

STATE OF BLACK WOMEN IN THE U.S. & KEY STATES, 2018:  
**TIME FOR A *POWER SHIFT***



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**5TH ANNUAL REPORT**



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# Executive Summary

## **Black Women in the United States & Key States, 2018: Time for a Power Shift**



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*Editor-in-Chief*

*Black Women in the United States & Key States, 2018*

*Black Women in the United States & Key States, 2018*, is the 5<sup>th</sup> in the series of annual reports produced by the Black Women’s Roundtable meant to assess the challenges, triumphs, and overall contemporary condition of Black women in the nation. This year’s report, entitled, “*Time for a Power Shift*,” takes an in-depth look at the issue of power and where Black women fall within the overarching power-dynamic. In some spaces, such as in the political sphere, Black women’s leadership and power is truly rising. Through both voter participation and by waging successful electoral campaigns as candidates themselves, Black women are, at this moment, exemplifying historic political strength, a trend that seems destined to continue through the 2018 Mid-Term Election Cycle and beyond.

However, in other areas, such as economic power, power of their own health and even their own bodies, Black women, it seems, remain as vulnerable as ever. Yet, this report shows that Black women continue the fight to push through challenges where they exist, while also building on strengths in the political and economic arenas and beyond.

The following are some key findings from this year’s report:

### ***Black Women Shifting Their Power***

- Black women’s leadership has had a significant, positive impact across issues and communities. Black women have played a critical role in leading social movements in the US and globally – as organizers, thought leaders, innovators, architects of policy, authoring groundbreaking research and more. Black women provide leadership for progressive *movements across the spectrum* including racial justice, gender justice, environmental justice, and labor.

- Unlike previous generations of women, particularly the baby boomers, Millennials who make up the largest generation in our history, are not chasing the glass ceiling. Millennials have made it very clear that they are unwilling to trade their racial and cultural identity for the unlikely possibility of being granted a seat at the obscure power table. They are much more comfortable and determined to pull up their own chairs at tables designed by them and for them.
- Since stepping foot on these shores, whether in bondage or free, Black women have found power and unity in their labor. In our darkest days, our intelligence, physical strength and sheer grit were tools for survival. Within a few years post slavery, Black women launderers in Atlanta were organizing strikes and demanding higher wages and better working conditions. Today labor union women stand on the shoulders Black women labor leaders who came before them as the fight for social and economic justice continues now and into the future.

### *When It Comes to Politics, the Power of Black Women is on the Rise*

- Whenever Black women organize and engage around issues of justice and inclusion a power shift occurs. There is room for Black women to lead power shifts and change conditions they are willing to no longer accept. From local school boards, city clerks, council members, mayors, county executives, and state representatives, all the way to Congress and the White House, there is opportunity.
- African American women in the United States play a critical role in both the civic life and the electoral process. Whether it be through efforts to mobilize communities or through leadership in advocacy organizations that are working to expand access to the ballot box, the voices and experiences of Black women continue to shape democracy today.
- In the November 2017 Elections, Black women candidates were exceedingly successful in their bids for office. Fourteen Black women were elected or reelected mayor in cities with a population of 35,000 or more, with seventy percent of the 20 women who ran for mayor in these cities winning their elections. On the other hand, only five Black men were elected mayor in cities of the same size and less than half of the Black male candidates won.
- In certain key states, Black women were exceedingly successful at the ballot. New Jersey elected its first Black woman Lieutenant Governor. Further, in Virginia, Black women were elected District Attorney, two were elected sheriff and two were elected treasurer of their cities, and in Minnesota, the first Black transgender woman was elected to the Minneapolis City Council with 70% of the vote.
- At the Congressional level, there is only one Black woman in the U. S. Senate; conversely, in the House of Representatives, Black women make up a larger percentage of House members than they do citizens in the general population. Black women are currently 12.7 percent of the population in the US, but make up 18.9% of all women serving in the 115<sup>th</sup> Session of the House of Representatives. Yet, overall women remain underrepresented in Congress as they make up just over half (50.8%) of the population, but less than a fifth (19.8%) of those in Congress.

- Black women voters were the key constituency responsible for flipping the once solidly red state of Alabama blue in its 2017 Special U. S. Senate Election. Further, Black women-led organizing was key to Senator Doug Jones' historic electoral victory.

### *Electoral Successes Prove Black Women Can Win Anywhere*

- Unlike their male counterparts, most Black women elected to Congress represent districts that are not majority Black. The average Black population percentage for Black women is 38.4%, compared to 55.6% for Black men. This suggests that Black women can be competitive and win *anywhere*.
- Of the eight largest cities where Black women have been elected mayor in the last two years, only half have a majority Black population.

### *In 2018, Black Women Can Make Political History*

- In 2018, more women are expected to run for office than ever before and Black women make up a key part of this potential electoral landslide. In addition to the House of Representatives, 36 gubernatorial seats, 30 lieutenant gubernatorial seats, 132 other state executives, 87 state legislative chambers and countless municipal and other local positions are up for grabs.
- Once again, Georgia is positioned to potentially make history for Black women as four are running for state-wide offices including Secretary of State, Insurance Commissioner, Lt. Governor, and with Stacey Abrams' run, 2018 may be the year in which the nation receives its first Black woman Governor.

### *Despite Gains, Black Women Are Not Without Political Challenges*

- The 2018 election cycle will occur under the shadow of the 5th Anniversary of the Shelby v. Holder Supreme Court decision, a ruling that is widely perceived to have gutted the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This leaves the Black vote vulnerable to a wide range of voter suppression tactics such as precinct consolidation and closures, reductions in early voting, purging of the voter rolls, and even misinformation distributed on voter registration forms.
- Georgia's Secretary of State was forced to change the language on voter registration forms which had incorrectly indicated that first time registrants were required to produce a Photo ID at the time they register. No such requirement exists. As Black political power increases, it is all but certain that voter suppression targeting Blacks will increase as well.

## ***Power of Black Women's Leadership Significantly Curtailed at Work***

- Of the record 32 women who now hold the position of CEO of a Fortune 500 company, none of them are Black. In fact, Ursula Burns, who ended her run as CEO of Xerox in 2016 remains the only Black women to have achieved this feat in the entire 60-year history of the Fortune 500 list.
- The dearth of Black women in leadership is not limited to the C-Suite. Black women's representation in executive leadership pales in comparison with their white counterparts, even though Black women are much more likely to aspire to lead. Black women are nearly three times more likely (22% vs. 8%) than White women to indicate that they'd like to ultimately acquire a position of executive leadership. Yet, when it comes to who actually receives those positions, white women make up almost a quarter (24%) of all executive leaders, even though only 8% say they aspire to such. Conversely, Black women make up just 1.5% of those who hold positions of executive leadership, while 22% indicate that's exactly where they'd like to be.
- Part of the problem appears to be that companies have made the clear decision to preference gender diversity (78%) as their main diversity priority over racial diversity (55%). And as has always been the cultural tradition in America, the term "woman" is reflexively viewed as "White woman" while "Black" is viewed as "Black male." Due to these narrow conceptions of race and gender, Black women are especially likely to be left behind.
- The double-pane glass ceiling faced by Black women, ultimately limits not only their professional potential, but also their earning potential, which has a cascading effect on their ability to maximize economic security for their families today and for their own retirement tomorrow.

## ***Black Women Especially Vulnerable Within the Criminal Justice System***

- Though the incarceration rates of Black women have gone down in recent years, Black women are still twice as likely to be incarcerated as White women for the very same offense.
- Eight out of ten women behind bars are mothers, leading to intergenerational effects of criminal justice policy. It's estimated that in the last 20 years, 250,000 children have been placed in foster care specifically because their mothers went to prison. Other research has shown that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, have problems with anger management, and are more likely to develop a learning disability and experience disciplinary problems in school, leaving Black children especially vulnerable to these challenges.

## ***Black Women Immigrants and Their Families Uniquely Targeted in Trump Era***

- The current Administration has consistently targeted immigration programs that benefit Black immigrants for reduction or cessation. For example, 2018 saw the end of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian and Honduran immigrants, putting tens of thousands of people in peril for deportation.
- While most Black immigrants arrive in this country via the Diversity Visas, the process for selection is far from the perceived "lottery" designation by which it is widely known. Qualification for a Diversity Visas require a significant financial investment and the successful completion of multiple interviews and background checks. In addition, African applicants are especially likely to



have received college or graduate degrees at a rate that exceeds the level of education of most Americans before gaining entry to the country. And so, Diversity Visas are already very much merit-based system for gaining entry into the country. Yet, this year a Congressional compromise put the Diversity Visa program in jeopardy by offering to largely end it in exchange for a pathway to permanence for Deferred Access for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, only a small percentage of which are African or Afro-descendant. In essence, this move has unnecessarily put Diversity Visas and the DACA program at odds with one another, which could result in a major blow to Black immigrants and immigration moving forward.

- In 2017 the Trump Administration indicated it was considering using family separation as a deterrent for future immigration. According to the ACLU, this traumatizing practice appears to currently be in place and even wielded against those seeking asylum. For example, a woman who fled the Congo with her seven-year old daughter was separated from her child only four days after arriving in the country. This despite the fact she passed the initial screening for asylum. The two remain separated.

### ***The Power of Black Women's Push for Social Justice Remains***

- Black women are key leaders in progressive movements across the spectrum. In the fight for racial justice, gender justice, environmental justice, labor, and more, Black women remain critical conduits of change.
- Despite their valuable contributions to social justice advocacy efforts, Black women led organizations remain woefully underfunded. In 1998, only 3.8% of foundation grant-making went to African-Americans, by 2006, this percentage had decreased by more than half, to only 1.5%. Though investments increased slightly in 2015, the change wasn't enough to address this sizeable gap.
- Yet, there are some organizations that stand in the gap for Black women. The Groundswell Fund, for example, is the largest funder of the U.S. reproductive justice movement. In 2017, Groundswell awarded \$8 million in grants and capacity building support to 103 organizations in 47 states and territories (including Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico). Of this total, \$2.7 million (30%) went to organizations led by Black women (up from \$1.7 million the prior year).
- Black women are leading efforts to increase diversity, inclusion and equity in mainstream environmental organizations and elevating environmental issues.

### ***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 lo-wage work, labor unions continue to be a key conduit to living wages and crucial benefits for Black women.

### ***Entrepreneurship Seen as a Conduit to Greater Economic Power for Black Women***

- Black women are continuing to turn to entrepreneurship, perhaps to escape structural discrimination across race and gender in the labor market. From 1997 to 2016, the number of businesses owned by Black women increased by more than 600%. As such, Black women remain the fastest growing demographic to embrace entrepreneurship in the nation.
- In 2017, Black women owned more than 2.2 million businesses, yet most remain sole proprietorships. As such, Black women-owned businesses employ fewer than 400,000 people nationwide.

### ***Black Women Venture Capitalists Flex Their Economic Power to Help Close the Venture Capital Funding Gap***

- A growing number of Black women are entering the venture capital space and making notable investments in startups largely ignored by White male venture capitalists, namely tech companies started by women and people of color.
- In 2015, a mere .2% of Venture Capital funding went to businesses founded by women of color, while more than 90% of funding went to white-male led companies.
- To combat this startling gap in access to capital, key Black women Venture Capitalists have emerged and invested into women-owned and people of color owned businesses within the tech industry.
- Top Black women venture capitalists, like Lisa Coca and Karen Kerr have each raised over \$1 billion to invest in promising firms.

### ***Black Women Still Lack the Power to Live Free from Violence, Health Challenges, and in Full Autonomy of Their Own Bodies***

- Founded by Black women, the reproductive justice movement continues to be one of the most prominent women of color–led movements in the U.S. today
- Black women are especially likely to experience negative health outcomes and are the most impacted by policies that restrict access to abortion, contraception, and paid family leave.

- Black women are 22% more likely to die from heart disease than white women, 71% more likely to perish from cervical cancer, and 243% more likely to die from pregnancy or childbirth-related causes.
- In a national study of five medical complications that are common causes of maternal death and injury, Black women were two to three times more likely to die than white women who had the same condition.
- Over the last two decades, more than 900 measures have passed to constrain a woman's right to choose. Many of these measures are concentrated in states with disproportionately large Black populations. In Georgia, for example, 58% of women live in counties without one abortion clinic. While in Virginia, where 34% of children live in poverty, abortion is covered in insurance policies for public employees only in cases of life endangerment, rape, incest or fetal impairment. So while legal abortion remains the law of the land, states are increasingly making it difficult for Black women to have full access to healthcare and economic resources they need.
- Black women remain particularly vulnerable to violence. They are three times more likely than White women to be killed as a result of domestic violence, yet Black women are also 80% more likely to be convicted in the criminal justice system for killing their abusers.
- Black women face unique challenges in abusive relationships, and as a result, they tend to remain in violent relationships longer. Many don't feel safe engaging systems meant to help. For example, some Black women hesitate to seek help from shelters because they believe they are "for white women." A lack of community outreach by shelters in Black neighborhoods contribute to the problem.
- Black women are also more likely to feel unsafe reaching out to the police for help, as it is widely known that police involvement in Black communities, can itself, have lethal consequences.

### ***Black Women Lean on Spiritual Power to Make Magic Happen***

- While Black women remain more religious than any other group in America, today many, especially younger Black women, seek self-expression, self-love, self-care, emotional and physical well-being that inspires their search for spirituality outside of organized religion.
- Still, facing escalating racism, sexism, misogyny and civil rights reversals, many Black women continue to rely on religious values and heightened spirituality to survive and thrive, particularly through challenging circumstances.

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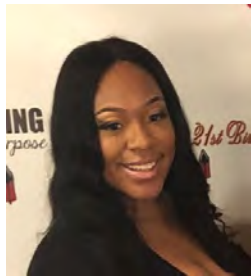
BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE  
**BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE 2018 ORGANIZING, POWER BUILDING  
& GIRLS EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES**  
**NOW** is the Time for a Power Shift!!!



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**The Black Women's Roundtable (BWR)** is the women and girls empowerment arm of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (The National Coalition/NCBCP). The BWR operates from a holistic, comprehensive model that combines narrative and policy change, capacity building, leadership and life skills development for a transformative approach to civic engagement and network development. BWR organizes in culturally and community competent ways that center racial and gender justice to promote health and wellness, economic security and sustainability, education and global empowerment for its constituents.

We are beginning year two of the Trump Administration and although our communities faced unprecedented reversals in civil rights, human rights, social justice and environmental protection, there were also incredible, hard-fought wins—including protecting Affordable Health Care. Black women leaders, many of whom lead National Coalition state-based affiliates and BWR networks, played a critical role in these victories. *The Power of the Sister Vote* is now a center of national attention as sophisticated, Black women-led and powered civic engagement initiatives are garnering big wins for progressive movements nationwide.

More Black women are running for and winning seats to public office, especially in the Southern states like Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina. Black women voters are showing up at the polls in bigger numbers and using their vote and their voice in savvy ways; and Black women are leading Black organizing, political and voter empowerment campaigns across the country. (See 2017 BWR Preliminary Report: <https://goo.gl/KWJMwL>)

Not enough has been written about the unique and powerful ways that Black women organize and make change, as too often this work is appropriated without credit or simply neglected. Yet, this work is on the cutting edge of movement innovation as Black women are bringing fresh, intersectional perspectives in a myriad of ways including as organizers, thought leaders, strategic communicators, architects of policy, and groundbreaking researchers.

**Some of the nation's most impactful political strategists and organizers are members of the BWR,** which is why BWR embarked upon a planning project to conduct a series of interviews with Black women organizers to explore the unique ways in which Black women build power, build community, make change and develop leadership pipelines to sustain the work over time. The project is interviewing a diverse cross section of Black women leaders across issues, gender expression, and geography. The project is also exploring how philanthropy can better support these leaders and their organizations.

**The BWR also believes it is vitally important for Black women's perspectives, methods and leadership be supported in these critical times to achieve genuine equity in America.** Black women are overrepresented in the public employee sector, among those who are disabled, in poverty and in the criminal justice system. As immigrants, Black people from the Diaspora are disproportionately targeted for deportation and have more difficulty entering the country in search of sanctuary. (currently unionized public sector jobs are under unprecedented attack in the courts, most especially the Janus vs. AFSCME Supreme Court case: <https://goo.gl/yr6vjF>). This is most disturbing as Black women achieve much higher wages through jobs protected by the Labor Movement.

**Despite many economic and social justice barriers, Black women are resilient and thriving!** The National Center for Educational Equity reported in 2017 that **black women are the most educated group in the nation.** The BWR 2017 Report revealed **Black women are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs.** As of 2016, “there were an estimated 1.9 million Black women-owned firms, employing 376,500 workers and generating \$51.4 billion in revenues.” **Black women are also leading the way to not only ensuring the Black vote is maximized in all elections, they are leading the way to hold elected officials and political parties accountable to Black and marginalized people.**

**The time is now for the NCBCP and its Black Women's Roundtable to leverage its unique role as a diverse, intergenerational leadership and engagement table** to raise the visibility of and support for this important intersectional work in our communities.

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 (AL, FL, GA, MI, MS, NC, OH, PA, DC/MD/VA areas), **we are headed in a vital new direction that will help amplify the voices and power of Black women and girls' leadership and communities deeply affected by this new policy context.**

***Further, the BWR will organize its 2018 Empowerment Project (BWR Project '18) in 2018,*** which is designed to provide Black women and girls with strategies, tools and resources to invest in their goals to achieve sustainable economic security & prosperity, retirement security, health & wellness, life-long learning and other means of empowerment for themselves, their families and communities.

*The BWR Project '18* will utilize interactive organizing and training models, civic engagement, coalition building, and leadership development strategies to achieve its project goals. Further, **due to the current movement to address historic and systemic sexual harassment and sexual assault; and most recently gun safety/gun control across the country, the NCBCP and its BWR is committed to ensuring Black women and girls' voices and stories are elevated in the public sphere on these critical issues and others through our 2018 *Power of the Sister Vote* Campaigns and BWR Project '18.**

**Over the next 12 months and beyond, The Black Women's Roundtable's primary goals are to ensure** 1) Black women-led organizing is elevated and supported by investing in BWR national and state-based leadership; 2) Black women are actively engaged in the policy decisions that will impact their employment and/or business ownership opportunities, health and wellness, educational opportunity and more; 3) Black women's voices and issues are front and center in the 2018 Mid-Term Election Cycle on local, state and national level; and 4) Black girls are empowered with leadership development, mentoring and empowerment tools to address the issues they are concerned about in their communities.

### ***Building On Our Strength Across the Generations***

In January 2018, BWR hosted a high-level two-day Planning, Leadership and Wellness Retreat in Atlanta, GA, bringing together its NCBCFP state-based affiliates, BWR networks and state partners. The convening provided structured opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, time in supportive community to reflect on the current context and develop coordinated strategies moving into the mid-term election season. Fresh from pivotal elections impacting Black communities in AL, GA, FL, MS, MI, PA, VA and other states, it was important to share the lessons learned and have them inform the work going forward.

**In March 2018, the BWR hosted its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual BWR Women of Power National Summit that had a record number of over 400 attendees from over 20 states** that was laser focused on developing innovative organizing strategies to elevate Black women's leadership and leverage the power of the Black women's vote in the 2018 Election, Census 2020 Decennial Census/Redistricting and other key power building issues that are included in the 2018 BWR Report.

**The BWR announced its new Southern Black Women's Civic Engagement Alliance at the Summit,** in partnership with the Southern Black Women's Rural Initiative and Black Voters Matter, to expand the power and impact of Black women's civic, voting and political power in the South, where over 55 percent of the Black population lives.

### ***Girl Power!***

**The BWR hosted a special organizing session during the summit with over 60 Black girls that focused on developing a new *BWR Girl Power National Initiative*** that is designed to empower girls to be leaders and change agents in their local communities. Key components the girls shared they would like to see in a BWR Girl Power initiative includes: 1) creating a safe space where young Black girls and women can feel empowered and have their voices heard; 2) making sure that when young Black girls and women are voicing their issues, they are seen as more than just angry and loud; 3) opportunity to speak in forums more openly about issues that affect us deeply and respecting the views we all express; 4) to have our voices heard through forums, protests and meetings; build on an organization that focuses on our issues; 5) uplift young Black women and girls to see and know their full potential; 6) time and space to plan and organize to build our organization to tackle sex trafficking, gun violence, unfair sentences, racism, gentrification, mental health, trauma, hate crimes against LGBTQ community.

### **BWR Girl Power Motto**

*"We are young, we are black, we are powerful, "We Are the Hope of Our Ancestors"*



**Now more than ever, it is of vital importance to lift up Black women and girls' perspectives, methods, leadership and build on this track record of success. Some are hailing 2018 as the Year of the Black Woman but this work and all of its impact have been decades in the making. It cannot be reduced to a trend or a fad. BWR has committed 35 years (established in 1983) to supporting and sustaining this work and we will continue to build on this legacy of holistic, intergenerational Black women-led change work in 2018 and beyond. *Now is the Time for a Power Shift!!!!***

# The Power of Black Women's Leadership



A signature program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

## When Black Women Lead Politically...



Dr. Helen Holton  
*Executive Director*

*National Organization of Black County Officials, Inc.*

*“I’m no longer accepting the things I cannot change...I’m changing the things I cannot accept.”*  
Angela Davis

The contributions of Black women to the political landscape of America are marked by change to that which they choose to not accept. In January 2017, the unimaginable happened, Donald Trump became the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. On a daily basis, it becomes apparent that change is needed to reclaim progress for the health and wealth of our communities. **Whenever Black women organize and engage around issues of justice and inclusion a power shift occurs.**

There are more than 500,000 opportunities for persons to be elected to represent America. These offices exist in small rural towns to major metropolitan cities with populations that rival some countries. **There is room for Black women to lead power shifts and change conditions they are willing to no longer accept.** From local school boards, city clerks, council members, mayors, county executives, and state representatives, all the way to congress and the White House, there is opportunity.

What happened in Alabama with the election of Doug Jones would not have happened without the collective effort of Black women throughout the state and around the nation. When Black women lead the power of our presence permeates the atmosphere. Black women were instrumental in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution ratified by Congress on August 18, 1920, giving women the right to vote. History doesn’t document well the participation of Black women in the political struggle for inclusion. But we are there.

How did Black women impact the Suffrage Movement that led to the vote of women? Black women live at the intersection of racism and sexism in America. The first recognized Black woman suffragist is Sojourner Truth, an illiterate, itinerant preacher spending much of her life advocating for the right to vote for Black women and men. Her speech delivered in 1857 at the Akron, Ohio woman’s convention in favor of woman’s rights entitled, “Ain’t I a Woman?” historically marks her entry into the political foray.

Political justice for Black women began in our own clubs and organizations, sometimes working with white suffragists. Black women did not accept their exclusion from white suffrage organizations or the racist tactics employed by white suffragists. In the twentieth century, more and more Black women joined the ranks of suffragists as the movement progressed.<sup>1</sup>

The right to vote was the first step that opened the possibility for Black women to dare to dream of running for office and lead. On March 3, 1913, the newly formed Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated was the only Black women's group to march in the first national women's march. Historically it was called a parade and Black women were instructed to walk in the rear. Another moment of a political power shift occurred when the ladies of DST did not comply; they did not bring up the rear.

