

Background and Baggage

Where do we go from here?

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Dreams (1932)

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) (1995, p. 32)

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.*

Family Tree

Father's Line

African Ancestry

Father's father: Tribe unknown

Arrival 1857: Slave ship Port Virginia

Sold to King /Anderson Plantation, Georgia

(Given name Richard King)

Sold to Pearsall Plantation, Alabama

Father's mother: Legacy of Pearsall owner and slave concubine (names unknown)

Twin girls born: Laura Belle & Anna Belle: Each daughter inherited Pearsall land at owners death

Richard King joined to Pearsall female: Anna Belle

Fathered (two live sons) Tom & Felix King (my father). Records of family birth dates (uncertain)

I am seventh child born into King family line:

Born February 26, 1945

Mother's Line

Native American Ancestry

Mother's father: Blackfoot Sioux Tribe (part of 1906 removal to Jay City, Alabama (unknown familial lineage or birth date)

Mother's mother; African and Native lineage Chickasha or Choctaw. Remnants of tribe relocated to Jay City, Alabama (grandparents raised 3 sisters and 2 brothers on reservation, until as youth, farmed out for domestic service)

Father: Robert Simpson

Mother: Sallie (Carter/McDonald)

Birthdates for all grandparents and parents (uncertain)
Census reports that records on Native Americans were destroyed or lost)

Background and Baggage:
Theories, Conclusions, and Recommendations

First, I briefly sum up the history of America as a colonizing nation and connect that history to my focus on the plight of African Americans' "failing syndrome" in America's social, economic, and political systems.

Second, I confess that most of this historical research work has been extracted from my dissertation process. In that effort, I present some major themes from my research findings.

Third, I offer some suggestions from my research findings, to serve others who are concerned about the failing people of color in all segments of this American society.

Finally, in my sharing my background story, I can attest to the tremendous amount of work required to survive in colored America; the pressure one might feel while living life through darkened skin; and the daily oppression that comes, often without notice, from trying to navigate simple life situatedness.

A Simple Tale

In tracing America's history, it is a very simple tale. The continent of Europe was landlocked and the Europeans were suffering because the natural resources were nearly depleted. Plagues, famine, and disease prevailed. Out of necessity, the people of this white European continent sought both revitalization and restoration. Venturing across an ocean, the Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people searched for a land of wealth and resources. Braving the uncharted oceans, they discovered new lands across the vast expanse of waters, the North and South continents. Holding fast to their dream, these Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people risked all to spread British imperialism and capitalism to every corner of the world. Landing on these shores of North America, over four hundred years ago, in 1607, the Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people founded Jamestown, Virginia. This Jamestown Colony became the first English colony to survive.

Encountering other peoples and lands

However, Indigenous peoples inhabited these new continental shores. In fact, these Indigenous peoples had existed for thousands of years on the North and South continents of the Americas. Nonetheless, these White Europeans needed this vastness of land and resources. Conquest became inevitable, providential. Problematically, however, once these European peoples—British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, and Spanish—had conquered the people and acquired the land; next, the land required many workers to produce wealth. Strategically, these white Europeans turned their attention to the continent of Africa. On this continent of Africa, these people, existing for thousands of years as agrarian workers, seemed ripe for the raping and robbing.

