable Health Care; Criminal Justice/Policing Reform; Equal Rights and Equal Pay; Hate Crimes/Racism; Jobs/Employment; and Voting Rights.
- Black women made it clear that their top policy priorities were Protecting the Safety Net Programs (Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid) as well as access to Affordable Healthcare, as Fifty-percent (50%) of Black women surveyed



identified protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as their top policy priority and one-third (33%) identified protecting Affordable Healthcare as their second highest policy priority.

- Protecting the safety net was important to Black women of all ages as Millennial and Gen Z Black women also valued these policies. Forty-nine percent (49%) of Millennial Black women (ages 25-34) identified Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as their top policy priority; and thirty-two percent (32%) identified protecting Affordable Healthcare as their second highest policy priority. But Black women representing Gen Z (18 – 24 years old), prioritized Affordable Healthcare (51%) as their top policy priority, followed by protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security (31%) as their second highest policy priority.

### ***Black Women Still Economically Fragile***

- Black Women face a double economic barrier—the persistent devaluing of black women’s work that results in lower wages, economic instability, and expanding income inequality, and less overall wealth that limits their ability to strengthen and build their economic sustainability over the long term.
- In 2017, black women’s labor force participation rate was 60.3 percent compared to a little over 56 percent for white women, Asian American women, and Latinas, yet their work does not pay off in the same way.
- Black women working full-time, year-round workers earned only 61 cents for every dollar earned by white male workers compared to 77 cents for white women, 85 cents for Asian American women, and 53 cents for Latinas. This disparity can have lifetime effects — black women stand to lose an estimated \$946,120 over a 40-year career due to the wage gap.
- Black women are less likely than white women to occupy higher-level jobs, which tend to offer better benefits, greater mobility, and economic stability, and black women are more than twice as likely to work in lower paying service sector jobs than white women. In 2017, for example, 23.2% of black women workers worked in service occupations, compared to 11.6% of white women workers. Further, data suggest that these gaps for black women are growing – median weekly earnings in

2007 were 17 percent higher for white women than black women, but by 2017, median weekly earnings were 21 percent higher for white women than black women.

- More than 70 percent of black mothers are either the sole or primary breadwinners for their families, and another 14.7 percent are co-breadwinners in their families.
- Low-wage workers – many of whom are black women — are far less likely to have key employee benefits. As a result, Black women often have to spend more of their income to maintain their households. Black women with family caregiving responsibilities are estimated to spend as much as 41 percent of their annual income on caregiving-related expenses such as medical and travel expenses compared to white caregivers – male and female combined – who spend an estimated 14 percent of their income.
- Black women are disproportionately targeted by discriminatory behavior at work. Research examining sexual harassment claims filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission between 2012 and 2016, for example, found that black women were three times more likely to file sexual harassment claims than white, non-Hispanic women. Other research analyzing workplace discrimination claims indicate that many of the jobs where black women disproportionately work have higher rates of discrimination claim filings on issues such as pay discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Black women experience an enormous wealth gap when compared to white women. Tools often used for building wealth such as education, marriage and home ownership do little to reduce these stark disparities. In 2013, the median wealth for single black women without a bachelor's degree was just \$500 compared to \$8,000 for white women without a bachelor's degree. This gap persists even as black women experience educational gains. In fact, married black women with college degrees have less than half as much wealth as married white women *without* college degrees. Furthermore, data reveal that the wealth gap between similarly situated black and white women actually expands as they approach retirement age. Single black women in their 40s with college degrees have 24 percent of the wealth as their white counterparts (\$6,000 vs. \$25,000). But, by the time they reach 60, single black women have just 2 percent of the wealth of their white counterparts (\$11,000 vs \$384,000).
- To combat the wealth gap effectively, it is critical to address multiple factors that compound on one another. Increasing wages of black women is significant, but it

must be accompanied by access to better benefits. Black women must have access to quality and affordable healthcare to reduce unexpected costs. There also must be a new focus on strategies to address the overall lack of savings available to black women, from targeted efforts to increase participation in traditional 401(k) retirement vehicles and the stock market, to ensuring that black women have a fair opportunity to purchase homes, to developing alternative asset-building vehicles. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that government officials at all levels fully enforce anti-discrimination and consumer protection laws.

### ***Increased Wages Essential for Lifting the Economic Well-Being of Black Women***

- The Raise the Wage Act would gradually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024 and then index the wage to increases in the median wage to ensure that low wage workers will see the same rate of improvement in life as other middle - income workers. The Act also eliminates the tip minimum wage and gives full protection to workers with disabilities. Because of the low wages paid to Black women, relative to other workers, this Act disproportionately raises the wages of Black women.
- It's been estimated that 31.5% of Black women would get a raise from the Act, and another 9.5% would likely get a boost because they work at wages close to \$15 an hour and work among workers who will get a boost. As a result, roughly 40% of Black women would receive a wage increase if that bill became law.
- Almost half of Black workers live in states that have failed to raise their minimum wage above \$7.25, while over half of Americans are living in places where the minimum wage is already above \$7.25.

### ***Black Women and Retirement Insecurity***

- Economic fragility in working years, means a disproportionate reliance on Social Security among African Americans and particularly Black women. According to the Social Security Administration, in 2016, the average annual Social Security income received by Black women was \$13,426 as compared to \$14,994 received by Black men. And for unmarried Black seniors, a disproportionate number of whom are

women, Social Security accounts for 90 percent or more of their income. As a result, for Black women especially, Social Security remains an economic lifeline, and ultimately the last line of defense between just making it and complete destitution.

- It is likely because of the critical importance of Social Security along with the perceived threat to its existence at a time of skyrocketing deficits, that Black women indicated that protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security was their top policy priority for the 115<sup>th</sup> U.S. Congress in responding to the 2018 Black Women's Roundtable/Essence Survey.

### ***Black Maternal Mortality Remains Critical, But Change is Possible***

- The United States is the only developed country where the maternal mortality rate has increased over the past two decades. When looking at black women specifically, maternal mortality is four times that of white women, and in some localities much worse. In New York City, for example, it is estimated that the rate of death during childbirth for black women is 12 times higher than their white counterparts.
- Black women “from all socio-economic backgrounds, experience higher rates of preterm births and infant mortality” than other women, suggesting that income is not the sole driving factor for poor infant health. For example, well-educated, high income, professional Black women have the same maternal mortality rates as white women who have less than an 8th grade education.
- The top complaint Black women have during and after childbirth is that their providers (MDs and nurses) didn't listen to them when they tried repeatedly to tell them something was wrong.
- A key factor related to maternal mortality could be lack of proximity to medical care. A recent March of Dimes Study found that 5 million women live in counties considered “maternity care deserts,” with no hospital offering obstetric care and no obstetric providers. An additional [10 million](#) live in counties with limited access to maternity care.

- Other nations — and [California](#), an anomaly among the 50 states — have reversed pregnancy-related death trends. If they can do it, the rest of the nation can too. But to do so would require prioritizing studying the crisis and searching for solutions.

## ***Discipline Disparities Plague Black Girls' K-12 Education***

- According to the most recent federal data, Black girls' 12% suspension rate is much higher than girls of any other race and most boys; and research shows that dark girls are suspended and expelled more harshly than those with lighter skin.
- National statistics from U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, 2013-2014 Civil Right Data Collection show that: Black girls are 5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school as white girl; Black girls are more likely than any other race or gender to be suspended more than once; Schools are 3.5 times more likely to suspend Black girls with disabilities than white girls with disabilities
- Studies continue to show that teachers, administrators, and policymakers often overlook Black girls. Educators of all races and the students themselves often internalize negative stereotypes that impede effective ways to combat barriers.
- To help educators get past their own implicit biases and students' defenses, cultural competence training is recommended. To help students transition from defense mode to relationship building, self-awareness and cultural awareness, and an overall positive feeling about themselves is foundational for everything else.
- Mentorship also helps to disrupt the negative narrative many Black girls may be internalizing, by providing them access to the wisdom, experiences, and the survival skills of their elders.



## ***Black Girls Too, Impacted by the School-to-Prison Pipeline***

- Black girls and young Black women comprise just 14% of the general youth population, yet they comprise fully one third of girls and young women being detained and committed within the juvenile system.
- Data also suggest that 85% of the LGBT/gender-nonconforming girls in the juvenile justice system are girls of color, and that Black girls in this category are incarcerated at higher rates than white girls.

## ***HBCUs are Rising, and So Are Black Women in Higher Education***

- Today, Black women sit at the helm of roughly one-third of all HBCUs, as they serve as President of 31 of the nation's 105 Historically Black Colleges or Universities.
- The most recent federal data tracking college enrollment finds that as of Fall 2017, the nation's HBCU's have experienced a 2.1 percent increase from the previous year, after years of declining enrollment, while enrollments in all colleges and universities have continued their multi-year decline.
- Black women continue to lead Black male enrollment at HBCUs, as they do at colleges and universities overall, so much so, that this most recent enrollment gain at HBCUs can be fully attributed to the rise in Black women's representation on college campuses, as Black male enrollees have decreased during this same period
- According to research by Purdue University and Gallup, Black graduates of HBCUs tend to fair better in the post-college experiences than do Blacks who graduate from Predominately White Institutions, HBCU graduates were more likely to indicate that they outperformed their non-HBCU counterparts across a variety of indicators, including financial well-being (40% vs. 29%), social well-being (54% vs. 48%), physical well-being (33% vs. 28%), community well-being (42% vs. 38%) and living with a sense of purpose (51% vs. 43%). That said, as HBCUs rise, it stands to reason that so too will those who choose this path as their conduit to the college educational experience.

- Overall, Black women continue to excel in degree-attainment. During the 2016-17 academic year, Black women earned 67 percent of all associate's degrees earned by Blacks; 64 percent of all bachelor's degrees to earned by Blacks; 70 percent of all master's degrees earned by Blacks; 68 percent of all research doctorates awarded to Blacks and 65 percent of all professional practice doctorate degrees earned by Blacks.

## ***Black Women Uniquely Vulnerable to Domestic Violence***

- One of the leading causes of death for Black women aged 15-35 is domestic/intimate partner violence.<sup>i</sup> Although Black women comprise only 8% of the population, compared to 30% for white women, Black women are almost three times as likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence.<sup>ii</sup> Despite the prevalence of domestic violence in the lives of Black women, they are less likely to seek help and more likely to fight back.
- Where the relationship could be determined, 93% of Black women who were killed by men in single victim/singe offender incidents knew their killers.
- More than 13 times as many Black women were murdered by a man they knew than were killed by a stranger.
- Of Black victims who knew their offenders, 58% of Black victims who knew their offenders were wives, common law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.
- 91% of the homicides of Black females were intra-racial
- Domestic violence researchers surmise that Black women remain in volatile relationships longer than abused women of other races because Black women don't feel safe in the systems designated to help abuse victims, such as law enforcement or event women's shelters.
- From the police to jurors, the legal system is less likely to sympathize or even process the idea of Black female victims. A Black woman is 80% more likely to be convicted for killing her abuser

## ***Immigration is a Black Issue***

- It is estimated that at least 30% of the population in the United States who are eligible for DACA, are Black.
- There are 13 countries that had Temporary Protected Status at the beginning of 2017. Nine of those countries have lost this immigration status or have terminations pending, all at the hands of President Trump. Seven of these are Black majority countries; including around 70,000 people from Haiti, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.
- According to a report issued by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), there was a 140% increase in removals of Africans in 2017.

## ***Digital Discrimination Create a New Barrier for Black Women***

- Companies are using algorithms to analyze data of perspective employees to determine more desirable hires. The algorithms would use past data to understand what will be successful in the future. These algorithms determined that females were promoted less frequently, tended to leave the job quickly and got fewer raises. It would then conclude that men are better hires, which perpetuating the historical gender bias of men as better employers.
- In many cases, Black women are the heads of their households and provide the sole household income. The effects of algorithmic discrimination in employment and housing can have long-ranging negative consequences on Black women and their families by crippling their ability to obtain the generational wealth that is achieved from higher-paying jobs that allow them increased opportunities for financial savings, investments and real estate acquisitions that could be passed along to current family members and future generations.
- Search engines and social media sites are not the only platforms where algorithms are used that discriminate against Black women. Financial institutions, insurance companies, education and the health care industry all use digital algorithms to determine the services, attention and care they provide to Black women.
- Algorithms used by big tech companies and other industries contribute to racial profiling and the systemic and institutional sexism, racism and discrimination that

marginalizes Black women and makes them vulnerable victims to these algorithms' ability to decrease opportunities for employment, housing, credit, education and health care—which harms the economic wealth and well-being of Black women, their families and communities.

## ***Black Women Still Underrepresented, Underfunded in Tech & STEM***

- Despite comprising 14.5% of the overall American private industry workforce, African Americans only account for 2.6% of Silicon Valley's labor pool. Contrast that to the fact that “in 2014 to 2015, black students earning a bachelor's degree in science, technology, engineering and mathematics accounted for 7.1 percent of graduates in those fields, according to the Department of Education.” Not to mention the countless others who graduated with degrees in marketing, law, communications, human resources, or other professions frequently dubbed “soft skills” that Silicon Valley companies also must fill.
- Across the country, Black women “comprise 4% of all female entrepreneurs running tech startups in the United States,” yet they are the nation's fastest-growing demographic of entrepreneurs. But in tech, they are the least likely to get funding from venture capitalists.
- According to a 2018 report by Project Diane, a biennial demographic study conducted by [Digital Undivided](#) on entrepreneurial trends among Black Women, “since 2009, Black women-led startups have raised \$289 Million in venture/angel funding, with a significant portion of that raised in 2017. This represents .0006% of the \$424.7 billion in total tech venture funding raised since 2009.”
- The number of Black women “who have received more than \$1 million in investment is growing, [but] the number is still small. In 2015, there were 12 black women who had raised more than \$1 million in funding...in 2017, there were 34.” The average raised by those who raised less than \$1million is only \$42,000, a 15% increase since 2016.

# 2019 Black Women's Roundtable

## Organizing, Empowerment & Policy Priorities

By

**Melanie L. Campbell**

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National Convener, Black Women's Roundtable

The Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) serves as the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation's leadership development, mentoring, intergenerational empowerment and power building arm for Black women and girls. The Black Women's Roundtable is at the forefront of championing just and equitable public policies that centers racial, economic and gender justice to promote health and wellness, economic security and prosperity, quality public education and global empowerment for and with Black women & girls in the South and key states including: AL, FL, GA, MI, MS, NC, OH, PA and the DC/MD/VA area.

In 2008, *BWR established its Intergenerational National Policy & Organizing Network*, a diverse group of Black women civic leaders representing international, national, regional, and state-based organizations and institutions to plan, strategize and implement its public policy, empowerment, power building and community engagement programs, campaigns and initiatives.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual BWR Report, ["Black Women in the U.S., & Key States 2018"](#) revealed that, "Black Women are Still the Foundation of Black Family Financial Power. For most Black women, work is not an option, it's a necessary precondition for survival for themselves and their families. As a result, some 70% of Black women are primary breadwinners for their family unit. This compares to only 24% of White women who are the critical lynchpin in their family's economic well-being. Even beyond primary breadwinning status, fully three-quarters (75%) of Black women who are breadwinners, are themselves the *sole* source of income for their families. Over half (55%) of all Black families with children are headed by a single mother. And among single mother-headed families, fully 46% live in poverty. In the face of over-representation in low-wage work, labor unions continue to be a key conduit to living wages and crucial benefits for Black women."

Further, "Black women are overrepresented in the public employee sector that is under attack, among those who are disabled, in poverty and in the criminal justice system. As immigrants, Black people and other people of color are disproportionately targeted for deportation and have a high level of difficulty entering the country in search of sanctuary."



To address the above challenges, The NCBCP's BWR will implement its *2019 BWR Racial, Economic & Gender Justice Empowerment Project* (BWR Justice Project '19) and expand its BWR state-based networks in CA, LA, MS and other states.

The National Coalition and BWR are on the verge of an exciting transition that roots our work firmly on the frontlines of change in this country. By prioritizing Black women-led organizing and focusing more intensively on the South and other key states, we are headed in a vital new direction that will help amplify the voices and power of communities deeply affected in this uncertain political climate.

**Over the next 12 months, the BWR Justice '19 Project will:**

- Focus on engaging the powerful intergenerational voices of Black women & girls to educate local, state and national leaders on importance of enacting public policies to improve economic opportunity, quality of employment and public education for black women, families and communities.
- Promote quality of life policies to secure health justice, affordable healthcare, raising minimum wage, protect Medicaid, Medicare & Social Security, reducing price of prescription drugs and other safety net federal and state-based policies.
- Promote the adoption of work/family and equity policies for women and working families to achieve economic security and prosperity now and for future generations including paid family leave, paid sick days, equal rights and equal pay.
- Develop national, state, local and state-based organizing campaigns and develop long-term strategies to win on our issues in key states in a racially polarized environment including criminal justice/policing, reform, hate crimes/racism, voting rights/protecting our democracy, immigration reform and more.

**The Black Women's Roundtable will also launch its *SiSTAR Power Women's Empowerment Initiative*** (BWR SiSTAR Power Project) in 2019 and will take to scale its women's economic empowerment and leadership development initiatives dedicated to empowering Black and underserved women to include: 1) SiSTAR Power - Take It To The TOP HBCU and Community College Women's Entrepreneurship Challenge; 2) Take it to the TOP Leaders Fellowship & Retreat; and 3) SiSTAR Power "Healthy, Wealthy, Wise" Online and Community Engagement Initiative.

**The NCBCP will build upon its BWR *Power of the Sister Vote Non-Partisan Campaign*** in 2019, to ensure the Black women's vote and leadership is respected and our issues are front and center in the 2020 Presidential Election Cycle. The BWR will also engage the 2020 presidential candidates by fielding its forth presidential candidates questionnaire to find out what their vision is for the nation and share their presidential platforms. The questionnaire responses will be utilized to help to develop the 2020 BWR's Presidential Election Voter Guide to be released prior to the first presidential primary in November 2019.

# Black Women & Politics:

## *Where We Now Stand*

# Black Women Break Racial & Gender Barriers in 2018 Midterm Election Cycle

By:

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After years of being ignored by many political leaders, black women found themselves in the political spotlight in 2018. Black women had shown their political muscle, first by outvoting other demographic groups on 2008 and 2012, and later by fielding successful black female candidates for local and federal elections and being the power behind other successful candidates. Nevertheless, black women were not being recognized for their political power.

During the 2018 Mid-Term election, record numbers of black women ran for political office at all levels of government. Motivated by a negative political climate and a lack of candidates addressing their concerns and issues, and uplifted by other black women, hundreds of black women filed their candidacy for political office in 2018. The positions they sought ran the gamut from local commissioners to governors and U.S. Representatives.

Some were veterans running for reelection after many years of public service like U.S. Representative Maxine Waters. Some like Sheila Tyson, a five-year veteran Birmingham, Alabama City Council member, ran for a higher position (County Commissioner) and won. Beverly Chester-Burton who had served 10 years on the City Council and had lost a race for mayor in 2008, was elected the first African American mayor of Shively, Kentucky. Others were first time candidates like Paula Dance who ran for sheriff in Pitt County, North Carolina after the incumbent sheriff decided not to seek a third term, and Merleyn Bell, a first-time candidate, won a seat in the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

The first black woman was elected to Congress 50 years ago when Shirley Chisholm was elected from a Congressional district in Brooklyn, New York. Fifty years later, there are 25 black women serving in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Five of the new black Congresswomen were elected to the U.S. House during the 2018 midterm election: Jahana Hayes (CT), a teacher; Lucy McBath (GA), a gun control advocate; Ilhan Omar (MN), a state legislator; Ayanna Pressley (MA), a City Council Member; and Lauren

Underwood (IL) a nurse. All are Democrats, and all, but one is 45 or younger. Prior to the November election, the youngest black female Congress member was Mia Love from Utah. Love, the only Republican, was defeated in her run for a second term.

Three of the five new Members had not served in an elected position prior to being elected to Congress. Unlike most of the first members of the Congressional Black Caucus, none represents a predominantly black district. Pressley's district has the largest percentage of blacks in the population—26.7—and Underwood has the smallest percentage of blacks—2.9. Another difference between the new Members and many of their CBC colleagues is that except for Pressley, the new Members' constituents are more likely to be suburban residents than urban dwellers.

Black women still do not hold many positions at the state executive level. Most of the black women who ran in statewide races lost. The most high-profile race was the Georgia governor's election. For the first time, a black woman ran a very credible race for governor, garnering 1,923,685 votes, 48.8 percent of the vote. Stacey Abrams came within 55,000 votes of winning in a state where her opponent, the Secretary of State, was accused of using tactics to suppress potential voters.

Abrams ran on issues that resonated with her constituents, especially black women. She received 56 percent of the women's vote and 63 percent of votes from young people (persons 18-29). Nevertheless, this race highlighted the continuing impact of race on elections in the United States. Only one-fourth of all white voters voted for Abrams compared to 88 percent of nonwhite people. Persons who were using their vote to show approval of Trump overwhelmingly voted for Kemp (Abrams' opponent). Conversely, persons who were using their vote to show disapproval of Trump overwhelmingly voted for Abrams.

Abrams' performance in the gubernatorial race has elevated her standing nationally, and has inspired and motivated women throughout the country. There are calls for her to run for Senator and for President of the United States. She was selected to give the opposition party response to the State of the Union address--the first black woman to deliver the official response.

Four African Americans won lieutenant governor's races, but only one of the positions was won by a woman. Illinois elected its third woman lieutenant governor, Juliana Stratton (D), but she is the first African American to hold that position. She joined two other black women who were already serving as lieutenant governors in New Jersey--Sheila Oliver (D) and Kentucky--Jenean Hampton (R). In Oklahoma, Anastasia Pittman won the Democratic primary in Oklahoma, but was defeated in the general election.

There were no victories for black women in races for Secretary of State. The importance of this position has become evident since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was weakened through the ruling in the Supreme Court case of *Shelby v. Holder* in 2013. The Secretary of State serves as the chief elections officer for a state. In Georgia, the black woman candidate failed to make it to the general election, and in Iowa, a black woman won the Democratic primary, but lost in the general election. In Louisiana, a black woman made it to the runoff where she lost the election.

One of the big victories at the state level was the election of Letitia James, an African American woman, as Attorney General for the State of New York. The New York Attorney General's position is considered the most powerful or one of the most powerful law enforcement positions in the U.S. This office is expected to be engaged in some of the investigations of misconduct by members of the present Administration or persons connected to the President. James held the position of New York City Public Advocate prior to winning this election.

Black women scored another statewide position with the election of Sandra Kennedy as a Arizona Corporation Commissioner in Arizona. This commission is commonly known as the Public Service Commission or the Public Utility Commission in other states. Kennedy had previously held the position, but was defeated in 2012.

London Breed, the first black woman mayor of San Francisco, was elected in a special election after the sudden death of Mayor Ed Lee. Breed was the San Francisco Board of Supervisors president, and accordingly, was appointed acting mayor after Lee's death. A month later, she was replaced after she announced her candidacy for mayor. Questions were raised about the decision, with some charging racism. Nevertheless, she persisted after a runoff election.