When Black women lead, power shifts and change happens. Black women began their public political presence to change what was unacceptable. Our momentum is growing thanks to the political leadership that began with these trailblazers at local, state, and federal levels:

- 1968 – Shirley Chisholm was the first Black woman elected to Congress representing New York's 12<sup>th</sup> congressional district. An educator and advocate for early childhood education;
- 1972 – Shirley Chisholm was the first Black candidate from a major political party to be a candidate for President
- 1973 – Lelia Kasenia Smith was the first Black woman elected mayor in America representing Taft, OK, a small rural city. A divorced mother of five living on welfare. She lost her bid for a seat on the school board, raised \$200 and was elected Mayor;<sup>ii</sup>
- 1973 – Doris Davis was the first Black woman elected mayor of Compton, CA, an incorporated metropolitan city. She was elected as the first Black City Clerk of Compton in 1965 and re-elected when the majority population was white. By 1970, after the Watts riots of 1965 the majority population was 70% Black;<sup>iii</sup>
- 1992 – Carol Mosely Braun was elected the first Black woman U.S. Senator, representing the state of IL. Her earlier work as an Assistant United States Attorney earned her accolades in the areas of housing, health policy, and environmental law;<sup>iv</sup>
- 2011 – Jennifer Carroll was the first Black woman elected Lt. Governor in America in the state of FL. She rose from the ranks of an enlisted Navy mechanic. A wife, mother, mentor, education advocate, and multi-term state representative
- 2016 – Kamala Harris was elected the second Black woman U. S. Senator, representing the state of CA. Prior to be elected to the U. S. Senate, she served as the Attorney General for the state of CA
- 2017 – Sheila Over elected first Black woman elected lieutenant governor of New Jersey Served in the New Jersey General Assembly prior to being elected lieutenant governor.
- 2018 - Stacey Abrams, State Senator in GA is on the ballot seeking to be the first Black woman nominated as the democratic nominee for the governor of Georgia.. A Yale-trained attorney and accomplished romance novelist is seeking to become a first in elective office for a Black woman.

There is room for Black women to raise their voices as leaders in the world of politics in elected and appointed positions. The Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University in their Women of Color in Elective Office 2018: Congress, Statewide, State Legislature, Mayors, proves the point that there's room for our voices. (<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2018>).

According to CAWP's research there are at least 558 Black women running for office this year. The breakdown is as follows:

- Federal seats – 96
- State seats – 196
- Local seats – 239
- Unspecified – 27
- 236 of the seats are in blue states
- 322 of the seats are in red states
- 208 incumbents are seeking re-election
- 305 candidates are challengers seeking to replace incumbents

The history of Black women shifting the power is growing. CAWP has captured the history of women in politics at the federal, state, and to some extent the local level. They break down the data by race/ethnicity.<sup>v</sup> As our communities continue to have some of the greatest disparities in quality of life that shows up in lower education achievement, lesser economic opportunities, higher unemployment and underemployment, poorer health statistics it all points to one clear reality.

It's time for more Black women to use their power and realize that we have the potential to be like the warrior women in Wakanda and revel in the mélange of the tapestry we create as Black women in America. As Black women who are sick and tired of the status quo let's claim our space because, ***It's Time for a Power Shift!***

*"It's time for those of us who have a voice to speak out for life, for love and for justice..."* Chaka Khan

## Black Millennial Women A New Approach to Black Women's Leadership



Barbara A. Perkins  
*President & CEO*

*International Black Women's Public Policy Institute*

A recent report by the Council of Graduate Schools states that African Americans continue to make significant progress in master's and doctoral degree programs. The report further states that Black students' enrollment between 1997 and 2007, increased an average of 8 percent each year, out pacing overall enrollment increases by a rate of 4 to 1. According to Blacks in Higher Education, although, enrollment for both Black men and women are on the rise, Black women make up 73% of all African American enrollments in graduate programs in the United States.

**Unlike previous generations of women, particularly the baby boomers, Millennials who make up the largest generation in our history, are not chasing the glass ceiling.** That glass ceiling arguably has been shattered a long time ago, but only for some. Millennials have made it very clear that they are unwilling to trade their racial and cultural identity for the unlikely possibility of being granted a seat at the obscure power table. **They are much more comfortable and determined to pull up their own chairs at tables designed by them and for them.**

In my coaching practice, as a full-time executive coach for 18 years, my clientele has been primarily high-profile African American women ages 40-55 with careers in politics, corporate, faith and not for profit agencies. Much of my past work focused on helping women sort through, navigate and prioritize the demands and expectations placed on them, as pre-requisites for their success. Helping women with designing their individual pathways to success with realistic time-lines to meet the targeted goals perceived by their particular industry, holds my attention differently with Millennials. Millennials are much more actively engaged with their process from design to implementation. They spend less time planning and preparing and much more time doing and being activated. Two distinctly different approaches, both with measured success.

It is my good fortune to be working with a sampling of the young women who are not waiting for that one seat on a corporate board to become available. They realized and have voiced in public discourse that the few seats held by African American women on boards around the country are rarely vacated and even when they are, the previous holders do not see Millennials as prime candidates for those seats. Millennials might be the first generation to weigh in and change the role and influence of mentors in their lives. The successful mentor model for them, includes their voices. The New Women Leaders are indeed CEO's establishing and designing boards, with an intention to expand opportunities for their sisters, bringing new ideas, innovation and expertise in technology, all to ensure their collective success.

### Profiles of the New CEO:

Name: Marie Yolaine Toms  
Title: CEO+FireStarter  
Age: 51  
State: NY  
Industry: International Non-Profit, Service and Development  
Website: [www.Community2Community.info](http://www.Community2Community.info)

Name: Cortney Walters  
Title: Attorney At-Law  
Age: 26  
State: FL  
Industry: Law  
Website: [www.Cortroom.com](http://www.Cortroom.com)

Name: April Q. Russell  
Title: ArTreprenuer: Film Financing, Distribution, Producer, Director  
Age: 39  
Industry: Media and Entertainment  
Website: [Www.revolutionizehollywood.com](http://Www.revolutionizehollywood.com)

Name: Vanessa Léon  
Title: Chief Executive Officer  
Age: 31  
State: New York  
Industry: Urban planning and public policy  
Website: [www.pinchina.com](http://www.pinchina.com)

## Shut Out of Power: Black Women, Leadership, and the Corporate Space



Avis A. Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D.  
*Founder & CEO*  
*Exceptional Leadership Institute for Women*

Black women know how to lead. In fact, I would venture to say that we lead like we breathe. It is our survival mechanism, our efficacy, our way of being. We lead in our homes, our communities, our churches. We lead in the streets fighting for change and we lead in community organizations, seeking to do the same. According to the Center on Talent Innovation, we enter the world of work, already as experienced leaders, fully twice as likely as our white counterparts to have done things like run a School Board, lead a youth initiative, or head a community service organization.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite our years of leadership experience outside the workplace, inside that domain, we are conspicuously absent from the leadership ranks. Of the record 32 women who now hold the position of CEO of a Fortune 500 company, only two are women of color and none of them are Black.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Ursula Burns, who ended her run as CEO of Xerox in 2016 remains the only Black women to have achieved this feat in the entire 60-year history of the Fortune 500 list.

This dearth of Black women's professional leadership is not limited to the C-Suite. The representation of Black women in executive leadership pales in comparison to white women as well, even though Black women are much more likely to aspire to lead. Black women are nearly three times more likely (22% vs. 8%) than White women to indicate that they would like to ultimately acquire a position of executive leadership.<sup>3</sup> Yet, when it comes to who actually receives those positions, white women make up almost a quarter (24%) of all executive leaders<sup>4</sup>, even though only 8% say they aspire to such. Conversely, Black women make up just 1.5% of those who hold positions of executive leadership<sup>5</sup>, while 22% indicate that is exactly where they'd like to be.

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Tai Green. 2015. *Black Women Ready to Lead*. Center on Talent Innovation: New York. <http://www.talentinnovation.org/publication.cfm?publication=1460>

<sup>2</sup> The 2017 Fortune 500 CEOs Include a Record Number of Women. <http://fortune.com/2017/06/07/fortune-women-ceos/>

<sup>3</sup> Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Tai Green. 2015. *Black Women Ready to Lead*. Center on Talent Innovation: New York. <http://www.talentinnovation.org/publication.cfm?publication=1460>

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Catherine, et. al. 2016. *Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women. <http://www.aauw.org/research/barriers-and-bias/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



Part of the problem appears to be two-fold. Despite our credentials, qualifications, dedication and desire to lead, we're more likely than any other demographic group in America to indicate that we've never received any active assistance from senior level colleagues meant to help us acquire the opportunity to lead.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, companies have made the clear decision to preference gender diversity over racial diversity as their main diversity priority. And as has always been the cultural tradition in America, the term "woman" is reflexively viewed as "White woman" while "Black" is viewed as "Black male." Due to these narrow conceptions of race and gender, Black women are especially likely to be left behind.

This double-pane glass ceiling, not only stunts the professional potential of Black women, it also greatly inhibits their earning potential, which has a cascading effect on the ability of Black women to maximize economic security for their families today and for their own retirement security tomorrow.

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<sup>6</sup> Gellman, Lindsay. September 30, 2015. The Racial Gap in Mentoring at Work. The Wall Street Journal. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/a-racial-gap-in-mentoring-at-work-1443600872>

## Black Women Lead Social Change, But Left Behind in Social Change Funding



Makani Themba  
*Chief Strategist*  
*Higher Ground Change Strategies*

Philanthropy plays an important role in the development and sustainability of social change infrastructure and Black led social change work is no different. Structural racism, disinvestment and marginalization of Black communities by the public, private and even independent sectors have made social change work imperative for the survival of Black communities. There is not a single aspect of Black life that is unaffected by deep, systemic inequities and it has only been sustained organizing, advocacy and community care and development that have moved the needle on improving Black communities' quality of life.

**Social change saves lives.** What are simple acts in more privileged communities like voting, buying groceries, getting a job, or the ability to call law enforcement without fear for one's safety are fraught with barriers and risk in most Black communities. It has been the long history of Black led organizing and sustained resistance that has made a difference. Although there is more work to do to fully achieve full rights and dignities in Black communities, imagine where communities would be without this work. Research shows that organized communities are healthier communities. Increased political agency and community connections make a substantive difference in health and quality of life<sup>vi</sup>. In short, Black organizing literally saves lives – and not just Black lives.

### **Black women's leadership has had a significant, positive impact across issues and communities.**

Black women have played a critical role in leading social movements in the US and globally – as organizers, thought leaders, innovators, architects of policy, authoring groundbreaking research and more. Black women provide leadership for progressive *movements across the spectrum* including racial justice, gender justice, environmental justice, and labor. They have made a huge impact on the political landscape as strategists, organizers, shapers of public narrative as well as voters. Recent electoral victories in Alabama, Virginia, Charlotte and beyond have underscored the pivotal role that Black women play in building progressive power.<sup>vii</sup> Yet, even with this impressive track record of brilliance and impact, much of the Black women led change infrastructure is woefully underfunded.

**Addressing the gross under investment in Black led and Black women led social change work.** All Black led organizations are underfunded. The Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE) and Hill-Snowdon Foundation, leading voices advocating for greater equity in funding for Black communities, have noted that there appears to be a kind of redlining with regard to major philanthropy and Black communities.<sup>viii</sup> A 2009 study by Rick Cohen shows that grantmaking for Black communities declined (calculated as percentage of grants awarded by the largest 1000 foundations). In 1998, only 3.8 percent of these grants went to African Americans. By 2006, this percentage decreased by more than half

to 1.5 percent.<sup>ix</sup> Although initial data indicates an increase in investments in 2015, it is not enough to address this considerable gap.

The National Coalition for Black Civic Participation and its Black Women’s Roundtable conducted a series of interviews with Black women organizers working in various sectors and representing a spectrum across gender expression and geography. The objective was to explore the unique ways in which Black women build power, build community, make change and develop leadership pipelines to sustain the work over time – and how philanthropy can better support their efforts. More information is in our forthcoming strategy memo. Below are initial recommendations for how philanthropy can more effectively, and more equitably, support the organizers who build and nurture much of the nation’s progressive infrastructure.

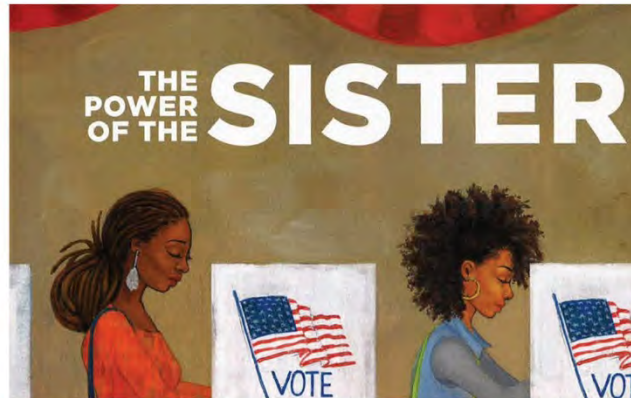
### **Summary Findings and Recommendations from the Field:**

- **Black women have developed holistic, comprehensive approaches to movement and community building that are changing how organizing is done. This work should be better acknowledged and supported.** From integrating healing and self-care, innovative cultural work to developing important political frameworks like intersectionality and queer feminist analysis, Black women have produced critical theory, practice and praxis for the entire field of social change. They have built intentional, effective support systems – as mentors and as colleagues and peers. Yet, the leaders producing this important work are rarely acknowledged for their contributions. Their work is often appropriated without credit, and they are not adequately supported as thought leaders and innovators, much less for their day to day programmatic work. **These organizations and their leaders deserve more and more longer-term, flexible, general support that rewards their work and encourages further experimentation and learning. There is also a need for dedicated resources for communications and documentation so that their work can be properly attributed and framed for the field.**
- **Trauma, crisis and thwarted capacity are just a few of the ways that the interconnected systems of white supremacy, patriarchy and class affect organizing in Black communities. Organizing in this context necessarily takes more work and intentionality – and that means more time and resources. Black women are innovating approaches to address these traumas as a necessary foundation for principled, long-term work together.** Communities are under siege in various ways and this trauma “shows up” as rage, reticence, underemployment and more. Black women are building sustainable movements that live in stark contrast to traditional, transactional mobilizing practices of “parachuting” into Black communities for votes, etc., without attention to community needs. Example of these approaches include “popular education” that help members learn skills even as they navigate trauma from previously negative learning experiences; creating healing circles and the use of traditional rituals and other healing modalities at gatherings.
- **Philanthropy often operates in issue silos while communities operate beyond silos.** We heard from numerous respondents that their holistic, cross cutting work was actually a barrier to funding. Funders are trying to move a certain issue while communities were navigating several, intersecting issues. Communities also have a different framework for how they understand the challenges, assets and solutions and want the flexibility to build out change work that fits their unique context. Again, **respondents reiterated the need for flexible, general support that trusts communities to determine what they need, the scale at which they need it, and how best to achieve it.**

- **Black women leaders and their organizations need equitable compensation and holistic, restorative practices in order to work sustainably over the long haul.** Black women leaders are often overworked, underpaid, and receive limited benefits. Of course, compensation is an issue for the social change sector overall and is even more so for women in particular. Black women face multiple forms of oppression as part of their work and personal life which can be deeply debilitating. For Black LGBTQ women, transphobia and homophobia compound these stressors. The leaders we interviewed frequently spoke to the need for intentional investments to ensure that Black women led organizations were able to provide sustainable working conditions including adequate staffing to manage workload; fair compensation including benefits; and support for coaching, wellness, sabbaticals and other regenerative practices. These kinds of investments yield a tremendous return for the field at large by creating more capacity, retaining experienced leadership and creating more stability and less turnover.
- **There is no monolith or single approach to Black women led organizing. Therefore, approaches to supporting this work should be nuanced and consider gender, nation status, class, age, geography, differently abled and other forms of identity and experience.** Although there was a great deal of alignment around issues like the need for flexible, general support and the other summary recommendations excerpted from the forthcoming strategy memo, it is important to restate that Black women’s experiences, approaches and perspectives are diverse. One manifestation of this diversity is funding inequities within Black communities. As underfunded as Black women led organizations are as a whole, organizations led by and organizing Black transgendered women as well as Black women who are differently abled are examples of groups that are even more marginalized in philanthropy and in society. **Equitable investments in the sector will mean attending to inequities within and outside of Black communities.**

This intersectional and inclusive analysis reflects what so many of the Black women we interviewed expressed.

# Political and Voting Power



## Black Women and Politics: Time for a Power Shift



Elsie L. Scott, Ph.D.

*Founding Director*

*Ronald W. Walters Leadership & Public Policy Center @ Howard University*

It took close to ten years for the mainstream media and society at-large to recognize a fact that Black women had been stating since the Presidential Election of 2008—Black women are actively engaged in electoral politics. Black women turned out in greater numbers than any other racial and gender demographic group in the 2008 and 2012 Presidential Elections.

In 2017, for the first time, Black women were recognized for the contributions they made to the success of Democratic Party candidates. The Washington Post carried the following headline on an article by Eugene Scott, “The Democratic Party owes Black female voters a big ‘thank you’”. After the successful election of a Democrat to a U.S. Senate seat in Alabama, a large Black turnout, led by Black women, was credited with making the “impossible” win, possible. Not only are Black women turning out the vote for male candidates, they are running for office in larger numbers and they are winning.

In the November 2017 elections, New Jersey elected its first Black woman lieutenant governor. Fourteen Black women were elected or reelected mayor in cities with a population of 35,000 or more. Seventy percent of the 20 women who ran for mayor in these cities won their elections. (One of the losses was a Black woman losing to another Black woman in the runoff.) On the other hand, only five Black men were elected mayor in cities of the same size. Less than half of the Black male candidates won.

Black women made their presence felt in the 2017 Virginia elections with a 7.8 percent increase from the turnout in 2013. Only one Black woman lost her race, and that woman lost to an incumbent. This was not a mayoral election year, but the criminal justice positions, district attorney and sheriff, were on the ballot. Three Black women were elected district attorney, and two were elected sheriff. Two Black women ran for treasurer of their cities; both were elected.

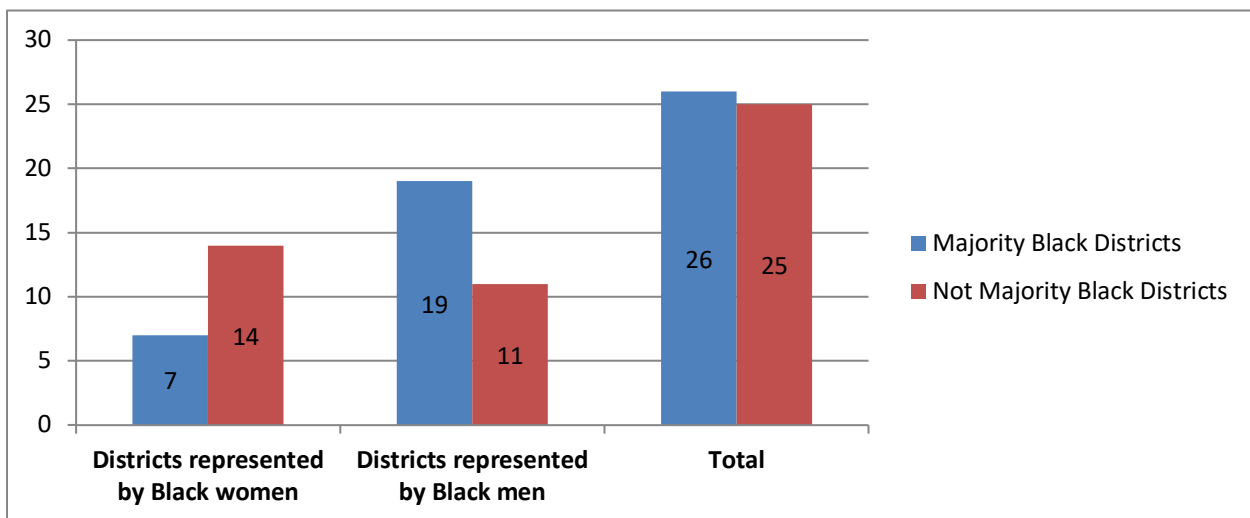
There were also interesting and meaningful wins for women in other states. Forest Park and Milledgeville, Georgia elected their first African American mayors as did Wilksburg and Duquesne, Pennsylvania. A 32-year old Black woman in Atlantic County, NJ, offended by a Facebook post from her Freeholder about the Women’s March, ran against him and won by over 1,000 votes. The first Black transgender woman was elected to the Minneapolis City Council, winning with 70 percent of the vote.

What do the results of the last few elections mean for Black women in 2018? What trends have been detected? Are Black women winning in districts that are not predominantly Black?

It is a good sign that Black women make up a larger percentage of the women in the House than they do of the women in the population. Black women, made up 12.7 percent of the U.S. female population in 2015, but they make up 18.9 percent of the women serving in the 115th session of Congress. This is good news, but it is bad news that women make up 50.8 percent of the population, but only 19.8 percent of the women in Congress.

Most of the Black women in Congress now represent districts that are not majority Black. Only seven of the 21 Black women in the 115th Congress represent majority Black districts. Conversely, most of the Black men represent majority Black districts. The average Black population percentage for the Black women is 38.4 percent, compared to 55.6 percent for Black men. The Black population of Rep. Mia Love’s 4th Congressional District in Utah is only 1.4 percent, and Reps. Bonnie Coleman and Barbara Lee have less than 20 percent Black population in their districts.

*Majority and Non-Majority Black Districts Represented by Black Congresswomen, 115th Congress*



These data show that Black women can be competitive and win in non-majority districts. Additional research needs to be conducted before a conclusion can be drawn about gentrification and its impact on the ability to elect Black women in gentrified districts.

Of the eight largest cities where Black women have been elected mayor in the last two years, half have a majority or 50 percent Black population. Mayoral election data may be a better indicator of the impact of gentrification on the election of Black mayors. Nevertheless, Black women can win competitive races in cities that are not majority Black. One of the best examples is Tacoma, Washington where the second Black woman mayor was elected in 2017.

Women have been energized by what they see is a lack of progressive policy and even regressive policies that affect women. More women are expected to run for office in 2018 than ever before. With all the House of Representatives seats, 36 gubernatorial seats, 30 lieutenant gubernatorial seats, 132 other state executive seats, 87 state legislative chambers and countless municipal and other local positions up for election, there is an opportunity for a Power Shift in 2018. One of the most watched races will be the Georgia Governor’s race where a Black woman is running. If Stacey Abrams wins, this will be a huge Power Shift. Not only would she be the first woman governor of Georgia, but she would be the first Black woman elected governor any place in the United States.

## The Intersection of Race, Gender and American Politics Today



Kristen Clarke, J.D.  
President and Executive Director  
*Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law*

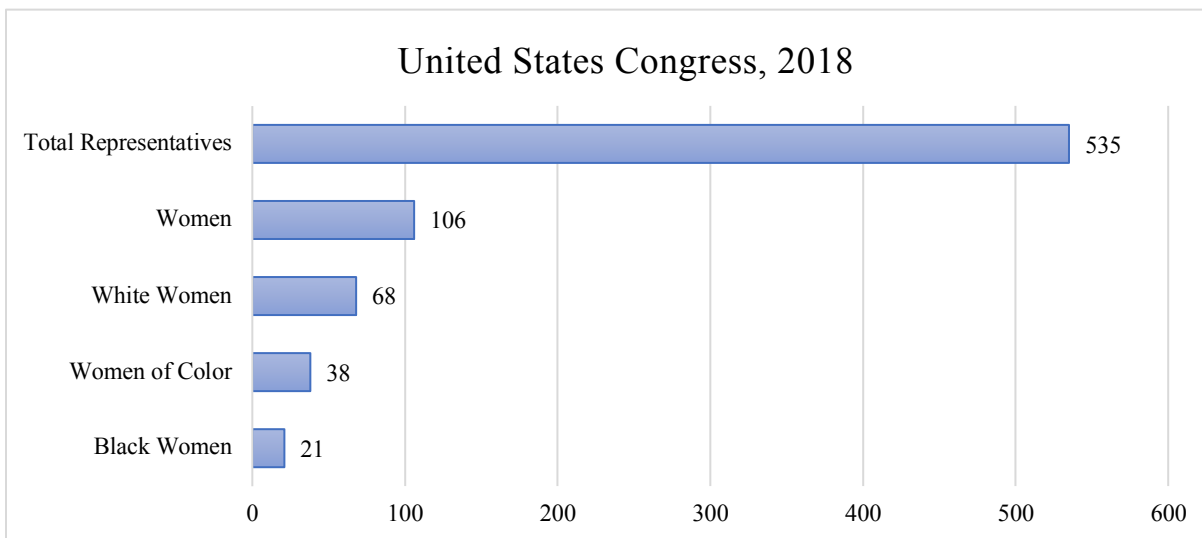
Gabrielle Gray  
National Coordinator  
*Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law*

**African American women in the United States play a critical role in both the civic life and the electoral process.** Whether it be through efforts to mobilize communities or through leadership in advocacy organizations that are working to expand access to the ballot box, the voices and experiences of **Black women continue to shape democracy today.** Civic engagement efforts of Black women have largely focused on mobilizing disenfranchised and nontraditional voters.