Colonization of the Indigenous: How best to use religion and guns

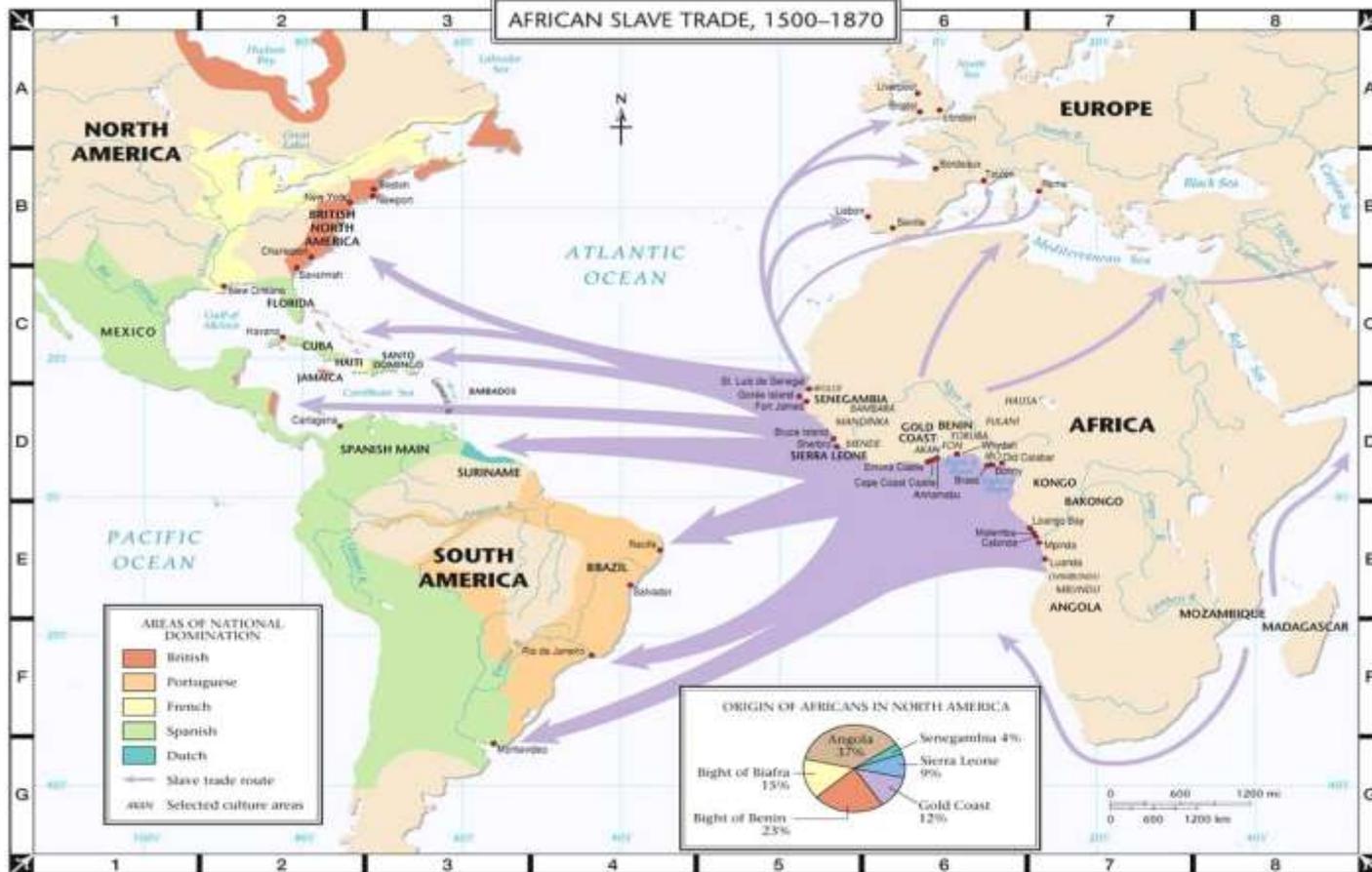


A brief tale of knocking on other peoples' door

Briefly told, yet accurately stated. Erasing a nation of indigenous peoples and enslaving a nation of African people, these Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people instituted the 1776 Declaration of Independence, the 1787 Constitution, and its subsequent Bill of Rights. With these documents, declaring this nation's freedom and liberty from British sovereignty, these Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people crafted a republican nation. With these same documents as the cornerstone of this nation's republican creed, these Anglo-Nordic/Saxon people grafted a capitalist head (white male leadership) onto a democratic body (masses of peoples). These Anglo-Nordic/Saxon capitalist leaders forged a republic that deeded freedom and liberty to the few; yet, for the many, their reality was a sharp contrast between the words and the deeds.