One of the most exciting victories for black women during the 2018 electoral cycle was the election of 17 black women as judges in Harris County, Texas after a campaign labeled "Black Girl Magic". The 17 joined two black women Harris County judges who lost races for the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, but retained their local judgeships.

The 2018 elections were historical for black women at all levels of government as black women ran for office, managed campaigns, held successful political fundraisers, mobilized their communities and got out the vote. The results were some high-profile victories and many other victories that did not make the headlines. The victories have created excitement throughout the country and are expected to be motivating factors in increasing the number of black women candidates and in getting black women, black men and other women out to the polls in 2020.



# A Black Woman Will Make History in Chicago Mayoral Race

By:

**Ebony Baylor**

Director of Civic Engagement  
National Urban League

Essence Magazine dubbed 2017 the “Year of Black Women Mayors in the United States”<sup>iii</sup>. According to the Center for American Women and Politics, there are currently seven black women mayors who oversee seven of the largest 100 cities in our country. The city of Chicago will be joining this list by electing its first Black woman mayor on April 2nd.

Lori Lightfoot and Toni Preckwinkle advanced to the runoff election from a crowded general election field of 14 candidates, which came as somewhat of a surprise<sup>iv</sup>. Many predicted that Bill Daley, the son of former mayor Richard Daley, would make the runoff<sup>v</sup>. They were wrong.

What to expect? The Chicago Tribune has called the runoff election “a showdown between two self-styled progressives” while other sources have called this “a showdown between the established machine candidate and the progressive bent on bringing ethics reform”<sup>vi</sup>.

The platforms of each candidate has been shaped by community organizing calling for reform in the areas of education, police accountability, racial and economic equity.

Who is Lori Lightfoot? Lori Lightfoot rose as the frontrunner in the general election receiving 17.5 percent of the vote<sup>vii</sup>. She has positioned herself as the alternative to the Chicago machine politics because she has never held elected office. Of note, she was appointed to positions by Richard Daley and Rahm Emanuel that focused on criminal justice reform<sup>viii</sup>.

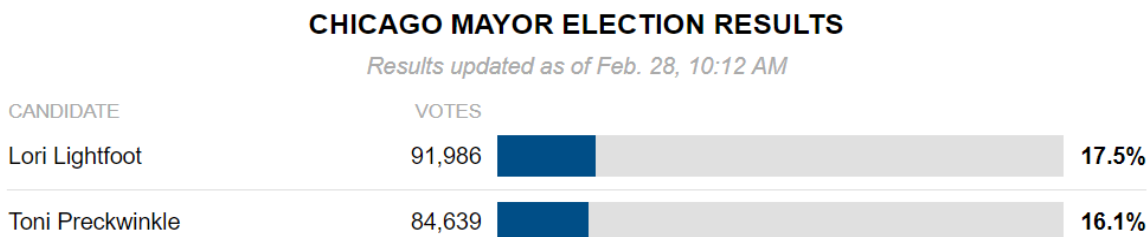
Lightfoot is a first-time candidate who worked as prosecutor and is vocal about social justice issues in Chicago. As chair of the Police Accountability Task Force, Lightfoot’s report released after the death of Laquan McDonald showed there was systematic racism of the police department and the community lacked trust in the department<sup>ix</sup>. Lightfoot is also an openly gay woman, so her presence in the race gives those who are LGBTQ+ the hope that their issues would be addressed.

Who is Toni Preckwinkle? Toni Preckwinkle has worked in Chicago politics for decades. She currently serves a head of the Cook County Democratic Party and prior to her current position, served as an Alderman in Ward 4 of Chicago for 20 years<sup>x</sup>. Her position with the Cook County Democratic Party led to an 64% increase of people of color being endorsed by the party and 72% more countywide minorities being elected as a result of her endorsements<sup>xi</sup>.

Before entering politics, she worked as school teacher, an experience that has shaped her policies on education and on gun reform.

Both candidates have platforms that are considered progressive with expanding access to affordable housing and legalizing marijuana.

## The Election Results



Source: Chicago Tribune

When looking at the election results, Lightfoot has an inclusive base of support with a racially-diverse electorate. She did well in Lakefront wards of the North Side, an area considered liberal, winning four of the six wards<sup>xii</sup>. She also won three wards that were racially mixed and two predominantly white wards in North Side<sup>xiii</sup>. Only 29% of Black voters choose Lightfoot as their candidate.

Preckwinkle, who received 49.7% of the Black vote, also won the majority Black wards. Her voting base includes the area where she served as Alderman and Hyde Park in South Chicago.

It should be noted that three wards Preckwinkle won, Lightfoot finished second.

Turning to fundraising, Lightfoot only raised \$1.5 million for this race, which included \$267,000 of her own money<sup>xiv</sup>. Preckwinkle raised \$4.6 million with 2 million coming from SEIU and additional dollars coming from the Chicago Teachers Union<sup>xv</sup>.

The turnout in general election was low with only 32.95% of voters casting their ballots. The city has not seen turnout this low turnout since 2007 where it hit only 33%. The turnout in Chicago has been up to over 82% when voters elected the first Black mayor, Harold Washington, in 1983<sup>xvi</sup>. When the turnout is low, every vote counts and who wins can be determined by a razor-thin margin. As the candidates are prepping for the April 2nd election, they have 67% of registered voters to appeal to and get them out to vote.

Some voters did not vote in the general election because of the crowded field, so a two-candidate race that will make history could organically move some voters to the polls<sup>xvii</sup>. As the candidates prepare for the April 2nd Election, the Black vote is being courted by both candidates. Leaders in the Black community of Chicago have made it clear that they hold the candidates accountable for the promises made in exchange for their votes<sup>xviii</sup>.

Preckwinkle will continue to work her Black base in West and South Chicago while Lightfoot will work look to pick up some Black votes from other mayoral candidates who have endorsed her<sup>xix</sup>. She will continue to work her liberal base that voted for her in the general election<sup>xx</sup>.

After the election of Donald Trump, Black voters especially Black women, moved to local government to see change in their community<sup>xxi</sup>. Local elections matter because in some communities, like Chicago, Blacks make up a large portion on the electorate and high turnout will decide who wins the election<sup>xxii</sup>. Also, since local elections have a small pool of voters and access to that local representative is relatively easy, the elected representative is normally more beholden to those who voted in their election and resource allocation goes to the highest voting bloc<sup>xxiii</sup>.

As Black women mobilize for this runoff election, we must remind our community that all politics are local and if they want to be counted, they must vote. It is our job to vote in all elections AND advocate once the election has been decided. Descriptive representation matters but it is only effective if the impact is substantive.

# Understanding 2018 to Prepare for 2020: Black Women Continue to Be a Voting Force

By:

**Holli Holiday**

President & CEO, Holiday Advisors  
Senior Political & Data Advisor, NCBCP

In 2018, the United States experienced the highest level of Midterm Election voter turnout in more than 50 years with more than 118 million people voting, including more than 13 million Black voters. <sup>xxivxxxv</sup> Despite reports to the contrary, Black voters continue to vote on pace, and in some states, outpace their percent share of the population, even as the country experiences historic turnout over all. In short, Black people showed up to vote in 2018.

As part of its Unity'18 Campaign, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation conducted its 2018 Election Day Exit Poll of Black Women Voters. Over 1800 surveys were collected in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Michigan, and Mississippi. As in past years, our goal is to track voting experiences, gauge importance of key issues and understand national policy priorities for Black women. The more research that is done, the more we understand the importance of issues as a driving force for Black women voters. This poll, as well as the 2018 Essence/Black Women's Roundtable *Power of the Sister Vote* Survey, has helped to inform the 2019 Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) National Policy Agenda.

The National Coalition, through its BWR work, remains committed to driving priorities for Black women based on our research as well as through our daily civic engagement work in Black communities. We don't do this work alone, but rather through our extensive network of partners and allies. In particular, we thank the following for contributing to this analysis:

Alabama Coalition on Black Civic  
Participation  
Salandra Benton  
Helen Butler

Clayton County Black Women's  
Roundtable  
Darrell Coles  
Florida Coalition on Black Civic  
Participation

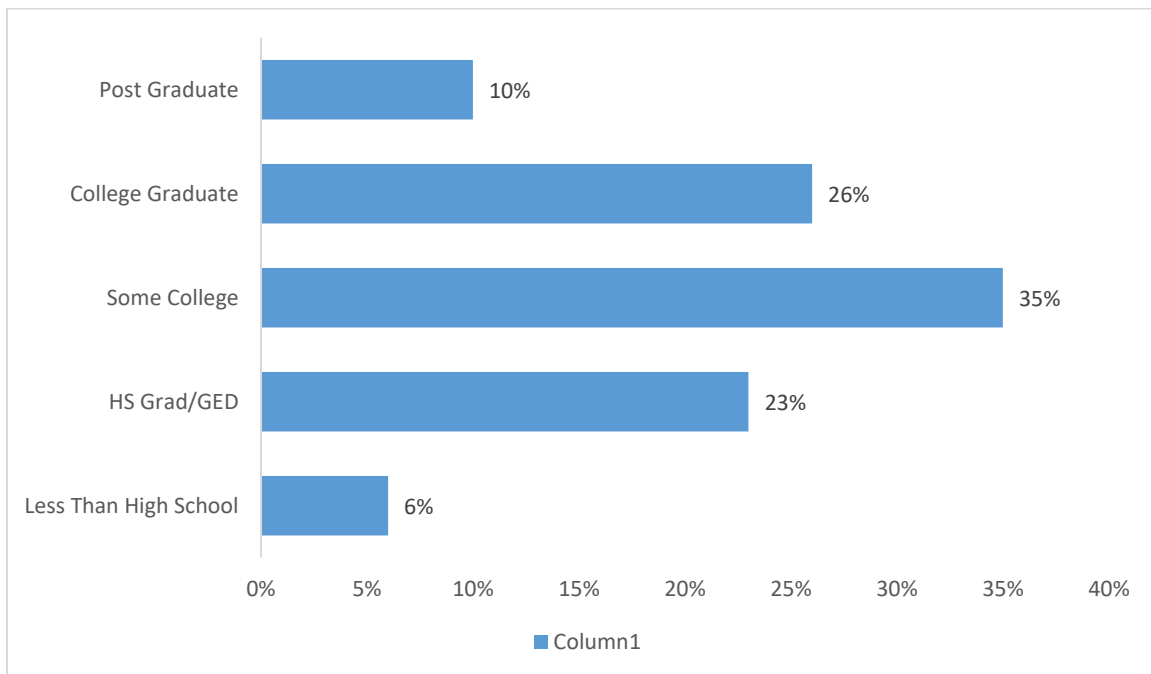
Felicia Davis  
Holliday Advisors  
Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.  
Hon. Stephanie Moore  
Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable  
Anissa Tywnman  
Mothers of Hope  
Acacia Newsome  
Ohio Unity Coalition  
The Peoples' Agenda  
René Redwood  
Ronald W. Walters Leadership and  
Public Policy Center at Howard  
University  
Elsie Scott, Ph.D.  
Hon. Shelia Tyson  
Pierrette M. Talley  
Cassandra Welchlin

## Demographics of Women Voters Surveyed

National Coalition volunteers collected over 1800 surveys, our largest sampling to date – more than 800 more surveys than 2016, from voters at the polls during Early Vote and Election Day. Surveys were collected from women of various racial backgrounds, but Black women made up the overwhelming majority of respondents (about 79%). That said, this analysis focuses specifically on the responses of Black women.

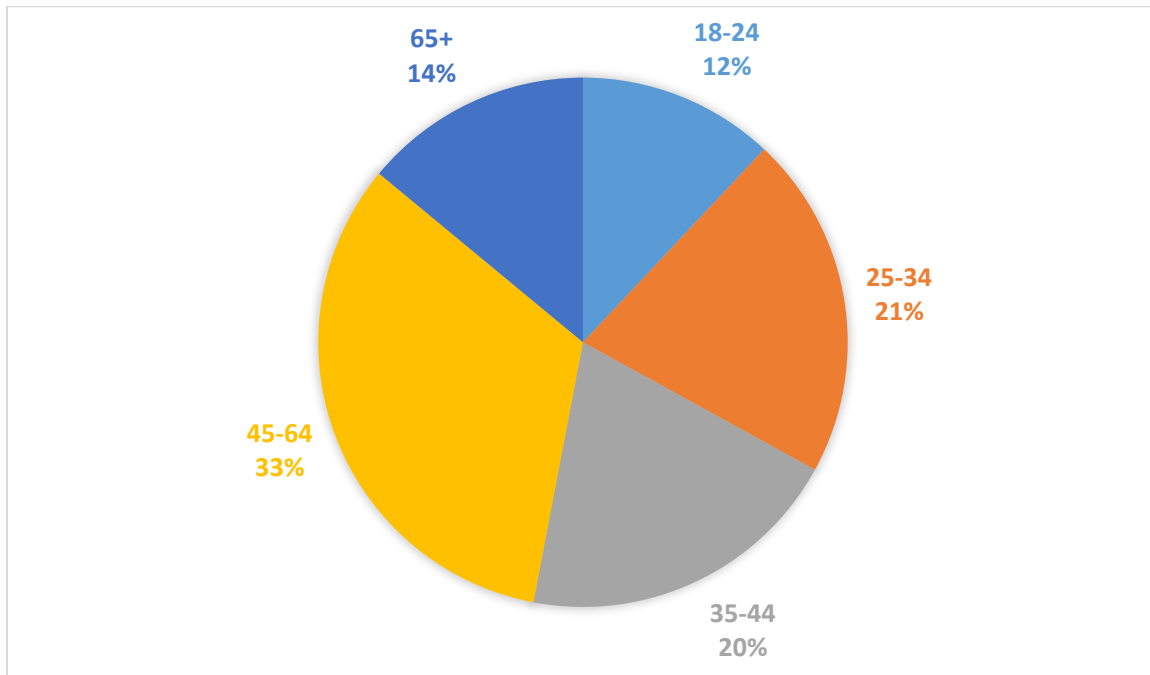
While the Black women included in the sample represented a wide range of ages, most fell between the ages of 25-64. Almost all (94%) had graduated from high school and most (over 70%) had completed at least some college. Despite their level of education, nearly two-thirds (64%) made less than \$50,000 a year, with about 50% working full time.

### Education Level of Black Women Surveyed

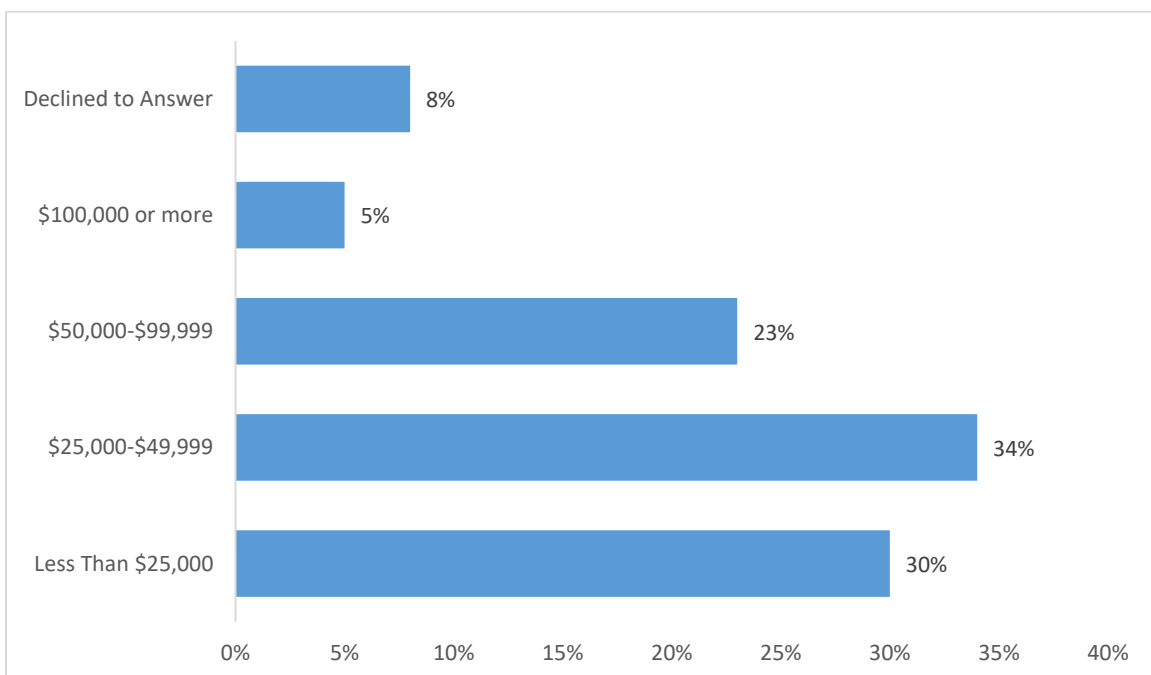




## Age of Black Women Surveyed



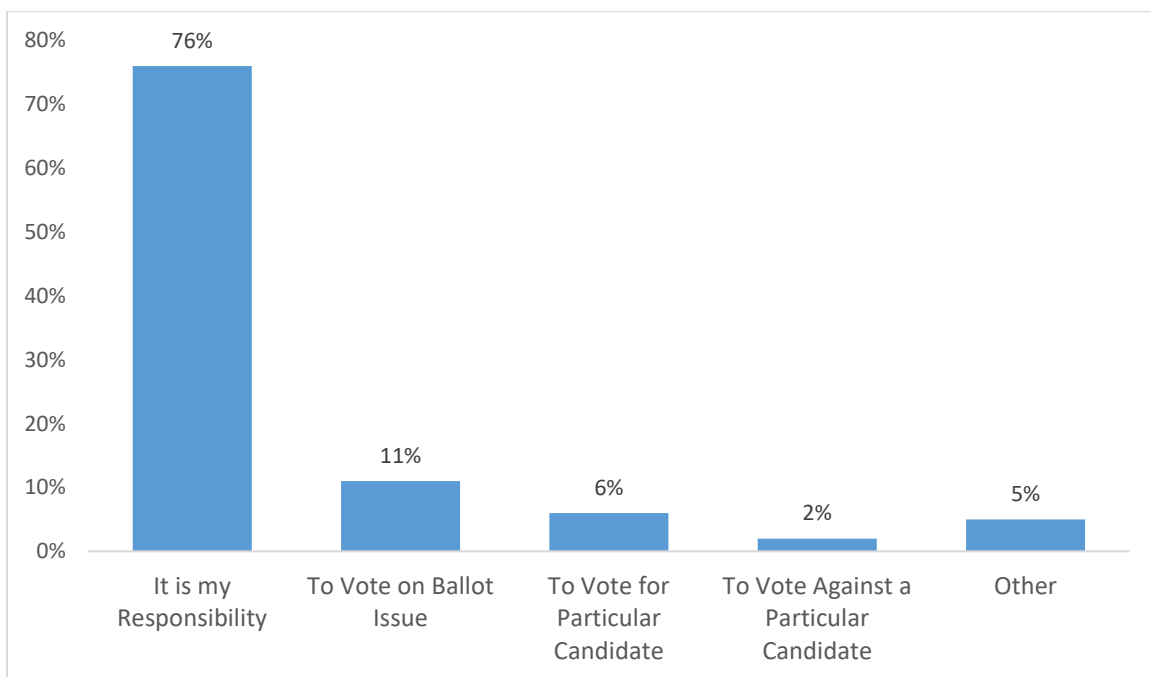
## Income of Black Women Surveyed



## Voting Experience

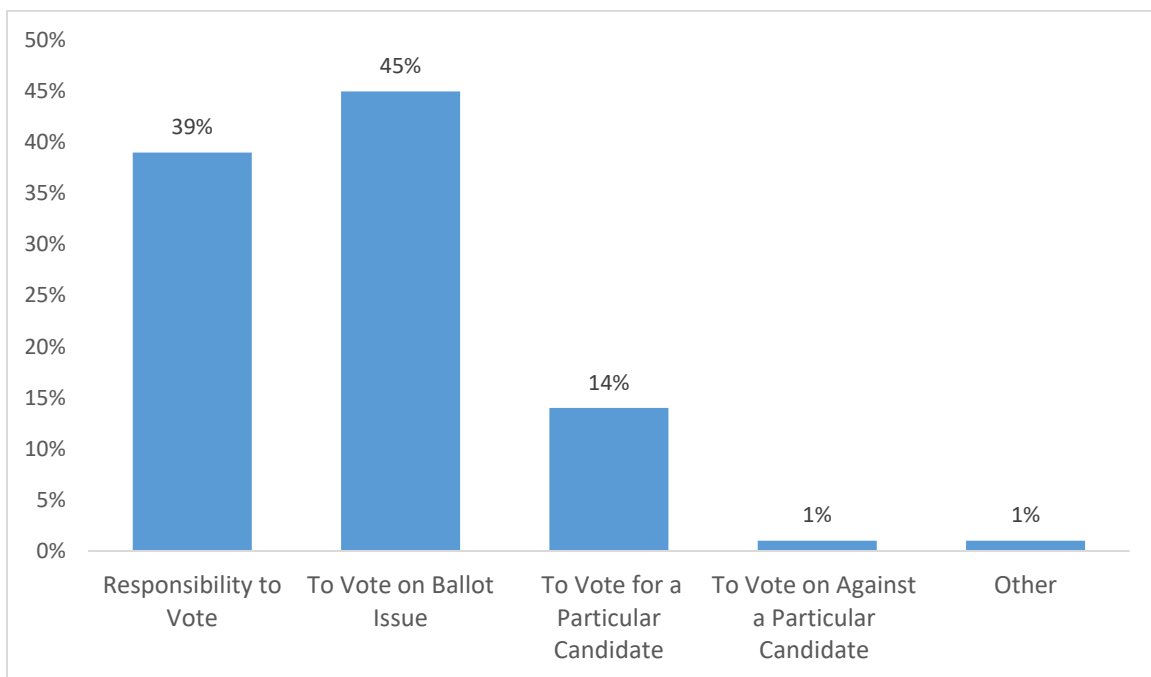
The New York Times dubbed the 2014 Midterm Elections “The Worst Voter Turnout In 72 Years”<sup>xxvi</sup>, while in 2018 the country experienced the highest voter turnout in 50 years. In both years, Black voters continued to vote in proportion to our population. We attribute this consistency to the strong sense of responsibility that Black voters have to voting, in particular Black women. In 2014, 2016, and 2018, more than 74% of Black women voters reported voting out of responsibility rather than to support a specific candidate, this data demonstrates the importance of c3 voter engagement work in the Black community to connect voters to their sense of responsibility.

### Black Women’s Reason for Voting



**The Florida Exception:** For the first time, we saw a deviation away from Black women as responsibility voters. In Florida, 43% of Black women indicated they came out to vote for a ballot initiative, 18% for a particular candidate and 38% out of a sense of responsibility. We attributed this shift in voter motivation to the tremendous effort of Amendment 4, which not only received more than 5 million votes, the highest of any other item on the Florida ballot, but it was also led by trusted Black leaders with deep roots in the Florida community.