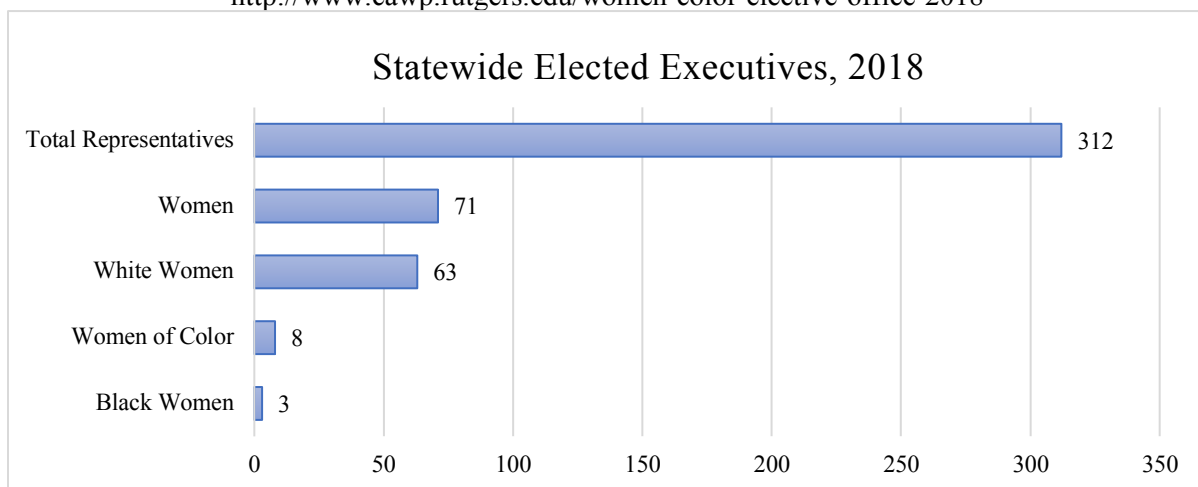
The recent 2017 special Congressional election in Alabama demonstrates the power and impact of Black women's votes in the face of oppression and ongoing voting discrimination. According to exit poll survey, 98 percent of Black women voters in Alabama chose to cast their ballot for Doug Jones.<sup>x</sup> This remarkable figure demonstrates the high level of political cohesion among African American women and the potential impact of their collective political power. Notwithstanding the role that Black women played in the 2017 election, the overall American electoral system remains racially polarized. Such stark racial polarization harms Black women voters and also explains the relative under-representation of Black women in elective office. Despite some progress, data makes clear that Black women continue to encounter barriers to electoral success at the federal and statewide levels.<sup>xi</sup>

According to the Center for American Women and Politics, as of 2018 Black women represent only 3.9 percent of all Congressional representatives.<sup>xiii</sup> Members of Congress, such as Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), and Rep. Val Demings (D-FL) represent seats picked up by Black women during the 2016 election cycle. Time will tell whether these electoral gains are fleeting or sustainable. In statewide elected executive offices, there are currently only three Black women: Lieutenant Governor Jenean Hampton (R-KY); State Treasurer Denise Nappier (D-CT); and Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver (D-NJ). Similarly, Black women represent only 14.6 percent of female state legislators nationwide. In all measures, Black women lag starkly behind their female White counterparts in elected offices.

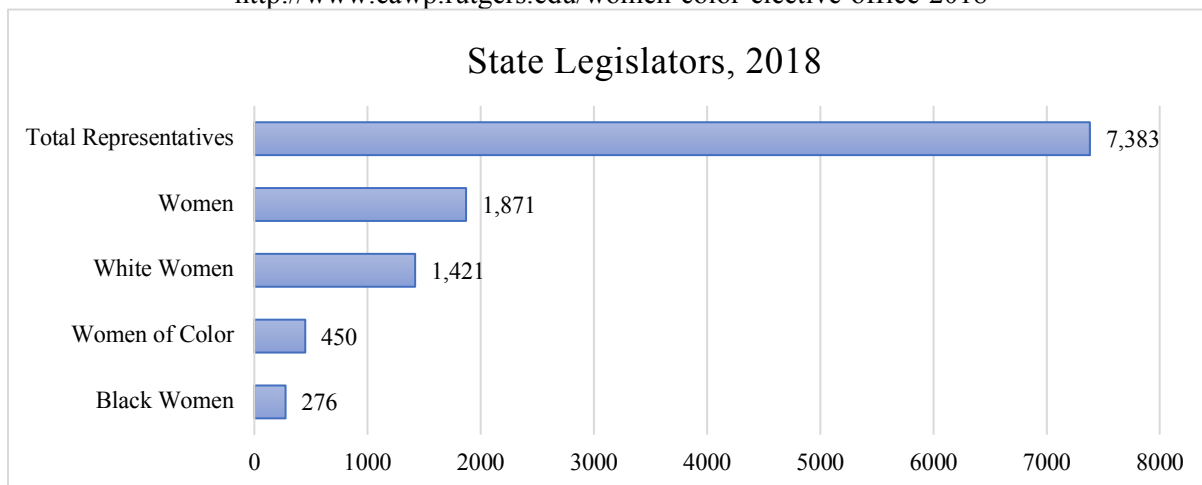




**Source:** Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute for Politics, Rutgers University, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2018>



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As we work to build a more inclusive and representative democracy, it is important that the electoral experiences of African American women remain front and center. The recent story surrounding Black women in democracy is one that is filled with hope and possibility, yet one that makes clear that Black women continue to encounter glass ceilings when it comes to electoral opportunities. African American women continue to carry forth the legacy of abolitionist and women's rights activists such as Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer, while working to ensure broad levels of civic engagement. Serving as agents of change, Black women continue in the footsteps of individuals such as Ida B. Wells and Anna Julia Cooper, even when faced with systemic and overt discrimination.

As Black women continue to work to knock down glass ceilings in the electoral arena, it is important to keep focused on positions in which Black women have almost been exclusively marginalized and under-represented. Many of these off-the-radar elected positions are ones that carry the great potential to affect policy outcomes. Such positions including District Attorneys, local sheriffs, local School Superintendents and more are positions in which Black women have been excluded almost wholesale. While Black women have encountered tremendous difficulty in securing statewide office the examples of former Illinois Democratic Senator Carol Moseley Braun (1993-1999), Democratic Senator Kamala Harris (2017-present) of California, and New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver are instructive.<sup>xiii</sup> These recent successes make clear that Black women need to carry forth their work for promoting civic engagement while also working on tearing down some of the glass ceilings that remain pervasive today.

## Another Historic Election Without Protections of the Voting Rights Act



Helen Butler

Executive Director

*Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, Convener, GA BWR*

The wave of new candidates running for office in Georgia, especially women of color, is expected to create a turnout model similar to that of Alabama, Virginia and other states that have recently seen increases in voter participation. However, as we approach the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the *Shelby v. Holder* decision of June 25, 2013, the *Shelby decision* left Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act inoperable in terms of providing Georgia voters protection from discriminatory policies, practices and procedures. Efforts to limit access to the ballot could have a profound impact on the turnout of minority voters in the General Primary and General Election of 2018.

While the 1965 voting rights movement was about voter suppression and lack of access to the ballot, the battles have changed but the war remains full enfranchisement – we still battle lack of access, photo ID laws, reduction in early voting, felon voting laws, citizenship rules, redrawing of district lines, annexation and other suppression techniques. Yet despite these disenfranchising policies and procedures, Black women have been able to be a strong voting demographic in their communities.

A look at some of the practices that are challenged in Georgia show the need to ensure access to the ballot is free of barriers. The Georgia Coalition for the People's Agenda, an affiliate of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation and Convener of the Black Women's Roundtable, along with other local advocacy groups and national partners and legal partners have been on the frontlines to ensure that voters do not encounter barriers to voting. We have encountered and challenge a growing list of obstacles and barriers:

- **Precinct consolidations and closures** without proper notification and input from voters – under the guise of saving money and due to the popularity of early voting, several counties have tried to implement precinct consolidations and closures. We were successful in stopping some of these measures due to a monitoring process of Boards of elections, but we weren't able to stop all of them due to lack of resources and lack of information submitted properly by the counties. We were able to stop these actions with the legal help of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Macon-Bibb and Hancock counties. For the current election cycle we are challenging such actions in Elbert, Morgan (settled without consolidation), and Fulton.

- **Reduction of early voting** – while many counties use the excuse of the popularity of early voting as a reason to consolidate precincts, there have been two legislative sessions in which bills to reduce early voting days has been offered. Currently, the legislature is considering a bill to reduce the hours that polling locations can remain open for cities with populations of over 300,000. It would reduce the hours from staying open from 8 pm to 7 pm. The reason given was that it gave candidates in those areas an unfair advantage over other areas.
- **Voter Challenges and Purges** – this process of targeting minority voters, especially African American and other communities of color present a barrier by removing eligible voters from the rolls, challenges and intimidation preventing individuals from exercising their right to vote. Even the Secretary of State’s office implemented an improper purge of voters and had to be challenged on the process.
- **Misinformation on voter registration application** – the ACLU was recently alerted that the voter registration application had incorrect information stating first time registrants are required to produce a Photo ID at the time they register. They do not have to produce the ID at the time they register. The Secretary of State has agreed to change the language.
- **Redistricting and annexation of cities** – electoral maps that are drawn to dilute the voting power of African Americans in Emanuel, Gwinnett and Henry counties. The recent annexation of parts of Dekalb County into the City of Atlanta will also dilute the voting strength of African Americans. The proposed legislation that is being considered to create a city of Eagles Landing is another attempt to dilute the voting power of African Americans in the city of Stockbridge.
- **Proof of citizenship** still looms in Georgia as it awaits a ruling from the courts on this matter. Still in this legislative session there are bills that would require Drivers’ Licenses to identify non-citizens and for English only language requirements.

These are some of the more prevalent barriers being implemented by the State and 159 counties in Georgia. It also shows how the protection of Section 5 that would require a preclearance process before these discriminatory barriers could be implemented is needed.

Black women represent the majority registered voters in 150 cities, 28 counties and 4 Congressional districts. They have had some of the highest turnout rates of all demographics – 77% & 78% for the 2008 & 2012 Presidential election cycles. During the midterm elections the turnout rates were the third highest of all demographics 55%, 51%, 62% for 2010, 2014 and 2016 respectively. In spite of this strong voter participation by Black women, we have not made any gains in representation on a statewide basis. There are no Black women that hold statewide office in Georgia.

Yet, Georgia has another historic opportunity during the upcoming election cycle to elect women and women of color to many statewide positions including an African American female Governor, Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, and Insurance Commissioner. Turnout will be critical in the outcome of all these races. The right to vote must be protected and barriers removed to ensure that all citizens can participate to elect the representatives of their choice.

## Black Alabamans Appreciate Your Thanks. Now Give Us the Power.



Latosha Brown

*Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter Fund  
Board Member, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation*

My colleagues and I have worked for years in our home state of Alabama to advance the voices of Black people in the electorate. Naturally, we put the full strength of our capacity into the special U.S. Senate election to defeat former Alabama Supreme Court chief justice Roy Moore, a racist who said at a September rally that the last time America was great and “had a direction” was when “families were united—even though we had slavery.”

After we prevailed and rejoiced, we woke up the next morning to hear national news media finally acknowledge a truth that we have known all along: Black Voters Matter. We also woke to a chorus of thank you’s from around the country, as people reckoned with the numbers and the reality that Black Alabamans saved this country from yet another international political disgrace—the election of an alleged child molester and rapist, a career homophobe, an Islamophobe and a birther backed by White nationalist Steve Bannon.

The thanks and acknowledgements are appreciated. It is always welcome to have your work recognized. Moreover, it is meaningful to see the special praise for Black women, who had the greatest numbers and impact in this race. In fact, many of the voter turnout operations were led by Black women. However, there are two more truths that Alabamans, persevering in the name of justice and dignity in an aggressively racist context, need you all to recognize.

**1. Black voters were doing this for us.** We understood perfectly well what Moore represented and we chose accordingly. Black voters in the South are sophisticated enough to know the difference between “Confederate Christianity” and the Christian faith that many of us practice. We saw the code words and the involvement of White supremacist leaders like Bannon. We knew Moore was an extension of the racist Republican right.

This was not, and I repeat was not, about any affection for senator-elect Doug Jones, a Democrat. The Jones campaign made a number of serious missteps in messaging to our community. For instance, they ran an ad that started with a Confederate soldier and a Union soldier, talking about how they compromised. Umm... no. Black folks were rightfully horrified by this ad.

Although the Jones campaign may not have done anything right in their messaging, local Black folks did. We crafted relevant messages that spoke directly to our people in ways that moved and affirmed them. Black voters outperformed our numbers because there were layers of Black leadership who saw this election as decisive for our own quality of life issues.

**2. The game-changing Black voter turnout was a result of the Black civic infrastructure that existed in the state already.** While there were national groups that contributed and did work in the campaign, this was not a parachute victory propelled by outsiders. The outcome was the result of Black Alabamans looking out for each other with our own homegrown system for mobilizing. It is very important to note that we did this through a deep understanding of our state and the various dimensions of our communities, whether rural or urban.

Operations like the one I co-founded with Cliff Albright, Black Voters Matter Fund, created a strategy that focused on centering and resourcing community groups in marginalized neighborhoods and rural areas. We knew, for example, that the more rural Black Belt region of the Delta may have a less dense population but it also has a high voter turnout and strong performance in key elections. The rural Black vote was an important but often overlooked factor in the Jones victory.

The messaging of the national Democratic Party was not what won the election. It was people on the ground from the same communities we were reaching out to, with long term commitments to our people and the cultural competency to speak to our folks in a way that held meaning for them. The national political operatives made their message about the candidates. We weren't in love with either of the candidates but we knew what was at stake, so we made the message about *us*, and organized on messages that moved us like "It's About Us," "Black Voters Matter," "Woke Vote", "Power of the Sister Vote" and "Vote or Die."

Black Alabamans won this special election for us and by us, not as pawns of the will of the national political powers. We did it using our own homegrown tools that we have been building and refining for many years. What does this mean for the next steps? Most fundamentally, it means the Democratic Party needs to shift its strategy to support, augment and provide substantial investment in Black political organizing infrastructure in the South. Likewise, private philanthropy must follow suit and put the weight of their dollars behind us.

We'll take your thanks and appreciation but more than this, we demand a shift in power that prioritizes our community and puts resources into our political self-determination. We are not here to be foot soldiers. We are here to be leaders.

Black voters in the South have a deep analysis about how to strategize and win in critical moments, in the face of conservative, reactionary and overtly racist environments. As the rest of the nation finds itself in a similar battle, why not listen to us? We've been beating bigoted zealot bullies for a long time, and we know what we're doing.

Doug Jones won the special senate election in Alabama because Black folks used our own homegrown tools that we have been building and refining for many years. It's past time to substantially invest in Black political organizing infrastructure in the South.

## The 2017 Special Election for U.S. Senate in Alabama



Letetia Daniels Jackson  
*President/CEO, Tandeka, LLC*  
*Convener of Dothan Alabama BWR*

By now, everyone has heard remarkable stories coming out of Alabama regarding the special election for the United States Senate seat vacated by Jeff Sessions. Alabama's story is one that did not occur overnight, rather it is the culmination of years of organizing and advocacy. There is a myriad of organizations, mostly led by Black Women, across the state that have been working for years to uplift the quality of our communities and to have our voices heard in the halls of power.

Here's one more story. On Special Election Day, Tuesday, December 12, 2017, there was something special in the air. Thanks to the Black Voters Matter Fund, headed by Latosha Brown and Cliff Albright, the Wiregrass area of the state (southeastern corner) received funds to ensure voters turned out in large numbers. We were able to go door-to-door, call people on phones and ride through the streets to offer free rides to the polls.

As we drove through neighborhoods encouraging people to vote the response was electric. People sitting on the porch, sitting on the stoop, sitting under the shade trees and just generally out and about in the neighborhoods had gone to the polls early. As we yelled to them, "Free Rides to the Polls," most people responded they had already voted. Of course, we would require them to show us their "I Voted" sticker and they all proudly displayed on their clothing.

It was clear by 10am CST this day was going to be something special, one for the record books. People from all walks of life were voting, in wheelchairs, walkers, holding-on to each other, driving up, walking up ... People were voting! At my precinct, by this time more people had already voted than generally vote the entire day. So, we went to other polls in Dothan, AL and found the same thing. People were voting. Specifically, Black folk were voting and they were voting in record numbers. By the end of the day, we had not only set a record for special election turnout in the state, we had set a record for the Wiregrass area, especially the county where I live and work – Houston County!

We wondered how the story would be told but when it was all said and done there was no way to deny the power behind the large turnout in Alabama – Black Women. Black Women turned out in record numbers and we turned our family and friends our as well. While there were a number of organizations working to make history in Alabama, one organization, Alabama Black Women's Roundtable supported by the national Black Women's Roundtable, was able to see the fruits of years of labor – organizing and educating our community on the importance of exercising our civic responsibility to vote.

The Sleeping Giant is yawning and wiping its eyes, never to fall asleep again. This is only the beginning. Keep your eyes on Alabama.

## I Got the Power!



Councilwoman Sheila Tyson  
*Member, Birmingham City Council*  
*Convener, Alabama Coalition on Black Civic Participation*

I GOT THE POWER!” is one of the chants Black women from Alabama shouted from the top of their lungs as they marched to the polls on December 12, 2017, which resulted in turning a **RED** state **BLUE**.

We were overcome with joy because of the intimate feeling of finally being counted. This is a work in progress that has been happening for more than ten years in 23 counties in Northern Alabama. On this day, however, Black women and young Black girls went throughout the entire state demanding CHANGE! This grassroots campaign was a door-to-door push on getting voters to the polls. We placed calls every day up to December 12th. We utilized the Minivan system to target the people to contact and the Van system to contact people who had not voted in the last four elections. We stressed the importance of getting out to vote.

The time has come for Black women to take the reins and use their voices. We have seen our power. We have struggled a long time having to understand that *we SHARE leadership and we TAKE power!* We have a long way to go, but we are NOT tired yet!

We will continue our trek throughout the state of Alabama to capture more counties, Black women and Black girls, because EVERY DAY IS VOTING DAY IN THE STATE OF ALABAMA!

Black women showed the world that we are a force with which to be reckoned. With organizations such as the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Black Women’s Roundtable, Black Voters Matter and many other civic organizations, we are showing a UNITED front on how we utilize our voices.

We are so proud of these organizations, for we realize we did not do this alone.

EVERY DAY IS VOTING DAY... POWER OF THE SISTAR VOTE!!!



# Census 2020 and Its Impact on the Black Community



Ebony Baylor

*Special Assistant to Senior Vice President for Policy  
National Urban League Washington Bureau, PhD Student, Howard University*

The history of the United States Census goes back to the creation of our country. As mandated in Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, The first Census was taken in 1790 under the direction of Thomas Jefferson and has been taken every ten years by the federal government. It officially became the United States official data bureau in 1902 where its mission is “to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation’s people and economy” and is dedicated “to provide current facts and figures about America’s people, places, and economy”. The political representation allocation begins with the Census data by adding or removing representative seats based on population<sup>7</sup>. The data is used to determine political representation in your community for a ten-year period.

The presence and roles of Blacks in America has always been a political point of negotiation in American politics. Several of the pivotal points in American political history have been shaped by the presence of Blacks. One of the earliest and most historical examples is Article 1, Section 2 of the US Constitution where apportionment of representatives and direct taxes are defined. The numbers of Representatives in states were increased by the presence of “those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other persons”<sup>8</sup>. Once free persons and Indians not taxed are removed from the equation, the group remaining is slaves, most who were of African descent<sup>9</sup>. This was important because the more representatives a state had the more political presence and power it had within the federal government. The Census data is used to determine political representation in the United States. The data determines how many US representatives speak for your state on a federal level-along with the two US Senator votes-which decides the number the of Electoral College votes a presidential candidate receives. The Census also determines the state legislative districts and most of these legislative bodies decide how the Congressional lines are drawn.

It is imperative the data collected accurately represents the U.S. population to ensure that political representation is properly distributed throughout the country. Most respondents receive and return their survey by mail. However, the U.S. Census still uses enumerators to conduct field surveys in undercounted areas in an effort to confirm that all persons in the country are being counted. In the 2010 Census, the agency reported that it undercounted the Black community by 2.1 percent; the largest undercounted areas were in the South<sup>10</sup>. The undercounting of Southern region is highly problematic for the Black community since it is highly concentrated in that region at 55 percent<sup>11</sup>. Most of the states with the largest undercounted

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-republicans-want-the-2020-census-to-fail-w492666>

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Const. art. I, § 2

<sup>9</sup> Waldstreicher, David. Slavery’s constitution: from revolution to ratification. Hill and Wang, 2010

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010\\_census/cb12-95.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb12-95.html)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010\\_census/cb11-cn185.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb11-cn185.html)

populations coincidentally have the largest Black populations: Florida, Virginia, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, and the District of Columbia<sup>12</sup>. It should also be noted that New York state has the largest amount of Blacks in the country and the state challenged the 2010 results stating it was too low. The Census allocated 15 billion dollars in outreach for the undercounted communities; the agency believed that the undercounted population would have been much higher without the outreach<sup>13</sup>.

As we prepare for the 2020 Census, many are very concerned that the U.S. Census data will be extremely undercounted due to the lack of leadership and resources being allocated to ensure that all Americans are being properly counted. The Census Bureau currently does not have a director<sup>14</sup>. There has been an increase of funding for the Bureau; however the majority of the funding goes toward IT development and not toward the outreach efforts that have decreased the undercounted population<sup>15</sup>. There has been little funding allocated to full advertising, restoring cancelled field tests, and identifying partnership specialists who work directly with undercounted and hard to count communities<sup>16</sup>. The outreach funding allocation will have a direct impact on the how undercounted population is calculated. Most recently, the Bureau ruled that it will count incarcerated people in their place of confinement rather than their home which “dilute[s] the representational equity of a prisoner’s home community”<sup>17</sup>. All of these issues if not addressed will lead to Black political power being diluted due to undercounting.

In most recent times, Black voter turnout, primarily the Black women voter turnout has been instrumental in electing Former President Barack Obama and most recently US Senator Doug Jones of Alabama<sup>18</sup>. In 2017, Black women made history by becoming mayors of large metropolitan areas like New Orleans and Atlanta and winning statewide positions such as Lieutenant Governor of New Jersey. Black women are head of household for almost a third of the U.S. Black population-this is the highest percentage among women head of households in the country<sup>19</sup>. It will be vital that for these women to take an active role to ensure every person in their household is counted.