The African Slave Trade 1500 -1870:

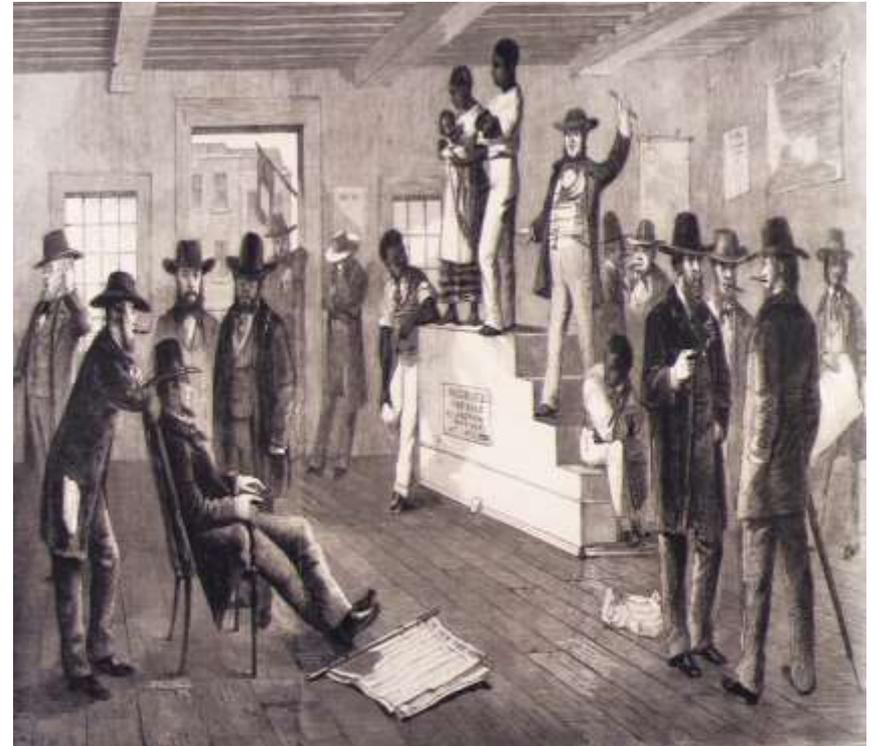
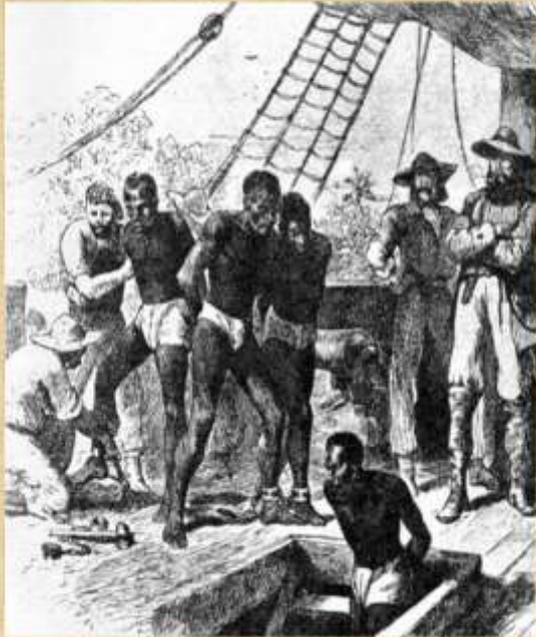
White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Males and their creed of Manifest Destiny



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Establishing property rights in Laboring masses

Colonial Slavery



Manifest Destiny with Laws

This proof became self-evident by 1857. Only one hundred-sixty odd years ago, in the infamous Dred Scott Decision, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that all blacks, slaves or free, were not and could never become citizens of the United States. Crucially, Chief Justice Taney's court also declared the 1820 Missouri Compromise unconstitutional, thus permitting slavery in all of the country's territories. This is America's history and, moreover, there within America's history is the key to its present dilemma.

