

NUL's 'State of Black America' Gives Grim Economic Equality Report

Written by Admin

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Amidst commemoration of a string of civil rights anniversaries this year, including the 50th Anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, the National Urban League has concluded that there's been little economic progress since that day.

“While African Americans have experienced tremendous gains in educational attainment since the March on Washington for Jobs & Freedom and these gains have increased their capacity to ascend the economic ladder, the distance between blacks and whites on this ladder hasn't changed much over the last 50 years – on average, blacks remain twice as likely as whites to be unemployed and earn less than two-thirds the income of whites.”

That is a direct quote from the Executive Summary of NUL's State of Black America Report to be release this week, April 10. The 37th edition of the annual report, titled, “State of Black America, Redeem the Dream: Jobs Rebuild America” not only commemorates “the milestones that have occurred in black history in the 50 years since the height of the civil rights movement,” but “it also shines a light on the work left to do as African-Americans pursue full equality.”

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This year's SOBA features essays by thought leaders from various sectors of the community, including corporations, not-for-profit organizations, academia, and the news media as well as members of President Obama's cabinet and federal lawmakers.

Among the writers are Dr. Gail Christopher, a vice president at the Kellogg Foundation, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr., U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), and Congressional Black Caucus Chair Marcia Fudge (D-Ohio).

A result of the Civil Rights Movement and affirmative action policies, increased access to educational and employment opportunities have significantly raised the standard of living for black Americans over the last 50 years.

According to the report, the following are some of the strides in education since 1963:

- Fifty years ago, 75 percent of Black adults had not completed high school. Currently, 85 percent of Black adults have a high school education.

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- At the college level, there are now 3.5 times more Black 18-24 year-olds enrolled, and five times as many Black adults hold a college degree than in 1963.

- The percentage of Blacks living in poverty has fallen by nearly half (45 percent), and the percentage of Black children living in poverty is down by more than one-third.

Despite these gains over the past 50 years, when compared with Whites, economic parity for African-Americans has fallen woefully short, the report states:

- We have closed the college enrollment gap at five times the rate of closing the unemployment rate gap.

- The total 2013 Equality Index of Black America stands at 71.7 percent. This means that on average, African-Americans enjoy less than three-fourths of the benefits and privileges offered to White Americans.

In a sense, the SOBA report concludes that America has come full circled. While the hundreds of thousands who marched on Washington for "Jobs and Freedom" did not march in vain, the report concludes that joblessness in the Black community remains the dominate problem that must be dealt with in order to achieve full equality. The report states: "...In many ways,

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employment remains the biggest barrier to economic equality in America.”