**As Black women are considering their political power, the 2020 Census and being counted properly directly impacts our political power on the local, state, and federal levels.** An undercounted Black population means that the Black political power can be diluted by the loss of elected representatives in our community in all levels. Black women have been leading the charge to get their families to the polls. For the 2020 Census, Black women must take the charge and make sure that we and everyone in our household is counted properly. Once we have our household counted, we must work together within our community to make sure our family, friends, and neighbors are counted.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2010-census-missed-15-million-minorities/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2010-census-missed-15-million-minorities/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.census.gov/about/leadership.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://thecensusproject.org/category/census-budget-issues/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://thecensusproject.org/category/census-budget-issues/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://nulwb.iamempowered.com/newsroom/press-releases/civil-rights-leaders-denounce-census-bureau%E2%80%99s-residence-criteria-and>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/12/16/long-before-sinking-roy-moores-candidacy-black-women-in-alabama-have-been-a-force/?utm\\_term=.c6f691edd30a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/12/16/long-before-sinking-roy-moores-candidacy-black-women-in-alabama-have-been-a-force/?utm_term=.c6f691edd30a)

<sup>19</sup> <http://blackdemographics.com/population/black-women-statistics/>

# The Power of Social Justice



## Fighting From a Powerless Space: Black Women and the Criminal Justice System



Khalilah L. Brown-Dean, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
*Quinnipiac University*

*“I beseech you all to think about these women--- to encourage the American people to ask for reforms, both in sentencing guidelines, in length of incarceration for non-violent first-time offenders, and for those involved in drug-taking. They would be much better served in a true rehabilitation center than in prison where there is no real help, no real programs to rehabilitate, no programs to educate, no way to be prepared for life “out there” where each person will ultimately find herself, many with no skills and no preparation for living” – Martha Stewart.*

The above passage is taken from a Christmas letter written by Martha Stewart while serving time in the Alderson Federal Prison Camp. When Stewart released her first cookbook in 1984 there were approximately 12,000 women behind bars. Since that time the number of women has increased by 800% with more than 200,000 women currently incarcerated in American jails and prisons.<sup>20</sup> All told there are over 1 million women under some form of criminal supervision.

The last two decades have witnessed a concerted effort to denounce the undeniable racial disparities resulting from America’s addiction to punishment. As the junior Senator from Illinois seeking the Democratic nomination, Barack Obama called for a new criminal justice system based on transparency, fairness, justice, and equity. Central to that push was denouncing a failed War on Drugs that led the US to lock up more people, per incident, than any other country in the world. Organizations like JustLeadership USA emerged to elevate the voices of the formerly incarcerated. Ava DuVernay’s gripping documentary, *13th*, exposed the depths of mass incarceration in a way that Orange is the New Black never could. Uprisings over police involved murders in Ferguson, Baltimore, and Charlotte commanded the nation’s attention.

These racial disparities affirm the need to interrogate a policy space that systematically devalues Black Lives. However, it’s necessary to address the intersections of race, gender, and hyperincarceration. Although White women’s incarceration rate has dramatically increased over the last ten years, Black women, particularly poorer and working class Black women, are arrested, prosecuted, and incarcerated at

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<sup>20</sup> “Women’s Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2017” by Aleks Kajstura (2017) for The Prison Policy Initiative.  
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2017women.html>

a rate that far exceeds their share of the population.<sup>21</sup> Black women comprise 13% of U.S. women but are twice as likely to be incarcerated as a white woman charged with the same offense. It's time for a power shift in our thinking and advocacy surrounding criminal justice reform. We must address the unique ways this system undermines the power of Black women as a whole, not just those accused of a crime. The consequences of punishing more Black women for longer periods of time are profound.

### Locking Up Mothers

Bipartisan efforts to adopt modest reforms helped reduce America's incarcerated population over the last ten years.<sup>22</sup> This de-escalation has reduced the number of men in prison, yet the rates for women have either remained constant or increased.

**Table 1. Change in incarceration rates (state and federal prison) by race, ethnicity, and gender, 2000 to 2009<sup>12)</sup>**

Group	Incarceration rate (per 100,000)		% change in rate	Ratio black/Hispanic to white rate		% change in ratio
	2000	2009		2000	2009	
Black men	3,457	3,119	-9.8%	7.7:1	6.4:1	-16.9%
White men	449	487	+8.5%			
Hispanic men	1,220	1,193	-2.2%	2.7:1	2.4:1	-11.1%
Black women	205	142	-30.7%	6.0:1	2.8:1	-53.3%
White women	34	50	+47.1%			
Hispanic women	60	74	+23.3%	1.8:1	1.5:1	-16.7%

Source: BJS Prisoners in 2010

Policy choices rather than crime rates undergird these trends. The increased number of Black women involved with the criminal justice system is particularly detrimental to community stability given that 80% of women behind bars are the custodial parent for a minor child.<sup>23</sup> More mothers going to prison means leaving more children behind. What happens to them? As Figure #1 indicates, the number of children going into foster care has increased in tandem with the number of women behind bars. In the last 20 years, over

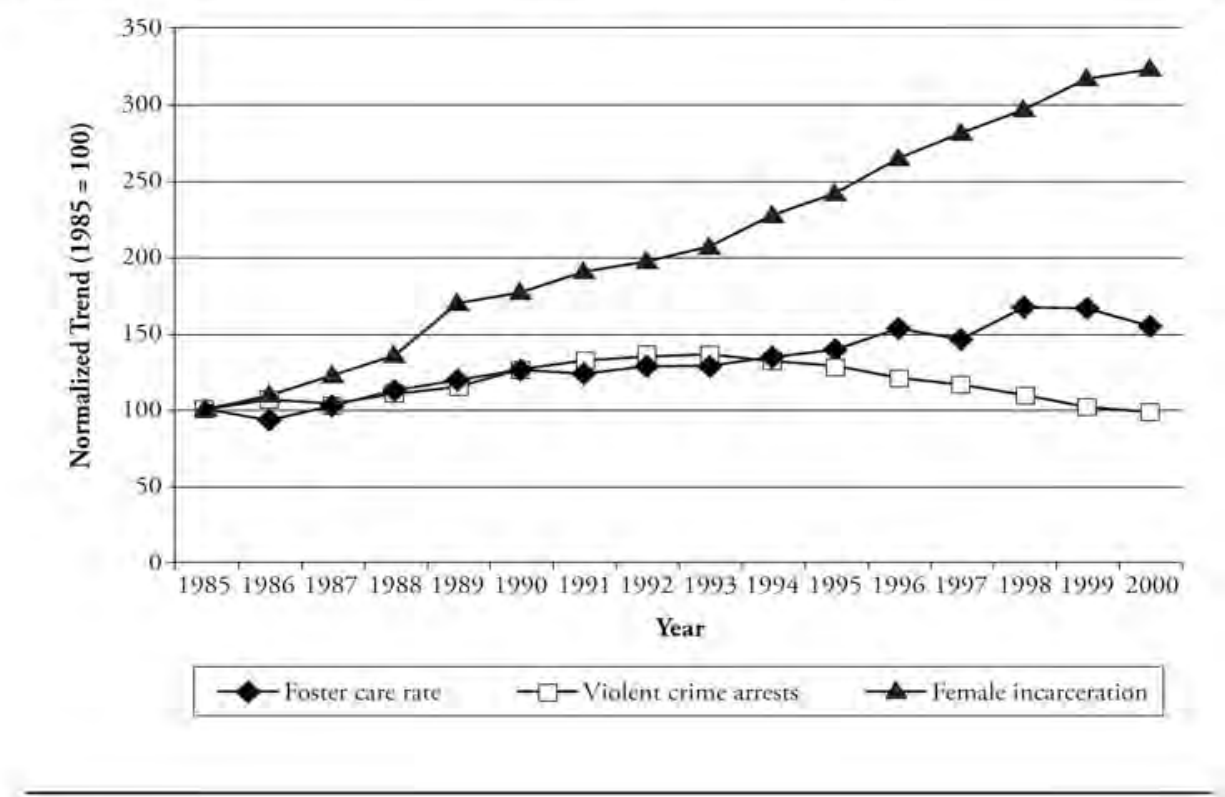
<sup>21</sup> See "The Changing Racial Dynamics of Women's Incarceration" by Marc Mauer (2013) of The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/the-changing-racial-dynamics-of-womens-incarceration/>

<sup>22</sup> Ghandnoosh, Nazgol. 2018. "Can We Wait 75 Years to Cut the Prison Population by Half?" The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/can-wait-75-years-cut-prison-population-half/>

<sup>23</sup> Sawyer, Wendy. 2017. "Bailing Moms Out for Mothers Day." The Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/05/08/mothers-day/>

250,000 children in the US have been placed into foster care because their mother went to prison.<sup>24</sup> According to Glaze and Maruschak, 7% of Black children have at least one incarcerated parent.<sup>25</sup>

Figure #1: Criminal Justice Trends and Foster Care Case Loads



Source: Christopher A. Swann and Michelle Sheran Sylvester. 2006. “The Foster Care Crisis: What Causes Caseloads to Grow?” *Demography*. Volume 43.

The consequences of this trend are profound. Children with an incarcerated parent are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and anger management. They are also more likely to develop a learning disability and have disciplinary problems in school. This is intensified for children in state custodial care where older children and children of color are less likely to be adopted out of the system. The generational effects of locking up more Black Mothers demands a shift in punishment policies and reform strategies.

### Return of the Federal War on Drugs?

As a member of the Senate Judiciary committee, Jeff Sessions vehemently opposed efforts to reduce the amount of time served for non-violent drug offenses. During the 2016 Election cycle, 6 states and the District of Columbia legalized recreational marijuana while 28 states and DC legalized medical marijuana.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Christopher A. Swann and Michelle Sheran Sylvester. 2006. “The Foster Care Crisis: What Causes Caseloads to Grow?” *Demography*. Volume 43.

<sup>25</sup> Glaze, Lauren and Laura Maruschak. 2008. “Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children.” *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/pptmc.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Brown-Dean, Khalilah L. 2016. “Justice Trump’d?” WEEA Radio. <http://weea.org/post/justice-trumpd>

Seventeen states including Connecticut and Vermont have moved to decriminalize small amounts of non-medical marijuana opting for substance abuse treatment over expensive incarceration. Though national polls indicate that the majority of Americans support full legalization of marijuana, Attorney General Sessions maintains his belief that the most commonly used illicit drug represents a significant threat to Americans' health and safety. This shift from promoting decriminalization to harsh punishment may have deleterious effects for Black women. Although Blacks and Whites use marijuana at relatively comparable rates, Blacks are four times more likely to be arrested for weed-related offenses. According to the Drug Policy Alliance, "Drug use and drug selling occur at similar rates across racial and ethnic groups, yet Black and Latina women are far more likely to be criminalized for drug law violations than white women."<sup>27</sup> Reigniting the federal War on Drugs may undermine the power of Black women who are statistically more likely to be victims of physical or sexual abuse before entering the criminal justice system.

Consider however the administration's differential response to the opioid crisis that disproportionately affects white addicts. A report by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that Whites comprised over 80% of opioid-related deaths in 2016.<sup>28</sup> Trump's declaration of this trend as a public health emergency greatly differs from the zero tolerance approach to the 1990's crack epidemic that set in motion decades of punitive policies that increased Black women's entanglement with the criminal justice system. This "kinder, gentler approach" to opioid addiction exacerbates longstanding cleavages related to race, gender, and class.

### **Once Convicted, Forever Doomed?**

Changes in crime control policy, not crime rates, have increased the number of Black women going into prison while also extending the length and depth of their involvement with the state. Policy changes such as the adoption of mandatory minimum sentencing structures, the abolishment of parole, and sentencing disparities for various drugs that have both expanded and deepened the reach beyond prison. Each year, over 650,000 people are released from prison. Most return to urban communities that are already grappling with the effects of crime, poverty, violence, and inferior education.<sup>29</sup> All of the socio economic indicators that significantly reduce ones likelihood of participating in the political process. Community members struggle to secure access to housing, education, and employment. This struggle is intensified for those leaving prisons and attempting to return to their families. The collateral consequences of a conviction limit opportunities for the formerly incarcerated to support their families, and make positive contributions to their communities. These restrictions disproportionately shift power away from those in greatest need of voice and representation.

### **Policy Recommendations**

On any given day there are more than 2.5 million Americans behind bars with over 7 million under some form of criminal supervision.<sup>30</sup> Punishing roughly 2% of the total U.S. population may not register much concern, but punishment in the United States stretches far beyond the walls of the nearly 8,000 correctional

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<sup>27</sup> See "Women, Prison, and the Drug War" Fact Sheet by the Drug Policy Alliance (2013).

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/race-and-drug-war>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/opioid-overdose-deaths-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

<sup>29</sup> Brown-Dean, Khalilah L. 2016. "Counting Bodies and Ballots: Prison Gerrymandering and the Paradox of Urban Political Representation." In *Urban Citizenship and American Democracy* edited by Amy Bridges and Michael Javen Fortner. SUNY Press.

<sup>30</sup> Wagner, Peter and Bernadette Rabuy. 2016. "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2016." The Sentencing Project. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2016.html>

facilities scattered across the country.<sup>31</sup> From shaping access to housing to defining opportunities for employment, the criminal justice system poses severe challenges to the economic, emotional, physical, and political well-being of Black women. Yet it need not be. Below I detail five key policy reforms to shift power toward Black women who are often overlooked by efforts to disrupt American punishment.

- **Eliminate Cash Bail.** Thousands of women languish in American jails without being convicted or sentenced because they can't afford the cost of bonding out. The lionshare of women in jail (60%) have not yet been adjudicated. Efforts to eliminate cash bail for non-violent offenses has gained traction in a number of states such as New York, Connecticut, and Alaska. Philadelphia's new District Attorney has also pledged to end the practice. Bail was set at \$5,000 for Sandra Bland following a 2015 traffic stop in Texas. Bland later died three days after her initial arrest. Though the cause of her death has been highly contested, eliminating cash bail can literally be the difference between life and death for Black people like Sandy Bland and Kalief Browder.<sup>32</sup>
- **Protect Black Mothers.** In 32 states incarcerated women can be restrained while giving birth. Shackles may be applied to hands, ankles, and across the laboring mother's belly. Beyond the humiliation of giving birth while restrained, the American Medical Association documents the severe health risks for both Mother and baby. States should protect Black mothers by adopting and strictly enforcing bans on shackling during labor.
- **Stop Humiliating Poor Women.** Menstrual cycles bring monthly humiliation to many Black women behind bars. In states like Arizona, female inmates are only given an allotment of 12 sanitary napkins per month. Additional pads beyond that allotment must be purchased by the inmate via her commissary account. For inmates making less than 25 cents per hour for their labor, overpriced sanitary products become an unaffordable luxury. The lack of access to basic needs such as sanitary napkins poses significant health risks related to infection.
- **Address Trauma.** Women in prison have a greater likelihood of having suffered a traumatic event (e.g. domestic violence and sexual assault) than their male counterparts. A study by Covington found that nearly 75% of incarcerated women have a history of mental illness. Trauma-informed care for Black women in prison must be provided on a consistent and equitable basis that prevents states from shifting greater resources to men's facilities and adequately prepares them for life after prison.

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<sup>31</sup> This figure includes state, federal, and Indian jails and prisons. It does not include prisons in U.S. territories, military prisons, or immigration detention facilities. See Peter J. Wagner and Leah Sakala. 2014. "Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie." Prison Policy Initiative.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/02/nyregion/cuomo-ending-cash-bail-state-of-the-state.html>



- **Black Women are Immigrants Too.** Detention has exponentially increased as part of a broader backlash against undocumented immigrants in the US. The ACLU and others have documented the prevalence of physical and sexual assaults against women in prison that often go underreported and unpunished due to fear of reprisal. It's time to affirm women's power over their bodies regardless of immigration status.

## Black Women, #MeToo and the Equal Rights Amendment



**Jennifer Tucker**

*Senior Policy Advisor, Black Women's Roundtable  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation*

*"It [Equal Rights Amendment] provides a legal basis for attack on the most subtle, most pervasive, and most institutionalized form of prejudice that exists."<sup>33</sup>*

Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, speaking  
in support of the Equal Rights Amendment,  
August 10, 1970

Simply stated, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) amends the U.S. Constitution to prohibit discrimination against women and girls of all races and ethnicities. Congress passed the ERA in 1972 before sending it to the states for ratification. Women's groups along with unions and other allies led a national campaign to have 38 states ratify the Amendment by the 1982 deadline, falling short of putting **women** and men in the Constitution by a mere three states. Not to be stopped, supporters in Congress reintroduced the ERA the following year, just as they had done since 1923.

Today, the ERA is enjoying renewed interest at a moment when several progressive Black women-led movements, like Black Lives Matter, The Women's March, #Me Too; and #Times Up, are drawing widespread support and defining equality and social justice for marginalized groups.

Last March, Nevada became the first state in roughly 35 years to ratify the ERA when the Legislature's upper Chamber narrowly approved the Joint Resolution under the watchful eye of its chief sponsor, Senator Pat Spearman who represents one of the state's most diverse communities.<sup>34</sup> Even though the deadline passed long ago, many supporters are encouraged that Nevada is the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the ERA. In fact, one of the two ERA bills introduced in the current Congress removes the deadline to allow for ratification

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<sup>33</sup> Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm (1970). *I am for the equal Rights amendment*. Retrieved March 2018 from <http://www.blackpast.org/1970-shirley-chisholm-i-am-equal-rights-amendment>

<sup>34</sup>CBS News. (2017) *34 years later Nevada lawmakers revisit equal rights amendment*. Retrieved March 2018 from <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/34-years-later-nevada-lawmakers-revisit-equal-rights-amendment/>

with three states<sup>35 36</sup> while the other proposal essentially consists of the original text introduced in over 90 years ago, with the word “woman” added.<sup>37 38</sup>

Support for the ERA has grown tremendously since the 1970s.<sup>39</sup> A 2016 poll conducted by the ERA Coalition/Fund for Women’s Equality showed such overwhelming support among both women (96%) and men (90%) that Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman, one of the conveners of the Congressional Caucus on Black Women and Girls, was inspired to organize monthly Special Order sessions on the floor of Congress to gather support for the Equal Rights.<sup>40</sup> The ERA would protect Black women against the enormous wage gap they experience when compared to non-Hispanic white men,<sup>41</sup> make them safer from

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<sup>35</sup> Civic Impulse. (2018). *H.J.Res. 53 — 115th Congress: Removing the deadline for the ratification of the equal rights amendment*. Retrieved from <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hjres53>

<sup>36</sup> Civic Impulse. (2018) *S.J.Res.5 – 115 Congress: A joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the equal rights amendment*. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/5/text>

<sup>37</sup> Civic Impulse. (2018) *H.J.Res.33 - Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for men and women*. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-joint-resolution/33/text>

<sup>38</sup> Civic Impulse. (2018) *S.J.Res.6 – 115<sup>th</sup> Congress: A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for men and women*. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-joint-resolution/6/text>

<sup>39</sup> Roper Center for Public Research “*The public and proposed constitutional amendment: We love you, you’re perfect, now change*”.[Website] Retrieved March 2018 from <https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/the-public-and-proposed-constitutional-amendments-we-love-you-youre-perfect-now-change-2/>

<sup>40</sup> Cision PR Newswire. (2016, June 17). *BREAKING: Americans--by 94% -- Overwhelmingly support the equal rights amendment (ERA)* [Press Release]. Retrieved March 2018 from <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/breaking-americansby-94---overwhelmingly-support-the-equal-rights-amendment-era-300286472.html>

<sup>41</sup> B. Temple and J.Tucker. (July 2017). *Equal pay for black women*. National Women’s Law Center: Washington, DC. Retrieved March 2018 from <https://nwlc.org/resources/equal-pay-for-black-women/>

sexual and domestic violence,<sup>42</sup> and create opportunity for parity in corporate leadership and elected positions.<sup>43</sup>

Some point to existing civil rights laws such as the Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (prohibits sex discrimination in education), Title VII of the Civil Right Amendments 1964 (prohibits race discrimination in education and employment), and the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA) as existing protection for Black women and girls from discrimination and bias -- both subtle and overt. However, the ERA places women at the heart and soul of our democracy, in the Constitution itself. The Constitution is the foundation from where all else flows that defines fairness and “liberty and justice for all”. Black women -- and women in all our diversity -- belong in the Constitution.

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<sup>42</sup> Jessica Neuwirth. (2018, January 5). “*Unbelievably, women still don't have equal rights in the Constitution*”. Los Angeles Times, Retrieved January 2018 from <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-neuwirth-equal-rights-amendment-for-women-metoo-20180105-story.html>

<sup>43</sup> V. Purdie-Vaughns. (April 2015). *Why so few black women are senior managers in 2015*. Fortune.com. Retrieved March 2018 from <http://fortune.com/2015/04/22/black-women-leadership-study/>

## Black Immigrants in the Trump Era



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Over 4 million Black immigrants live in the United States, a “fivefold increase from 1980”.<sup>44</sup> 48 percent— of all Black immigrants come from the Caribbean, 43 percent from African countries, and 3.6 percent from South America.<sup>45</sup> Black immigrants make up the fabric of overall and African American communities. Black immigrants often come to the United States in their most productive working years taking on both menial jobs as well as professional roles. For example, 37% of Nigerians living in the US hold an undergraduate degree, 17% hold a Master’s degree and 4% a doctoral degree well above their American counterparts.<sup>46</sup> Once an immigrant is undocumented, it becomes almost impossible to adjust their status putting their careers and families at risk. Immigration Customs and Enforcement have stepped up raids and arrests of undocumented persons, even those who have committed no crime. Ironically, this increased enforcement makes our neighborhoods LESS safe. Due to fear of deportation, undocumented immigrants are less likely to report crimes.<sup>47</sup>

The current Administration has made conditions for Black immigrants confusing, perilous and unjust. More concerning, the needs of Black immigrants are often an afterthought in the immigration debate. 2018 saw the end of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian and Honduran immigrants, putting over tens of thousands of people in peril for deportation. Consistently we see immigration programs that benefit Black immigrants are targeted for reduction or cessation. Amid this reality, Black immigrants are impacted by many aspects of the immigration structure, there are three areas that are impacting Black immigrant women and their families.

### **DACA**

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA was a policy put in place by the Obama Administration to provide a legal status for low priority deportable immigrants, specifically those who had been brought to the United States as children. Advocates, known as “Dreamers” advocated on their own behalf throughout President Obama’s term with the hope their interests would be included in comprehensive immigration

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<sup>44</sup> “Key facts about African Immigrants in the US” Pew Research, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/24/key-facts-about-black-immigrants-in-the-u-s/>

<sup>45</sup> Center for American Progress

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2018/01/12/445015/top-3-things-need-know-black-immigrants-united-states-2018/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.chron.com/news/article/Data-show-Nigerians-the-most-educated-in-the-U-S-1600808.php>

<sup>47</sup> Insecure Communities: Latino Perception of Police Involvement in Immigration Enforcement. [http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE\\_COMMUNITIES\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/INSECURE_COMMUNITIES_REPORT_FINAL.PDF)

legislation. After the full immigration package failed to pass, President Obama announces the executive would establish the policy. In September 2017, President Trump announced he would rescind the DACA protection, giving Congress six months to create legislation to the same or different ends. This decision impacted over 800,000 DACA recipients. Currently, there is no permanent legislation protecting DACA recipients. Federal courts have ruled that in the interim, DHS must continue to accept DACA applications.

African and Afro descendant immigrants do not make up the majority of DACA recipients.<sup>48</sup> However 3% of all African immigrants are eligible for DACA.<sup>49</sup> Under DACA, children and adults up to a certain age, brought to the US by their parents can register with the Department of Homeland Security, provide vital information about themselves and be issued renewable work permits for two years.