### Black Women in Florida Reason for Voting



In 2018, the Black community faced unprecedented voting challenges. In Georgia, Florida, and Ohio, each battled massive voter suppression tactics including voter purges, disproportionately affecting Black voters. Specifically, in Georgia we saw large scale voter purges, voter registration cards placed on hold due to lack of “exact match” and absentee ballots rejected due to lack of birth date or incorrect signature. In response to this environment, our Georgia Unity’ 18 Coalition partners lead programs in the 28 counties where Black women represent the Majority Registered Voters to conduct a series of Get out the Vote education forums, Election Protection volunteer trainings as well as traditional door to door and telephone outreach.

Despite these challenges, once they got to the polls, most voters reported a positive experience. 85% reported no problems at all. Only 2.6% reported a negative voting experience, although almost 9% reported voting problems, including wait times and name not being on the list.

## **Priority Issues**

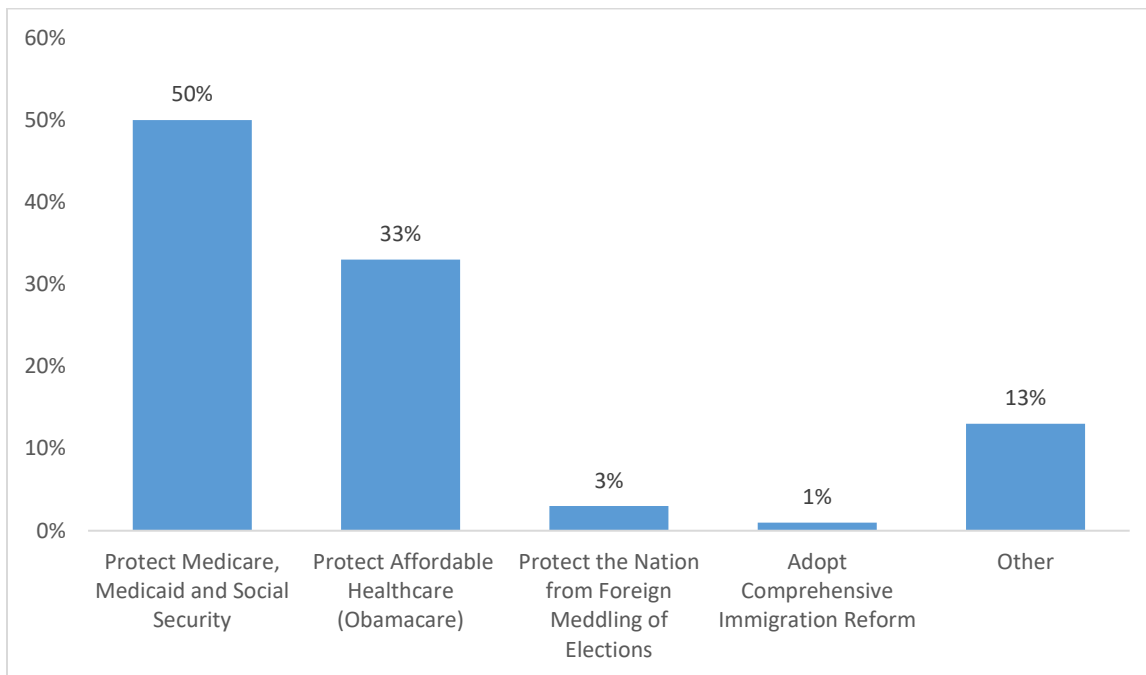
As we turn our attention toward 2019 and 2020, it is essential that we uplift the issues Black women are prioritizing. Black women are multi-issue voters supporting a wide range of policies that they believe support and uplift their families and communities. However, BWR seeks to elevate the issues that Black women have identified as “most important” or as a priority from those issues that they merely support. As such these issues and policy are the foundation of our 2019-2020 agenda. An agenda we are sharing with allies, partners, Congress and other elected officials as well as all potential candidates seeking to solicit Black women voters. We want all to approach our community informed and empowered to move on our issues.

In our 2018 Exit Poll, we asked two questions to ascertain these priorities, the first to rate the overall importance of an issue and the second to identify specific federal policies priorities for the President and 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. Over seventy-percent (70%) of Black women surveyed rated the following issues as very important:

- Affordable Health Care
- Criminal Justice/Policing Reform
- Equal Rights and Equal Pay
- Hate Crimes/Racism
- Jobs/Employment
- Voting Rights

Black women made it clear that their top federal policy interests are Protecting the Safety Net Programs (Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid) as well as access to Affordable Healthcare. Fifty-percent (50%) of Black women surveyed identified protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as their top policy priority. One-third (33%) of Black women surveyed identified protecting Affordable Healthcare as their second highest policy priority.

## What do You Most Want the President and the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress to Address?



These issues are not just driven by older Black women, as both Millennial and Gen Z Black women also value these policies.

- Gen Z: Fifty-one percent (51%) of Black women 18 – 24 surveyed identified Affordable Healthcare as their top policy priority; and thirty-one percent (31%) identified protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as their second highest policy priority.
- Millennials: Forty-nine percent (49%) of Black women 25-34 surveyed identified Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security as their top policy priority; and thirty-two percent (32%) identified protecting Affordable Healthcare as their second highest policy priority.

# Black Women and Economic Security



# Black Women in the Economy

## Black Women, Income Inequality, and the Wealth Gap

By

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Black women are increasingly the economic engine for their families and communities. Yet, black women must navigate an economy that too often is not built for them or their families to achieve economic prosperity. The dominant economic narrative driving the public discourse frequently fails to reflect the diverse experiences of black women or the complex lives they lead. Absent from the discussion are comprehensive, targeted solutions to address persistent gender- and race-based disparities and uneven outcomes that undermine family economic security. Policy makers have fallen short and must do more to address unfair pay gaps, inadequate workplace supports, occupational segregation, rising inequality, and the broader systemic inequities and discriminatory practices that leave black women with less wealth and overall prosperity. Left unaddressed, these problems build over time, compounding and perpetuating the economic stresses for families. Connecting the dots to understand the range of factors affecting black women's economic standing is essential to generate concrete, responsive solutions that can put black women and their families on firmer financial ground in the short and long term. Such progress requires an intentional commitment to pursue simultaneous strategies to promote wealth-building, reduce inequality and improve earnings, combat systemic barriers that incubate discrimination, and create greater sustainability for families.

### Understanding the Status of Black Women in the Economy

Much of the current rhetoric about the economic status of black women has focused on the perceived strength of the economy overall, relying on low unemployment as evidence that the economy is working well for everyone. But, this narrative ignores the real-world experiences of black women and longstanding inequities around earnings, advancement, and economic stability, many of which are rooted in race, gender and

ethnic differences. Of particular importance are two critical drivers shaping black women's economic standing: the persistent devaluing of black women's work that results in lower wages, economic instability, and expanding income inequality, and less overall wealth that limits their ability to strengthen and build their economic sustainability over the long term.

*Income Inequality.* Black women are increasingly multiple job-holders and have the highest labor participation rates in comparison to other women, yet that work does not pay off in the same way. Black women earn less than their white female and male counterparts and disproportionately work in lower wage jobs. In 2017, black women's labor force participation rate was 60.3 percent compared to a little over 56 percent for white women, Asian American women, and Latinas. But, black women working full-time, year-round workers earned only 61 cents for every dollar earned by white male workers compared to 77 cents for white women, 85 cents for Asian American women, and 53 cents for Latinas. This disparity can have lifetime effects — black women stand to lose an estimated \$946,120 over a 40-year career due to the wage gap. These earnings disparities are reflected in data on the jobs that black women hold and the pace of black women's movement up the career ladder. Black women are less likely than white women to occupy higher-level jobs, which tend to offer better benefits, greater mobility, and economic stability, and black women are more than twice as likely to work in lower paying service sector jobs than white women. In 2017, for example, 23.2% of black women workers worked in service occupations, compared to 11.6% of white women workers. Further, data suggest that these gaps for black women are growing — median weekly earnings in 2007 were 17 percent higher for white women than black women, but by 2017, median weekly earnings were 21 percent higher for white women than black women. The consequences of these disparities are significant. Black mothers are overwhelmingly breadwinners, providing substantial economic support for their families. More than 70 percent of black mothers are either the sole or primary breadwinners for their families, and another 14.7 percent are co-breadwinners in their families. This means that any economic losses experienced by black women have practical consequences, not only for their own economic standing, but also for the economic stability of their families.

The income inequality experienced by black women is further agitated by inadequate or non-existent external supports to alleviate some of life's daily challenges. Black women, like most women, often assume primary responsibility for day-to-day tasks. They are expected to handle doctor appointments, child care arrangements, and school visits. They are also the family member frequently relied upon to care for an elderly parent. Despite these additional responsibilities, workplace policies have failed to keep pace with workers' needs. Many women juggle work and family responsibilities without access to helpful policies such as paid family and medical leave or paid sick days, or

access to affordable child or elder care, all of which are critical to addressing caregiving obligations without risking the loss of a job. Low-wage workers – many of whom are black women — are far less likely to have these employee benefits. In fact, black women often have to spend more of their income to maintain their households – black women with family caregiving responsibilities are estimated to spend as much as 41 percent of their annual income on caregiving-related expenses such as medical and travel expenses compared to white caregivers – male and female combined – who spend an estimated 14 percent of their income. The end result is that the workers with the fewest economic resources often must find ways to absorb more costs of daily living, adding even more economic stress to families.

Additionally, black women must navigate the effects of intersecting racial and gender biases that can make them targets of discrimination. Pernicious stereotypes about their value and abilities, the types of jobs they should hold, their personality traits, and even their sexual experiences can subject them to hostile workplace environments or result in the denial of a job altogether. Research examining sexual harassment claims filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission between 2012 and 2016, for example, found that black women were three times more likely to file sexual harassment claims than white, non-Hispanic women. Other research analyzing workplace discrimination claims indicate that many of the jobs where black women disproportionately work have higher rates of discrimination claim filings on issues such as pay discrimination and sexual harassment. Research examining the different components of the gender wage gap further confirms that multiple factors drive wage differences. Researchers point to an over-concentration of women in the low-wage workforce, the lack of comprehensive worker supports such as paid family leave, and discrimination as contributors to portions of the wage gap. What this means is that solutions must be multi-faceted and comprehensive with a concurrent focus on raising wages, rooting out discriminatory workplace practices, and adopting strong policies to navigate work-family demands.

*Black Women's Wealth Gap Exacerbates Economic Differences.* In addition to increasing black women's wages, it is critical to address the wealth gap. Wealth is the best overall economic indicator of one's economic status. It looks beyond the income that an individual earns through paid employment to measure all of the assets an individual owns, such as a house and savings, minus the debts they owe. In 2016, the median wealth for black families was just \$17,600 compared to \$171,000 for white families. In other words, black families have approximately one-tenth of the wealth of white Americans. Black families have fewer assets and more costly debt than their white counterparts. Even when black families do have assets, these assets are worth significantly less than those assets owned by whites. Furthermore, factors that are usually associated with wealth, such as education, homeownership and marriage, have

little impact in closing the wealth gap for black families. Research conducted by the Center for American Progress, for example, found that college-educated black households have less wealth than white households without a college education.

This wealth gap is even more pronounced for black women, demonstrating how the combined effects of race and gender can have double impact. Black women experience an enormous wealth gap when compared to white women. Tools often used for building wealth such as education, marriage and home ownership do little to reduce these stark disparities. In 2013, the median wealth for single black women without a bachelor's degree was just \$500 compared to \$8,000 for white women without a bachelor's degree. This gap persists even as black women experience educational gains. In fact, married black women with college degrees have less than half as much wealth as married white women *without* college degrees. Furthermore, data reveal that the wealth gap between similarly situated black and white women actually expands as they approach retirement age. Single black women in their 40s with college degrees have 24 percent of the wealth as their white counterparts (\$6,000 vs. \$25,000). But, by the time they reach 60, single black women have just 2 percent of the wealth of their white counterparts (\$11,000 vs \$384,000).

Similarly, housing, the most common wealth-building asset, does not provide the same return on investment for black families for multiple reasons. First, black individuals are less likely to own a home (45 percent) compared to their white counterparts (73 percent). Second, if they do own a home, they are more likely to receive a higher interest rate for the mortgage loan or be denied. In a 2015 study, researchers found that even if black women are successful in getting a home loan, the interest rate that they receive is significantly higher. Third, even when homes are of similar quality, homes in majority black neighborhoods are worth roughly 23 percent less than homes in minority black neighborhoods. This precarious cycle leaves to many black women with less financial stability.

To combat the wealth gap effectively, it is critical to address multiple factors that compound on one another. Increasing wages of black women is significant, but it must be accompanied by access to better benefits. Black women must have access to quality and affordable healthcare to reduce unexpected costs. There also must be a new focus on strategies to address the overall lack of savings available to black women, from targeted efforts to increase participation in traditional 401(k) retirement vehicles and the stock market, to ensuring that black women have a fair opportunity to purchase homes, to developing alternative asset-building vehicles. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that government officials at all levels fully enforce anti-discrimination and consumer protection laws.

## Policy Solutions to Improve Black Women's Economic Status

Strengthening the economic standing of black women requires intentional solutions aimed at addressing the different contributors to persistent wage inequities and the overall wealth gap. Solutions should include:

- Stronger protections to ensure equal pay for equal work – such as policies to promote greater pay transparency, collect pay data from employers broken down by race, ethnicity, and gender, and close loopholes in the law that limit employer accountability for discriminatory pay practices.
- Measures to raise wages such as raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour and eliminating the lower minimum wage paid to tipped workers so that they are paid the same as other minimum wage workers.
- Measures to ensure workers receive quality benefits – comprehensive and affordable healthcare and 401(k)/retirement vehicles - in addition to a fair wage.
- Strengthening work-family policies to address conflicting work-family demands, such as ensuring access to paid family and medical leave, flexible scheduling, paid sick days, and affordable, high-quality child care.
- Supportive policies that enable workers to join unions, engage in collective bargaining, and participate in other forms of collective worker actions.
- Greater investments in enforcement to combat workplace discrimination, including targeted resources focused on occupations where black women disproportionately work and experience higher rates of discrimination.
- Full funding for the Consumer Financial Protection Board and other federal efforts to combat financial sector discrimination.
- Full funding for robust civil rights enforcement at all levels to combat housing discrimination.
- Prioritizing strategies to combat occupational segregation, including targeted efforts to move women into higher paying jobs, such as apprenticeships, where black women have been under-represented.
- Revamped training across multiple sectors to combat conscious and unconscious forms of race and gender bias.
- Conducting research and analysis of existing data to continue examining the different factors driving income inequality and the wealth gap, with a special focus on the experiences of black women and identifying where more data is needed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Black women are vital to the economic success of black families and the overall economy. Yet, they consistently face barriers that erode their earnings, limit their opportunities, and impair their long-term ability to build wealth and financial security. Policy makers must take concrete and targeted steps to address these challenges head on. Policy interventions — such as paid family and medical leave, raising the minimum wage, stepped up anti-discrimination enforcement, and asset-building initiatives — are essential to improve the economic outlook for black women. They deserve nothing less.



# Black Women and Retirement Insecurity

By:

**Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.**

President, Incite Unlimited, LLC

Senior Policy & Resource Development Advisor, BWR

The labor of Black women has been a key economic driver of this nation since its very inception. Yet, some 400 years of labor have yet to produce equitable pay for Black women in this nation. As it stands today, due to pay inequity alone, as we uncover in this report, that over the course of a 40-year career, the typical Black woman loses nearly \$950,000 in wages. Other research has shown that in some geographic areas, this lifetime earnings gap exceeds \$1 million. This real-time financial penalty means that Black women would have to work an additional 24 years after her while male counterpart retires to merely catch up with his earnings<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, experiencing a lifetime of unequal pay means that Black women must make due with less disposable income. This means she has less to invest in wealth-building vehicles, including those meant to ensure her own retirement security. As a result, for far too many Black women, their golden years are devoid of glimmer. Instead, those years are more akin to a daily struggle just to hold on.

Economic fragility in working years means a disproportionate reliance on Social Security in retirement among African Americans and particularly among Black women. According to the Social Security Administration, in 2016, the average annual Social Security income received by Black women was \$13,426 as compared to \$14,994 received by Black men. And for unmarried Black seniors, a disproportionate number of whom are women, Social Security accounts for 90 percent or more of their income. As a result, for Black women especially, Social Security remains an economic lifeline, and ultimately the last line of defense between just making it and complete destitution.

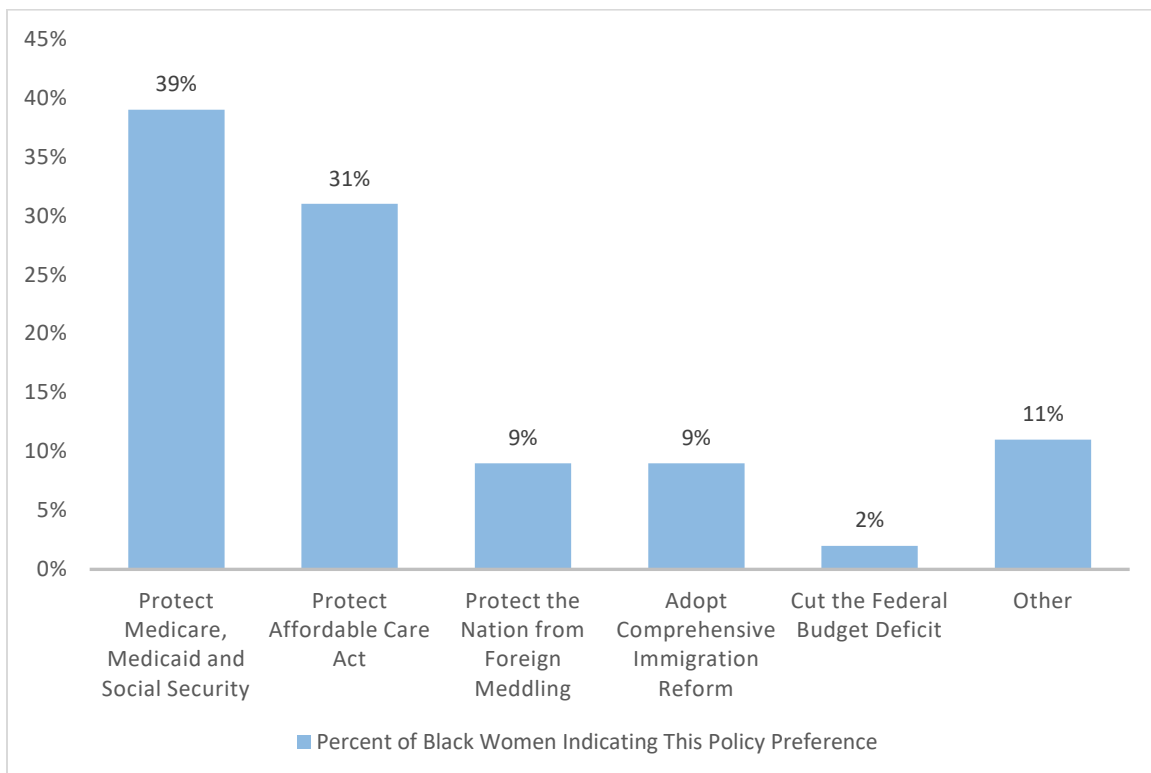
It is likely because of the critical importance of Social Security along with the perceived threat to its existence at a time of skyrocketing deficits, that Black women indicated that protecting Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security was their top priority for the 115<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Women's Law Center. April 2, 2018. The Lifetime Wage Gap State by State. <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-lifetime-wage-gap-state-by-state/>

U.S. Congress in responding to the 2018 Black Women’s Roundtable/Essence Survey. For many Black women, Social Security isn’t merely social program, it’s a personal survival lifeline.

Black Women’s Policy Priorities:  
What President Trump and the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress Should Address  
2018 BWR/Essence Survey



Source: 2018 Black Women’s Roundtable/Essence Survey

# Green New Deal, Opportunity Zones & Reparations

By:

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The first enslaved Africans are reported to have arrived in Jamestown in 1619, exactly 400 years ago. Midway into the International Decade for African Descendants, African Americans have survived slavery, Jim Crow terrorism, redlining and racism. In a world that is now rapidly warming and threatening massive upheaval, wide gaps in measures assessing quality of life persist for the Black community. It is against this backdrop that Black women must assess government policy proposals.

The aspirational Green New Deal is one of the most far reaching policy resolutions on the horizon. It sets out ambitious goals for combatting climate change by fueling a massive transition in the economy. Advancing justice and equity are specifically mentioned as overarching goals. Calls for aggressive action to combat climate change, restore ecological balance, invest in needed infrastructure upgrades and advance justice and equity attracts criticism based upon short-term cost estimates and resistance to changes in the status quo. Promoting government responsibility for the creation of good jobs with livable wages is criticized as potentially more destructive than the escalating climate catastrophes.

The Black community contributes a well-defined environmental justice framework to the global green agenda. EJ experts have long advocated multi-dimensional integrated approaches to tackle complex problems that impact human health and economics as well as natural environment. Above all, environmental justice principles place people on the landscape, value the experiences of impacted communities and demand that polluters pay for restoration. Access to clean air, water, shelter and healthy food are fundamental needs for all.

The Black community is not alone when it comes to experiencing toxic environmental impacts however the fact that race is the most salient factor pinpointing toxic dumping even today is undeniable. Equally true is the fact that this debilitating pattern has persisted throughout the sojourn of Blacks in America. Environmental impacts lead to higher infant, maternal and group mortality; higher rates of asthma and certain cancers; and higher rates of developmental disorders. There is a growing realization that large segments of the Black community live under a level of stress that is best described as

traumatic. The fact that a significant portion of the community is able to survive and even thrive against the odds in no way mitigates the need to repair deep wounds and build stronger bridges to opportunity.

As the debate over reparations revs up, even a cursory examination of the gaps in Black health and education outcomes underscores the connection between health, education and wealth. Amid reports that Black unemployment is at an all-time low, a recent Prosperity Now report notes, “in just over a generation, median Black households saw their already-low net worth decrease by 75%.”<sup>2</sup> “By 2020 black households are projected to lose even more wealth: 18 percent. After those declines, the median white household will own 86 times more wealth than its black counterpart.”<sup>3</sup>

Appeals for reparations are frequently rebuffed as ancient history long past making amends impossible to calculate or distribute. Unlike other groups, Black America has experienced waves of dispossession and massive loss of wealth. The race riots of 1919 known as “Red Summer” mark a more recent period of race-based terror. In 2012 the Tulsa race riot completely destroyed the wealthiest Black community in America at that time.

