

Leaders Change But The Problems Stay The Same

THE CONCOURSE



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Inherited wealth tends to persist through generations: AP

The “big problems” that America faces do not involve imaginary threats from immigrants, street crime, or voter fraud. Rather, they involve the fact that grotesque inequality is baked into our nation, and nobody in power cares enough to do much about it.

What qualifies as a big problem? The racial wealth gap. Here is a problem that has persisted throughout the *entire history of the United States of America*. Every additional day that it persists is an additional outrage, because its persistence reflects a deep lack of giving a shit about either injustice or the suffering that comes from profound economic inequality. Not only did we enslave black people and profit from their labor for centuries before legally

oppressing them for another century or so, but even in the 50 years since the civil rights movement we have utterly failed to correct the entirely predictable leftover effect of all this: black people in America are poor.

Many white people—particularly those on the right—find it hard to believe that racism persists in America, the land of the free, or that race could be a reason that one group of people are forced to suffer in poverty. The racial wealth gap is a clear, factual, numerical way to demonstrate the lingering damage of America’s racial history. A new report out from Demos last week explicitly addresses the standard techniques that are often offered up as paths to financial success, and demonstrates that none of them are sufficient to put minorities on an even footing with whites in America, where the median white household has 13 times more wealth than the median black household.

- **Education isn’t enough:** “[The] median white high school dropout has similar wealth to the median black adult who graduated high school and attended at least some college.”
- **Raising kids in a two-parent household isn’t enough:** “[The] median white single parent has 2.2 times more wealth than the median black two-parent household.”
- **Working hard isn’t enough:** “[The] median white household that includes a full-time worker has 7.6 times more wealth than the median black household with a full-time worker.”
- **Saving money isn’t enough:** “[White] households spend more than black households with similar incomes, yet also have more wealth.”

In other words, all of the platitudinous advice typically offered by conservatives as a path to success in America is insufficient to achieve anything close to economic equality for black and white people. Which makes sense, when you consider the fact that whites on average start out with more wealth and inherit more wealth, and money makes money. This is a common sense recipe for persistent inequality that we would have dealt with 150 years ago if we actually cared about it.

If all of these personal behaviors can't fix the problem, what can? Government action. "Reparations" is still considered something less than a topic of serious political debate, but we don't even need to utter that terrifying word to fix the racial wealth gap. All we need to do is funnel wealth to the poor. (Conveniently, our nation has already conspired to ensure that "the poor" and "black people and to a lesser degree Latinos" are overlapping groups.) White conservatives may object to transferring wealth to "black people," but I do recall Jesus saying some stuff about giving to the poor. That should poll better.

The tax policies that the Trump administration reportedly plans to pursue, which would lessen the tax burden on the rich, will tend to make the racial wealth gap worse, not better. Like most Republicans, Donald Trump is anti-Jesus.

[*The full report*]

Racial Wealth Gap



Poverty and Racism Aren't the Same, But Black People Are Getting Screwed by Both



Don't Settle For Speeches: Fix the Racial Wealth Gap



What Reparations in America Could Look Like

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