Organizations such as UndocuBlack are calling for a “Clean Dream Act” that demands the cessation of raids and overzealous policing in neighbors, schools and communities. UndocuBlack and other organizations call for a Clean Dream Act also highlights immigrant rights advocates concerns about border militarization, including the proposed “Wall” at the Southern border, criminalization of immigrants, including conditions of detention and detention centers and policies such as e-verify that force the undocumented into casual jobs with terrible working conditions.

We must recognize that the concerns of African American communities in regards to over criminalization, lack of education and job opportunities are intensified for Black immigrant communities.

## Diversity Visas

The diversity program is a main way Black immigrants enter the United States each year. This “lottery program” for immigrants that are underrepresented in the overall emigration to the United States, is very stringent requiring financial investment from the applicant as well as numerous interviews and background checks. Interestingly, applicants from Africa typically have obtained college or graduate degrees thus reflected in the higher number of African immigrants with graduate degrees than the rest of the American population. In many ways, the diversity visa program is a defacto merit based system. In order to take advantage an applicant must have the resources to to undergo the arduous process.

Despite, the importance of this program to Black immigrants, this year a Congressional compromise threw this program into jeopardy. The compromise called for a gutting of the program and in return DACA recipients would be granted a pathway to permanence. The Trump Administration demonized the program claiming that it allowed unvetted people into the US. In the midst of the debate, President Trump claimed in a closed door meeting the program allowed immigrants from “s\*\*t hole countries into the United States (referring to Haiti and other African countries) instead of countries like Norway”<sup>50</sup> Clearly, the Administration is aware of the implications of the diversity program as a pathway for African immigrants to legally emigrate.

The remarks of President Trump show a deep prejudice against Black immigrants and a strategy to pit one group of Black and brown immigrants (“Dreamers”) from another (diversity visa, TPS holders) Commentators remarked that the compromise would “help the kids and deport the parents.” Black Alliance for Just Immigration calls for “an immigration deal that doesn’t pit against immigration programs like the

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<sup>48</sup> See DACA at the 2 year mark

<sup>49</sup> Center for American Progress

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2018/01/12/445015/top-3-things-need-know-black-immigrants-united-states-2018/>

<sup>50</sup> “Trump decries immigrants from “shithole countries” <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/immigrants-shithole-countries-trump/index.html>

Diversity Visa and [DACA recipients] against each other.”<sup>51</sup> If the compromise were to pass at the expense of the Diversity Visa Program, it would mean the end to a major pathway for Black immigrants to the United States.

## Asylum

As many other countries, the United States offers asylum to persons who can prove they have a “credible fear of death or persecution” in their home country. This has been an essential part of the US immigration regime to ensure that the country does not turn away foreign civilians who would face death in their home country due to their identity, religious or political beliefs. It is a high bar to prove an asylum claim, and to be allowed to stay in the United States while awaiting an asylum hearing requires the person to prove many of the aspects of their asylum claim. For African immigrants who need asylum in the US, the bar is substantial, however hundreds of immigrants from Africa are granted asylum each year.

However, those seeking asylum are too often criminalized and are subject to some of the same inhumane tactics witnessed at the Southern border of the United States. In 2017, the Administration stated they were considering using family separation--- taking young children away from their parents when they crossed the US border from Mexico. This inhumane treatment has been widely denounced and is reminiscent of tactics used to traumatize and subjugate groups of people. Unfortunately, this practice has been used against those seeking asylum as well. In February, the ACLU reported that such a tactic is currently being used against their client, a Congolese woman who fled the Congo with her seven year-old daughter. Kept together for the first four days, they were separated even after the mother passed the initial screening for asylum.<sup>52</sup> The seven year old is traumatized by being ripped away from her mother. Many asylees come to the United States after they have experienced profound abuse in their home countries. Although it is legal to present oneself at the border and file for asylum, it appears a blanket policy is being utilized for people of color who attempt to emigrate.

Poor treatment of immigrants, through policy and practice, mirrors criminalization we see of Black and brown citizens. Further, the inequities that Black women face are exacerbated when one does not have the status of “citizen” in this country. It is essential that our communities have a holistic lens that includes the plight of immigrants in our midst, so we do not give into false choices or myths about immigrants’ impact on the Black community. Voting for elected officials who have a sophisticated and compassionate stance on immigration ensures that we leave no one behind.

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<sup>51</sup> “BAJI Condemns Congress’ Continued Lack of Leadership on TPS and a Clean DREAM Act” February 9, 2018

<sup>52</sup> A Mother and Child Fled the Congo, Only to Be Cruelly Separated by the US Government  
<https://www.aclu.org/blog/immigrants-rights/deportation-and-due-process/mother-and-child-fled-congo-only-be-cruelly>

## Using United Nations Mechanisms to Fight Against Discrimination



Marcia Johnson-Blanco  
*Member of the Board*  
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The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (“CERD”) is a little-known treaty that provides a venue to bring attention to the ongoing scourge of racial discrimination in the United States. Ratified over 20 years ago during the Clinton Administration, CERD mandates that the U.S. “prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms, including practices and legislation that may not be discriminatory in purpose, but are discriminatory in effect.”<sup>53</sup> In short, it challenges countries that have ratified the treaty to address discriminatory impacts as well as intentional discrimination. While domestic jurisprudence limits opportunities to address structural discrimination,<sup>54</sup> the CERD treaty requires that the U.S. government address the discriminatory results of its policies. It requires action to prohibit discriminatory impact even if there was no intent to discriminate. It applies to all levels of government – federal, state and local. Governments must affirmatively address racial disparities both in government programs and in society at large.

As such, the CERD treaty is a significant tool with which to bring the world’s attention to ongoing discriminatory policies in the United States. During the last review of U.S. compliance with the treaty, the CERD Committee of Experts expressed concern about the limited definition of racial discrimination found in federal and state legislation and the courts, noting that the limited definitions of racial discrimination fail to comply with treaty obligations.<sup>55</sup> Regarding areas where Black women face considerable discrimination, the Committee urged the U.S. government to address, among other concerns:

- Ongoing discrimination and segregation in housing,<sup>56</sup>
- Discrimination in education,<sup>57</sup> and

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<sup>53</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 1 G.A. res. 2106 (XX), Annex 20 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 14) at 47, U.N. Doc. A/6014 (1966). 66 U.N.T.S. 195, entered into Force Jan. 4. 1964.

<sup>54</sup> *Alexander v. Sandoval*, 532 U.S. 275 (2001). The Supreme Court eliminated the right of private parties to bring claims of structural discrimination in areas such as education, health care and criminal justice

<sup>55</sup> Concluding Observations on the Combined Seventh to Ninth Periodic Reports of the United States of America, CERD/C/USA/CO/7-9 (para. 5), 25 September 2014.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, para 13.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, para 14.



- The persistence of racial disparities in the fields of sexual and reproductive health, particularly with regard to high maternal and infant mortality among African American communities.<sup>58</sup>

The United States is once again up for review before the Committee. Its report was due on November 20, 2017. However, the government has yet to submit its report. When it does submit its report (and we must insist that it does so), civil society organizations such as the Black Women’s Roundtable can file shadow reports addressing any areas in which the government fails to document discrimination. Organizations can also appear before the CERD committee to testify about ongoing discrimination. The Concluding Observations of the Committee expressing concern about discrimination in specific areas of U.S. domestic policy can then be added to our tool kit resources to fight back against racial discrimination.

Similarly, the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015 – 2025) offers an opportunity to highlight not just the continued challenges people of African Descent face in the United States, it offers an opportunity to join with people of African Descent around the world to build an international movement to address discrimination worldwide. A goal of the Decade is to create a “Declaration of the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent.” This Declaration would provide a framework to highlight the ongoing struggles people of African Descent face not only in the United States but also around the world.

However, the Declaration is not the only goal of the Decade. While it provides a vehicle to insist that the human rights of all people of African Descent are respected and upheld, it also provides a platform to highlight the accomplishments of African Americans in the United States and people of African Descent around the world. It provides a platform to lift up the accomplishments of Black women around the world and provides an opportunity to create a Pan African sisterhood joined in global solidarity to fight for human rights and against discrimination across borders.

The U.N. mechanisms are unfortunately underutilized. They are available to complement domestic advocacy and the CERD treaty and the International Decade are two mechanisms to add to the arsenal in the fight against discrimination and for the full human rights of Black Women.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, para. 15.

## Environment, Education & Girl Power



Felicia Davis

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African American women helped to shape the global climate justice movement starting with the 2000 UN Climate Conference in The Hague where Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Sonia Jarvis, Beverly Wright, Felicia Davis and the late Connie Tucker represented the interests of Black women living at the intersection of race and gender in America. Fast forward and Dr. Wright's Deep South Center for Environmental Justice now prepares scores of Black college students to travel internationally and participate in the annual Climate Conferences and millennial HBCU graduates have established a student-driven HBCU Green Fund to invest in greening Black college campuses.

Education is essential to build strong, resilient communities and millennial graduates are working to advance sustainability at Historically Black Colleges and Universities as a foundation for promoting environmental justice. Stewardship and endowment are principles that guide their efforts to combat climate change and other environmental challenges. In addition to working collectively to engage campus communities around environmental issues, young advocates are training students and engaging their peers in fundraising campaigns to finance projects while working full-time as environmental professionals.

Environmental thought leader Paul Hawken's Project Drawdown assembled and analyzed "the 100 most substantive solutions to reverse global warming." Listed in order of greatest impact for reversing climate change item number six is Educating Girls. "It is the most powerful lever available for breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty; while mitigating emissions by curbing population growth."<sup>xiv</sup>

To put environmental justice in perspective it is worth noting that humans can live about three minutes without oxygen, three days without water, and three weeks without food. The quality of each significantly impacts the quality and quantity of life. **Black women were among the first to sound the alarm about the impacts of air pollution and climate change for the Black community.** The Air of Injustice Report made the connection between poverty and pollution stating: "High poverty rates restrict housing options, and lack of health insurance limits access to quality health care, resulting in a more devastating impact on African American communities from air pollution."<sup>xv</sup> While some continue to reject science and the fact that the climate is changing, Black women continue to rebuild lives impacted by catastrophic climate events including Katrina, Rita, Irma and Maria.

The Flint, Michigan water crisis stands out as an environmental injustice and water catastrophe with lead poisoning likely to have far-reaching negative impacts especially for Flint's children. Unfortunately, Flint

is not unique, aging infrastructures around the nation deliver water quality are bad and sometimes worse than Flint. This is particularly disturbing as the association between lead in the environment and violence is increasingly documented.<sup>xvi</sup> As urban centers struggle to repair and replace failing infrastructure, escalating water bills are disproportionately impacting low income families. Inability to pay high water bills also impacts sanitation and potentially the spread of disease.

The term “food desert” has been coined to capture the absence of fresh food within entire neighborhoods. In many lower income communities there is limited access to grocery stores, fresh vegetables and healthy food options contributing to health challenges such as obesity and diabetes.

Instead of blaming the victim when it comes to diseases that are impacted by lifestyle choices, culturally sensitive interventions are needed to ensure healthy diets and adequate physical activity. The truth is that unhealthy lifestyle choices contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes, however environmental impacts are real and race, income and gender are significant factors.

<b>Comparative Impacts By Race</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Mexican Am</b>	<b>White</b>
Childhood Lead Poison	11.20%	4%	2.30%
Childhood Asthma Rates	14%	6.50%	7.7
Obese Women	60%	41%	32%
Heart Disease Women	7.6%	5.6%	5.8%
Median Family Wealth	17,000	20,000	171,000

More than 30 years since the defining Toxic Wastes and Race<sup>xvii</sup> study, EPA’s National Center for Environmental Assessment finds that among all groups Blacks are most impacted by particulate pollution. Heart disease is the number one killer of Black women and EPA has identified particulate pollution as a contributor to heart attacks and possibly premature deaths, the ultimate disparity. In addition, this pollutant has been implicated in asthma prevalence, low birth weights and high blood pressure. As the Trump administration seeks to dismantle their office of environmental justice, their own study confirms the disproportionate impact of air pollution on people of color and low-income communities.

Environmental justice advocates have always taken a holistic approach to environmental issues with people placed squarely on the landscape defining environment as “where we eat, sleep, study, work, play and pray” means that gun violence is an environmental justice issue. Neighborhoods with more trees have less violence than those that are barren, children with ADHD have fewer symptoms when they have access to nature and trees can increase property value by as much as 15%.<sup>xviii</sup> The US Forest Service conducted a study of young male gunshot survivors in Philadelphia and analyzing with 274 community controls found, “when participants were under tree cover, they were less likely to experience gun violence.”<sup>xix</sup>

Today, **Black women are leading efforts to increase diversity, inclusion and equity in mainstream environmental organizations and elevating environmental issues** within traditional civil rights organizations. These women simultaneously work to advance evidence-based environmental policy responsive to community needs and equity within the broader environmental landscape. Leslie Fields, Jackie Patterson, Vernice Miller Travis, Whitney Tome, Donna Hope, Kim Noble, Chaprece Henry and the list goes on to include millennials Eriqah Vincent, Illai Kenney, Delsa Guerrero and a growing

collective of Black women joining with local leaders to advance social, economic and environmental justice.

It is critical that low-wealth communities are educated and mobilized to capitalize on the transition to clean and renewable energy. Black women bring a new asset driven mindset to the march for justice and equity within the environmental arena viewing current gaps as potential opportunity. The US Department of Energy reports that last year 300,000 jobs were added in the energy sector. Wind turbine technician is now the “single fastest growing occupation in America.”<sup>xx</sup> There are a range of new jobs in the solar, clean car, eco-building and sustainability management. Environmental concerns impact virtually every profession and new businesses are being created ranging from organic farming to vegan restaurants and tiny houses to micro grids. Environmental sustainability is not a fad, it is the only path to a resilient future.

## Economic Power



## Entrepreneurship and Wealth-Building “Make Money Today for a Better Tomorrow”



Rene Redwood  
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Ashlynn Boodhoo  
Intern, Redwood Enterprise, LLC

"Building wealth" seems identical to the term "making money."<sup>59</sup> The average wealth of Black families is \$95,261 compared to \$678,737<sup>60</sup> for white families. The wealth of Black families with a college degree is approximately one-eighth of a white family with a college degree - so equal educational attainment does not level the playing field. Too many Black women live from paycheck to paycheck particularly when paid 48 to 69 cents for every dollar paid to white non-Hispanic men.

Black women are the primary source of finances for Black families and consequently shoulder the responsibility for wealth building. Given the data supported challenging economic reality for African American women, how can we build wealth?

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<sup>59</sup> <https://money.stackexchange.com/questions/80809/what-does-building-wealth-mean-as-an-investing-term>

<sup>60</sup> Source Survey of Consumer Finance Combined Extract Data, 2013

There are different ways to build wealth. For some, wealth is peace of mind, and for many it is a sense of security that comes when the material needs of life are available now and for the foreseeable future. Business owners know that building wealth is rooted in the growth and profitability of their business. The entrepreneur makes a conscious decision to seek self directed revenue and it is this attitude of self agency and self determination that drive many Black women (as an employee or self-employed) to envision a future that is more comfortable for themselves and their families.

Actions entrepreneurs as individuals can take to create prosperity and grow the funds and resources needed for financial security.

- Have a wealth building goal so you can be strategic and deliberate in handling your money.
- Get your financial house in order first before you assist others.
  - Be conscious and conscientious about your cash flow.
  - Do estate planning which is more than planning for the transfer of property. It is a process that launches thinking and conversation about money and caring for self over time.
- Teach good money habits early<sup>61</sup> to your children so that wealth acquisition is sustained from generation to generation.
  - As an entrepreneur, bring your children to work with you. If they show some interest, encourage them to learn the business.
- Investopedia suggests a 3-step process for building wealth: You need to make it. You need to save it. And, You need to invest it.

### **Step 1: Make It. Make Money.**

Building wealth requires both active income and passive income. As an employee your active or earned income comes from a paycheck and for entrepreneurs it is cash flow that exceeds expenses. Entrepreneurs need to know their value and ask for fees and compensation commensurate with what the market will bear. Passive income comes from sources where you are not actively involved, or having revenue that requires little or no effort on your part such as rental property income.

### **Step 2: Save It**

Live off seventy percent of your income and save 30%. The more you save the more you can invest. Purchase with a purpose. Be thoughtful about what you buy. For entrepreneurs - work your budget with deliberateness. Write into contracts the full cost of client incurred expenses. In Washington DC, a trip to and from a client site via taxi or Lyft can range \$8 to \$32 each way. The expense reimbursement for local travel could be a margin of profit and money saved.

### **Step 3: Invest It**

IRAs and 401K plans offer investment opportunities for retirement planning for both employees as well as business owners. Look for ways to improve your cash flow by tracking your income just as you track your spending. Look for opportunities to buy commercial real estate instead of paying rent for office

529 Plans help families invest in secondary education, and are a tax advantage account that allows any person to save funds for individuals important to them to pay for college, trade school, and other learning opportunities after receiving a high school diploma or GED.

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<sup>61</sup> <http://www.blackenterprise.com/5-wealth-building-tips-valerie-coleman-morris/>

Invest the time to learn about money and economics. Ask questions and talk with financial planners or your banker or small business offices of your local government or SBA. Join the finance or fundraising committees of community organizations or faith center or PTA or other civic association to gain knowledge of budgets, and balance sheets. Get comfortable with money not simply as something to spend but as a tool to build wealth for today and a better tomorrow.



## Economic Solutions



Janice Mathis, JD  
*Executive Director*  
*National Council of Negro Women*

For one magical weekend in Atlanta, women from every corner of the nation, and beyond, celebrated themselves and each other. We called it *Power Rising*. As only the Creator Goddess could arrange it, many of us had visited Wakanda the week end before. We were full of magical power.

Here are the facts. In 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated there are 46,778,674 African Americans in the United States meaning that 14.5% of the total U.S. population of 323.1 Million are Black. African-American women's consumer preferences and brand affinities will drive total Black spending power toward a record \$1.5 trillion by 2021. At 24.3 million strong, Black women account for 14% of all U.S. women and 52% of all African-Americans.<sup>62</sup> More than 80 percent of Black mothers are breadwinners who bring in at least 40 percent of total household earnings. Three quarters of Black women breadwinners are the sole source of income for their families. The poverty rate for Black families with children which are headed by single Black women is 46 percent. 55% of all Black families with children are headed by single women.<sup>63</sup> In June 2016, 6.4 million part-time workers were looking for full-time jobs. Working full-time at minimum wage pays \$15,080 annually, almost \$10,000 below the poverty line.

Solutions are not simple, but they are within our grasp. The more willing we are to adopt cooperative strategies, the more likely we are to succeed. Magic will help. But we also need a plan.

### **Create jobs.**

One of the time tested ways to create jobs is through entrepreneurship. From 1997 to 2016 the number of businesses owned by Black women increased more than 600%. This phenomenal rate of growth was not simply due to seizing market opportunity. During the Great Recession, Black women formed businesses because they couldn't find jobs. Despite the massive growth in the number of firms owned by Black

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<sup>62</sup> <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/african-american-women-our-science-her-magic.html>

<sup>63</sup> <http://blackdemographics.com/households/poverty/>

women, African American female entrepreneurs start their ventures with less funding than men. They also receive less money from private investors.<sup>64</sup>

Discrimination is still a powerful obstacle to entrepreneurship for Black women. Economists see discrimination as a form of economic inefficiency – a massive, systematic misallocation of human resources. Those in the discriminated-against groups can't bring their full talents to the table, languishing in jobs for which they are over-qualified, while less-talented members of more privileged groups take high-powered, high-paying jobs that are beyond their abilities, dragging down everyone with their relative incompetence. The color line is an indelible part of the American fabric.

EMPLOYMENT						
Race/Ethnicity	2017 Number of Employees	% Chg 1997-2017	Annual % Chg 1997-2017	% Chg 2016-2017	Avg # of Employees*	Addtl Empl if Empl at Parity**
All women-owned firms	8,985,172	27%	1.2%	0.1%	0.77	
All minority-owned	2,105,931	166%	5%	5%	0.39	3,870,904
African American	398,378	136%	4.4%	5%	0.18	2,042,428
Asian American	1,031,826	236%	6%	5%	1.03	At Parity
Latina	599,687	156%	4.8%	5%	0.30	1,609,972
Native American/Alaska Native	61,286	-17%	-0.9%	5%	0.38	117,439
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	14,754	133%	4.3%	5%	0.43	23,109
Non-Minority	6,879,241	9%	0.5%	-1.4%	1.11	

To some extent, we have become entrepreneurs out of necessity. Now is the time for us to accelerate this trend in two specific ways. We must do even more to hire our own friends, relatives, children, spouses. It is not enough to create an income stream for ourselves. As of 2017, Black women owned more than 2.2 million businesses, but we employ fewer than 400,000 people.<sup>65</sup> If each Black woman entrepreneur hired one person over the next year, we would create 2 million jobs. To do so, we will have to commit to patronizing Black business with the same passion that we re-elected President Obama.

**Unleash the Power of Nonprofits.** It is interesting to look at our nonprofit organizations, including the one I lead. We like to say that NCNW is alive, well and solvent. It owns real estate, has adequate cash flow to meet current needs, has a broad diverse base of support and a comfortable cushion of savings. The same is true of the Links, Delta Sigma Theta, Missionaries of the AME Church and countless other philanthropic and religious organizations, started, led and managed by African American women. Our goal must be to promote, for the average Black working mom with kids, the same economic security that our nonprofit organizations are achieving. We are required to apply the principles that have made our churches durable and our clubs successful to personal finance – stick to a budget, live within your means, cooperate for the good of the organization (family); follow the leader, take the long view.

We must insist that nonprofit organizations benefit grassroots communities and working families. The rich array of Black-led foundations, nonprofit corporations, religious institutions, charities, sororities, civic associations and social clubs have a moral obligation to continue the long push toward economic justice for

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.blackenterprise.com/black-women-business-owners-outpace-all-other-startups-six-times-national-average/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://about.americanexpress.com/news/docs/2017-State-of-Women-Owned-Businesses-Report.pdf>

working Blacks who want to escape the cycle of poverty. There is nothing wrong with summer conventions and winter debutante balls, but we must assure that a healthy portion of our collaborative might is meaningfully assigned to changing lives and lighting the path toward economic stability and wealth. A different approach to education and career preparation may also be in order. Perhaps it is time to counsel our children to major in business, technology, science, engineering, math and architecture, and minor in history, psychology, literature, music, sociology and criminal justice. We need programs and activities that directly aid those working poor families seeking to escape poverty.

**Note.** Vigorously promote economic policies that favor family life and support only elected officials who vote consistently for policies that favor family economic stability. This is not rocket science. We know that a properly crafted child tax credit could lift eleven million American families out of poverty. The recent tax bill expanded the tax credit to \$2000 per child and the tax credit was made refundable. Unfortunately, the new Child Tax Credit is available to families earning more than \$400,000 per year and will do relatively little to promote economic security for America’s most economically insecure families – those headed by women of color. Just to be clear, more than 20% of America’s working families are “lower income”, regardless of race or ethnicity. The entire population needs Black women to point the way toward economic justice.

Another program that should be expanded is the Earned Income Tax Credit, or EITC, which helped more than 6.5 million Americans—including 3.3 million children—avoid poverty in 2012.<sup>66</sup> It’s also an investment that pays long-term dividends. Children who receive the EITC are more likely to graduate from high school and to have higher earnings as adults. We also need to vigorously invest in public education, expand Medicaid, insure pre-existing conditions, increase the minimum wage make it possible for every student to engage in post-secondary education.<sup>67</sup>

And we must fight to reform the criminal justice system. Nothing has a more deleterious effect on Black family economic stability that they myriad costs associated with control of persons accused and convicted of crime. They are too numerous to name here. When I was still actively practicing law, I sometimes told my young clients to look around the courtroom. “There is a bailiff, court reporter, judge, prosecutor, probation officer, clerk of court, sheriff’s deputy and me. All of us make a healthy living wage. And all of us are being paid by you.”