The Black experience has been one of destruction and denial of opportunity. Instead of honoring Black veterans for their service following World War I, Blacks were “denied the vote in the South, trapped in a system of sharecropping that precluded economic mobility, excluded from countless workplaces, denigrated as biologically and culturally inferior, subject to harassment and violence, and relegated to segregated facilities that were palpably inferior to those of their white counterparts.”<sup>4</sup> Even following WWII redlining prevented Black veterans from receiving home loans. Further, the racialized history of housing policy in the U.S., including residential segregation, redlining, and discriminatory credit practices, have exacerbated inequality in wealth and homeownership rates and have also contributed to the rate of return on the asset itself.<sup>5</sup>

When we fast forward to the housing crisis of the Great Recession, the prevailing trope was that Blacks purchased homes that they could not afford with predatory loans that

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<sup>2</sup> [https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/road\\_to\\_zero\\_wealth.pdf](https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/PDFs/road_to_zero_wealth.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianthompson1/2018/02/18/the-racial-wealth-gap-addressing-americas-most-pressing-epidemic/#683402957a48>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/ct-xpm-2011-11-18-sc-ent-books-red-summer-mcwhirter-20111118-story.html>

<sup>5</sup> [https://socialequity.duke.edu/sites/socialequity.duke.edu/files/site-images/FINAL%20COMPLETE%20REPORT\\_.pdf](https://socialequity.duke.edu/sites/socialequity.duke.edu/files/site-images/FINAL%20COMPLETE%20REPORT_.pdf) (For an extensive discussion on the development of racialized housing policies see Richard Rothstein (2017).)

were supposedly justified by higher risk. The truth is that even upper income Blacks were steered to high-interest mortgages. In spite of recent settlements racist redlining policies continue to limit opportunity for Blacks.

Senators Tim Scott and Cory Booker along with Congressmen Pat Tiberi and Ron Kind introduced the Investing in Opportunity Act to incentivize investment in economically distressed neighborhoods. The Opportunity Zone program provides incentives that reduce capital gains taxes for investments made in targeted deteriorated areas. Even if the program works to revitalize distressed areas there is no mechanism to combat yet another round of displacement or gentrification. What is certain is that the bulk of capital invested and direct benefit will accrue to investors.

Access to capital is critical for economic development and building wealth. In spite of the shortcomings associated with Opportunity Zones and Opportunity Funds established to facilitate investment, the Black community must mobilize to take advantage of programs ostensibly designed to “unlock new private investment for communities where millions of Americans face the crisis of closing business, lack of access to capital, and declining entrepreneurship.”<sup>6</sup>

The Green New Deal is visionary rather than practical. Opportunity Zones are designed as for those possessing capital to invest. Given the enormous wealth gap Black communities are less able to take advantage of tax incentives. Reparations should, at a minimum, provide pathways for African Americans to participate in and benefit from wealth building opportunities.

In the final analysis, Reparations emerges as potentially the single most rational approach to closing the wealth gap. Research is a logical place to begin and Congresswoman Shelia Jackson Lee has picked up the torch carried for 30 years by the late Congressman Ron Dellums once again introducing H.R 40 Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act. 2019 is the year to finally establish a Commission on Reparations.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) should be supported to engage all higher education institutions in a national reparations research initiative. HBCUs are typically located in or near Black neighborhoods in need of revitalization. With direct investment HBCUs can serve as anchor institutions leading environmentally responsible enterprise. HBCUs can also help to assemble scholars and scholarship needed to advance a more accurate and holistic narrative of the Black experience in America. Black colleges are trusted leaders in the community and they can play a

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<sup>6</sup>Senators Tim Scott (R-SC) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Congressmen Pat Tiberi (R-OH) and Ron Kind (D-WI)

powerful role in galvanizing and sustaining support for programs that actually help to close the wealth gap, dismantle racism, and increase opportunity.



# The State of Black Women at Work

# Protecting Black Women Workers Rights in the Trump Era

**Clayola Brown**

President

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On the campaign trail and in office, President Donald Trump promised to fight for the American worker. Yet since he took office in January 2017, his actions have repeatedly betrayed this promise. His administration has rolled back protections to ensure that American workers can be safe on the job, receive fair pay and benefits, save for retirement, access high-quality training programs, have a voice in their workplace, and not be discriminated against at work.

The administration won't defend workers and the Court has sanctified forced arbitration. But states and cities can create new ways for workers to safeguard their rights.

The November 6, 2018 election of progressive new legislators and governors in multiple states created an important opportunity for protecting workers' rights. During the Trump era, states and cities have become the last line of defense for workers. Liberal state policymakers around the country have fought for higher minimum wages, expanded overtime coverage, paid sick and family leave, and more robust protections for victims of harassment and discrimination.

This is significant for Black women.

Valerie Wilson, of the Economic Policy Institute, has documented that Black women work as many hours a year as white women, when the economy is doing well, but lose out when the economy slows. Today, after the labor market began an unbroken string of months with positive job gains back in 2011 under President Obama, Black women have returned to having a higher labor force participation rate than white women, 59.1% compared to 57.9% (as of February 2019), and as a result, despite having a much higher unemployment rate, 5.3% compared to 3.0%, a higher share of Black women are working than white women, 59.1% compared to 56.2%.

But, what Black women struggle with is landing good jobs. This gives rise to three key priorities, all aimed at improving the pay of Black women. As a first order of a good job, Black women still struggle because of finding low wage jobs. Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) chairs the House Education and Labor Committee and has introduced the *Raise the Wage Act* that just cleared his Committee. The Act would gradually raise

the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024 and then index the wage to increases in the median wage to ensure that low wage workers will see the same rate of improvement in life as other middle-income workers. The Act also eliminates the tip minimum wage and gives full protection to workers with disabilities. Because of the low wages paid to Black women, relative to other workers, this Act disproportionately raises the wages of Black women.

Analysis done by the Economic Policy Institute shows that 31.5% of Black women would get a raise from the Act, and another 9.5% would likely get a boost because they work at wages close to \$15 an hour and work among workers who will get a boost. In all, close to 40% of Black women will get a wage increase. This is significant. First, it fights the long slide in the purchasing power of the federal minimum wage, now only at \$7.25. Almost half of Black workers live in states that have failed to raise their minimum wage above \$7.25, while over half of Americans are living in places where the minimum wage is already above \$7.25.

In 2024, there is no county in America where a single person can afford a decent life below \$15 an hour. Further, it will be enough to lift a family of four above the poverty line if the family has a full-time, full-year worker. So, expect a significant decline in child poverty for Black families if this legislation passes. In 1966, when the Fair Labor Standards Act that governs the minimum wage, was fixed to include agricultural and service workers, rural Black workers finally got the boost in wages that others had benefited from.

New work, by a young Black woman economist, Ellora Derenoncourt and her co-author Claire Montialoux shows how that even as late as 1966, over one third of Black workers still suffered because the Fair Labor Standards Act did not protect their wages. The expansion showed that the early efforts of Southern Democrats to exclude Black workers had a lasting impact on Black families. The expansion closed the Black-white wage gap by 20 percent, doubled wages for many Black workers, did not result in Black job loss in the newly covered occupations and led to cutting Black child poverty by almost 30 percentage points.

Today, the fight continues. Regrettably there are still Southern Congresspersons who want to carve out “low income” communities that would get a lower minimum wage, under the same old theory that it costs less to be poor in the South. Of course, this is despite lower levels of public transportation, less access to health insurance, and low access to subsidized high-quality childcare. An earlier analysis of such regional minimum wage proposals showed as many as one-third the workers who would be left behind earning less than \$15 an hour would be Black women. Those proposals are as wrong as the original exclusions of 1937.

Next, Black women need to see overtime protections, put in place by the Obama Administration re-instituted. Those regulations needed updating to protect against ‘wage theft’ brought about by glorifying positions that were not managerial and forcing workers to work longer hours at low pay.

Union density, the share of workers who belong to a union, is higher for Black women at 11.7% than for white men, 11.4% according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Further, at 1.1 million strong, roughly the same number of Black women and men are members of unions. Because the weekly pay of Black women in unions was \$784 compared to non-union women’s \$636, protecting collective bargaining is vital for Black women in the work place.

Black women need to have our labor laws repaired to provide an opportunity to exercise their right to engage in collective bargaining and meet their bosses face to face. We will celebrate 50 years ago this Spring, when Black women stood their ground to protect their dignity and fight for their families when they organized at the hospitals of Charleston, South Carolina. In their memory, we must continue this fight.

# The Burden of the Shutdown and the Complexities of Unionization

By:

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The 2018-19 government shutdown heightened the discourse about fiscal insecurity with a focus on Black families – specifically Black female-headed households. The focus on Black women is justified. When the Trump administration shut down the government from December 22, 2018, until January 25, 2019, 27 percent of Federal employees were Black women. By comparison, Black women were 22 percent of all Federal employees when the Clinton administration shut down for 21 days, December 16, 1995 – January 6, 1996, and were 20 percent of the Federal employees when the Obama administration shut down for 16 days, October 1 – October 17, 2013.

Table 1 Percent of Government Employees by Type: Black/African American

Administration	<u>Federal</u>			<u>State</u>			<u>Local</u>		
	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Total</u>
Clinton – December 1995	14%	22%	18%	14%	19%	17%	15%	15%	15%
Obama - October 2013	15%	20%	17%	14%	17%	16%	13%	15%	14%
Trump – December 2018	17%	27%	22%	14%	18%	16%	15%	12%	13%

Author's calculations using Current Population Survey Data

The disproportionate rate of Black women employed by the Federal government is bittersweet. The sweet: access to jobs that offer union membership, which offer higher wages. In December of 2018, the median weekly earnings of Black women employed by the Federal government range from \$576/week for no union coverage to \$920 per week for union members. Both the values were higher than the median wages for Black women employed by state and local governments and the private sector.

For the five weeks, 35 days the Federal government was shut down, Black women and their families had to replace between \$2,880 to \$4,600. Given that 40 percent of Americans do not have means to cover a \$400 emergency and have less wealth, for Black women the government shutdown was equivalent to removing one leg from a three-leg stool. Additionally, Maryland had the highest percentage of Black women who were Federal employees but also had higher median home and rental prices as well as utility expenses than the national median which means these families were fiscally vulnerable.

In addition to the Federal government, employment with State and local governments provide Black women with higher median wages. Approximately 25 percent of Black women employed by local governments who are also union members were elementary and middle school teachers. Just over nine percent of Black women were employed by local governments as social workers, police officers, cashiers, and personal care aides were union members. In general, Black women who were union members or were covered by a union had higher median wages.

Table 2. Black Women by Employment Sector and Union Status

	No Union Coverage	Member of Union	Union Coverage: not a member
Private Sector	\$12	\$16	\$14
Federal	\$18	\$13	\$24
State	\$16	\$18	\$15
Local	\$16	\$22	

Author's calculations using December 2018 Current Population Survey Data

The influence of union membership on Black women's wages is mixed for reducing the wage gap. Black women who were union members and employed by the Federal government had higher median wages than white females and Black and White males but earned 81 cents of the dollar that their Asian male counterparts were paid. However, the union "advantage" relative to Whites is only present for Black women employed by the Federal government. The median earnings for Black women were less than Whites employed by state and local governments and the private sector. The race-gender gap was greater for Black women who were union members than for those who were not. Black women who were union members and employed by local governments had median hourly wages that were 51 percent of their White male counterparts' median earnings. The race-gender wage gap was 77 percent for non-union members employed by local governments.



Black women were 5.47 percent of all union members, but only 1.64 percent of Black women were union members. Although Black women were a small share of all union members, their share of the state's unionization rate exceeded their share of the state's population. The overrepresentation of Black Women in state unionization rates, suggests the impact of *Janus v. AFSCME* will be a function of union jobs and the due diligence of the union. If unions follow the lead of the United Domestic Workers of America (UDW), which represents home-care workers in California, and improve the services provided to their members, the impact will be minimal in the long-run.

Table3. Union Membership by State for Black Women

State	Percent of State Unionization	Percent of Population
Delaware	23.08	11.82
Alabama	22.22	15.08
Georgia	21.05	17.07
District of Columbia	19.05	21.53
Louisiana	18.75	17.86
Connecticut	16.67	5.07
North Carolina	16.67	12.22
Missouri	15.79	5.85
Texas	14.29	6.81
Mississippi	11.11	21.32
New Jersey	9.52	7.83
Michigan	9.38	8.16
Massachusetts	7.55	4.02
New York	7.26	7.83
Iowa	6.67	0.86
Florida	6.25	8.27
Indiana	5.88	4.85
California	5.41	3.01
Illinois	4.92	6.94
Vermont	4.17	0.37
Ohio	4	6.47
Hawaii	2.38	0.23

Source: Author's calculations using December 2018 Current Population Survey Data

# The Importance of Paid Leave, Paid Sick and Safe Days for Black Families

By:

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Colds and flus are never convenient, but for millions of people in the U.S., taking time to care for yourself or a loved one can mean lost wages and even a lost job. Even harder are the occasional times we need a longer leave to welcome a new child or deal with a serious personal or family illness. In our country, these events can be a trigger to debt and poverty. That's because the United States has no national policies guaranteeing even a few job-protected paid sick days, and no federal law ensuring paid family and medical leave.

We are the only member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development<sup>1</sup> (OECD), a group of 36 countries working together to stimulate economic progress and world-wide trade, that fails to offer some form of paid leave. In fact, across the globe, the United States stands with only with Papua New Guinea in this category. We have zero weeks<sup>2</sup> of paid family and medical leave to recover from an illness or surgery, care for a seriously ill family member or bond with a new baby. Employers aren't expected to provide paid sick days either, the shorter time needed for workers to pick up a sick child from school, recover from the cold or flu, or get routine medical check-ups. The lack of paid family and medical leave and paid sick days is a scandal in our nation that impacts all workers, but the effect is exacerbated for Black families due to historic and institutionalized racism. The lived experience of caregiving and needing care while Black can be devastating. Still, a growing movement is making significant progress, paving the way for nationwide change.

## **Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFL)**

Only 17% of the U.S. workforce has access to employer-sponsored paid family leave, and fewer than 40% have access to a temporary disability insurance program to cover illness.<sup>3</sup> Even the Family and Medical Leave Act<sup>4</sup> (FMLA) covers only 60% of the workforce and is unpaid time. Given that Black women are more likely (81%) to be single heads of household,<sup>5</sup> unpaid leave is not an option for most of us. The result is greater economic, health and other disparities.

Despite a growing economy and high productivity rates,<sup>6</sup> wages have remained flat for Black women since 2000. Black women earn 60.8 cents on the white male dollar, are overrepresented in low-wage jobs and less likely to have access to worker supports like paid family leave. When a child arrives, or illness strikes, Black women are often forced to choose between their job/career and their family or health. The impact of these decisions shows up as job loss, higher use of public assistance, and increased poverty rates. These forced choices produce harsh outcomes for Black families, who are also more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions.<sup>7</sup>

Tameka Henry, a Michigan native, and her husband were raising a family and saving money to buy a home when her husband became ill with a disease that took months to diagnose and eventually prevented him from working. Caring for him and their four children resulted in Tameka losing her job. As she told members of the U.S. House Ways and Means sub-committee recently, “Every time I found a new job, it was like starting over again. I didn’t have a chance to build up tenure. When I do the math, I estimate that I’ve lost close to \$200,000 in wages since his diagnosis.” Paid family leave would have kept their family economically secure while addressing this crisis. Instead they were financially devastated and, 10 years later, are just beginning to make ends meet.<sup>8</sup>

As a nation, we can do better. Absent a federal law for paid leave, several states have stepped up to address this urgent need. Comprehensive paid leave laws in CA, NJ, RI, NY are currently in effect. WA, MA and the District of Columbia have also passed such laws and are all in the process of implementing them. These programs increase the likelihood that workers will remain attached to the labor force, returning to work after an illness or caregiving event with their health and finances intact. Access to paid leave means new parents can spend more time bonding and breastfeeding; others can care for an older relative or recover from their own illness. The evidence from the states with such programs show workers are more likely to take the time they need to care, and fathers show a significant increase in time off after a new baby.<sup>9</sup>

While many policymakers think parental leave is the type of leave most people need, a Department of Labor<sup>10</sup> study of FMLA use found that 75% of caregivers used FMLA to care for themselves or a seriously ill family member. Only 25% used FMLA to recover from childbirth or bond with a new child. For these reasons, we need a national program that values all care and covers every family.

The Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMILY) Act,<sup>11</sup> introduced in Congress each year since 2013, is a social insurance program in which both employers and employees contribute a small amount into a trust fund. Employees will draw from this

trust fund when they need time to care: welcoming a new child, caring for a seriously ill family member or recovering from illness or surgery.

The FAMILY Act is good for families and also good for business.<sup>12</sup> In the states that have passed paid leave, small and mid-size businesses point out that a social insurance model is the only way they can provide paid leave to their employees; it helps them to compete with larger corporations.

Black women have a painful attachment to work and family caregiving in the U.S. There has never been a program that protects Black women while they care for their loved ones; when they do take time to care, it's often with grave sacrifices. For Black families, paid leave provides the economic stability needed when a child arrives or a family member is sick, guaranteeing income while the caregiver's attention turns toward doctor's visits, breastfeeding, healing and family time. But how that paid leave program is structured can make all the difference in whether Black families will benefit. The FAMILY Act is good, but key amendments are necessary to ensure that it's affordable, offers an adequate number of weeks off and is accessible to all. More specifically, it must emerge out of Congress with the following provisions:

- **Job Protection:** The FAMILY Act is built on the rules from FMLA, which has job protection but only covers 60% of the workforce. It's important to address the gap between those covered under the FMLA and the 40% who are not. Otherwise, workers employed by a small employer or otherwise not covered by FMLA could take paid leave under the FAMILY Act and risk job loss upon return.
- **Progressive Wage Replacement:** As written, the FAMILY Act will provide up to 67% of wage replacement. If you earn \$100 a week, you'll receive \$67 while on leave. In the states where paid family and medical leave has passed, advocates and elected officials have wrestled with this wage replacement issue and made many improvements. California and New Jersey increased their rates for workers earning wages closer to the poverty line. Washington, Massachusetts and the District of Columbia are implementing laws that provide 90% of wage replacement for the same population.
- **Comprehensive Family Definition:** Our families are very diverse. Grandparents are raising grandkids, brothers and sisters are caring for elderly siblings, and same-sex couples and gender non-conforming people have caregiving responsibilities for chosen family members. The nation's first paid leave bill

must take these caregiving relationships into account by including leave to care for people related to us by “blood or affinity.”

### **Paid Sick and Safe Days**

Paid sick days are needed for the shorter period of time required to recover from a cold, be there for a mildly sick family member or attend a doctor’s appointment. Increasingly, the states and advocates who’ve passed paid sick days (PSDs) have included “safe” days to provide the needed time for families to respond to a domestic violence or sexual assault situation. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research,<sup>13</sup> public sector employers are more likely to have PSDs (84%) than private sector employers (56%); and larger companies are also more likely to offer them. Another determinant is hours worked. Whereas 70% of those who work 35 hours or more each week have paid sick days, on 29% of those who work between 20 and 35 hours do; those who work less than 20 hours per week are far less likely to have coverage (19%).

Black workers are fairly represented in public sector work,<sup>14</sup> meaning higher access to paid sick days for that segment of the Black population (59% of Black men and 60% of Black women have PSDs). These same workers are also more likely to be represented by a union that has bargained for PSDs collectively.<sup>15</sup> However, this is not the case for the majority of Black workers in the private sector,<sup>16</sup> many of whom work in retail, hospitality, childcare and other jobs with precarious hours and no benefits. Here, Black workers have less access to PSDs because they are overrepresented in low-wage work (30% of low-wage workers are Black) and tipped work (20%), sectors with the least access to PSDs.

In the past decade, 36 states, counties and cities have passed paid sick days laws, and many of them include safe days. In these locales, Black families are now able to conduct the following caregiving activities without losing pay or being fired:

- Take time off from work when sick without losing pay
- Attend well-baby, and other wellness appointments
- Get appropriate cancer screening tests
- Take a family member to the doctor’s office
- Pick a sick child up from school
- Meet with an attorney to arrange legal protections from domestic violence
- Move to a safer location

The Healthy Families Act<sup>17</sup> is the nation’s paid sick and safe days bill that aims to provide an employment standard of 7 job-protected paid sick and safe days at full pay. Employers

with 15 or more employees will be required to offer this time; employers with fewer than 15 employees will have to provide a minimum of 7 unpaid, job-protected days.

Together paid family and medical leave and paid sick and safe days begin to frame out a social contract that government, employers, and employees enter into on behalf of our families. The guarantees in these laws reflect our investment in family life and allow loved ones to honor the obligations they have to one another. For Black families, this social contract means the freedom to care for loved ones while maintaining much-needed income and job security, keeping families on the path to upward mobility.

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# When Money Ain't the Final Solution: Where the Resources At??

## **Tameka Ramsey**

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According to the 2018 State of Women Owned Business Report, commissioned by American Express, the number of black women owned businesses grew a stunning 164% between 2007 and 2018. During that time frame, higher unemployment rates, greater gaps in gender pay, being locked out of traditional jobs, hitting the glass ceiling, poor treatment, low quality educational systems and systemic racism led black women to start businesses at a higher rate out of necessity and the need to survive.

As of 2016, minority-owned businesses have contributed close to 49 billion in local, state and federal tax revenues. These businesses have the potential to create more jobs and revitalize distressed communities. It has been researched, proven and documented that minority owned business are:

- Less likely to receive loans than non-minority firms;
- More likely to receive lower loan amounts than non-minority firms;
- More likely to be denied loans;
- More likely to not apply for loans due to rejection fears; and,
- More likely to have lower wealth levels that are a barrier to entry into entrepreneurship for minority entrepreneurs

Even with the start of programs and services that is placing focus on investing in communities of color by nonprofits, foundations, and corporations, there is still a high failure rate among these businesses. For women of color, average revenue dropped from \$84,000 in 2007 to \$66,400 in 2018; while non-minority women businesses revenue rose from \$181,000 to \$212,300.

The question becomes, why are black women business not growing or sustaining with the increase of invest flowing into their communities? The answer is simple and complex at the same time. A lack of non-monetary resources is what is holding black women business owners from being as successful and sustainable as their white counter parts. My complex explanation is: psychological and educational barriers have been



embedded in communities of color and among black women for over 300 years; and, no matter how much financial resources are pumped into these communities, if proper support, assistance and coaching are not combined with these financial supports, very few businesses will make it pass the micro stage. There is a reason why you see a lot of clustering in very few industries with a low barrier to entry—service businesses such as hair salons, catering, child daycare centers and consulting.

Frequently, black women “don’t know where to go” to find support and guidance when starting up a business; and, once they start their business, without these same supports, many of them “don’t know, what they don’t know”. And that not knowing can end up costing them not only their business; but, back taxes, fines and penalties that can create a snowball effect that could cause a generation of financial hardships. In a 2017 focus group of black women business owners conducted by the Federal Reserve of Kansas, it showed that “self-learning” was a top entrepreneurial characteristic needed to start and manage a business. This is because there is no place for them to go to get the formal assistance they need.