Eyes on the Prize; but eyes off its Cost

Now, in the beginning of the 21st century, America faces a myriad of problems. Her story on the home front is changing. America teeters on the brink of disaster, both abroad and on the home front. America languishes in her woes of home invasion from terrorism, foreign diplomatic ineptness, and global calamities. Issues of home insecurity, natural catastrophes, and domestic instability plague her daily.

Free is not always free

In the world, America is no longer touted as the harbinger of success. She is no longer upheld as the beacon of hope, freedom, and liberty for the masses. Time and space suggest that America, no longer the fledging nation, like Egypt, Greece, Rome, Britain, and others great nations before her, faces her decline.

Myths die hard

America's internal contradictions and conflicts, like those of other nations gone before her, have begun to erode her prestige. The myth of democracy has not produced freedom and liberty for all its peoples. Instead, America's capitalist system has produced a triangle that bulges at the sides with the woes of the masses, while only the few stand at the peak of the triangle. In effect, America is likened to a banquet table laden with every good thing to eat and at this table of plenty, she seats only the few; yet just beneath, America's masses are found crawling about the ground fighting and struggling over the crumbs.

Cause and effects

Because of the extreme racial divisions that still permeate life in America, these divisions speak loudly to the inequities of the masses. On top of the heap, white Eurocentric males capture and keep the bulk of what are capitalism's excess profits. The white stakeholders promote consumption to the masses, while they practice greed and profit, as the core structure of capitalism. At the bottom, the masses, never endingly, consume all that they can as they struggle simply to scrape out a meager subsistence. This scraping out of a meager subsistence holds true, especially, for the masses of people of color.

Prophetic Speech

In other words, on March 25, 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr., summarily, described America's plight in a speech given after a freedom march in Montgomery, Alabama:

"Selma from Montgomery".

"If it may be said of the slavery era that the white man took the world and gave the Negro Jesus, then it may be said of the Reconstruction era that the southern aristocracy took the world and gave the poor white man Jim Crow. He gave him Jim Crow. And when his wrinkled stomach cried out for the food that his empty pockets could not provide, he ate Jim Crow, a psychological bird that told him that no matter how bad off he was, at least he was a white man, better than the black man. And he ate Jim Crow. And when his undernourished children cried out for the necessities that his low wages could not provide, he showed them the Jim Crow signs on the buses and in the stores, on the streets and in the public buildings. And his children, too, learned to feed upon Jim Crow, their last outpost of psychological oblivion."

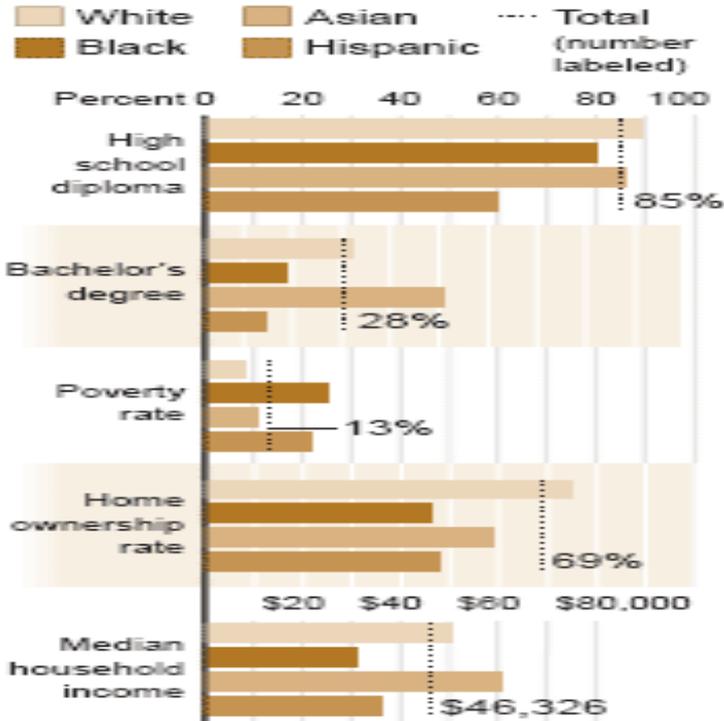
Thus, the United States Census Bureau graph (2006) grants a simple picture of the level of disparities that permeates this society.