This is an especially dangerous time to be poor, when the social safety net is being shredded. If our power is to continue to rise, it will be because we focus with laser precision on solving the economic insecurity that plagues too many Black communities and families.

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<sup>66</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. “A Profile of the Working Poor, 2014.” BLS Report 1060. <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/faq/who-are-working-poor-america>

<sup>67</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2016. “A Profile of the Working Poor, 2014.” BLS Report 1060. <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/faq/who-are-working-poor-america>

## Black Women, Microenterprise, and the Racial Wealth Divide in Michigan



Tameka M. Ramsey BSW, MPA  
*Owner, T. Ramsey & Associates*  
*Co-Convener, Metro Detroit BWR*



Autumn M. Butler, MPA, MSP  
*Executive Director*  
*Pontiac Policy Council*

African American women have always had the tendency to have multiple streams of income long before we knew what multiple streams of income were. Often, African American women have called these enterprises - side hustles and gigs. But, these side hustles often provided additional income to help African American women provide for their families and their households. The fact is, the number of African American women-owned businesses grew by 322% since 1997. This makes African American women the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs.<sup>68</sup> For many African American women entrepreneurs their business does not provide the sole source of income for their households but does help to bridge the gap between income and expenses as well as provide a way for African American households to acquire and maintain assets that contribute to household wealth.

According to Prosperity Now “It will take an estimated 228 years for Black Americans to own as much wealth as Whites have today. While individual behavior is often blamed for racialized wage and wealth divides, compelling evidence indicates that racial economic inequality is primarily the result of long-term investment in some communities and a lack of investment in others”<sup>69</sup>. There is a growing racial disparity in household financial security between whites and African Americans and Latinos. This disparity can be attributed to countless racialized policies and programs that have created and maintained this system of income inequality and maximized the gaps in net wealth between white households and African American

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<sup>68</sup> <http://fortune.com/2015/06/29/black-women-entrepreneurs/>

<sup>69</sup> The Racial Wealth Divide Initiative at Prosperity Now. [www.prosperitynow.org](http://www.prosperitynow.org)

and Latino households. For example, due to the hyper-segregated nature of Michigan this issue is extended from individual households to communities of color as a whole.

“For example, for every dollar of White households net worth, Black households have a median net worth of seven cents, while Latino households have about 10 cents on average<sup>70</sup>.” In Pontiac, MI the income poverty rate is 32.4% and it is 1.5 times higher for households of color. In Flint, MI, the income poverty rate is 35.8% with households of color having a rate of 1.4 times higher. When one looks at the disparity by race in regards to business value it is clear that communities of color are under-resourced. In Pontiac, business values by Whites is 15 times higher than for businesses owned by persons of color. In Flint, the business value of White owners are 16.6 times higher than owners who are persons of color.

The cake lady, the event planner, the girl who does hair, and the social media influencer are all contributing to the economy and the community and are actually entrepreneurs engaging in microenterprise. Microenterprise is defined as a business operating on a very small scale, especially one with a sole proprietor and fewer than six employees. All too often, though, these side businesses stay in the infancy stage of entrepreneurship – never becoming fully legitimated and unable to reach their full financial capacity and potential.

According to Lillian Singh, the Director of Racial Wealth Divide at Prosperity Now, “Microenterprise development, through microloans, can be a viable option for many African Americans who seek to make their entrepreneurial dream a reality. From short term impacts like income generation to long lasting impacts like intergenerational wealth, microloans can be a promising wealth building tool for many. For this reason, its time African Americans become more vocal about micro-finances’ future”<sup>71</sup>

Black women micro-entrepreneurs are one way of bridging prevalent racial income inequality.

My father, who came to Michigan from Mississippi to work for GM, had always instilled in me to go work on time, work hard, stay at the same job until I retire. It wasn’t until he was dying (at the age of 44), that he told me to seek more! To leave more for my children, then he left to my sister and I. That maybe working for someone else, wasn’t the way to leave wealth; because he had so little to leave us. It was then that I started to think more about generational wealth.

However, even with Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration, I still didn’t think I was qualified enough to have my own my business. I felt like there was always more education I could get. I didn’t have a network of lawyers, accountants, business owners, CEO that I could call and ask simple or complex questions to. I was the first person in my family to graduate from college, so there was no one I could lean to guide me in starting or running a small business. Or so I thought. My aunt “baked cakes and pies” which allowed her to take care of her 5 children while cleaning houses. My close friends “did hair” out of their homes, which helped them put their children in extracurricular activities. All these women were business owners. With guidance, this could be their full-time business. But, the lack of resources available to Black women (training, coaching, capital) leave us to stay working at a stable job; yet, unable to leave a meaningful inheritance to our children.

Because of this, I walked out on faith. After two years of doing my business as a “side hustle” I quit my job and became my own boss. This was not without planning for over six months; working two jobs for six months, having a husband that works at G.M. and provides me with health insurance. There are still times

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<sup>70</sup> A State Policy Blueprint For a More Inclusive Path to Prosperity. (2017) Prosperity Now. [www.prosperitynow.org](http://www.prosperitynow.org) (pg. 5)

<sup>71</sup> Singh, Lillian. Micro-Lending and the Opportunity for African American Entrepreneurs. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lillian-d-singh/microlending-and-the-oppo\\_b\\_6956248.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/lillian-d-singh/microlending-and-the-oppo_b_6956248.html)

that I am not sure where the money is coming from and it scares me. But, my 15 year-old daughter asks to come to work with me every day, because “I am going to be running it someday and need to know what to do”. That is the beginning of leaving more for my children and their children. Black women have the knowledge, skills and dedication to own and manage our own businesses. We have been doing it for hundreds of years.

We now need the courageousness to nurture and grow our business, like we have our babies. We need to know when it’s time to cradle and rock the business. Know when it’s time to let the business crawl, then walk. We need to allow our business the opportunity to grow into a fully mature business, that not only allows us to do what we love; but, allows us to take care of our families, while giving them a meaningful inheritance.

## Black Women Are Game-Changers in Venture Capital



Joycelyn Tate, J.D.  
*Managing Director*  
*Tate Strategies*

There is an increased focus on the need to get more Black women into the pipeline of the tech ecosystem. From organizations that support Black women tech entrepreneurs, to teaching Black women coding skills, to more actively recruiting Black women for tech jobs, more businesses and organizations are providing opportunities to encourage Black women to seek employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tech industry. But nowhere has the dearth of Black women been more prevalent than among the ranks of venture capitalists, which has been dominated by white men.<sup>72</sup> However, a growing number of Black women are entering the venture capital (VC) arena and making their mark with notable investments in innovative and disruptive businesses led by women and underrepresented minorities that have been traditionally neglected by VC firms.

Black women VCs come from successful careers in other fields and have the academic and business credentials that rival their VC peers in Silicon Valley.<sup>73</sup> These Black women recognize the prevailing bias that exists among most VCs when it comes to investing in businesses led by women and minorities. Black women VCs are changing this narrative by embracing the business case for investing in these groups.

Black women-business ownership is the fastest growing among all women<sup>74</sup> yet, Black women rarely receive any VC funding. In 2015, a mere 0.2% of VC funding went to businesses founded by women of color.<sup>75</sup> The majority of VC funding goes to white male-led businesses, while less than 10% of all VC funding goes to women and minorities.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Brian Oaster, “Where are All the Black and Female Venture Capitalists?”, *Day News* (April 25, 2017), available at <http://www.daynews.com/business/money-industry/2017/04/black-female-venture-capitalist-26592/> (last visited March 5, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> Andrea Hoffman, “Black Venture Capitalist are Transforming Tech”, *Xconomy* (December 4, 2017), available at <https://www.xconomy.com/new-york/2017/12/04/black-venture-capitalists-are-transforming-tech/> (last visited March 5, 2018).

<sup>74</sup> American Express OPEN, *2016 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report*, (April 2016), available at [http://www.womenable.com/content/userfiles/2016\\_State\\_of\\_Women-Owned\\_Businesses\\_Executive\\_Report.pdf](http://www.womenable.com/content/userfiles/2016_State_of_Women-Owned_Businesses_Executive_Report.pdf) (last visited March 5, 2018).

<sup>75</sup> Kimberly Weisul, “Venture Capital is Broken. These Women are Trying to Fix It” *Inc.* (November 2016), available at <https://www.inc.com/magazine/201611/kimberly-weisul/new-face-of-funding.html> (last visited March 6, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Backstage Capital, available at <http://backstagecapital.com/> (last visited March 6, 2018).

There are several reasons for the discrepancies in VC funding between white males and other business founders. One reason is because VC firms tend to avoid risk, and therefore, they invest in businesses that have proven patterns of success. In most cases, VCs view businesses founded by white males as one of the major factors of business success.<sup>77</sup> For this reason, the vast majority of VC firms have adopted the prevailing mindset that businesses founded by women and minorities are risks not worth taking.<sup>78</sup>

Another reason for the lack of VC investments to women and underrepresented minorities is because traditionally, VCs tend to invest within their familiar social networks—which are overwhelmingly made up of white males. As a result, VC firms tend to invest in business founders who are like themselves—white males.<sup>79</sup>

The majority of the VC community has overlooked the fact that women-led businesses perform 63% better on average than male-led businesses<sup>80</sup> and that businesses with diverse founding teams are more creative<sup>81</sup> and profitable.<sup>82</sup> Because of their slight of women- and minority- led businesses, these VCs have ultimately hurt their performance portfolios and left unrealized returns on the table.

Black women VCs, many of whom are among the top investors in the investment community, are shifting the paradigm of thinking in the VC community by seizing the opportunity to invest in businesses led by women and minorities. Here are examples of how Black women VCs are transforming the VC community are:

#### **Arlan Hamilton, Founder & Managing Partner, Backstage Capital**

Arlan Hamilton started venture capital fund, Backstage Capital, with the focus of providing funding to women, minority and LGBT entrepreneurs. To date, Backstage Capital has invested more than \$2 million in companies represented by underrepresented founders.<sup>83</sup>

#### **Gayle Jennings-O’Byrne, Founder & CEO, iTENT**

Gayle Jennings-O’Byrne founded iTENT Ventures to provide support and investment capital to women of color tech entrepreneurs.

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<sup>77</sup> Wendy DuBow and Allison-Scott Pruitt, “The Comprehensive Case for Investing More VC Money in Women-Led Startups” *Harvard Business Review* (September 18, 2017), available at <https://hbr.org/2017/09/the-comprehensive-case-for-investing-more-vc-money-in-women-led-startups> (last visited March 6, 2018)

<sup>78</sup> Id.

<sup>79</sup> See supra. note vi

<sup>80</sup> First Round 10 Year Project, available at <http://10years.firstround.com/> (last visited March 6, 2018).

<sup>81</sup> Katherine Phillips, “How Diversity Makes Us Smarter”, *Scientific American* (October 1, 2014), available at <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/> (last visited March 5, 2018)

<sup>82</sup> Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton and Sara Prince, “Why Diversity Matters”, McKinsey & Company (January 2015), available at <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/why-diversity-matters> (last visited March 6, 2018)

<sup>83</sup> Backstage Capital, available at [backstagecapital.com](http://backstagecapital.com) (last visited March 13, 2018)



### Monique Woodard, Venture Partner, 500 Startups

Monique Woodard led a \$25 million micro fund to make early stage investments in Black and Latino founders.

Black women VCs see the value and profitability of investing in the innovative and disruptive businesses led by women and minorities. As part of their commitment, some of these VCs have launched investment funds within their firms that are dedicated to diverse entrepreneurs.

Some of the Top Black Women Venture Capitalists	Venture Capital Firm Represented	Venture Capital Firm's Total Funds Raised for Investment
Lisa Coca	GE Ventures	Over \$1 Billion
Karen Kerr	GE Ventures	Over \$1 Billion
Jillian Williams	Antemis Group	\$106 Million
Shauntel Poulson	Reach Capital	\$53 Million
Lisa Lambert	National Grid Ventures	\$37.5 Million
Kesha Cash	Impact America Fund	\$10 Million
Erica Minnihan	1000 Angels	\$5.3 Million

Source: Crunchbase et al.

- Of the over \$70 billion available in venture capital funds, Black women venture capitalists are committed to investing in businesses led by women and underrepresented minorities.

## There is Power in Unions

*Statements collected by:*



Carol Joyner

*Director, Labor Project for Working Families, Family Values@Work*



Robin Williams

*International Vice President, Director, Civil Rights & Community Action Department, UFCW*

Since stepping foot on these shores, whether in bondage or free, Black women have found power and unity in their labor. In our darkest days, our intelligence, physical strength and sheer grit were tools for survival. Within a few years post slavery, Black women laundrerers in Atlanta were organizing strikes and demanding higher wages and better working conditions. **Today labor union women stand on the shoulders of these mighty mothers as we fight for social and economic justice.**

**These are the voices of some of Black Women’s Roundtable’s (BWR) labor union women, why they fight and what having power means to them.**



**Diane Babineaux, Vice President International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (Retired), Vice Chair of the Board, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation**

Black women have always been organizers whether in the workplace or not - we learned from our mothers, who often had to turn a small amount of food into enough to feed a family. Like in our home lives, Black women in the labor movement have always had to adapt to changes and support one another to ensure our success. We don’t have many women machinists at International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), but the ones there, are building power through the Women’s Leadership Program. We started it a few decades ago training ourselves on leadership development and the skills for running union meetings and becoming business representatives on the shop floor. These women have gone on to be more politically engaged, some are now local presidents – a milestone in a male dominated industry. I know firsthand what this means, at IAMAW, I started out as a clerk typist, as I moved up the ladder, I made sure that other people were brought up with me. The key for us was building authentic relationships – that’s how I got involved in the union’s civil rights and women’s department. We, women, are picking up the torch and there are no obstacles we can’t overcome.



**Salandra Benton, Statewide Community Organizer, AFL-CIO and Convener of the Florida Coalition on Black Civic Participation/FL Black Women’s Roundtable**

Black women in labor execute their power, both from the shop floor and the community, to improve the lives of working people. On the shop floor, we fight for better wages, benefits and working conditions while we develop leaders who understand the relationship between labor and the broader communities. In communities, we “connect the dots” by encouraging dialogue on social justice issues and bringing our power to bear on local and statewide policies like paid sick days, nutrition, education equity and gun safety. For example, the fight to win voting rights for returning citizens in Florida shows how we bring our power to navigate between community and work places. In 2016, the Florida Restoration of Rights Coalition (FRRC) launched a campaign to restore voting rights to more than a million returning citizens via a constitutional amendment. Black labor union women, representing both the AFL-CIO and the Florida Coalition of Black Civic Participation joined the FRRC and worked to get national and state resolutions passed in order to support the restoration of rights efforts. Our conversations with labor, in the communities and across the country have resulted in the collection of more than 1.2 million signatures – surpassing our goal to get it on the 2018 ballot. We are doing all we can to ensure that returning citizens, who have paid their debt to society, will be able to participate as full citizens, and voters under Florida’s Constitution. This is what power looks like.



**Clayola Brown, President, A. Phillip Randolph Institute and NCBCP Board Member**

Over the past few years, the power of Black women has been publicly acknowledged within the political, civil rights and labor arenas. The Alabama election is the latest example of the political power of Black women, where with limited resources but grit and determination, Black women changed the outcomes in a state election. Developing trends point to the new face of labor as Black and female. The density of Black women in the labor movement has grown but we will only sustain and expand our numbers if we recognize the powerful force of reaching back and giving back through mentorship. The number of young (under 40) women who have made a place inside of labor is refreshing and encouraging. They move at a rapid pace toward the civil rights, reproductive rights, and social justice movements. They are shifting focus even if it means sacrificing the stability of a good "9 to 5" for the unpredictability of movement work. These trade-union women are showing up for #BLM, #Women’sMarch, #MeToo and other forces for change. This new generation of powerful Black women speaks clearly to the idea that we fight until we win for what is right for all of us.



**Dr. Lorretta Johnson, Secretary Treasurer, AFT and NCBCP Board Member**

What does the power of Black women look like in the labor movement? It looks like my union sister, Marietta English, the president of the Baltimore Teachers Union, who is leading the fight for great public schools and protesting the shameful conditions many students endure (like unheated classrooms) in Baltimore – where the majority of the student body is Black and brown. Power in the labor movement, looks like Chicago Teachers Union president Karen Lewis, whose community building, political organizing and progressive policies make even the mayor quake in his boots! Our power looks like Jeion Ward, the president of the Hampton Federation of Teachers who is also in her seventh term in the Virginia House of Delegates. This sister is the senior Democrat on the powerful Commerce and Labor Committee and serves on the Rules Committee, which basically runs the House. She is a fierce fighter for working people, civil rights and public education. It looks like me. When I started out as a teacher’s aide, as they called us, we were treated poorly and paid even worse. I knew I couldn’t change that by myself, but I saw what we could do when we got people together at one school, and then another, and then throughout Baltimore. Years later, as the Secretary-Treasurer of a union, 1.7

million members strong, I have a powerful voice to fight for economic dignity, racial equality and great public schools—and to lead the resistance to bigotry, inequity and the politicians that hurt working people.



**Kerry Jones, Director, SEIU Racial Justice Center**

Not all Black women have the same reality. Lost in this viral moment of #ThankBlackWomen is the in-depth analysis and discussion around the inaccurate generalization about Black women homogeneity with respect to our needs and experience(s). In fact, there is significant variation in our experience based on our choices—rational or circumstantial—regarding the issues that are important to us, to families and to our community. In response to this reality, the Service Employees

International Union’s (SEIU) Racial Justice Center is energizing and motivating Black women to make gains in 2018. We are grounded in a common reality that racial and economic justice is an integral priority for us all. The Center is taking on projects and conducting experiments for the development of an evidence-based framework to build Black women’s power. By shaping a racial and economic justice analysis and agenda, we aim to ensure that Black women thrive in the union, our communities and the nation.



**Tiffany Loftin, Director, Youth & College Division, NAACP**

When I was a child, I thought the well-paid job and benefits my parents had were normal standards for every family. That was until my mom went from a union job to a nonunion job. It meant the things we wanted to do we couldn't do anymore. Like, pick the pair of glasses I needed from the wall display at the doctor’s office instead of a shoe box. When I moved to DC, I witnessed, first hand, the power of Black women labor leaders, like Dr. Lorretta Johnson and Ms. Robin Williams, Dr. Tony Lewis and Carmen D. Berkley. Black women like them are the brain, the heart and

the backbone of the labor movement. Together we’ve shifted the entire practice of how race is discussed in labor. Leading the Racial Justice Program at the AFL-CIO meant I was empowering communities of color, training new leaders, and educating our allies. In doing so, I developed a framework for labor to engage in the cross-movement issues of police brutality, education, voter suppression, women's rights, immigration, and above all institutionalizing the way in which the labor movement engages with Black women. The labor movement is forever stronger because Black women work hard and unapologetically even when the work we do is not acknowledged or respected. If the labor movement knows anything, it knows to listen to Black women. That, to me, is power.



**Kimberly Mitchell, Macy’s Store Makeup Artist, UFCW Local 400 Shop Steward**

In a time of much dissension, sexism, racial hatred and corporate greed, the question of what does power look like for Black union women is simple for me. Black women workers have stood in the proverbial “gap” for the Black family and this entire country for centuries. In the workplace, we fight for equal pay, healthcare, paid sick leave and safe working conditions. Our work creates and nurtures a stable economy, from the

factory floor, to the courtroom, to the halls of Congress. And, we are in these streets—fighting for an equitable economy through voter engagement, electing worker friendly candidates, supporting good public policies and defeating bad ones. Building power means staying “woke” and engaging others. My union has afforded me the opportunity to bring power in spaces where I’ve never dreamed of being: serving on the union’s collective bargaining team; helping to lead the fight for minimum wage increases and paid family leave in Washington, D.C. and; lobbying Congress to pass national worker-friendly policies. In the workplace, my co-union steward and I have united the predominately female workforce to *“Become the Union We Seek.”* We assist our union with collective bargaining language, enforce the union contract and protect the rights of workers on the job. My union’s Racial Justice, Citizenship, LGBTQ and Restorative Rights campaigns are expanding the lens of what power looks like for Black union women—and makes me proud to be UFCW!



**Elizabeth Powell, Secretary Treasurer, APWU and NCBCP Board Member**

The American Postal Workers Union (APWU) supports the development of Black women leaders. Judy Beard is the first woman Director appointed to the APWU Legislative/Political Department. Her responsibilities entail meeting on Capitol Hill with Democratic and Republican representatives to influence policy that better the lives of working people. Sharyn Stone sits on our National Executive Board, setting policy for the union as a whole and representing postal workers in the 13 State Central Region. As the first woman elected to my union's National Executive Board, representing postal workers in the Northeast Region, I educate union members and organize workers to build power on the job while increasing their participation in the struggle for civil rights and gender justice. As Secretary-Treasurer, I speak truth to power - always standing up for what I believe in and believing what I stand up for while representing the voices of a diverse group of workers. Ultimately, my charge is to insure that workers have dignity and respect in the workplace all the time and - not just some of the time - and the ability to continue the fight for social and economic justice for all working people.



**Tinselyn Simms-Hall, Digital Media Manager, SEIU**

The unpaid work of Black women is the foundation of this country's economic and political structures. Despite the significance of our contributions, our work is consistently devalued and underpaid. It is a tradition that we, in the labor movement, must be intentional about breaking within our unions and in the workplaces that we organize. Black women are capable of leading labor into the future. Our power is in our unique lived experiences, the diversity of perspectives and our tradition of leading successful fights for justice. It is the challenge of the labor movement to stop underutilizing us as leaders. It is our challenge to not become silent in the face of opposition or complacent with personal success. We must continue to speak up about the ways that racism and sexism impact the lives of all working people and remain vigilant in holding the movement's feet to the fire on eradicating these injustices. When we fight to raise the economic conditions and strengthen the workplace protections afforded to Black women, we improve outcomes for Black families, Black communities and everyone else too. As a result, we improve our chances of having fully realized the American dream. If Black women don't get justice, then it will remain elusive for all.



**Pierrrette "Petee" Talley, Secretary-Treasurer Ohio AFL-CIO and Convener of Ohio Unity Coalition, Co-Convener, OH BWR**

The last couple of big elections revealed that Black women have showed up to vote in high stakes presidential, gubernatorial, and special elections. We know that we cannot afford to sit out any election so we show up. As Black women, we are born organizers. We know what our families and communities need to thrive and we vote for candidates who can deliver policy that helps all of us. New AFL-CIO data indicates that Black women are participating in leadership in greater numbers than our rate of union membership. The benefit of this leadership makes Black women a force in our communities and the foundation for political change. That change gets demonstrated not only in our outreach to Black women in unions dealing with work issues; but also in our outreach and collaboration with Black women groups such as the Black Women's Roundtable, Black women sororities, other civic organizations of Black women as well as our churches. In Ohio we have worked to connect many of these women in our network and we will continue using our voices to contest for greater political power that will help our families and our communities thrive.

## Health and the Power to Control Your Own Body



## It's Time for a Power Shift: Black Women, Healthcare, and the Power to Control Our Own Bodies



L. Toni Lewis, MD, RYT  
*Family Doc, Geriatrician, Yogi  
Health Equity and Social Justice Strategist*

*“It is our duty to fight for our freedom.  
It is our duty to win.  
We must love each other and support each other.  
We have nothing to lose but our chains.” -- Assata Shakur*

2018 marks the 5th Annual Report for the Black Women’s Roundtable. Since the First edition, Dr. Avis Jones-Deweever and contributors have laid out the many ways in which Black Women have dire statistics when it comes to health outcomes and the social determinants that contribute to outcomes in the US.<sup>1</sup> Whether we’re looking at the hypertension, diabetes, breast cancer, maternal mortality, pay equity, or wealth gaps, it seems as if the likelihood of a young Black girl living a life free from disease or inequality is slim. (Table 1).<sup>84</sup> In this report let’s look at the root causes of these disparities, some of the challenges that exist in treatment, and how we can leverage our power as Black women to begin to shift outcomes for generations to come.