In Metro Detroit, there is a small group of black women business owners who come together monthly to eat, talk, network and share their expertise to assist one another. Each month, a different business owner presents on a topic that business owners need. This could be an accountant/book keeper, marketing specialist, social media consultant, etc. We ask questions without feeling “behind” and there is no judgement when a business owner finds out that they are not doing something that they should have been doing.

This group has been created by BWR- Metro Detroit and funded by Black Women’s Roundtable (BWR) National, through grant funding. The leadership at BWR understands that, to start, to grow and to sustain a small business, mentoring, coaching, and guidance is as vital as investing money. If you give a small business \$10,000, when they do not have processes or support in place, is akin to throwing \$10,000 into the fire. It will keep you warm for a short period of time; but, then it’s gone, and you are cold again.

If funders (both non and for profit) expect black women businesses to be able to grow and sustain their businesses, which will allow more individuals to be hired locally, keeping more dollars circulating within their community and revitalizing distressed communities (also their communities), then a shift has to occur. Investing more than just money means: adding mentoring services, providing (low or no cost) business services and workshops that give these women and their business access to not only updated laws, processes and policies that affect their business; but, also access to mentors that have been there and done that. Giving pointers, helping others to not fall

into traps that they might have encountered; and help navigate relationships within any given industry.

If funders expect black, women business owners to succeed; they need to not treat us like throwing dollars at us is going to wipe away hundreds of years of oppression. But to start investing in us, like they really want us to win.

# The Health of Black Women

# Centering Black Women's Needs and Leadership to Transform Access to Our Best Lives: *Time for Affordable Healthcare*

By:

**L Toni Lewis, MD**

Founder, Liberation Health Strategies

Co-founder, Health Equity Cypher

There is this saying in the Black community - when the majority (or white folks) gets a cold, Black people get the flu. In recent years I've heard many say it's not just the flu; it can be pneumonia, in the ICU, or all sorts of things that ground us in the context that the culture of our country with hundreds of years of systems, policies, and practices meant to marginalize and mistreat people of color. We know that whatever seems to be of concern in the larger context hits our communities hardest. As a Black woman physician and member of the Black Women's Roundtable, this seems particularly relevant when we begin to discuss the idea of affordable healthcare.

The historic Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act has not only decreased the numbers of folks who are uninsured, it has effectively continued to increase the level of conversation around who has access to what and how well it serves us in moving towards us living our best, healthiest lives. In a year where we have record numbers of Black women leaders in our political and policy spheres, it stands to reason that we take this moment to leverage our political power to tackle the issues before us when it comes to our health and access to holistic, competent, and culturally relevant healthcare.

Healthcare costs continue to be of concern to families in the Black community. Every day I hear of a friend, family member, or member of my community struggling with costs associated with healthcare - co-pays, prescription drugs, long-term care, wellness services, you name it. Health- care takes a significant portion of our time and budgets. The challenges for Black women are exacerbated by issues of pay equity (that Black women make less on the dollar than many), decades of health injustice that is reflected as poor health outcomes and health disparities (We have more challenges to address.), and a system built on prioritizing profit via institutional racism and greed that will not on its own prioritize the well-being of Black Women and families.

In 2019, the "Year of the Women," what better time to leverage our political power and ensure that our precious investments not only ensure that we receive access to the

best healthcare available, but also provides with what we need as Black women to thrive. It's beyond time to transform the healthcare system to fully serve us.

So far this year, we've gathered additional insight to a key pillar of our existing healthcare system, prescription costs. As the house committee on oversight and reform convened hearings to investigate the skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs, we have learned more about one of the ways the healthcare system, as it stands, marginalizes people in their time of need.

As we continue to reveal the ills off our sick health system and discuss the way these ills show up as poor health outcomes for Black Women, it is critical that Black women are front and center in crafting the solutions we need to provide access to the healthcare we have, need, and deserve. To do this, I offer a few recommendations.

First of all, ***Trust Black Women***. Center and invest in the leadership of Black Women to offer and implement solutions that provide affordable, accessible, culturally relevant healthcare.

A few things to fight for include:

- Preservation, protection, and improving on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- Opposing creating insurance products meant to work around the protections of the ACA
- At every level of government, invest in community-based clinics and initiatives that ensure access to services and build on the resources and strengths of the communities they serve
- Expand Medicaid in all 50 states including the 14 states that have not expanded as of this report's publication. Oppose barriers to access

including work requirements; support expanded coverage and reimbursements for services that move toward health equity.

- Insist on access to affordable life-saving drugs and remove barriers to traditional medical therapies
- Support the Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness Act (MOMMA) Act introduced by Rep Robin Kelly (D-IL).

There are a number of resources available that profile and center the needs of Black Women. Invest in and appreciate the work of organizations such as:

Black Women's Roundtable - Annual Policy Reports

Black Women's Health Imperative - Policy Recommendations

Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust Lead by Rep. Robin Kelly (D-IL)

Higher Heights For America - Issues

Black Mamas Matter Alliance - Resources

National Black Justice Coalition - Health and Wellness

Movement for Black Lives - Policy Platform

Caring Across Generations - Policy

It is time. We are worthy and worth it.

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# Tackling Black Maternal Mortality Now

By:

**Linda Goler Blount**

President & CEO

The Black Women's Health Imperative

It's time to talk about our black pregnant mothers. Our women are dying in record numbers during and shortly after childbirth. But until recently it has not been on the radar.

It changed with the news of the death of Kira Johnson, a practicing physician, and the daughter in law of Judge Glenda Hatchett, and tennis star Serena Williams' postpartum story, to know that there is a lot to unpack when it comes to the disparities in maternal mortality. These are both high profile examples that put black maternal mortality in the spotlight, but it is a reality for black women all over the country no matter their social or economic status.

Black maternal mortality across the United States is four times higher than that of white women. In New York City, it is estimated that the rate of death during childbirth for black women is 12 times higher than their white counterparts.

The United States is the only developed country where the maternal mortality rate has increased over the past two decades. When looking at black women specifically, the U.S. maternal mortality rate is comparable to Sub-Saharan Africa, with black women accounting for a disproportionate number of maternal deaths. On average black women are three to four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related conditions, such as cardiovascular conditions, hemorrhage, and other chronic medical illnesses, than their white counterparts. In fact, from 2011 to 2013, there were 40.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for black women as compared to 12.1 deaths per 100,000 live births for white women.

Poor maternal health has a severe impact on black infant health. Currently, the black infant the mortality rate in the United States is 2.4 times higher than for white infants, primarily because black women have high rates of preterm births. While pre-term births are typically associated with low income women, black women "from all socio-economic backgrounds, experience higher rates of preterm births and infant mortality" than other women, suggesting that income is not the sole driving factor for poor infant health. And, black women who deliver at hospitals that primarily serve the black

population, are much more likely to experience complications and death during and after delivery.

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### **Enough is enough.**

At a time when we are seeing overall numbers of maternal and infant mortality improve, we have not seen the same improvements for black women and babies. This is not simply an issue of economics. Well-educated, high income, professional Black women have the same maternal mortality rates as white women who have less than an 8th grade education.

But why is this still happening? Those of us working in the field have some ideas, but from a research perspective, we simply don't know. As of 2019, there are no studies that examine why black women have higher mortality rates during childbirth. And while most states have infant mortality reviews to address deaths in the first year of life, few states are collecting the data required to begin to fully understand Black maternal mortality.

The Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI), through our IndexUS report, has been in conversations with black women. They continue to share stories of providers bringing their personal and professional biases into the care they receive. The top complaint black women have during and after childbirth is that their providers (MDs and nurses) didn't listen to them when they tried repeatedly to tell them something was wrong.

There are many providers who believe black women shouldn't have babies and that black women don't receive the same quality of care. Also, in looking at the data that is available we saw that in Washington, DC, hospitals that primarily serve Black women have poorer birth outcomes and are closing - putting hardships on low-income black women who must travel long distances for prenatal care.

It should be noted that in the Black Women's Health Study, Fleda Mask Jackson, Tene Lewis found that causal relationships between experiences of racial and gender discrimination may be connected to uterine fibroid tumors which are linked to low birthweight babies and maternal mortality. Current research also suggests that poor maternal health may result from poverty and lifelong exposure to racism, which have a cumulative impact on the body before during and after pregnancy. The studies that are available suggest that chronic exposure to racial and gendered stress due to discrimination is key in understanding maternal mortality and poor birth outcomes for black women. In one study, black women who reported high levels of racial and/or gender discrimination were more likely to deliver preterm, but the same association was

not present for White women. Another study suggests that many Black women have consistently elevated levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that triggers the body's fight or flight response, due in part to lifetime exposure to traumatic events.

## **Turning Talk Into Action**

It is never going to be enough to just point out the issues as we understand them. It is time for us to collectively come together to understand the why, through the data and further conversation with black women and then fight for change. There are many organizations and collaborators who are working together for improved outcomes for black mothers and babies.

Specifically, at BWHI, our CYL<sub>2</sub> program funded by CDC, is working with our partners around the country to address gestational diabetes, a leading cause of maternal morbidity. Our partners in CYL<sub>2</sub> are working on the ground to improve health outcomes for black women through lifestyle changes and emotional wellness.

We are also developing a training curriculum for providers to ensure Black women's lived experiences are incorporated into systems of care delivery. The curriculum will be available January 2020.

And because we know that change comes through both practice and policy, BWHI's legislative agenda highlights key legislation to protect Black women during prenatal care, labor & delivery and postpartum care.

BWHI is calling for a deeper analysis of data on the lived experiences of pregnant black women. That data would inform a national strategy to examine the underlying causes of poor maternal outcomes among black women and to develop and implement strategies for policy, practice and delivery systems to move the needle.

# We Can't Save Babies if We Fail America's Mothers

By:

**Stacey Stewart**

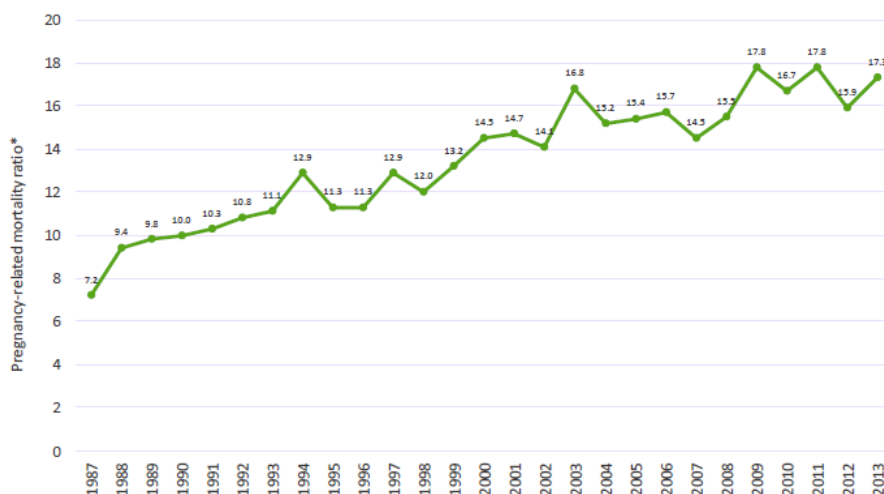
President & CEO, March of Dimes

The United States is at a moment of reckoning when it comes to women's lives and safety. The avalanche of outrage we're witnessing — brought on by #MeToo moments, stubborn gender pay inequities and unconscionable [maternal death rates](#) — has shaken us from our slumber. What matters now is what we do about these systemic failures.

Plenty of issues divide us. But prioritizing the health of women, mothers and babies should not be among them. Politics has no place in the maternity ward or the neonatal intensive care unit.

As leader of March of Dimes, an organization that has for [80 years](#) fought for the health of America's mothers and babies, every day I confront the reality that [700 women a year](#) needlessly die during pregnancy, in childbirth or soon after giving birth. An additional [50,000](#) suffer severe, life-threatening complications. The research, protocols and solutions are there to save lives, starting right now. But progress here and elsewhere must begin with a shift in how we view and treat women, starting with truly prioritizing their health and safety.

## **PREGNANCY-RELATED MORTALITY UNITED STATES, 1987-2013**



\*The pregnancy-related mortality ratio is defined as the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births. A pregnancy-related death is defined as the death of a woman during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.

Source: CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pmss.html>)

## Maternal deaths are too high in the U.S.

The startling maternal death ratio in the United States — [18 deaths](#) per 100,000 live births in 2014, the [highest in the developed](#) world — does not reflect our values or who we are. It is tragic because babies are growing up without their mothers, but doubly so because most of these deaths of women in their prime are preventable.

In other developed nations, rates of maternal death have remained [steady or declined](#), but in the United States they've more than doubled over the past 25 years.

The ratio for black women is even more disturbing: [40 die for every 100,000 live births](#).

Other nations — and [California](#), an anomaly among the 50 states — have reversed pregnancy-related death trends. The United States can, too.

Yet we continue to fail mothers by not taking steps proven to save lives. Last year, USA TODAY uncovered [nationwide gaps](#) in implementing safety protocols shown to protect pregnant women and new mothers from injury and death. Reporters also found that states have not provided sufficient resources to [properly study](#) maternal deaths, a critical process that has saved lives in the United Kingdom and California.

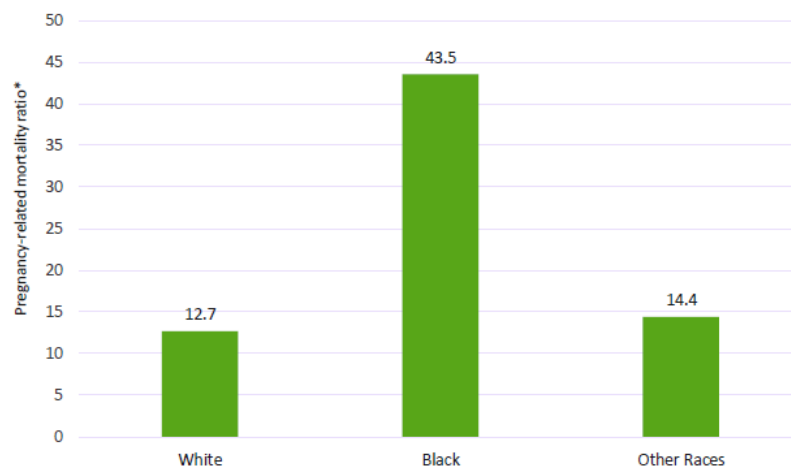
High-profile cases such as Serena Williams' postpartum [pulmonary embolism and hematoma](#) show how even when women tell their medical teams that something is wrong, too often no one listens.

No woman, no matter who she is, should have to say, "I almost died when my child was born," because she did not immediately get the care she needed. And yet I know from speaking to women — and particularly African-American women like me — that this is our reality.

We fail mothers, too, by not ensuring access to maternity care for every woman who needs it. A recent [March of Dimes report](#) finds that 5 million women live in counties considered "maternity care deserts," with no hospital offering obstetric care and no obstetric providers. An additional [10 million](#) live in counties with limited access to maternity care.

Living far from hospitals or providers can impact a woman's ability to get the care she needs throughout her life and during pregnancy. Even if a woman lives where there are obstetric providers and hospitals with obstetric services, not having health insurance or a way to pay for care can impact a woman's health before, during and after pregnancy. The time it takes to go to appointments and the cost of getting to the doctor's office or delivery room are also barriers for both rural and urban women, especially those who are poor.

### **PREGNANCY-RELATED MORTALITY BY RACE UNITED STATES, 2011-2013**



\*The pregnancy-related mortality ratio is defined as the number of pregnancy-related deaths per 100,000 live births. A pregnancy-related death is defined as the death of a woman during pregnancy or within one year of the end of pregnancy from a pregnancy complication, a chain of events initiated by pregnancy, or the aggravation of an unrelated condition by the physiologic effects of pregnancy.

Source: CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pmss.html>)

### **States can do more to help mothers**

States such as [Arkansas](#), [Oregon](#), [Texas](#) and [Wyoming](#) are investigating innovative methods of reaching women during their pregnancies, including telemedicine for consultations and referrals, transportation reimbursement, subsidized housing close to the regional perinatal center, and state income tax credits for rural obstetric providers.

Such efforts strengthen my belief that things can be different. Every woman in the United States, no matter where she lives, can and should have adequate maternity care. We can work to protect women's physical and mental health throughout their

lives. We can acknowledge and reduce the racial and ethnic bias and systemic inequities. We can ensure that all women have quality, affordable health insurance. We can do everything possible to make it easier for women to have healthy pregnancies and to be healthy before and after birth. We can stop making women feel they are to blame when a pregnancy goes wrong.

We must start doing all of this now.

Last fall, I [testified](#) in support of legislation that aims to save women's lives by studying pregnancy-related deaths, proposing [solutions in every state](#) and looking for ways to address disparities faced by women of color. That's a start, but ending maternal deaths will be complex and will take time. The solution will not be linear. Doctors, insurers, hospitals, politicians, researchers, states and federal agencies, organizations like mine, and countless others must work together urgently to renew our commitment to protect our nation's moms.

Now is the time to turn a nation's collective outrage into collective action. After all, we can't say we care about babies if we continue to turn our backs on their mothers.

*Stacey D. Stewart is president and CEO of the March of Dimes, which fights for the health of all moms and babies. This Opinion was published in USA Today, October 11, 2018.*



# The State of Black Women & Girls in Education

# Discipline Disparities in the Education of Black Girls in K-12

By:

**Becky Pringle**

Vice President

National Education Association

A white student in an Iowa middle school brings a knife to school, threatens another student, and is placed in an in-school suspension program for eight weeks. A black student in the same school brings a knife to school and is immediately expelled.

As an in-school suspension educator at the school in question, Yvonne Shepherd has a front-row seat to the impact of disproportionate discipline policies on students of color. Although Black students comprise around 20 percent of the school's student population, of the approximately 600 student referrals during the school year's first semester, 400 are Black and that includes girls.

Shepherd acknowledges that Black girls at her school are more likely to be in trouble for insubordination and "silly fights over hair and looks and boys." But there is a difference, says Phillips, in the way in which Black girls and their white peers are disciplined.

The ways in which Black girls are seen—and see themselves—has a definite impact on the way in which they're treated, confirms Professor Erika Wilson, who speaks from experience. A gifted student and fast reader, Wilson was automatically tracked into a remedial reading group in her predominantly White elementary school.

A scholar activist at the University of North Carolina School of Law, Wilson's research focuses on racial equality in education and the intersection of race and gender. She breaks down the one-dimensional, cartoonish stereotypes Black girls must navigate:

*African-American girls are portrayed as "loud, obnoxious Mammies and Jezebels; Girls of color from all groups suffer the stigma of being depicted as oversexualized seductresses.*

These stereotypes carry over into the way Black girls are disciplined. According to the most recent federal data, Black girls' 12% suspension rate is much higher than girls of any other race and most boys are; and research shows that dark girls are suspended and expelled more harshly than those with lighter skin are.

National statistics from U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, 2013-2014 Civil Right Data Collection show that:

- Black girls are 5.5 times more likely to be suspended from school as white girls
- Black girls are more likely than any other race or gender to be suspended more than once
- Schools are 3.5 times more likely to suspend Black girls with disabilities than white girls with disabilities

According to a recent study commissioned by the Grantmakers for Girls of Colors, numbers are frequently used to perpetuate comparisons that either lead to a deficit narrative (i.e. “compared to white girls”), or fuel unnecessary competition within groups (i.e. “compared to Black boys and men”). These frameworks limit the way we define and understand the barriers that could improve the success for Black girls.

Unfortunately, this oversight continues to contribute to a lack of educational programming and policies that address the impact of the intersection of racism and sexism on the educational experiences of Black girls.

Studies continue to show that teachers, administrators, and policymakers often overlook Black girls. Educators of all races and the students themselves often internalize negative stereotypes that impede effective ways to combat barriers. Awareness for both groups is the first step in addressing the problem says Wilson.

## **Rainya Miller**

At a meeting of the Lunch Circle at Crossland High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, an animated group of Black girls discussed the “messed up” gender stereotypes governing the behavior of girls and boys—from double standards involving sexuality to the glass ceiling.

“I started the Lunch Circle this school year as a way to reach out to young ladies who were being written up for insubordination and minor transgressions,” says Rainya Miller, an instructional program coordinator for the National Board-Certified Teacher Program.

Miller explains that home life and community life are often behind the emotional issues some of her girls bring to school. What's worse, these issues are compounded by

negative stereotypes that color the ways in which they're perceived and treated. "It's harder to focus on academics if you're in defense mode all the time," says Miller.

To help educators get past their own implicit biases and students' defenses, Miller recommends cultural competence training. To help students transition from defense mode to relationship building, Miller emphasizes self-awareness and cultural awareness. "Feeling good about themselves is the foundation for everything else."

Girls from the Grantmakers report articulated that mentorship also helps to disrupt the negative narrative many Black girls may be internalizing. Instead, it provides them access to the wisdom, experiences, and the survival skills of their elders. Mentorship programs allow Black females to understand and validate their common experiences, and thereby further understand their shared viewpoint.

"No one knows what to expect," echoes Professor Wilson, who encourages activists to continue to advocate for positive discipline policies at the state and local levels. "We have to be especially vigilant to ensure all the progress we've made isn't just gone with the wind."

# HBCUs Rising: Enrollment Increase Harken Bright Future for HBCUs and Black Women

By:  
**Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.**  
President & CEO  
Incite Unlimited

After years of declining enrollment, HBCUs are on the rise. The most recent federal data tracking college enrollment finds that as of Fall 2017, the nation's HBCU's have experienced a 2.1 percent increase from the previous year, after years of declining enrollment, while enrollments in all colleges and universities have continued their multi-year decline. Set within a broader context in which hate crimes have increased for a third year in a row (up 17% since 2016), and a moment in which roughly 2 of 5 such crimes are motivated specifically by race or ethnicity, HBCU's are perhaps seen as a safe haven, a space where the focus can be on the acquisition of a quality education, without worry of being stigmatized, ostracized, or potentially exposed to violence.

Black women continue to lead Black male enrollment at HBCUs, as they do at colleges and universities overall, so much so, that this most recent enrollment gain at HBCUs can be fully attributed to the rise in Black women's representation on college campuses, as Black male enrollees have actually continued their multi-year enrollment decline.

If this enrollment rebound continues or even increases in the years to come, these historic institutions, many of which have struggled in recent years, may begin to find themselves on more sound and stable financial footing. Additionally, as more African Americans choose HBCUs for their higher educational needs, they too may experience better outcomes related to employment and overall well-being.

According to research by Purdue University and Gallup, Black graduates of HBCUs tend to fair better in the post-college experiences than do Blacks who graduate from Predominately White Institutions. , HBCU graduates were more likely to indicate that they outperformed their their non-HBCU counterparts across a variety of indicators, including financial well-being (40% vs. 29%), social well-being (54% vs. 48%), physical well-being (33% vs. 28%), community well-being (42% vs. 38%) and living with a sense of purpose (51% vs. 43%).