A Simple Picture

Census data shows racial disparities

New census data highlights the disparities in education, income and home ownership between whites, blacks, Asians and Hispanics.

2005 American Community Survey data, by race

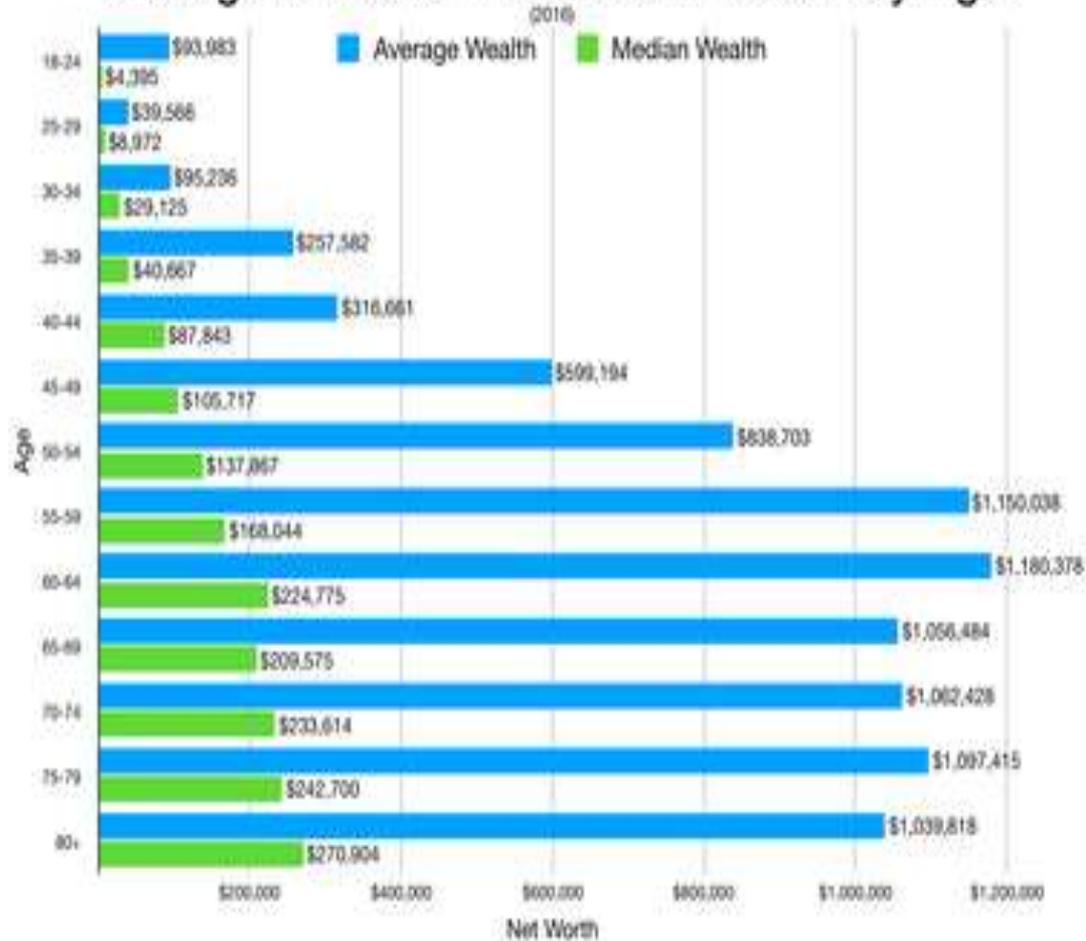


SOURCE: Census Bureau

AP

By the numbers

Average & Median Household Wealth by Age



By Design

More important, since this nation's legacy has been constructed under a white-male Eurocentric and hegemonic system of conquest and genocide, history evidences that social stratification was by design; thus the end result should not be a mystifying situation. In America's story, the Indigenous peoples' contact with white Europeans speaks loudly about her unrelenting quest for power and control. In her zeal, the white Europeans exterminated countless numbers of this group, all in the name of liberty and freedom. Next, white Europeans plundered the African continent of its peoples and continued the scourge of chattel slavery for over three hundred years.