In 2016, Dr. Camara Jones MD, MPH, PHD, then President of the American Public Health Association and renowned expert on the effects of racism and health, launched a National Campaign Against Racism.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Jones noted, "There's a kind of stress, like you're gunning your cardiovascular engine constantly if you're Black that results from dealing with people who are underestimating you, limiting your options. . .the stresses associated with racism are chronic and unrelenting."<sup>5</sup> The toxic stress of racism is at the root of the injustice we see in health and healthcare delivery. Naming this fact and addressing it head-on in our advocacy, policy, and practice are keys to understanding and addressing the disparities that exist.

In 2017 we had the personal testimony of tennis GOAT Serena Williams. Despite her being renown as a once in a generation athlete with presumed access to whatever she needed, she still had to fight for her life and convince her healthcare team that she knew what was going on with her own body.<sup>67</sup> Had she not advocated for her life, the outcome most likely would have been fatal. Serena’s case illustrated what many of us know deep down - that many outcomes, and many of the potential preventable outcomes that disproportionately affect Black women are not due to some lack of effort or non-compliance or a

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<sup>84</sup> L. Toni Lewis, MD, RYT, Family Doc, Geriatrician, Yogi  
Health Equity and Social Justice Strategist

predisposition to disease. When the same attitudes in the US and globally that seek to quiet or erase the voices of Black women show up in our health system, they result in everything from misdiagnoses to preventable deaths.

These outcomes persist despite the historic and consistent political power of Black women being leveraged in our country.

These two ideas - the fact that we as Black Women have the worst health stats AND have excellent strategic and consistent political power are clearly a mismatch.

2018 is the year to fix this. It is indeed time for a power shift.

**"It is our duty to fight for our freedom."**

We should leverage our power to ensure that policy is directed toward solutions to disrupt the patterns of disparities. We must nurture and elect candidates that see us and value our lives. We must demand legislation as if our lives depended on it - because it does.

For example, in New York State, Assemblywoman Diana Richardson and State Senator Marisol Alcantara have introduced bill A9733/S7622 "Maternal Mortality Reporting and Advancement Legislation."<sup>89</sup> Advocating for a policy initiative like this that requires that Black women are seen (data is collected) and that best practices be advanced is a start at valuing the lives of Black Women. Let's use our political and organizing power to advance legislation like this across the country. (Additional resources for policy recommendations to address maternal mortality are available from the Black Mamas Matter Alliance<sup>10</sup> and the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust.<sup>11</sup>

**"It is our duty to win."**

As we have seen over and over, electing officials and passing legislation are not enough. In order to WIN for Black Women, we must stay vigilant. By understanding and addressing the root cause of injustice in healthcare, which is racism, we are able to address the institutional and systemic injustices that contribute to poor outcomes.<sup>12</sup> By staying in community with groups like the Black Women's Roundtable, we can ensure that implementation of good policy happens with us. And is for us. And actually makes a difference in the lives of Black Women.

**"We must love each other and support each other."**

It is critical that we take care of ourselves and each other -- as Black Women and as advocates for social justice and health equity. Connecting with others to share, lift, and support is a thousand years long practice that is of benefit today. Gather your peeps! Jenee Johnson, program director of the San Francisco Black Infant Health Program, recently spoke on the "Sister Circles"<sup>13</sup> that the program provides. In Brooklyn, NY, the IMFoundation in partnership with local practitioners like me and the NYC Center for Health Equity provided "Healing Circles"<sup>14</sup> in the community, co-designed by the community, for the express purpose of matching community needs with culturally resonant and available resources.

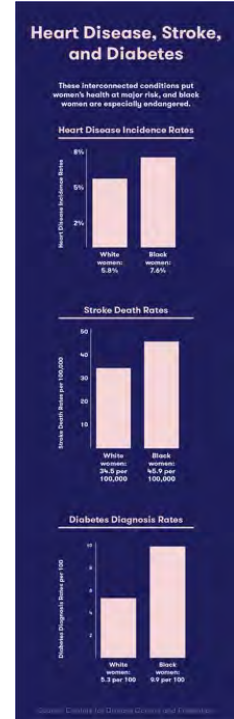
**"We have nothing to lose but our chains."**

Many in our communities have spent their lifetimes looking at the problem of injustice in Black Women's health. Many organizations over those same lifetimes have implemented solutions to make a difference.



Let's honor the collective work of past, present, and future trailblazers in health equity and break the chains of health injustice for Black Women.

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## Groundswell Fund & Groundswell Action Fund



Vanessa Daniel  
*Founder & Executive Director*  
*Groundswell Fund*

**Founded by Black women, the reproductive justice movement continues to be one of the most prominent women of color–led movements in the U.S. today**, modeling the type of intersectional, multi-issue and solidarity-based organizing that is more critical than ever in the current political climate. Groundswell is the largest funder of the U.S. reproductive justice movement, and supports organizations led by women of color, low income women and transgender people through its 501c3 (Groundswell Fund) and its new 501c4 (Groundswell Action Fund), currently the largest fund in the country centering women of-color-led c4 work. Groundswell Fund also houses a Birth Justice Fund, the only fund in the country dedicated to making midwifery and doula care and training accessible to women of color, low income women and transgender people – a key strategy to address stark racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. In 2017, Groundswell awarded \$8 million in grants and capacity building support to 103 organizations in 47 states and territories (including Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico). Of this total, \$2.7 million (30%) went to organizations led by Black women (up from \$1.7 million the prior year). Several, though not all of these organizations, are based in the U.S. South, where Groundswell invested \$2.8 million, making it the top region receiving Groundswell support. Groundswell doubled the number of trans-led grantees it supported in 2017, awarding a total of \$1.26M to transgender-led work, the vast majority of which was led by Black trans women. Increasing resource flow to the South and to Black women-led work has been a key priority for Groundswell in recent years, and it will continue to ramp up support in these two areas.

In 2017 Black women RJ leaders played key roles on many fronts, including:

- Maternal and infant mortality continue to be a top RJ concern the Black community where compared to whites, maternal mortality rates are four times as high and infant mortality rates over two times as high. Groundswell grantee Commonsense Childbirth is led by internationally recognized Black midwife Jennie Joseph who was recently featured in the NY Times. She has achieved a 0% preterm birth rate – including among the African-American and Haitian clients she serves - compared to the state average in Florida of 14 percent. Mama Sana/Vibrant Woman Pregnancy Clinic is working with the city of Austin, TX to fund a new stream of work to address inequities in maternal health care. The Prison Birth Project provided trauma-informed doula care and childbirth education classes to women and transgender parents impacted by the criminal justice system in Massachusetts.
- Decriminalization in a time of “law and order”: In a political climate shaped by emboldened white supremacists, an increasingly punitive Department of Justice, and presidential endorsements of police brutality, Groundswell grantees are actively resisting the criminalization of communities of color, women, LGBTQ people, and people living with HIV.

Criminalization is an RJ issue for Black women since police brutality and incarceration continues an ugly legacy of separating families of color. In California, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children built on its milestone 2013 “Ban the Box” victory that prevented state and county employers from asking about criminal convictions on job application forms and won passage of a similar bill for private employers. Governor Brown signed the measure into law in October, a law that will be life-changing for formerly incarcerated parents and their families. Also in California, Positive Women’s Network helped to pass groundbreaking legislation that ends discriminatory HIV transmission laws that criminalize HIV+ people in California. Catalyst grantees also took direct action to confront racist policing and the prison system. In 2017, National Advocates for Pregnant Women joined other Groundswell partners, like Black Lives Matter and Southerners On New Ground, to bail out thousands of Black mothers on Mother’s Day and advance a national campaign to end the exploitative bail-bond system. New Catalyst grantee Trans Queer Pueblo organized direct actions against mainstream LGBTQ organizations and the Pride March for its collusion with the police department in harming trans and queer Latinx people and immigrants.

- Healthcare access in a time of repeal and replace: Black women RJ organizations have been engaged in the fight to preserve the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid, helping to inform and mobilize thousands of women of color, low-income women, and trans people around repeated attempts to dismantle healthcare access. Several of these organizations are state coordinators for Raising Women’s Voices, the premier national effort watchdogging the implementation of the ACA to ensuring comprehensive coverage for women and LGBTQ people. Together they all pivoted quickly after the 2016 November election to defend the ACA from repeal.
- Immigrant justice in a time of Muslim bans and border walls: The Trump Administration and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have waged cruel and pointed attacks against immigrant communities. Groundswell grantees with deep bases in Latinx, API, Muslim, and Black communities have had to rapidly increase support for immigrant communities living in terror, while fighting back at the local and state levels under the solidarity banner of #NoBansNoWallNoRaids. National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health – which includes leadership from Afro-Latinx people - has been on the frontlines of organizing immigrant women and families in Florida, Texas, Virginia, and nationally to resist, and new grantee the Transgender Law Center is organizing at the national level for policy changes in detention centers holding trans people. Many grantees have been active in local *Sanctuary for All* movements, often adding necessary analysis about gender and RJ to coalition spaces. The heightened level of xenophobia, anti-immigrant policies, surveillance, and raids is also having an impact on the staff of people of color organizations, whether or not they organize around immigration issues, with several activists targeted for detention and deportation. RJ groups continue to raise the visibility of Black immigrants, who are too often treated as invisible in the discussion about immigration.
- Building c4 capacity: Groundswell Action Fund provided seed funding to Black Women for Wellness Action Project, the first Black-women led RJ organization in the country to establish a 501c4.
- Reproductive justice wins in a time of religious exemptions: In a political climate in which employers and individuals are being given sweeping permission to discriminate against women, LGBTQ people, and even other people of faith under the guise of “protecting”

religious liberty, Groundswell grantees are beating back harmful anti-RJ legislation and attacks on reproductive freedom. In 2017, Catalyst grantees mobilized women of color to win definitive advances for abortion access and reproductive healthcare. In Oregon, Western States Center passed the [Reproductive Health Equity and Access Bill](#), now the single most comprehensive RJ law on the books in the U.S. The landmark bill enshrines abortion rights into state law in the event that *Roe v. Wade* is overturned and ensures that Oregonians, regardless of income, citizenship status, gender identity, or type of insurance have access to the full range of preventive reproductive health services, including family planning, abortion, and postpartum care. The Black women-led RJ organization Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health used the power of youth storytelling to help win an exciting victory that expands Medicaid and state-funded insurance coverage for abortion across the state.

- Environmental health and justice in a time of man-made climate disasters: In the same year that saw wildfires and hurricanes ravage the U.S.; the executive gutting of the Environmental Protection Agency; federal authorization of the DAPL and the Keystone XL pipeline; and the U.S. exit from the Paris Climate Accord, organizations, cities, and states have stepped up their commitments to address climate change, protect the environment, and safeguard public health.
- Trans justice in a time of military bans and rollbacks on Title IX. The Transgender Law Center (TLC) has been a leading trans voice in the struggle to preserve the ACA, Medicaid, and funding for reproductive healthcare clinics, many of which also provide medically and culturally-competent care to trans communities. Centering the leadership of trans women of color, trans people living with HIV, and trans migrants, TLC hosts leadership institutes to support grassroots trans activists across social justice movements. Other grantees, like Positive Women's Network, and Miami Workers Center, name a dedicated focus on trans, femme, or Two Spirit issues. In conversations with trans-led potential grantees, we heard repeatedly that priorities for trans communities do not fall squarely within the RJ framework. Groundswell's newly launched Liberation Fund, which supports the strongest multi-issue organizing by women of color and trans people of color working in movements outside of RJ, also includes a number of Black trans women-led efforts.
- Build on a service-to-organizing model. Several grantees are using organizing strategies that blend direct services with advocacy and power building, including abortion focused groups (National Network of Abortion Funds' member funds, ARC-Southeast) and criminalization and trans rights-focused groups (Women with a Vision) are among the Black-women led groups at the forefront of this work. They demonstrate how to use service provision as a strategic gateway into organizing, aiding recruitment, base building, and member retention. However, striking the right balance between having enough capacity to both provide services and organize to address systemic injustice is a struggle for many RJ groups, particularly when their funding is siloed by strategy.
- Expanding work in red states: Organizations like New Voices for Reproductive Justice are doubling down and expanding their commitment to specific red states where they have expertise and relationships on the ground.

## The Disenfranchised Womb of the Black Woman



China Dickerson  
*Deputy Political Director*  
*NARAL Pro-Choice America*  
*Chair, Young Democrats of America, Women's Caucus*

It remains true that seven in 10 Americans support legal access to abortion.<sup>85</sup> That pro-choice majority is inclusive of persons from varying ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, gender, ages, geographic locations and political parties. Therefore, contrary to the political rhetoric and media conversation that insists that our country is split right down the middle on the issue of abortion access, an overwhelming amount of Americans believe that women should have the right to choose what happens to and within their bodies.<sup>86</sup> Black women, particularly, experience negative health outcomes and economic instability at higher levels than all other ethnicities<sup>87,88</sup> so are the most impacted by policies that restrict access to abortion, contraception, and paid family leave. To protect Black women, governments must respect the constitution, advocacy organizations must support Black women, and Black women must educate themselves on their rights and the implications of pregnancy and abortion.

Throughout history and even today, governments - federal and local - have not protected Black women as they have other groups: Black women are 22 percent more likely to die from heart disease than a white woman, 71 percent more likely to perish from cervical cancer, and 243 percent more likely to die from pregnancy- or childbirth-related causes.<sup>89</sup> In a national study of five medical complications that are common causes of maternal death and injury, Black women were two to three times more likely to die than white women who had the same condition.<sup>90</sup> Add to this list the negative health and economic impacts of anti-choice legislation. More than 900 measures to constrain a woman's right to have an abortion have been passed in the states over the last two decades.<sup>91</sup> Some of these laws are known as TRAP laws (laws which single out abortion providers with unnecessarily burdensome requirements and force many clinics to close), varying from zoning laws to outright attempts to amend state constitutions.

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<sup>85</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/03/about-seven-in-ten-americans-oppose-overturning-roe-v-wade/>

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/public-opinion-on-abortion/>

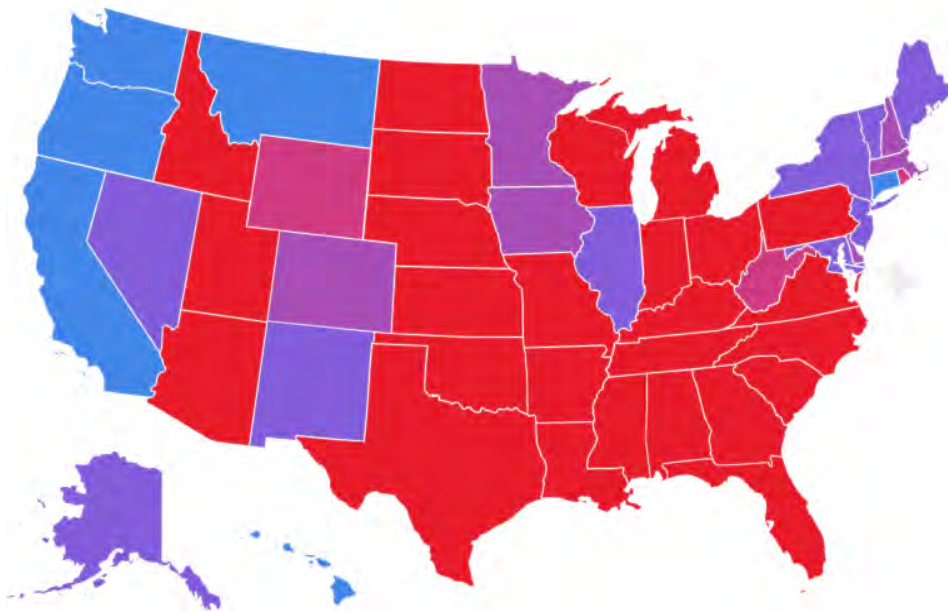
<sup>87</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2017/07/31/436869/state-u-s-labor-market-black-women-pre-july-2017-jobs-release/>

<sup>88</sup> <https://nwlc.org/resources/women-and-poverty-state-state/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.self.com/story/black-women-health-conditions>

<sup>90</sup> [http://startmovingstartliving.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MIL\\_HealthDispAAW.pdf](http://startmovingstartliving.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MIL_HealthDispAAW.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/laws-policy/state-government/>



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Of these states, those with the large Black populations<sup>93</sup> not only legislate to disenfranchise the reproductive rights of Black women, but also against resources that would make it easier for families to prosper economically. The hypocrisy is evident. For example, on November 28, 2018 in Alabama, voters will decide if abortion is protected as the U.S. Supreme Court has already determined. The language on the ballot will include, “to declare and otherwise affirm that it is the public policy of this state to recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children, most importantly the right to life in all manners and measures appropriate and lawful; and to provide that the constitution of this state does not protect the right to abortion or require the funding of abortion.”<sup>94</sup> This proposed amendment to the state constitution, advanced by anti-choice politicians, intentionally refers a commitment to the sanctity of life, yet it’s these very politicians that advance policies that abandon families, leaving children to grow up in environments where they’re unsupported, unhealthy, and not cared for in the way they should be. Alabama’s poverty rate among children is 50 percent higher than the national average of 43 percent.<sup>95</sup>

Other states like Texas and Georgia, with poverty rates among children at 49 percent, have struggled to protect women’s constitutional right to access abortion. In Texas, a woman must undergo an ultrasound at least 24 hours before obtaining an abortion; the provider must show and describe the image to the woman and most women must receive state-directed counseling that includes information designed to discourage her from having an abortion, and then wait 24 hours before the procedure is provided.<sup>96</sup> In Georgia, 58 percent of women live in counties without an abortion clinic.<sup>97</sup> Further north in Virginia, where 34

<sup>92</sup> The spectrum of colors from blue to red indicate “strongly protected access” to “severely restricted access”.  
<https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/laws-policy/state-government/>

<sup>93</sup> [https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/census\\_2000/cb01cn176.html](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/census_2000/cb01cn176.html)

<sup>94</sup> <http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/Alison/default.aspx>

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.nccp.org/tools/table.php?states=AL&cat=1&denom=char&db=dem&data=per&unit=Children&age=18&inc=Low-Income&submit=Create+Table>

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.gutmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-texas>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.prochoiceamerica.org/state/georgia/>

percent of children live below the poverty line, abortion is covered in insurance policies for public employees *only* in cases of life endangerment, rape, incest or fetal impairment and public funding is available for abortion *only* in cases of life endangerment, rape, incest or fetal impairment.<sup>98</sup> So, while legal abortion is the law of the land, states are increasingly making it difficult for Black women to access the healthcare and economic resources they need.

National organizations traditionally led by white women are recently understanding the importance of supporting Black women's reproductive rights in a more holistic way. Last year, the President of Planned Parenthood, Cecile Richards stated, "Planned Parenthood believes that creating health equity — including access to quality, affordable, compassionate health care — is critical to ensuring all people can lead healthy, safe, and autonomous lives. We cannot achieve that mission in a country and culture where systemic racism blocks Black women, from full bodily and reproductive autonomy. We must work with communities of color to dismantle white supremacy — and the oppressive systems that stem from it — which prevents advancements in health equity." Immediately before and since that time, two of the nation's leading pro-choice organizations, Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America have been working with reproductive justice organizations like Sister Song, All\* Above All, and the National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda to secure full reproductive rights for Black women. There is still work to do, but the partnership between organizations is welcome news for women of all backgrounds and ethnicities.

The Black community is becoming increasingly supportive of reproductive rights, but there is still work to do in our own communities as well. Still today, some leaders in the Black community view "abortion as Black genocide."<sup>99</sup> One of the more notable leaders of the Black anti-abortion movement is Alveda King, one of the nieces of Martin Luther King Jr. and head of Civil Rights for the Unborn and part of Priests for Life. It has been assumed that religious leaders are mostly anti-choice, however, influential leaders like Dr. Willie Parker and Reverend William Barber are standing up for women's rights. Rev. Barber believes that the Bible says far more about caring for the needy than it does about abortion; "How do you take two or three Scriptures and make a theology out of it, and claim it is the moral perspective, and leave 2,000 on the table?" he said. "That is a form of theological malpractice."<sup>100</sup> Dr. Parker similarly believes that his job is to provide care and compassion to his patients based on the decisions they would like to make: "When I was on faculty at the University of Hawaii, for the first time in my career I was forced to take a more critical look at my faith identity and what it actually said about abortion. And what I found is that Christianity says nothing about abortion in its sacred texts."<sup>101</sup>

As we think about the critical needs of Black women, we must explore the inequities in education, housing, labor force, criminal justice system, and healthcare, particularly reproductive rights. Black women need to be provided the resources needed to live their best lives which means support from elected bodies, advocacy organizations, and intercommunity alignment on the fact that access to legal abortion is the established law of the land.

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<sup>98</sup> <https://www.gutmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-virginia>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/1/19/16906928/black-anti-abortion-movement-yoruba-richen-medical-racism>

<sup>100</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/10/us/politics/politics-religion-liberal-william-barber.html>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/09/willie-parker-abortions-deep-south/539862/>

## Violence Against Black Women and Girls



Karma Cottman

Executive Director, Ujima, Inc: The National Resource Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community and DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence



Gretta Gardner

Deputy Director, Ujima Inc.



Lisalyn Jacobs

*Owner & CEO, Just Solutions*

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>102</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>103</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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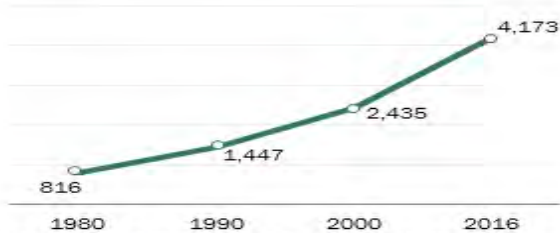
<sup>102</sup> Feminista Jones, *Why Black Women Struggle More with Domestic Violence*, <http://time.com/3313343/ray-rice-Black-women-domestic-violence/>

<sup>103</sup> [http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC\\_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf](http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf);  
[http://www.doj.state.or.us/victims/pdf/women\\_of\\_color\\_network\\_facts\\_domestic\\_violence\\_2006.pdf](http://www.doj.state.or.us/victims/pdf/women_of_color_network_facts_domestic_violence_2006.pdf)



## 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

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>104</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>105</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>106</sup> Black women hesitate to seek help

<sup>104</sup> Carol Jacobsen, *When Justice is Battered*, <https://solidarity-us.org/node/729>

<sup>105</sup> Laura Flores, *What is Social Construction*, <http://oakes.ucsc.edu/academics/Core%20Course/oakes-core-awards-2012/laura-flores.html>

<sup>106</sup> <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/crime/headlines/20130921-Black-women-at-greater-risk-of-becoming-victims-of-homicidal-domestic-violence.ece>

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>107</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>108</sup>

## Action Items

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<sup>107</sup> *The Plight of Black Battered Women*, Linda L. Ammons, excerpted from: *Babies, Bath Water, Racial Imagery and Stereotypes: The African-American Woman and The Battered Woman Syndrome*, 1995 *Wisconsin Law Review* 1003-1080, 1017-1030 (1995).

<sup>108</sup> *When Men Murder Women, An Analysis of 2015 Homicide Data*, The Violence Policy Center, September 2017.