So what accounted for this difference? HBCU graduates were more likely than Black graduates of other colleges to indicate that they had professors who cared about them (58% vs. 25%) and a mentor that encouraged them to pursue their goals (42% vs. 23) while also receiving experiential learning opportunities in college that set them up to thrive in later life. Likely because of this mix of personal concern, encouragement, and mentorship along with real-world experience in the college context, HBCU graduates were much more likely to indicate that their college prepared them for life after graduation (55% vs. 29%). That said, as HBCUs rise, so too will those who choose this path as their conduit to the college educational experience.

**Table 1: HBCU Enrollment Rebounds After Multi-Year Decline**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Black HBCU Enrollment	251,527	241,485	231,889	228,062	223,512	226,843
Black Males	96,079	92,491	88,469	86,857	84,153	83,921
Black Women	155,448	148,994	143,420	141,205	139,359	142,922

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. Table 313.20: Fall enrollment in degree-granting historically Black colleges and universities, by sex of student and level and control of institution: Selected years, 1976 through 2017.

**Table 2: Black HBCU Graduates More Likely to Thrive**

	HBCU %	Non-HBCU %	Pct. Difference
Financial Well-Being	40	29	-11
Purpose Well-Being	51	43	-8
Social Well-Being	54	48	-6
Community Well-Being	42	38	-4
Physical Well-Being	33	28	-5
Thriving in all Five Well Being Elements	7	7	0

Source: Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014-2015

**Table 3: Different College Experiences for Black HBCU Grads  
and Non-HBCU Grads**

	HBCUs %	Non-HBCUs %	Pct. Difference
My professors at my University cared about me as a person.	58	25	-33
I had at least one professor at my University who made me excited about learning	74	62	-12
While attending my University, I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams	42	23	-19
Felt Support	35	12	-23
While attending my University, I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom	41	31	-10
While attending my University, I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete	36	30	-6
I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while attending my University	32	23	-9
Experiential Learning	13	7	-6

Source: Gallup-Purdue Index, 2014-2015



# State of HBCU's Black Women Presidents

By:

**Lezli Baskerville, J.D.**

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

“The true worth of a race [and its anchor institutions] must be measured by the character of its womanhood.” These are the words of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, the Nation’s only black female founder of an Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Bethune- Cookman, was the first black women HBCU president. Today, Dr. Bethune is smiling on the black women who are currently serving as the chief executive officers of 31 of the Nation’s 105 HBCUs. As we approach the sixty-fourth anniversary of Dr. Bethune’s death, I can imagine her whispering to the Board Members of her beloved Bethune-Cookman, “Don't you let nobody turn you around.”<sup>7</sup>

If Dr. Bethune were with us today, I can imagine her telling the Board:

*“I understand from my former student, protégé, and friend, Dr. Oswald P. Bronson, your late beloved President Emeritus who served with distinction for almost three decades, that BCC is confronting a number of challenges today. I say to you BCU Trustees, faculty staff, alumni, and friends, if [you] have the courage and tenacity of our forebears, who stood firmly like a rock against the lash of slavery, [you] shall find a way to do for [your] day what they did for theirs [and I did for mine.] “We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may shore up BCU for the next 115 years and, direct their power toward good ends.”*

I believe Dr. Bethune would make two final appeals to the BCU trustees, presidential search committee, faculty, staff, alumni, students, families and friends: (1) ‘Leverage BCU’s affiliation and relationship with the United Methodist Church, to inform the values and future of the institution,’ and (2) ‘find the right woman to serve as the next CEO.’

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune has a great deal about which to be inspired today. As the HBCU Community is poised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National

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<sup>7</sup> A spiritual printed with music in Clarence Cameron White's 1927, **Forty Negro Spirituals**.

Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO),<sup>8</sup> the Nation's only membership and advocacy association of all of the richly diverse HBCUs and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs).<sup>9</sup> NAFEO counts among its many transformational successes for its members, their students, faculty, staff, and service communities, the increased number of female HBCU presidents. Many of the NAFEO internship, mentorships, and fellowship programs; its advocacy in Congress, state legislatures, courts, and executive suites; its annual Presidential Peer Seminar and Shadow a Successful President programs have contributed to the rise in the number of HBCU female presidents. An initiative shaped by Dr. Arthur E. Thomas, President Emeritus of Central State University, and NAFEO Presidential Fellow, and the NAFEO Kellogg Leadership Institute, as part of a larger MSI Leadership Fellows Program, significantly increased the number of senior-level leaders at HBCUs and minority-serving institutions (MSIs). The program took affirmative steps to achieve gender diversity among the participants.

As is the case in many black families, black women are punching above their weight in serving at the helm of HBCUs. In an industry that is dominated by white men, black women are making progress toward closing the gender gap among the chief executive officers of the nation's HBCUs. Though the gap still persists, Black women, today, sit at the helm of one third of all HBCUs.

Synthesizing data contained the *Postsecondary Institutions and Cost of Attendance in 2017-18; Degrees and Other Awards Conferred: 2016-17; and 12-Month Enrollment: 2016-17: First Look (Provisional Data)*; See/download [here](#). The *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* reported in a

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<sup>8</sup> **About NAFEO** Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, NAFEO serves as “the voice for blacks in higher education.” It is the nation's only 501 (c) (3) membership association of the nation's 105 HBCUs and roughly 80 PBIs. It was founded for and is governed by the presidents and chancellors of the richly diverse HBCUs and PBIs. NAFEO represents the entire swath of HBUs and PBIs: public, private and land-grant, two-year, four-year, graduate and professional, historically and predominately black colleges and universities, located in 25 states, the District of Columbia, Virgin Islands, Columbia, and Brazil. NAFEO was founded to provide an international voice for the nation's HBCUs; place and maintain issues of equal opportunity in higher education on the national agenda, advocate policies, programs, and practices designed to preserve and enhance HBCUs, and increase active participation of blacks at every level in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs in global higher education. Unique to its mission, NAFEO has represented and continues to represent before the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches of Government the issues and interests of HBCUs and to advance their centrality to American progress.

NAFEO members represent more than 700,000 students, 72,000 faculty, and 7 million alumni worldwide. HBCUs have a \$16 billion short-term economic impact. They graduate 50% of African American public-school teaching professionals; in excess of 40% of African Americans who get advanced degrees in the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); 60% of African American health professionals; and growing percentages of African Americans in sustainability and Homeland Security professions, the arts, and humanities. Learn more at [www.nafeo.org](http://www.nafeo.org).

<sup>9</sup> For a complete list of all HBCUs and PBIs, please see, [www.nafeonation.org](http://www.nafeonation.org).

November 26, 2018 synopsis, that major gender gaps persist in degrees awarded to African Americans at all degree levels.

“African American women earned 83,679 associate’s degrees during the 2016-17 academic year. This was 66.9 percent of all associate’s degrees earned by Blacks.

“....Black women earned 64.1 percent of all bachelor’s degrees awarded to African Americans.

“In master’s degree awards, Black women earned 58,054 degrees, compared to just 24,818 for Black men. Thus, Black women earned 70.1 percent of all master’s degrees awarded to African Americans.

“Black women earned 68.4 percent of all research doctorates awarded to African Americans and 64.5 percent of all professional practice doctorate awarded to African Americans.”

Overall, at the doctoral degree level, which is most important in assessing gender and race parity at the CEO level in the academy, neither black women or men are approaching parity.

The 2017 National Science Foundation *Survey of Earned Doctorates* revealed that of the 54,641 doctoral degrees conferred by US universities, African Americans earned 6.7 percent of all doctoral degrees awarded in 2017, roughly one half the doctoral degrees required to reflect U.S. African American racial parity. The struggle continues. However, the growth in numbers of black female presidents and chancellors serving at the helm of HBCUs is promising.

Black female HBCU presidents are Superwomen! They come from a variety of fields and backgrounds: administrators, accountants, auditors, biologists, chemists, corporate CEOs, doctors, educators, engineers, government executives, guidance counselors, higher education executives, financial and resource management professionals, certified human resources professionals, institutional advancement specialists, lawyers, physicians, scientists, mathematicians, ministers, philosophers, psychologists, public policy analysts, social workers, sociologists and student retention experts.

Our Sister Presidents have expertise and experience which they are using to inspire, lead, and lift their students, families, institutions, faculty, staff, alumni and service communities. They are creating and sustaining environments designed to spur and support students to identify and dedicate their lives to the highest good and ideals they know, to understand their relationship and responsibility to humanity. They are creating

and sustaining challenging and stimulating environments that encourage students to learn and grow to capacity; to test their personal beliefs against those of others and, yes, to engage in affirmative disruption without trammeling the rights of others.

Our Sister Presidents are different in background and training, substance, style, ethnicity, experience and expectations of themselves and others. Some study stars and other celestial objects; others are Rock Stars, many trust in the 'Rock of the Ages.' Each is fulfilling her calling to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, (Matthew 5:13-16).

NAFEO salutes and lifts with thanksgiving the thirty-one (31) phenomenal SiSTAR HBCU presidents. We elevate and celebrate in particular two HBCU female presidents who are exemplars and who are serving with distinction. These women exemplify the excellence and diversity of the women in the current cohort of HBCU black female presidents, and the diversity of HBCUs. One is president of Tougaloo College, a private, coeducational, liberal arts college in Jackson, Mississippi, founded in 1869 by the American Missionary Association, that has served as the epicenter of the Civil Rights Movement and social justice movements in Mississippi. The cornerstones of the Tougaloo experience remain academic excellence and social justice. Tougaloo is ranked in the top15 HBCUs graduating females with undergraduate degrees in the physical sciences. The second SiSTAR President we lift as she transitions to her next position of service is president of Savannah State University, a four-year, state-supported, historically black university and the oldest public historically black university in the State of Georgia.

Both HBCU SiSTAR Presidents we lift for special recognition are sheroes who are retiring after moving their institutions to great new heights, and after distinguishing themselves within and among those in the HBCU/MSI communities, and in higher education, nationally:

## 2019 NAFEO Nation HBCU Black Female Presidential Sheroes:



**Dr Cheryl Davenport Dozier**

**Retiring President, Cheryl Davenport Dozier** became the 13th president of Savannah State University (SSU) in May 2012. Dr. Dozier is university-level professor, researcher, author and administrator known throughout the University System of Georgia (USG). Highlights of Dr. Dozier's transformative tenure at the helm of SSU include, improving graduation and retention rates, customer service, and external relationships. She created a Board of Visitors; launched the Transformation and Growth campaign; created the Closing the Gap need-based funding for seniors; opened two STEM academic buildings; enhanced the university's global mission and global footprint, including Fulbright Educational programs; and, as the international ambassador for SSU, Dr. Davenport Dozier supported the renewal or establishment of academic relationships at universities in Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, Nigeria, Brazil, China, Indonesia, South Korea and India.

An experienced administrator, prolific speaker, passionate advocate for educational access, social justice and equity, Dr. Dozier is widely recognized for her work locally and nationally. Her passion for education, youth development, and service to the community is manifested through her work with numerous organizations including the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), where her leadership and support for her colleagues was second to none. She lent her time and leadership lessons to enrich the community of HBCU presidents and chancellors in formal and informal ways. The sessions she anchored at NAFEO's Presidential Peer Seminars were among the best and most highly subscribed. During her tenure at the helm of SSU she mentored no fewer than two freshmen presidents, annually, enabling her to leave at least fourteen presidential protégés who will hopefully carry on in the Dozier Davenport lore.

Dr. Dozier earned her Doctor of Social Work degree from Hunter College, at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, received a Master of Social Work Degree from Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta) and a bachelor's degree in Education from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Said Dr. Davenport of her service at the helm of Savannah State University, *“This has been the most rewarding position of my career, leading and serving this historical university at such a time as this. I am energized by the future of this great university, especially our students and graduates and look forward to the growth and success as SSU expands beyond the campus to reach more nontraditional students online and at our two new satellite campuses.”*



**Dr. Beverly Wade Hogan**  
**Longest Serving, Currently Serving HBCU Female President**

Dr. Beverly W. Hogan has served as president of Tougaloo College since May 2002 and will retire on June 30, 2019. She is the 13th president and first woman to lead this historic institution. President Hogan is the longest currently serving HBCU female president.

President Hogan will be transitioning from her privileged position of service at the helm of Tougaloo College as the College celebrates its sesquicentennial anniversary in 2019. Under President Hogan's leadership, 'a solid organizational infrastructure [was]... established to support a top-notch academic enterprise. New undergraduate degree programs were started in mass communications, hotel and hospitality management and religious studies. Two graduate degree programs in education and an Early College High School in partnership with the Jackson Public School District were also launched. The



Center for Undergraduate Research, an honors program, the Center for International Studies and Global Change, and the Institute for the Study of Modern Day Slavery were established. The Research and Development Foundation was also formed. Significant technological improvements were made, including campus wide connectivity, smart classrooms, wireless networks and the installation of an integrated information management system. Campus renovations, the repurposing and renovation of the L. Zenobia Coleman Library into a 21st Century Learning Resource Center and the construction of the Bennie G. Thompson Academic and Civil Rights Research Center have transformed the living and learning environment.’

President Hogan is a master relationship builder, sustainer and “leverager.” She is a Master Mentor. President Hogan worked her “friends” with excellence, grace, aplomb, and unparalleled success. She includes among her friends and friendly colleagues, persons of all races, ethnicities, religions, backgrounds, socio-economic strata, all stripes, persuasions, both genders, and persons of all statures. Throughout her seventeen-year tenure at the helm of Tougaloo, President Hogan masterfully grew and leveraged personal, professional, social, civic, philanthropic, corporate, government, NGO, and political relationships to achieve excellence and greatness for Tougaloo. She leveraged those same relationships for the progress of the entire HBCU Community, known as NAFEO Nation. The HBCU Community owes President Hogan a great debt of gratitude for many things, most especially the manner in which she quietly and professionally leveraged for the good of the whole, her uncanny special relationship with Mississippi Senator Tad Cochran, who served four decades in the United States Senate before retiring last year, many of them as Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, a powerful panel with jurisdiction over government spending, for the good of the whole. The Hogan-Cochran association yielded hundreds of millions for the HBCU Community and expedited funding and affirmative actions to bring HBCUs back online following several devastating hurricanes and other natural disasters. President Hogan counts among her friends, another powerful Mississippi Member of Congress, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson. Congressman Thompson is a proud Tougaloo alumni who made the following comment as he celebrated his golden anniversary as a Tougaloo alumni last year, “I take Tougaloo everywhere I go.” This speaks volumes about an important relationship President Hogan has that inured to the benefit of the entire HBCU Community. Congressman Bennie Thompson is now serving his second term as Chair of the Homeland Security Committee.



Said President Hogan, “Together, we have weathered some crisis years to engineer the building and growth of the Tougaloo we see today. The future looks bright for Tougaloo. It is not encumbered by debt. There are tremendous opportunities for the college to diversify its revenue streams through the development and optimization of its fixed assets, some of which are already in progress. I am confident Tougaloo’s best days are in the future.”

# Black Women & Technology

# Digital Discrimination: How Algorithms Reinforce Race & Gender Bias

By:

**Joycelyn Tate, J.D.**

*President, Tate Strategies*

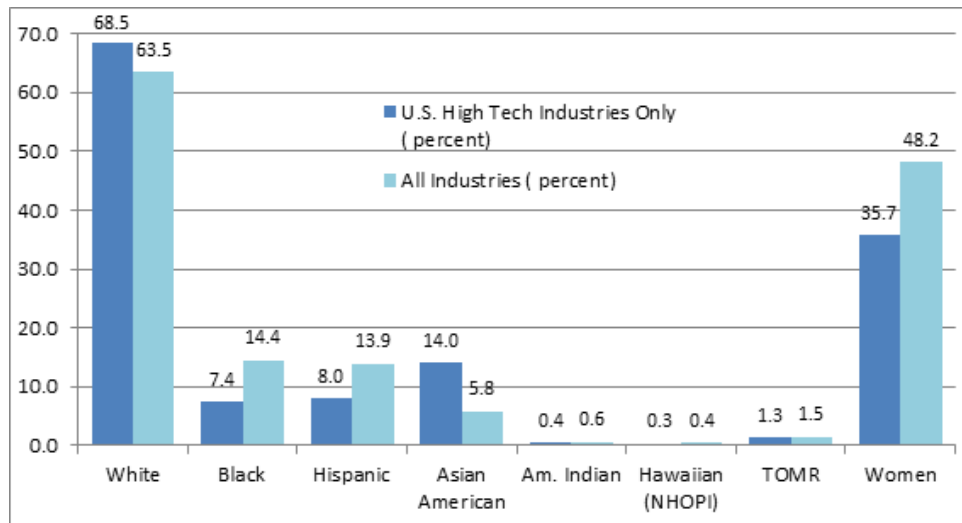
*Senior Technology Policy Advisor, BWR*

For many years, doing a simple online search of the words “black girls” would lead to some disturbing search results. The first page of the search results would yield sexually implicit advertisements, websites and discussion boards with explicitly sexual content about black women and girls. Even though the words “porn,” “pornography,” or “sex” were not included in the search terms, pornography dominated the first pages of results when searching online for women and girls of color.<sup>xxvii</sup>

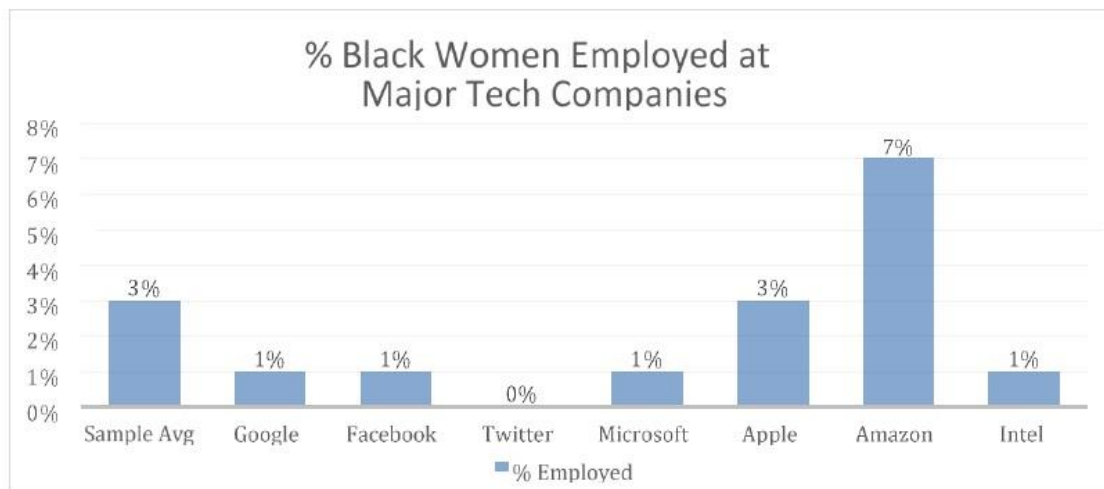
Over the last few years, major search engines have changed their algorithms or key word searches to yield more positive results for a search of “black girls,” but for many years the small monopoly of Internet search engines used algorithms which yielded results that reflected the negative historical images of Black women and girls as hypersexual and objects for sexual pleasure.

This digital coding became the norm because Black women are not employed in any significant number at any of the big tech companies as computer programmers or in decision-making positions<sup>xxviii</sup>. This allows these companies the unfettered ability to control the implicit and explicit narratives of how Black women and girls are presented in online search results.

## INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION BY GENDER SEX AND RACE GROUPS HIGH TECH VS. ALL PRIVATE INDUSTRIES



Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission



Source: 2014 EEO-1 Reports from Respective Companies

The business model of most major search engines and social media companies is to monetize their ability to use algorithms to prioritize online search results, track users' search patterns and online social media profiles. This business model has created an online landscape where advertisers who pay more rank higher priority in search results and can dictate which user profiles will see their advertisements in search results and on social media.<sup>xxix</sup> This has created a market that sells search results and online profiles the highest bidder. As a result, information seen in search engine results and social

media are driven by advertising algorithms. These algorithms have created data discrimination that diminishes Black women's opportunities for employment, housing, credit, education and health care.

Search engines track users based on their geographical area and online preferences for information, goods and services.<sup>xxx</sup> The results of this tracking lead to predictive algorithms that deliberately exclude or target advertising and online search results to users. For example, research found that Google employment advertisements for executive positions paying a salary of over \$200, 000 were displayed in search results 1,852 times to men and 318 times to women.<sup>xxxi</sup> This employment discrimination further devastates Black women's ability to obtain equal pay and secure their financial futures into retirement; particularly because Black women in the United States are typically paid 61 cents for every dollar paid to White men.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Social media companies can parse their users to exclude certain populations from viewing such things as employment and housing advertisements. Recently, two separate law suits were filed against Facebook for racial and gender discrimination in its advertising practices. In one law suit, Facebook is accused of violating the Fair Housing Act because its ad tool allowed advertisers to use a customization option called "Ethnic Affinities" to select which racial groups they did not want to view certain housing-related advertisements that appeared on Facebook.<sup>xxxiii</sup> According to the National Fair Housing Alliance, the organization that filed the law suit, the exclusion list included every racial category except for Whites.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In another law suit, Facebook and 10 employers who use Facebook to post job advertisements, are alleged to have discriminated against women by targeting certain job advertisements only at men.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Additionally, companies are using algorithms to analyze data of perspective employees to determine more desirable hires. The algorithms would use past data to understand what will be successful in the future. These algorithms determined that females were promoted less frequently, tended to leave the job quickly and got fewer raises. It would then conclude that men are better hires, which perpetuating the historical gender bias of men as better employers.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

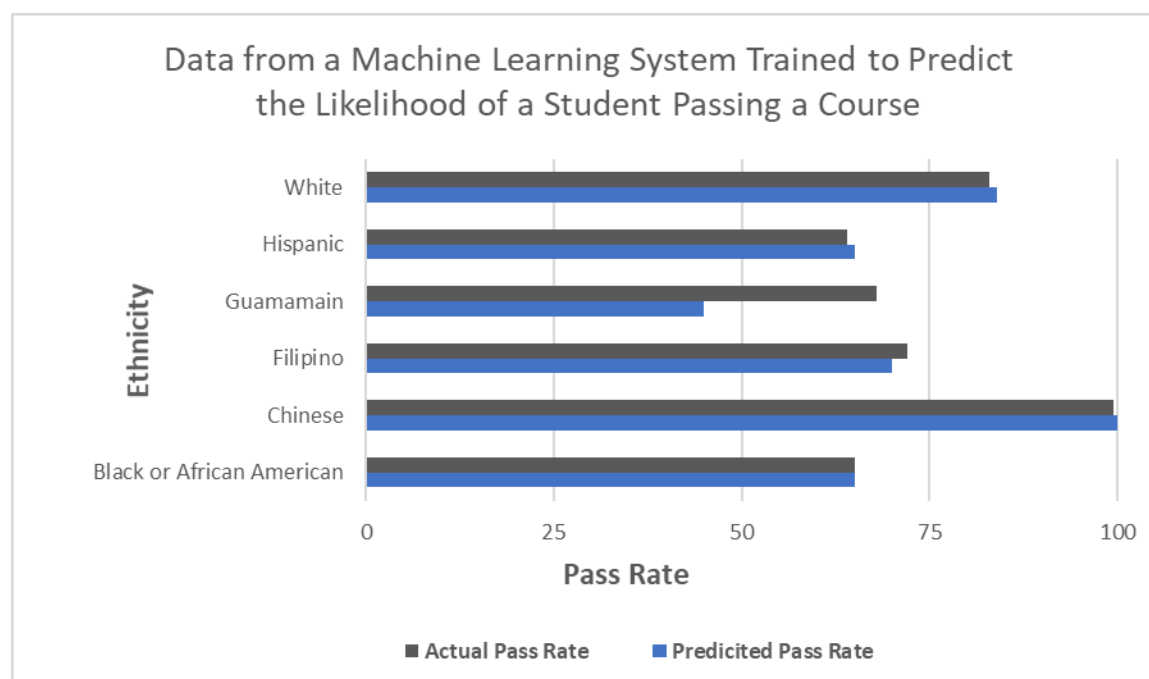
In many cases, Black women are the heads of their households and provide the sole household income. The effects of algorithmic discrimination in employment and housing can have long-ranging negative consequences on Black women and their families by crippling their ability to obtain the generational wealth that is achieved from higher-paying jobs that allow them increased opportunities for financial savings, investments and real estate acquisitions that could be passed along to current family members and future generations.