The Saga continued

Finally, they, forcibly, removed the Mexican people from the western portion of this northern continent. In the book *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird (2005) define this systematic process of conquest and exploitation of “other peoples,” lands, and resources as colonization. They explain, “Colonizers engage in this process because it allows them to maintain and/or expand their social, political, and economic power”(p. 2). Moreover, the process of colonization leaves in its wake, devastation not only for those colonized, but also for those who colonize. America’s story is that story of white colonizers who colonized people of color.

Did you know?

- ❖ Prior to 1822
- ❖ What is today Mexico, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and California are all Spanish colonies.
- ❖ 1822
- ❖ Mexican colonists, following the American revolution, rebel against Spain and win their own revolutionary war, making Mexico a free nation just like America.

Lies and Myths

Thus, in America's capitalist hegemonic system, not only does race matter; but it also, apparently, rules. Internally, America's racial disparities corrupt and corrode all aspects of her structures and institutions. The structures and institutions exist as if they have a life apart from human agency. America's problem is not simply about exposing the countless structural layers that sustain and underpin this white European hegemonic system; the real work requires moving away from the lies and myths into real, genuine, authentic truth, and transformation. If Americans intend to live and to thrive, they must change; they must understand that each group is united irrefutably to the other. In essence, this nation can no longer dismiss or deem irrelevant the plight of any one group in the larger scheme of constructing a democratic nation.

A bit more data

- **Among the findings:**

- Black adults have narrowed the gap with white adults in earning high school diplomas, but the gap has widened for college degrees. Thirty percent of white adults had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005, while 17 percent of black adults and 12 percent of Hispanic adults had degrees.
- Forty-nine percent of Asian Americans had at least a bachelor's degree in 2005.
- The median income for white households was \$50,622 last year. It was \$30,939 for black households, \$36,278 for Hispanic households and \$60,367 for Asian households.
- Median income for black households has stayed about 60 percent of the income for white households since 1980. In dollar terms, the gap has grown from \$18,123 to \$19,683.
- Hispanic households made about 76 percent as much as white households in 1980. In 2005, it was 72 percent.
- The gap in poverty rates has narrowed since 1980, but it remains substantial. The poverty rate for white residents was 8.3 percent on 2005. It was 24.9 percent for black residents, 21.8 percent for Hispanic residents and 11.1 percent for Asian residents.

More data: National Center for Children in Poverty

The NCCP fact sheet shows that among America's poor children, 4.2 million are white, 4 million are Latino, 3.6 million are African American, 400,000 are Asian, and 200,000 are American Indian. Poor children, by race 34% 32% 29% 3% 2% White children Latino children Black children Asian children American Indian children. While the figures indicate that indeed more white children are poor, they also show, however, that higher percentages of minorities live in poor families:

- 10% of white children (4.2 million). In the 10 most populated states, rates of child poverty among white children range from 7% in Texas to 12% in Michigan.
- 27% of Latino children (4 million). In the 10 most populated states, rates of child poverty among Latino children range from 19% in Florida to 35% in Pennsylvania.
- 33% of black children (3.6 million). In the 10 most populated states, rates of child poverty among black children range from 29% in California and Florida to 47% in Ohio.
- 12% of Asian children (400,000) and 40% of American Indian (200,000) .

Comparable state comparisons are not possible due to small sample sizes.

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- DuBois, W. E. B. (1909). *The souls of black folk.*
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- Joshi, Sunand Tryambak, (1999). *Documents of American prejudice: An anthology of writings on race from Thomas Jefferson to David Duke.*
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- Our Health Matters: *In touch with your health: Volume 14, Issue 4*
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