Search engines and social media sites are not the only platforms where algorithms are used that discriminate against Black women. Financial institutions, insurance

companies, education and the health care industry all use digital algorithms to determine the services, attention and care they provide to Black women.

As face-to-face meetings between mortgage officers and homebuyers are replaced by online applications and algorithms, lending discrimination still exist. Blacks borrowers are still charged higher interest rates than Whites both online and face-to-face.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Insurance companies are using social media posts on sites like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook to determine life insurance premiums. These determinations are based on posts of users' appearances in terms of their weight and posting healthy activities like running.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Studies found that Black women who follow the same diet and exercise routine as White women tend to loss less weight.<sup>xxxix</sup> Based on the insurance industries biased algorithms, those Black women who are healthy, but appear to be overweight, and post their pictures on social media would be denied or charged a higher premium for life insurance.

Educators are using algorithms to determine the likelihood of a student passing a course. Based on any biases programmed into algorithms used for education, the learning performance of Black women and girls could be systematically underestimated<sup>xl</sup>. This underestimation could negatively influence educators' decisions when teaching Black women and girls—which will ultimately turn presumption into a reality of educational underperformance for them.



Source: Chris Walker, Student Predictions & Protections: Algorithm Bias in AI-Based Learning, Illuminated Blog, June 28, 2018

Biased algorithms in health care are adversely affect Black women as well. Algorithms designed to decrease the length of hospital stays and provide additional out-patient care used zip codes to identify those people who have shorter hospital stays. When using the zip codes for predominantly Black neighborhoods, where people were most likely to have longer hospital stays, the algorithm led to the hospital providing additional case management resources to a predominantly White, more educated, more affluent population to get them out of the hospital earlier, instead of to Blacks, who are considered a more medically and socially at-risk population to many diseases and in need of more out-patient care.<sup>xli</sup>

The mode of gender discrimination has shifted from human to algorithmic. Predicative algorithms, which reflect the biases of their creators, are delivering gender biased information and targeted marketing to search engine and social media users based on historic biases and stereotypes about Black women. Because most of the people who are programming these algorithms are not Black women or people of color, they are perpetuating their own prejudices and racists beliefs of Black women into the computer coding of these algorithms.

Algorithms used by big tech companies and other industries contribute to racial profiling and the systemic and institutional sexism, racism and discrimination that marginalizes Black women and makes them vulnerable victims to these algorithms' ability to decrease opportunities for employment, housing, credit, education and health care—which harms the economic wealth and well-being of Black women, their families and communities.

# Black Women and Girls in Technology and STEM

By:  
**Krystal High Taylor**  
Founder & CEO  
Influence.us

Since its inception, talk of Silicon Valley conjured images of “Bro culture” and pattern-matched white men - the Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates Harvard drop-out success stories have become the thing of legend, and often color the way investors perceive opportunity. As times begin to change however, Silicon Valley’s diversity challenge is being met head on by a powerful force: Black women.

## **Black Women Are Changing the Face of Silicon Valley**

Black women are changing the narrative of what it means to be an active participant in Silicon Valley’s high-tech culture, and they’re opening doors and windows for more Black women to become actively engaged in the space. Take Felicia Mayo, for instance, who was recruited by Elon Musk to run Tesla’s Human Resources and Diversity & Inclusion operations after previously spending 19 years in Silicon Valley working for companies like PwC, Oracle, and Juniper Networks. Or Sydney Sykes, who co-founded BLCK VC, “a formal network and community of venture professionals” looking to increase the presence of Black investors who can financially support companies being created by underrepresented founders.

Likewise, Netta Dobbins’ Mimconnect seeks to help companies recruit people of color for marketing and advertising jobs, while Ariel Lopez’s Knac provides a platform to assess the technical skills of job seekers. And Lisa Skeete Tatum recently made history when her personalized career management company, Landit, announced closing on a \$13 million round of Series A funding – a figure monumental not only because of its size, but because a Black women-led company was able to attract that level of investment early in its life cycle.

Even consider the role Black women are playing as catalysts for investment in other Black and diverse founders. Arlan Hamilton, for example, has made a name for herself as the Founder and Managing Partner of Backstage Capital. Just a few years ago, she was homeless and learning the basics of investing. Today, she helms one of the most sought-after investment firms in the nation for underrepresented founders. Backstage Capital, which launched in 2015 with the goal of finding and supporting underrepresented founders – women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ



community – has already invested \$4 million dollars in 100 startups to date. They’ve also launched a \$36 million fund expressly for Black women, and have begun offering an accelerator program for diverse founders looking to scale their operations.

## **Despite Gains, Black Women Remain Under-resourced and Under-Funded**

Across the country, Black women “comprise 4% of all female entrepreneurs running tech startups in the United States,” “are the nation’s fastest-growing demographic of entrepreneurs. Yet in tech, they are the least likely to get funding from venture capitalists.” As entrepreneur Daniel Applewhite noted in an article for Forbes, “power and structural racism have crippled the startup ecosystem, and entrepreneurs of color seeking early-stage financing are suffering the most.”

According to a 2018 report by Project Diane, a biennial demographic study conducted by Digital Undivided on entrepreneurial trends among Black Women, “since 2009, Black women–led startups have raised \$289MM in venture/angel funding, with a significant portion of that raised in 2017. This represents .0006% of the \$424.7 billion in total tech venture funding raised since 2009.”

The number of Black women “who have received more than \$1 million in investment is growing, [but] the number is still small. In 2015, there were 12 black women who had raised more than \$1 million in funding...in 2017, there were 34.” The average raised by those who raised less than \$1MM is \$42,000, a 15% increase since 2016. Even still, “the median amount of funding raised by black women is \$0...because the majority of startups founded by black women receive no money.”

By the same token, “81 percent of VC firms don’t have a single black investor. Roughly 50 percent of black investors in the industry are at the associate level, or the lowest level at a firm; and only 2 percent of VC partners are black.” To buck these trends of lack of access to capital and resources in the Valley, Black women are looking to other sources of support to help catalyze opportunity.

## **Black Women Are Creating Opportunity Beyond Silicon Valley**

Despite comprising 14.5% of the overall American private industry workforce, African Americans only account for 2.6% of Silicon Valley’s labor pool. Contrast that to the fact that “in 2014 to 2015, black students earning a bachelor’s degree in science, technology, engineering and mathematics accounted for 7.1 percent of graduates in those fields, according to the Department of Education.” Not to mention the countless

others who graduated with degrees in marketing, law, communications, human resources, or other professions frequently dubbed “soft skills” that Silicon Valley companies also must fill.

Knowing the promise created by emersion in Silicon Valley and the broader tech culture, Black women are now expanding beyond the borders of tech’s traditional epicenter to create new spaces for innovation and opportunity for diverse founders.

Ecosystem builders like Felecia Hatcher of Code Fever and Black Tech Week in Miami, Sherrell Dorsey of The Plug and BLKTECHCLT in Charlotte, North Carolina, Karen Finney of Digital UnDivided and Project Diane in Atlanta, and Fallon S. Wilson of Black in Tech Nashville are becoming more common fixtures across the country. In fact, there’s so much promise for African American achievement in the tech sector beyond Silicon Valley, African Americans are “abandoning the Bay Area, Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Detroit to reclaim cities in the South.”

The revolution of Black women spearheading new opportunities for inclusion and prosperity in the tech sector is just beginning! Meaningful participation in this space requires a concerted effort and consistent engagement between funders, entrepreneurs, and the customers and communities they serve, alike.

A movement is afoot in Silicon Valley and beyond in which Black women are staking their rightful claim as innovators and change-makers who are ushering forth a culture shift in the ways we perceive inclusion in the tech economy. They are breaking glass ceilings and paving new paths to prosperity for the next generation. They aren’t looking for handouts; they’re looking for a leg up, and they are building new ladders of success and opportunity along the way.

# The Impact of Criminal Justice, Exposure to Violence and Immigration on Black Women and Girls

# Immigration is a Black Issue

By:

**Patrice S. Lawrence**

National Policy and Advocacy Director,

*UndocuBlack Network*

Black immigrant women play a critical role in all walks of life in this country. We make up the fabric of everything around us. We make the food, the dance, the dialect, the culture mixed into all of us who are descendants of people who were enslaved, and others who were just not put on the boat. We are inseparable from the Black community in the United States in almost every way. Almost every way, except when we get unique attacks cloaked as documentation, but what is really an attack on our collective Blackness. This is how immigration is a Black issue.

Let me clear, the difference between being an immigrant with legal status and one without is paperwork, a slip in the system, and oftentimes racial, socio-economic and political privilege. Black Immigrants come here for many reasons and play many roles, roles that are essential, like me. We must challenge ourselves to be reminded that there is not one undocumented voice, there is not one undocumented face, in fact there are millions of us across this United States, almost 600,000 of whom are Black, some look like me, others don't.

The last two years in particular have been very hard for our communities and as we begin 2019, the challenges are many. We saw especially the stripping of immigration protections and removal of the ability to make livelihoods for our households. This has been varied, but the impact possibly most felt through the rescinding of immigration protections: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Liberians. Additionally, we are increasingly becoming more aware about how the criminal justice system for Black communities is closely entwined with the immigration enforcement system, and in truth, has always been.

Most folks have heard about DACA. The estimates are that at least 30% of the population in the United States who are eligible for DACA, are Black. This includes people, women from Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica and across the Black diaspora. DACA eligibility currently runs up to people who are in their late 30s. These are not children. Moreso, these are Black immigrant women all around us, who have businesses, own homes, have children, families and went to school with many of us since they were very young.

On the other hand, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is an immigration status that is given to nationals of certain countries temporarily for humanitarian reasons. It is a relief from deportation for these foreign nationals who were physically present in the U.S. during the time that something catastrophic happened in their country of origin preventing their safe return. The conditions making it unsafe for them to return include but are not limited to: an ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster, an epidemic.

There are 13 countries that had TPS at the beginning of 2017. Nine of those countries have lost this immigration status or have terminations pending, all at the hands of President Trump. Seven of these are Black majority countries; including around 70,000 people from Haiti, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. TPS impacts not only the obviously Black countries that we associate fufu, kente cloth and griyo with but also several Afro-Central Americans from the remaining countries.

DED is a discretionary decision made by the President to protect a class of individuals. Liberians have had DED or TPS since 1991. It has been extended for the last decade by Presidents Bush and Obama, many recipients have been here in the U.S. for over 25 years. It is truly a shame that the Trump administration ended this bare minimum program expected to be fully out of effect by March 31, 2019. “Many Liberian DED holders are like [Louise Stevens](#) of Brooklyn Park, MN. Louise has called the US 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.” Her daughter also has another status that was shut, DACA. Apparently, there is a plan to make every immigrant undocumented and Black people are an easy invisible target.

The news of [21 Savage](#) rocked the country recently and gave an insight into the invisibility and hyper-visibility of being Black and undocumented. As news leaked about him being in 23 hour lock down while in detention, it also gave a look into the cruel world of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE). We shouldn’t have been surprised about this though, because there have been several [reports of ICE abuses](#) especially of Black individuals. And ICE is arresting and abusing more of them. [USCIS reports](#) that there was a 140% increase in removals of Africans in 2017. More Africans than ever since the creation of this rogue agency only created 16 years ago after 9/11. These individuals who are detained are flesh and blood, inherently due justice, dignity and freedom just like anyone else but instead have been [treated “like an animal” “lesser than” in these inhumane detention centers and within the custody of ICE.](#)

We know that many of the other reports of sexual abuse and violence in private prisons, county jails and immigration detention centers never make it to headlines. All we have sometimes is the anecdotal evidence from members of the Black immigrant community we comprise and serve. Some of whom are already fighting back with lawsuits against US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (USCIS) and ICE. Some of the other conditions litigated include ICE agents who forced them to stay seated, denied them access to a bathroom, and “kicked, struck, choked, and dragged” them in the process of deportation.

The blood and deaths that have been on the hands of law enforcement offices including ICE and others in this country for centuries. Black and brown bodies have been treated as indispensable and disposable. The impact of the enforcement of immigration laws disproportionately impact Black immigrants in that they intersect with the impact of the flawed, racist criminal justice system as currently structured in the United States. It will take more than just one legislated bill to fix that. As people are stripped of their legal protection, losing one more defense, this is the system they will be shuttled into. Forced removal is particularly cruel, to them and the families, employers, and communities who depend on them for sustenance, friendship, and support.

One of the most incredible things about us though is our resilience. Through in person connections, collaborations between local and national organizations and social media campaigns to highlight these injustices, Black undocumented immigrant women are leading the charge, even if behind the scenes. Indeed, this ushered in the new members of Congress in 2019 women from Native American, Muslim and LGBTQ communities; showing a clear repudiation of the hatred, injustice, cruelty of Trump’s Republican Party and administration. We are demanding a better country for all of us. A country in which marginalized communities, especially Black communities, can live, thrive and exist in this country without fear. I only hope to usher it in.

# Violence Against Black Women and Girls

By:

**Karma Cottman**

Executive Director, Ujima Inc: The National Resource Center on Violence  
Against Women in the Black Community (NRCVAW)

**Gretta Gardner**

Deputy Director, Ujima, NRCVAW

**Lisalyn Jacobs**

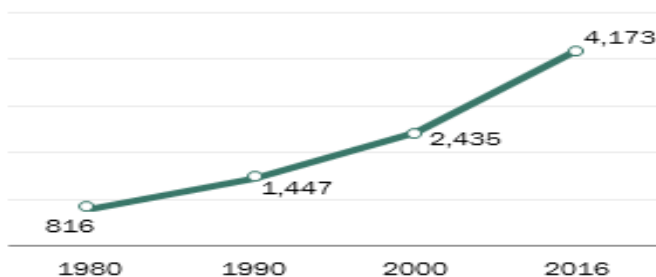
CEO, Just Solutionsi

Institutionalized and internalized oppression through racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, religious subjugation, etc., create the foundation for unrecognized, unaddressed, and denied traumatic experiences in the lives of Black women. One of the leading causes of death for Black women aged 15-35 is domestic/intimate partner violence.<sup>xlii</sup> Although Black women comprise only 8% of the population, compared to 30% for white women, Black women are almost three times as likely to be killed as a result of domestic violence.<sup>xliii</sup> Despite the prevalence of domestic violence in the lives of Black women, they are less likely to seek help and more likely to fight back.

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## **Black immigrant population in the U.S. rose to 4.2 million in 2016**

*Total foreign-born black population in the U.S., in  
thousands*



Note: In 2000 and later, foreign-born blacks include single-race blacks and multiracial blacks, regardless of Hispanic origin. Prior to 2000, blacks include only single-race blacks regardless of Hispanic origin since a multiracial option was not available.  
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2016 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS) and the 1980, 1990 and 2000 censuses (5% IPUMS).

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

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Additionally, there has been very little recognition of the diversity within the Black community in the U.S. From 2000-2010, the African Foreign-Born population has increased exponentially. Yet, the term “Black” continues to be used interchangeably with “African-American” in the U.S., referring solely to Black Americans-descendants of slaves. Our community is much more diverse including Afro-Hispanics, Afro-Caribbeans, and Foreign-Born or first-generation Africans. Historical and cultural differences

between the communities are as vast as the countries they represent and the languages they speak. Little research exists about the impact of domestic violence on these



communities and the way in which services should be framed in order to best meet their needs. “Culturally and linguistically” appropriate services often minimize and discount the Black community. The term assumes that Black culture is not unique and Black Americans do not share a distinct language. We are left with the quintessential question - What is Black culture and how do we create prevention and intervention strategies that address the diversity of our community without further victimization?

## **Unique Challenges for Black Survivors**

From the police to jurors, the legal system is less likely to sympathize or even process the idea of Black female victims. A Black woman is 80% more likely to be convicted for killing her abuser.<sup>xliv</sup> For a Black woman, a history of social oppression, implicit/explicit bias, and racial loyalty/collectivism directly impact how she perceives, reacts to, and reports domestic violence. Racism and stereotypes continue to contribute to the failure of the justice systems, crisis services, and other programs to provide adequate resources and assistance to battered Black women.<sup>xlv</sup> Domestic violence researchers surmise that Black women often remain in volatile relationships longer than abused women of other races. According to Dr. Tricia Bent-Goodley, “African-American women just don’t feel safe in integrating with some of the systems designated to help abuse victims, such as the police or even women’s shelters.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Black women hesitate to seek help from shelters because they believe shelters are for “white women” inasmuch as shelters are associated with the women’s movement. A study of the shelter movement in America concluded that Black women are (1) ignored in the policymaking, planning, and implementation of shelter services; (2) the lack of community outreach in Black neighborhoods by the shelters contributes to the perception that shelters are not for Black women; and (3) Black women have found shelters unwelcoming of their cultural differences.<sup>xlvii</sup>

The Violence Policy Center further illuminates the crisis Black women are facing:

- Where the relationship could be determined, 93% of Black women killed by men in single victim/single offender incidents knew their killers.
- More than 13 times as many Black women were murdered by a man they knew than were killed by a stranger.
- Of Black victims who knew their offenders, 58% of Black victims who knew their offenders were wives, common law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends of the offenders.
- 91% of the homicides of Black females were intra-racial.<sup>xlviii</sup>



## Other alarming statistics:

### School to Prison Pipeline:

- Black girls and young women are perceived as not conforming to middle class, white notions of “femininity,” seen as being too difficult, too noisy, too promiscuous or defiant, or punished for their use of profanity.<sup>xlix</sup>
- Black girls and young women who are suspended are at higher risk of dropping out of school or being pulled into the juvenile justice system.<sup>l</sup>
- Additionally, girls (disproportionately Black girls) are subject to arrest and detention even when their non-conforming conduct occurs as a result of trauma.<sup>li</sup>
- Black girls and young Black women comprise just 14% of the general youth population, yet they comprise fully one third of girls and young women being detained and committed within the juvenile system.<sup>lii</sup>
- Data also suggest that 85% of the LGBT/gender-nonconforming girls in the juvenile justice system are girls of color, and that Black girls in this category are incarcerated at higher rates than white girls.<sup>liii</sup>

### Law Enforcement & the Industrial Prison Complex

- The head of the FBI has acknowledged the presence of racial bias in policing.<sup>liv</sup>
- The Department of Justice released guidance on law enforcement bias and response to matters involving sexual and domestic violence in 2015.<sup>lv</sup>
- Sexual misconduct is the second or third most common infraction for which police officers are disciplined, depending on which source you use. Misconduct/violence consistently comes in first, and financial crimes alternate with sexual misconduct as the second most common violation.<sup>lvi</sup>
- Trans people of color were six times more likely to endure physical violence at the hands of law enforcement, compared with white cisgender survivors.<sup>lvii</sup>
- The rate of incarceration for Black women is still more than twice that of white women.<sup>lviii</sup>
- Black women (ages 18-19) are still 5 times as likely to be incarcerated as white women.<sup>lix</sup>

## **Action Items:**

### **Support the Reauthorization of the Family Violence Services and Prevention Act and the Violence Against Women Act**

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act supports lifesaving services including emergency shelters, crisis hotlines, counseling and programs for underserved communities throughout the United States, American Indian and Alaska Native communities and territories. It is the ONLY federal funding source dedicated to domestic violence shelters and programs. FVPSA was enacted in 1984 and is due to be reauthorized in 2018. It is administered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was enacted in 1994 and is due to be reauthorized in the spring of 2018. VAWA is landmark legislation that provides federal funding to improve the criminal and civil legal responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking and is administered through the U.S. Department of Justice.

The lack of culturally specific services designed by and for Black survivors has become increasingly evident and despite the best efforts of advocates who rallied for funding for culturally specific programming, the Black community remains sorely underrepresented in the grantee pool. Access to designated funds to support their work has proven successful for many culturally specific providers and communities. However, we must galvanize to not only get FVPSA and VAWA reauthorized, but also encourage our programs to apply for funding and assist with their sustainability.

# The Impact of Sex Trafficking on Black Girls

By:

**Barbara A. Perkins**

President

International Black Women's Public Policy Institute

The sexual exploitation of black girls continues to grow and is currently a multi-billion dollar business operating in major cities in the United States, although it is illegal in every state. According to the Los Angeles Sentinel “a pimp is likely to earn \$150,000 to \$300,000 thousand dollars each year selling and exploiting the bodies of Black teenage girls.”

A major risk factor that puts Black girls at greater risk of being recruited as sex workers is the vulnerability of the population. They are more likely to be from high risk neighborhoods and poor. Girls that are identified as runaways are especially targeted for being trafficked. The National Runaway Switchboard, says that 10-28 percent of runaways turn to sex to survive. The greatest percentage are found with those living on the streets. These girls range in ages from 13 to 17 and are not able to fully take care of themselves. They become pray for street pimps and those, often other young girls, who assist them for profit or a better life themselves.

Reports from the US Justice Department and the Center for Missing and Exploited Children states that “the average pimp has four to six girls and many are ages 13-14. These young ladies are raped, beaten, branded, contract sexually transmitted diseases within six months of being on the streets and sold daily in the sex trade.”

The International Black Women's Public Policy Institute (IBWPPI) spent 2014 and 2015 helping to bring awareness to communities in cities that had the highest percentage of young Black girls being trafficked. The major cities IBWPPI included in our efforts to be advocates and educators on this issue of great concern were: Los Angeles, Atlanta, Detroit, Miami, Chicago and New York.

The IBWPPI ARCH Initiative is envisioned as the largest coalition of women's organizations to bring awareness to the disproportionate impact that human trafficking has on and girls domestically. The ARCH is an acronym that stands for Awareness, Rescue, Counseling and Healing. By staging a nationwide awareness campaign that teaches the threats, risks, and dangers our girls fall prey to every day, we hope to

heighten the sensitivity surrounding human trafficking. We hope that churches, sororities, neighborhood groups and concerned citizens would want to get involved with helping us with this crisis.

During 2019-2020, IBWPPI will advance this work significantly through the launch of its ARCH Network. This innovative, interactive online directory of over 200 vetted organizations with demonstrated success in the following areas: Awareness and Advocacy, Rescue, Counseling and Healing for trafficked victims. Trafficking. We look to the work of many other groups doing exceptional work that is making a positive difference and saving the lives of many.

We want to partner with organizations such as the Polaris Project an advocacy and policy group responsible for establishing and operating the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline, which provides comprehensive services to victims and survivors that have long-term benefits.

There needs to be an all hands-on deck approach to this problem that appears to be getting worse rapidly. The trafficking network is global, coordinated and complicated. The United Nations reports that there are 27-30 million modern-day slaves in the world. In the United States, reports out of the State Department show more than 500,000 people being trafficked annually. Victims are generally hidden and removed from day to day society and therefore, it is believed that the number of victims in the US is even greater. There is something that we all can do to help, but first, we must know the truth and the myths surrounding this topic. Misinformation about sex trafficking of black girls gets in the way of help getting to them keeping them trapped and enslaved.

Here are a few myths that we must know about and share within our communities:

1. That Sex Trafficking of under-aged children mainly happens overseas. The truth is that teenaged girls are being forced into the life of sexual exploitation in all neighborhoods and cities in the United States. Sex Trafficking is taking place in and around middle schools, high schools, parks, community centers, malls and believe it or not, churches.
2. That only girls are being trafficked. Young adult women are also being forced and deceived into becoming sex workers. Young women who travel from other cities within the US seeking stardom, fame or fortune are being caught off guard and misled, only to find themselves in situations that they cannot get out of. Black boys are also, the victims of sex trafficking and have become a target of this undesirable crisis.

3. That Traffickers are only organized gangs or criminals. Nothing can be further from the truth. Traffickers can look like ordinary upstanding citizens. Traffickers are both males and females, young and old persons who are intentional about taking advantage of the most venerable among us. Traffickers are often charming, manipulators that give the appearance of being kind, compassionate and sophisticated.
4. That victims are always forced into the life. Report after report show that many victims particularly those over 18 years old, initially agree to relationships that appear to be safe and trustworthy. Once seduced by the trappings of a better life than being on the street as a runaway, or living in poverty which is generally a part of their stories, they find it too difficult to leave.
5. The final myth that we must expose is the myth that families are unaware of the dangers their children are in. Sadly, far too many children are introduced to a life of sexual exploitation by members of their own families. The motivation most often is for financial gain.

We can all do something to help eradicate the sexual exploitation of our children. We can work together with the cities we live in to promote safe places for children to play and to gather. We can join community awareness efforts. We can volunteer to be advocates for victims as well as provide shelter for survivors. In the city of Atlanta where I live, when travelers arrive at the airport, they will hear public safety announcements in the terminals that alert them to the reality of sex trafficking. Atlanta is one of the most popular destinations for conventions and sporting events where it is known to attract traffickers. Atlanta, according to FBI statistics ranks at the top of 14 cities in the United States for domestic sex trafficking. It is reported that approximately 300 girls across Atlanta are lured into trafficking every month.

The most important thing that we each can do, is when we see something out of the ordinary or when we have a bad feeling about a situation that we might observe, take special note of any details that might be useful. Do your best to make eye contact with a child that you may suspect to be a victim. Sometimes, they will provide you with clues and give you something to work with.

The call to action by The Black Women's Roundtable is that we as ordinary concerned citizens begin to participate in the healing and reimagining of our communities. Our communities will be better when we all commit to helping to make them better. The challenges are great, the time is now and together we can and will make a positive difference.

# Black Women's Roundtable Policy Agenda

# The Black Women Roundtable's 2019 Policy Agenda for Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

By:

**Melanie L. Campbell**

President & CEO, NCBCP and National Convener, BWR

**Jennifer Tucker**

Senior Policy Advisor, Black Women's Roundtable

*In Consultation w/ BWR State Conveners & BWR Policy Working Group*

The Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) Policy Agenda is a broad expression of the 2019 domestic policy priorities, which will guide the outreach and mobilization of BWR activists during the coming year. This document was prepared using research findings from our annual ESSENCE/BWR Power of the Vote Survey and our exit polling, and in consultation with members of the BWR Public Policy Working and the Conveners of State/Local BWR Roundtables in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Mississippi. This is a critical period for the domestic programs that can mean life or death for Black women and their families. Every voice counts and this agenda helps to create a powerful chorus of Black women and their allies. We all are affected by misguided public policy. Our country can do better and it will!

## **Caring for Our Nation: Safety Net for All**

The Trump – Pence Administration is aggressively and systematically dismantling our already fragile safety net programs. Food is the most basic of human needs. First, through deep budget cuts to the program over the past two years, and now with regulation changes to eligibility for the SNAP program (food stamps), the notion of it as a safety net is slipping away. Every month, SNAP keeps 38 million people in the U.S. from going hungry and has enjoyed bipartisan support for over four decades. Yet today, it is threatened by destructive policies. On average, SNAP benefits are less than \$1.40 per person per meal and 90 percent of the benefits are spent after only three weeks.

We urge Congress to support a strong and vibrant SNAP program, reject policies that weaken this crucial lifesaving program and strengthen it by adopting the provisions in the **Closing the Meal Gap Act of 2019** sponsored by Rep. Alma Adam. Congress must resist Administration policies that will reduce public housing assistance, Medicaid and Medicare coverage and any Social Security benefits.



## A Census that Counts Everyone

Census 2020 remains core to our democracy. Just one year away from the 2020 count, the Census is sorely underfunded. There are several areas that require immediate attention to ensure that the goal of counting everyone is realized, including: an on-line data collection protocol that uses electronic questionnaires based on data-driven research and tested on a reliable platform that will not become overwhelmed and crash, from heavy traffic; removal any questions related to immigration status or citizenship; placing a priority on counting in rural areas, on Native lands and LGBTQ communities. In the 2010 Census, we experienced a 6.5 percent undercount rate of young Black children. It is important to ensure that there are sufficient enumerators and who are well trained to deliver an accurate and robust count. We **urge** Congress to use its legislative powers to remove any citizenship question and to provide sufficient funding in FY 2019-2020, an amount of at least \$4.5 to 5 billion.

## Protecting Our Democracy: Voting Rights and Voter Protection

With the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, great progress was made. In 2013, in a 5 to 4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* ruled that Section 4, which described the formula that determined which states had to submit voting changes for federal approval before they can be implemented was unconstitutional. Today we see a new generation of subterfuges that are no less destructive to voting rights -- purging of voter registration rolls of people who have not voted in some previous elections, so-called interstate "cross check" requirements where people are thrown off the rolls based on comparison with another faulty data base, unreasonably onerous ID requirements, canceling of early voting opportunities, intimidation and abusive challenges, mishandling of absentee ballots, racial and partisan gerrymandering and more. The **For the People Act of 2019 ( H.R. 1)**, addresses the new generation of voting rights infringements and affirms the need to restore the preclearance remedy addressed in H.R. 4. H.R. 1 also reforms campaign finance and government ethics rules. Also included in H.R. 1 is the **Democracy Restoration Act** that restores voting rights in federal elections to the 3.3 million disenfranchised Americans who have been released from prison and are living in the community. The **Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019 (H.R. 4)** is the preclearance remedy of the **Voting Rights Act**, which over the decades repeatedly drew bipartisan support, as well as provide other protections against voting discrimination. H.R. 1 passed in the House March 8<sup>th</sup>; we urge its swift passage in the Senate.



## Health Care is a Human Right, Not a Privilege

With the failed attempt to repeal the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)**, the Trump-Pence Administration is methodically working to dismantle access to health care for individuals least likely to be able to afford it. It is transforming Medicaid from a federal entitlement program to one that applies a “work requirement” and/or even “time-limits” to anyone hoping to access health care. These changes will have a devastating impact on Black women who are one-fourth (24 percent) of the millions of women served by Medicaid. It is critical that prioritized attention to lowering the disproportionately high maternal mortality rate among Black women continues and we urge lawmakers to adopt the strategies offered in the **Maternal Care Access and Reducing Emergencies (CARE)** Act sponsored by Senator Kamala Harris that address persistent biases in our health system. Increase funding to support research into diseases that disproportionately affect Black women. We support legislative action to fully protect Planned Parenthood services provided under Title X. The universal health care model is gaining support as an acceptable policy option and the **Medicare for All Act of 2019**, which was introduced in the House of Representatives with 106 co-sponsors, is a viable alternative. BWR ask Congress to ensure that families aren’t made to choose between their picking up their prescription drugs or shopping for the food - they need both to survive.

## Fighting for Freedom to Care

*Paid Sick* and *Safe Days* and *Fair Scheduling* policies ensure that working families can both care for themselves and loved ones and maintain their employment. Absent a federal standard, a multitude of jurisdictions have exercised their democratic right and passed paid sick and safe days for short-term leave; family and medical leave insurance laws and; fair scheduling laws to ensure the right to request. **Healthy Families Act**, aims to address the fact that 40 percent of workers don’t have a single paid sick day making it impossible for workers to attend to their own healthcare and that of their loved ones. This is also a public health issue which seeks to minimize contagion in the workplace and other public places. The **Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMILY) Act** establishes a social insurance fund to be used for paid leave to welcome a new baby, care for a sick family member or care for oneself. The **Schedules that Work Act** permits employees the right to request changes in on-call hours, advanced scheduling notification, and fluctuations in employee schedules.

## Eliminating Violence Against Women

The violence that women experience comes in many forms: including 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 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. We urge Congress to reauthorize both the **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**, and the **Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)** at the increased appropriations levels requested. These programs are the nerve center to funding violence against women initiatives and services to survivors, and they should be funded at levels reflective of the epidemic of violence that women experience. We ask Congress to strengthen workplace protections against sexual harassment with the passage of the **EMPOWER Act** and **Fair Employment Protection Act**.

## Full Freedom: Criminal Justice and Policing Reform

The United States has the highest prison population rate in the world, but this practice of mass incarceration cannot be sustained. Each year 636,000 people leave federal and state prisons, but in the same year, people go to local jails 10.6 million times. Black and brown 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 were four times more likely to than their White counterparts to be incarcerated. In 2018, Congress enacted the First Step Act, which is a just beginning. We urge Congress to put in the time and effort needed to reform the nation's criminal justice and prison systems at every level, including pretrial and bail systems, sentencing and policing; modernizing drugs laws to recognize the public health connection and addressing racial equity. We **urge** Congress to: reauthorize the **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)** with attention to reducing racial and ethnic disparities and the treatment of LGBTQ youth; pass legislation to end racial profiling and bias-based policing that covers profiling on sex, gender identity and expression and sexual orientation; and restore voting rights to person formerly incarcerated in federal facilities, pass the **Democracy Restoration Act**. We **urge** Congress to use legislative action to address racial profiling and bias policing.

## Equal Rights and Equal Pay for Equal Work

Black women have a long and consistent history as workforce participants, so it is no wonder they ranked “equal rights and equal pay” near the top of 16 priority issues listed in the 2018 Essence/Black Women’s Roundtable Survey. Women 18 to 34 years old were more likely than those over 35 to rank equal rights and pay higher on the list. It is likely that this level of urgency for workplace fairness that is driving renewed support for the passage of **Equal Right Amendment** (ERA) resolutions in state legislatures and signaling Congress that it’s time to make the ERA a reality in the United States. Black women earn less than any other workers at 61 cents for every dollar earned by white men with the exception of Native women (58 cents) and Latinas (53 cents). At the same time, 70 percent of Black women are the primary breadwinners in their family units. Along with the ERA, which would affirm in the Constitution that rights must not be abridged on the basis of sex, Black women will benefit from the enactment of the **Raise the Wage Act of 2019**, which raises the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 generally increase it to \$15 per hour in 2024, and gets rid of the subminimum wage of \$2.13 that tipped workers earn. Both the **Paycheck Fairness Act** and the **Pregnant Worker Fairness Act** will level the playing field for Black women in the workplace by ensuring equal pay and prohibiting discrimination against pregnant women.

## We Want to Live: Gun Violence and Control

Gun related deaths are at a nearly 40-year high. Black women (91 percent) are more likely to be murdered by someone they know. The killings must stop and things are changing, but not fast enough. In 2018, 67 new gun control laws passed in State Legislature; now it’s time are national gun control laws. In February, the House Representatives passed two background check bills: one that extends the number of days to conduct as background check from 3 to 10 and another that extends coverage beyond licensed dealers to include purchases in other private settings, at gun shows and on-line. We urge the Senate to pass similar background check legislation (**Background Check Expansion Act**, S.42) and Congress to ban bump stocks that turn semi-automatic weapons into automatic weapons; limit the sales of high capacity magazines; raise the age to 21 for purchasers of guns like AR-15. Finally, cut ties to the NRA. It’s a matter of life and death.

## **Living Our Value: Immigration Reform, DACA and TPS**

The Trump-Pence Administration has worked aggressively to limit immigrants and refugees coming to the United States with: attempts to rescind the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** initiative that enabled certain individuals who came to the country illegally as children to avoid deportation proceedings and obtain work authorization for two years, subject to renewal; failure to extend **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)** to people from six of ten countries fleeing conflict, hurricanes, earthquakes and other tragedies; implementation of the “Muslim Ban”; detention of families, including children and widespread violations of human and civil rights by ICE agents, border officers and others. Any attempt to limit the number of asylum-seekers disproportionately affects women, especially those individuals fleeing domestic violence. We **urge** the passage of the **DREAM Act** that addresses the issue of DACA and TPS; legislation to repeal the Muslim ban; stop attacks and harassment of sanctuary cities, and halt detention of families, pregnant women and children. Reauthorize the **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)** and ensure that it has strong protections for survivors of domestic violence.

## **Investing in the Future: Quality Education for All**

The attack on our fundamental right to a quality education is unprecedented. The first two Trump-Pence Administration fiscal year budgets have called for decreased overall funding, but for substantial increases in school choice programs that places traditional public school in jeopardy of being overtaken by charter schools and voucher programs, which have not proven to be alternatives. Private Historically Black Colleges and Universities are experiencing financial pressures that threaten their accreditation and sustainability. Black colleges continue to serve an important and critical role within the higher education community and programs that provide institutional and student support without exacerbating debilitating debt must be developed and sufficiently funded. We support increased funding for Title III programs and other federal programs designed to support HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions. We support public education as a great equalizing force in America. We are deeply concerned about a host of civil rights and school climate issues including bias/discrimination in student discipline policies/practices; Title IX coverage and of sexual assault and harassment on college campuses; hate and bias activities on campuses and treatment of transgender students. We urge Congress to provide our public education system with sufficient funding; reauthorize the **Higher Education Act** and to take legislative action to support the creation of positive school climates and safe environment for students in K-12 and higher education.

## **Affordable Housing for All**

Housing assistance programs are more important than ever. At 41 percent, the number of Black homeowners is at a 50 year low. Yet, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and its programs are dwindling. Shelter is a major component of our safety net and programs such as the Housing Choice Vouchers that helps families afford private apartments and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) that assists low-income households pay for heat are crucial. It is imperative we maintain affordable housing with regular repairs. We urge Congress to provide funding to increase the number of low income housing units and ensure that key civil rights laws, such as the **Fair Housing Act** and the **Equal Credit Opportunity Act** are enforced.

## **Economic Opportunity to Advance Black Prosperity**

We urge Congressional oversight of the implementation of Opportunity Zones and Opportunity funds assessing impact upon predominantly Black urban and rural communities. In the past, tax incentives have not necessarily benefitted residents of deteriorated neighborhoods and have the potential to fuel gentrification already underway in major cities across the nation. In addition to programs to reduce capital gains, investment in people programs is essential

We request the Office of Federal Contract Compliance be directed to disaggregate federal contract data by race and by sex to specifically determine what percentage of federal contracts are awarded to Black women.

We support passage of HR 40 Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act. The legislation has been introduced every year since 1989. We also support commemoration of 2019 marking 400 years since slavery was introduced.

## **The ADA is a Civil Rights Law**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, ADA is significantly weakened by attempts to gut it with H.R. 620, the ADA Education and Reform Act of 2017 and related bills. The idea of these “notice and cure” bills require disabled individuals to notify a business that is not ADA compliant, before filing a lawsuit. These bills also include a period for the business to fix the problem creating a disincentive for them to follow the law. This change strips the ADA of the carefully constructed bi-partisan deal made long ago to balance the obligations of businesses with the needs of the disabled community. Added to this attack on civil rights are the onerous cuts to Medicaid, and healthcare that will further impact Americans living with disabilities.

## BWR Voices from Alabama & Michigan



# Black Women in Alabama

By:

**Honorable Sheila D. Tyson**

Convener Alabama Black Women's Roundtable, ACBCP  
County Commissioner, Jefferson County Commission

“Let me be clear: We won in Alabama and Virginia because Black women led us to victory. Black women are the backbone of the Democratic Party, and we can't take that for granted. Period.”

-Tom Perez, Democratic National Committee Chairman

Black women are and have been the backbone of the Democratic Party. We are the most reliable voting bloc in terms of allegiance and voter turnout. Our influence in the historic triumph of Doug Jones over Roy Moore cannot be overstated. However, after the adrenaline-fueled frenzy of the campaign, too often our contributions and more importantly our voices are overlooked. The issues that impact Black women's lives the most become low priority after an election. The same politicians that wouldn't be in office, but for our grassroots organization and voter turnout, move on to "mainstream" party issues. As a result, year after year, we continue lead in the most depressing statistics. We are up to seven times more likely to be suspended from school and four times more likely to die during child birth. By now everyone has heard the statistic that 'women make 72 cents to a man's dollar', the reality is even more sobering for Black women who earn 61 cents to a man's dollar. And even though the focus has been on police violence against Black men, unarmed Black women are not only victims of physical violence at the hands of the police, but also sexual violence.

We must take control if we expect to improve the landscape for our daughters. That doesn't just mean political activism, it means taking the reins of political power. It is not enough for politicians to owe their political success to our hard work and dedication. History has demonstrated that is a debt that often goes unpaid. We must have seats at the tables where decisions are being made. For example, right now, when state law makers meet to discuss funding for maternal health, the committee is made up of mostly white males. No one is suggesting that white males are not concerned about maternal health. The truth is that for women, particularly women of color, this isn't an abstract, intellectual concept - it is one of life and death. Not only will we be able to advocate more fully for our best interests, but our mere presence in the room changes the conversation. If you don't believe that, imagine how much different the conversation would have been when the appellate judges sat down to discuss whether it was legal to fire someone with dreadlocks, if there had been a black woman with dreadlocks and a robe in the room.



# Black Women in Michigan: We Must Lead Now!

By:

**Honorable Stephanie Moore**

*Convener, Kalamazoo MI BWR*

*County Commissioner, Kalamazoo County Commission*

For centuries, Black women have been relegated to take the “backseat” when it came to issues that directly impacted her well-being, her dollar, and her community. Although nationally the momentum for Black women in politics has seen an upward trajectory, when it comes to issues of healthcare and economic injustices, the concerns of Black women have often been melded into the pot of “others” only to continue to create more disparities that negatively impact the well-being of the Black woman. In Michigan, the Black woman is literally at a cross-roads where she can no longer remain silent, nor entrust her life, her children’s lives, her men’s lives, or her community to mere political promises, meaningless research studies, or well-intentioned individuals who may have her best interest in mind but often get distracted by “competing priorities”.

The Black woman in Michigan must take the reins of her life. We can no longer afford to wait.

It was in 1851 when Michigander Sojourner Truth delivered a riveting speech, “Ain’t I a Woman” in which she eloquently captured the essence of Black womanhood in America and how we are often discarded, disregarded, dismissed, and destroyed without as much as a thought. In this speech, Ms. Truth poignantly stated “If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!”

In Michigan, Black women lead but not in the areas we’d like to see. Black women in Michigan lead in maternal deaths being 2.5 times higher than the rate among our white sisters and 4 times higher than the rates among our Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanic/Latinx sisters. Death disparities are also seen in the mortality rate of babies identified as Black (14.6 babies out of every 1,000 live births). Black women Michiganders also lead in the top chronic diseases (cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes) in both mortality and morbidity rates. The mental health and emotional trauma of Black women in Michigan is inadequately tracked and only in recent months have tools such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study been taken into consideration when evaluating the level of trauma from childhood into adulthood and its impact in Black communities. So, while on national levels, we are seeing more Black

women faces and hearing more Black women voices, the tragedy is that when it comes to translating those voices to action, It's as anemic as most Black sisters find ourselves. Flint is a perfect example of how voices does not translate into meaningful action; even when the voices are diverse and come from people running for the highest office in the nation.

The good news is that Black women can cause a serious blow to the structural racism that has impacted every facet of our lives. We understand even when we have access to health insurance, education, and economics, negative disparities still exist. This why we must take the lead NOW.

One of the first ways of taking the lead is in the area of financial independence and economic empowerment. Black women are the highest educated group in the nation. Yet, we are often overlooked for promotions and hires where we could influence industry trends. The challenges for Black women in Michigan are to consider not only climbing the corporate ladder but building her own ladder in which she can climb and carry others from our community with her.

As the Black woman in Michigan flexes her economic arm, it is critical that she explore how she can do so through entrepreneurship, real estate investments, and other financial opportunities. Having that type of financial leverage, can empower us to mobilize our resources in order to mitigate the short and long-term impact of racism. It's great to have a strong voice; it's better to put our money where our mouths are.

For example, Detroit has recently seen a boom in economic development. This not only bodes well for Detroiters but also for others in Michigan who are following Detroit's lead; especially as it pertains to entrepreneurship, small business, and other economic opportunities.

Challenges for us include not only access to capital for start-ups but also entrepreneurial development, networking for procurement and contracting purposes, and advocacy that promotes creative legislation and policies that benefit Black women owned businesses in not only urban areas like Detroit, but also areas where there are lesser but equally important populations of Blacks like Kalamazoo.

In Kalamazoo, Michigan, there's been a multi-prong effort to promote Black businesses through a new web network called "Kalamazoo Black Wallstreet". Additionally, in partnership with the Kalamazoo Foundation for Excellence and LISC, Black women start-ups have received the seed funding to open their own businesses. Since 2018, at least three Black woman-owned businesses in Kalamazoo have all opened using the seed money from these resources.

Black women in Michigan must look at diversifying our professional eco-system in order to create a dynamic economy that works for Black families while also lends itself to creating an undercurrent of financial agility in the state. We must extend beyond the traditional businesses that focus on food, housekeeping, and beauty to looking at influencing Michigan industries in automotive, engineering, healthcare, and technology.

Black women in Michigan have a rare but critical opportunity to seize the moment in front of us. We must take the lead to build our internal capacity in order to support the type of infrastructure that undergirds our viability in more positive health outcomes, stronger financial opportunities, and a network of sisterhood that serves as a foundation for our posterity to build upon.

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