## **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.

## Black Women's Health, Justice, and Humanity The Role of Childhood Trauma



Commissioner Stephanie Moore  
*Chairwoman, Kalamazoo Michigan County Commission*  
*Convener, Kalamazoo MI Black Women's Roundtable, Mothers of Hope*

Black Women's Roundtable – Kalamazoo MI, in collaboration with Mothers of Hope, convened a two-day BWR Healthy, Wealthy, Wise Empowerment & Spa Day on May 20-21, 2017, specifically for women of color with support from the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation as a part of the 2018 BWR Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise Empowerment Project. Three hundred women registered for the event.

The convening focused on teaching urban women how to balance the mind, body, and spirit. There were several breakout sessions surrounding themes regarding radical forgiveness, mindfulness, self-care, self-love and self-acceptance. These two days including HIV, STD and health screenings provided by the local health department and federally qualified health center.

**One of the most critical outcomes from this event was the results from the ACEs screening.** ACEs are Adverse Childhood Experiences or traumatic events that are often a result of abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction. **The results demonstrated that although a majority of participants did not answer in the affirmative for questions related to adverse childhood trauma, there were still a concerning number** who did. These types of experiences can have long-term effects on adults including a damaging impact on mental health.

In 2018, the Kalamazoo BWR in collaboration with Mothers of Hope, Kalamazoo MI is focused following up on these findings by advocating that our communities become more trauma-informed where women are empowered to address the trauma in their lives. As a trauma-informed community, we can ensure communities, especially our marginalized communities of color, understand that even when traumatic events happen, they do not determine a person's destiny. As stated in the Muskegon report, "ACEs are not destiny. You can build resilience and live a happy, healthy life."

## Stopping Violence Against Black Women and Girls



Dr. Stephanie E. Myers  
*National Co-Chair, Black Women for Positive Change*

Since 2012, Black Women for Positive Change, a national volunteer network, (BW4PC) has worked to “*Change the Culture of Violence in America, and the World.*” This urgent issue is a priority since Black women and girls experience the highest high levels of violence in the United States, and throughout the world. Statistics underscore the urgency of governments instituting programs and initiatives to address violence against women and girls, particularly in the African American community.

### FIVE FACTS ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

**Homicide is one of the leading causes of death for women in America, less than 44 years old. One third of homicide victims attended some college.** <sup>109</sup>

**Estimates suggest that of all the women victims of homicide globally in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members.**<sup>110</sup>

**One in four (23.7 percent) girls report having experienced bullying on school property one or more times, over a period of 12 months.** <sup>111</sup>

**By race/ethnicity, African American Black women have the highest possibility of dying by homicide.**<sup>112</sup>

**An estimated 246 million girls and boys experience school-related violence every year. One in four girls say that they never feel comfortable using school bathrooms.** <sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> (Centers for Disease Control, Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence — United States, 2003–2014)

<sup>110</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

<sup>111</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6628a1.htm>

<sup>113</sup> All Global Monitoring Report UESCO, United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative 2015

## **Violence Prevention Programs: A National Necessity**

Violence prevention interventions must be administered by government, schools and faith institutions. It is urgent for men, women, youth and children—who are potential perpetrators of violence—to get assistance immediately. Violence prevention interventions should include training in: (1) de-escalation of violence; (2) anger management; (3) conflict resolution; and (4) implicit bias training for law enforcement. Going forward, we must put a priority on jobs, training, education and entrepreneurship as alternatives to violence.

Since 2012, BW4PC has sponsored six (6) annual Weeks of Non-Violence, Justice and Opportunities, in partnership with the Positive Change Foundation, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement (NOBLE); National Black Nurses Association; Moms Demand Action for Common Sense Gun Control; Wednesday Clergy Council in Washington, D.C.; North Carolina Central University Law School; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity; and many other local organizations. In 2017, thirty-eight (38) cities and four (4) nations participated in the Week of Non-Violence Justice and Opportunities by organizing events, forums and violence prevention activities in their local communities.

### **BW4PC Tool Kit for Violence Prevention**

- Youth violence prevention films “On 2<sup>nd</sup> Thought,” and “DROP: A Story of Triumph” are available at: [www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.org](http://www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.org) Click on Socially Responsible Media. For information contact [Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com](mailto:Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com)
- The Peace Pledge© is available from BW4PC for use in schools, organizations etc. Contact [Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com](mailto:Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com)
- To access the Toolkit go to: <http://www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.org/socially-responsible-media/>

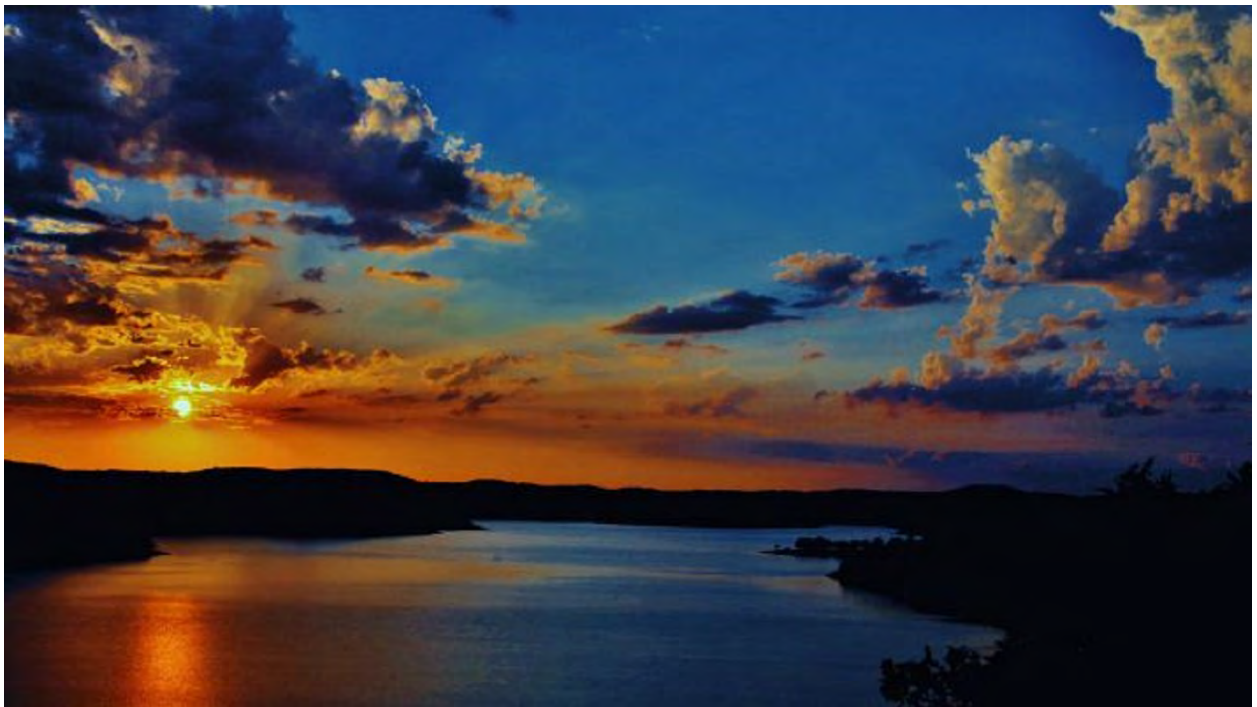
### **Sign-up for 2018 Week of Non-Violence, Positive Change & Opportunities**

**Planned for October 13-21, 2018**

**[www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.org/2018-week-of-non-violence-sign-up-form/](http://www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.org/2018-week-of-non-violence-sign-up-form/)**

Cities, nations, organizations, faith institutions, school districts, labor unions and businesses are invited to sponsor violence prevention events during the 2018 Week of Non-Violence, Positive Change and Opportunities. Sign up at: [www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.com](http://www.Blackwomenforpositivechange.com). For information contact [Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com](mailto:Bkwomen4poschange@gmail.com)

# Spiritual Power



## SPIRITUAL POWER: The Spirit of a Woman



Ambassador Suzanne Johnson-Cook  
*Presidential Advisor, Pastor, Theologian, Author, Activist*

*“We’ve Come this far by Faith LEANING on the Lord, Oh, oh, oh, oh,  
Can’t turnaround. We’ve come this far by faith..”* Albert A Goodson

*“Ain’t gonna let nobody turn us around...”* Civil Rights Freedom song

This is the 50th year of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. I was in Washington, DC for the 50th anniversary of the historic March on Washington. At age six, the journey to DC with my parents for the March was difficult, so the children of Black and Jewish parents who travelled and marched together from NYC, attended Freedom Schools in the basement of the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church in NYC. We sang and learned the hymns and the freedom songs listed above. The church was the center of our existence, and where we garnered our SPIRITUAL POWER. We worshipped there, we sang there, we had educational forums there, and our social life was imbedded in the Black church, because Spiritual power undergirded the movements of our time.

It is that same faith and Spiritual power that many Black women still tap into today, as new movements arise, some led by faith leaders, like Rev William Barber, of the Moral Mondays movements, a pastor, and others led by Black women, not based in the church, but who often meet in church houses, sanctuaries. It’s interesting how church SANCTUARIES become the only “safe SANCTUARIES” for refugees.

### **A SHIFT IN BLACK WOMEN’S ENROLLMENT IN SEMINARIES**

When we move, and how we move, is guided by our faith, Fifty years ago, most of the prominent mainstream Black churches had no women in leadership,. Today, with more that 50% of major seminaries being filled with and graduating women, we have Black women Spiritual leaders, who are trailblazing pioneering, stained glass ceiling cracking Pastors, Womanist theologians, Scholars, at the forefront of every major denomination, church and seminary, who remind us that in God, “we live, move, and have our very being “ ( Holy Scriptures Acts 17:28)

Black women spiritual leaders are in every arena, the workplace, leadership as pastors, Deacons, Bishops, conferences, entire denominations, and now penetrating the media.

### **SHIFTING SYSTEMS: FOOD FOR THE SOUL**

When I became the first Black woman Chaplain of the NYC police Dept ( where I served 21 years), I found myself needing Spiritual Power to get me through every day, as we faced and fought systemic racism and sexism, often holding and rocking other Black women in my arms who had been assaulted



violated, hated upon, and just treated unjustly and unfairly To shift the atmosphere, we created a Wednesday noonday LUNCH HOUR OF POWER, where more than 500 Black women would gather weekly to garner the spiritual strength needed to face the ills of our time.

One can still often find praying women gathering throughout the workday, finding spiritual “refuge in a time” of trouble. Many corporations, like Coca Cola, have also invested in hiring Workplace Chaplains, and often Black women fill those posts. But prayer is a vital power connector, and power shifter. There’s a Christian adage that “prayer changes things, and it does”. You will often hear our meetings, both sacred and secular, opening and closing with prayer, and when meeting by phone or webinar, sisters ask for other women to “pray for me”.

How I remember when there were only two Black women, myself and another, in the West Wing of the White House, and both of us feeling the enormity of the pace and problems of the White House, and the pain of racism, we met in the Women's bathroom, gaining enough strength to go back and combat the forces.

We were “coding” before there was coding. Isn’t that how our ancestors fled oppressions, with the codes of spiritual songs, and spiritual hymns and prayers. “Ain't got long to stay here...Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus...”.

### **THE NIGHT SHIFT**

I recently heard a preacher say that “the God of the night is often shifting some things in the night”. That means hold on, even when it’s dark, because “weeping may endure for the night, but joy will come in the morning...and there are mornings after our mourning.

Not only would God allow me the privilege of serving in two US Presidential administrations, but also as the first female leader of the historic Hampton University Ministers Conference, the largest gathering of African American clergy in the world, some 12,000 Clergy leaders., the male bastion of power, for more than 100 years. It was the Black women, the sisters of prayer and power, that gathered around me to support me and cheer me on, when there were rumors that many men were going to stay away because a woman was now in leadership. With and through prayers, we saw God shift some things in the night. The opposite held true. More men came out than ever before for opening night.

One of my honors was that not only did preaching, praying women also show up, but Civil rights icons Coretta Scott King and Dr. Dorothy Height came to stand with me, and indicated that it was their FAITH that kept them, through all the civil rights storms.

### **TRAILBLAZING WOMEN AND SPIRITUAL POWER:**

From every seat, I realized that as a trailblazing woman, it wasn’t just important to be the “first” but the first of many. So as often as I could use my influence, I’d open doors for Black women of SPIRIT to come in, for roundtables, for discussions, for presentations, to have impact, success and ACCESS.

We must come back to the SISTER SPIRIT, of not only opening doors, but keeping spirit doors open, for again, we face racism, sexism at an alarming rate, and the only power that will get us through, is SPIRITUAL POWER. It informs our education, our legislation, our advocacy, our families, our marriages, our jobs, our careers.

### **A SHIFT IN SELF CARE**

As many sister pastor and sister scholar leaders begin to approach retirement, after two and three decades of leadership, often in rural or urban areas, with limited resources, the toll of the toil has also become evident. As with all Black women, we, too, must be mindful of our health, often exacerbated by the stress-filled situations we have found ourselves in. I can count, on one hand, the pioneering women

who still remain standing, since we began this incredible journey 35+ years ago together. Many succumbed to death, or aggressive illness, because as with many Black women, the pay has been low, and the stress has been high.

“God of our Weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who has by thy might led us into the Light, Keep us forever on the path we pray...” Black National Anthem - James Wilson and John Rosamand Johnson

Annually, now we take Black women SPIRITUAL leaders away on a retreat to be refreshed, renewed, re-CHARGED and re-connected with the power that keeps us going and growing, and to look at our LOSSES, but also our gains, to look at Life, and now LEGACY. What do we leave? Who do we leave, to sustain the work we’ve begun, the seeds we’ve planted, the accomplishments we’ve been blessed to achieve.

### **POWER SHIFT**

It is time for a POWER shift. With Black women spiritual leaders at the helm of this new era, we can only go upward and forward, standing side by side, together!... “true to our God, true to our native Land”

Ambassador Suzan Johnson Cook was the 3rd US Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom in the Obama administration, a senior pastor of three NYC congregations, spanning three decades, and the first female President of the historic Hampton U Ministers Conference. She leads the Pro Voice/Pro Voz movement for Christian women of color leaders. She is a proud, Spirit-Filled Black woman.

## The Power of Spiritual Power



Dr. Jacquie Hood Martin, PhD

*Executive & Christian Life Skills Coach, Author, Speaker, Trainer*

There are always going to be challenges in life, obstacles to overcome, or naysayers to move out of our way. One of the best ways to move past your mountain is to stand on God's word and tell that hindrance to move! The power in your words as you take ownership of what you are facing, will empower and embolden each one of us to rise.

We each are unique and wonderfully made.

God has designed our lives so that we can be, are to be, meant to be healthy, happy, and whole. But of course, things happen and today we face what seem to be insurmountable odds. Tolerance is low. Acceptance is fleeting. Patience is fading. But for the grace of God, many of us can say 'there go I'. It is through prayer and prayers that have been prayed for us, and over us that we can walk boldly into our tomorrow.

As we approach our adversity and adversaries, let God reveal to you more and more how He is ready to take you to the next level of trust. Yes! You trusting God and God trusting you.

Today you may be struggling, but just know that whatever you are facing you can overcome. It is the power of your spiritual power that shows itself when we are not working in our own strength; when we believe that we are stronger from having endured our last challenge, and that we are greater when we stand with God in the midst of, in spite of, and because of what we go through each and every day. Our spiritual power is expanded when we pray. Our spiritual power will do its most effective work when we allow it to change us first, then allow it to have its way in the lives of others with whom we interact. Spiritual power is exacting when appropriately channeled and challenged. We each can attest that prayer has the ability to change people from the inside out. And, when that change is complete ... things around us start to change. It happens because we are no longer blinded by our own misconceived ideas, and the preconceived ideas and ideals of others.

Aren't you tired of others benefiting from your blindness? I sure have been and continue to be!

God shows us how to see with His sight. He opens our eyes, our heart, our mind, our understanding and our senses so that the spiritual power within us is operating to its full capacity and without blockage. As we are open to all that God birthed us to be equipped with spiritually, we forge ahead to discover our worth and embrace our God-given creativity and power. The power of spiritual power reveals to us how to sustain ourselves with the abilities in which He has endowed us; to provide a life for yourself and your family. It equally no longer renders us defenseless against forces, wickedness, and trickery that are outside the protection and provision of God.

When we each become aware, acknowledge, accept, appreciate, and anticipate that the power of our spiritual power is a chain breaker, as well as a foundation sustainer, then and only then do we create the

peace we aim to attain. The power of our spiritual power is meant to be a mainstay of our existence. Through life experience we are able to tell ourselves that it is okay to toot our own horn, to shout victories from the rooftops, to pat ourselves on the back, and live a peaceful existence even when there may be a lack of peace in our world. However, our personal peace, doesn't give us a pass to rest when so many others are unable to tap into their own spiritual power due to oppressive rules and regulations and impoverished environments. Our spiritual power reminds us that it will not always be like we see it in this moment. Time is filled with many moving parts and our spiritual power has the power to shape how we perceive those encounters. A key dynamic is harnessing the power through perception and pace.

As you go along in life, please note a word of caution and warning to also keep a proper pace! Don't run ahead of God. Keep communication with God through prayer that He may guide your steps. It is through our relationship with God that we are able to right our own mistakes, to govern our actions, redirect others who encroach on the lane in which God has given us to operate, and to live according to the plans He has marked out for us individually, and corporately. It is what you learn as you go in your daily dealings that prepares us to live our lives to the fullest. In order to fulfill the plans God has, it is important we comply with the notion we can never lead others where we ourselves are not prepared, equipped, or are unwilling to go. Our journey to what's next starts with activating our spiritual power and all its subtle nuances.

## TO MY SISTERS: We Are NOT Easily Broken



Rev. Dr. Judith C. Moore

*Executive Director, Sisters Saving Ourselves Now, Convener, Pittsburgh/Mon Valley Black Women's Roundtable, Author, Itinerant Elder Emeritus, AME Third District*

### A DAILY PRAYER

#### GOD

*"Thank you that I am unique in your kingdom. Thank you that you made me special. Thank you that there is no one like me. Thank you that no one has the same talents, skills, and abilities that I have.*

*Thank you that no one has what it takes to achieve my destiny - except me!*

*God, it makes me feel so good to know that no one can replace me in your heart. No one could ever be so special to you or important to you that you wouldn't still yearn for my company.*

*The truth is that I am incredibly important to you. I will believe that truth.*

*I am adorable and treasured in your sight.*

*You love me just the way I am. You think I am awesome. You are eager to help me become even more than I am right now. You are eager to guide me to become even more joyful, more contented, more mature, and more blessed.*

*I am uniquely qualified and prepared for each day, because you are living inside me and I am living inside your love."*

*Amen*

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**WE ARE NOT EASILY BROKEN:** We are tough because we know:

God didn't just create a single drop of water he made oceans of water-

God didn't create just 1 star – God made the galaxies

God didn't just make a hill – God made the Rocky Mountains, Grand Canyon

God didn't just make the sun – but God created sunsets and sunrises

God exceeds all the expectations – that is why we are tough; because we are not easily broken for God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all we ask or imagine, above and beyond all things.

**We are not easily broken because we can trust God to see us through.** Those who are transitioning to another phase of their lives will make it through because they know God is with them.

You will make it because you believe in God's word and you learned how to wait. Everything is possible for them who believe. You will make it because you are not focused on what you see with your physical eyes but what is unseen.

Our mothers had no secret recipe to follow they just had to trust God and make the impossible happen. Nobody can help you through it, you can't work for it, you can't buy it, you can't call your mother up, daddy up, sister, brother and you can't call your preacher or pastor. Only God can provide what you need, just when you need it. Your legacy is in the making what will you leave?

Trust him, he is right on time; scripture says: because of the lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail, they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. God is able to do more, it is incredible, it is outrageous but expect more.

We have all been lost, we have all been hurt, we have all been distressed. Life is not peaches and cream. but when God saved you, satan really begin to want a piece of you. You felt life fires like you never felt before. but the struggles refined your faith. the hard times strength your heart. The trials worked out your patience. the fire where you learned, when my mother and father forsake me the lord will take me up, and when the fire seemed like it was going to last forever you remember the words:

They that wait upon the lord shall renew their strength. they shall mount up on wings like eagles. you are not easily broken. you will be able to run and not be weary. it is going to be alright: they shall walk and faint. I know you almost fainted but you didn't, the fire was meant to refine you.

After all you have been through you still have joy.

After dealing with the haters, you still have peace.

After dealing with all the spirit killers, you still have love.

The woman with the issue of blood had to pressed her way through the crowd, blessing to you – for pressing your way: sometimes through the storm, sometimes through the rain.

I don't know about you but I got a reason to praise him. My story may not be your story and your story may not be my story. There is a reason behind our praise.

This has been a rough year and my soul looks back and wonder, how I got over. Sometimes you got to go through it to get to it.

God is able – that would be enough said, God Can, God is, God is Able to do; that would be enough to have our hearts beat with confidence and faith; our hearts would beat a few beats faster – God is able to do more than what we ask or imagine;

DEATH OF A LOVE ONE DID NOT BREAK YOU

SICKNESS DIDN'T NOT BREAK YOU

FOLKS SPECULATING YOUR NEXT MOVES DID NOT BREAK YOU

YOU MIGHT HAVE BEND BUT YOU DID NOT BREAK

**BECAUSE A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD**

AND THOUGH THIS WORLD, WITH DEVILS FILLED, SHOULD THREATEN TO UNDO US – WE WILL NOT FEAR, FOR GOD HATH WILLED HIS TRUTH TO TRIUMPH THROUGH US;

THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS GRIM, WE TREMBLE NOT FOR HIM; HIS RAGE WE CAN ENDURE, FOR LO HIS DOOM IS SURE, WE ARE NOT EASILY BROKEN.

**Spirituality and African American Women**



Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner  
*President, Skinner Leadership Institute*  
*Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network*

### **Overview**

African American women today, facing escalating racism, sexism, misogyny, and civil rights reversals, must rely on both liberating religious values and heightened spirituality, to survive and thrive. While Americans today increasingly identify themselves as spiritual and not connected to organized religion, studies show that African Americans women make only a subtle distinction.<sup>1</sup> Religion involves beliefs about right and wrong as defined by a Higher Power or Supreme Being. It includes organized bodies actively engaged in the proclamation of eternal values and worship, whether through a church, temple, synagogue or mosque. In contrast, spirituality encompasses our relationship to ourselves, others, nature, and, for most Black women, our connection to God. Religion focuses on activities. Spirituality concerns relationships. Both involve reverence for something bigger than oneself. While African American women are more religious than any other group in society, today many seek greater self-expression, self-love, self-care, emotional and physical well-being, especially among younger women, that inspires their search for spirituality outside of organized religion.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 1.**

**Spirituality – Breath of Life**

Celebrated author, Stephen Covey said, *"we are not human beings having a spiritual experience.*

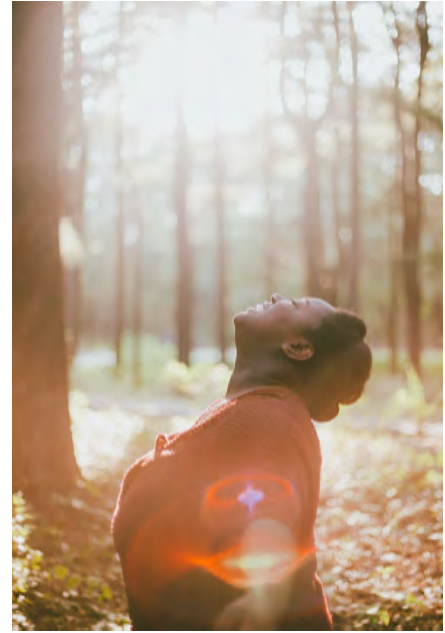
*We are spiritual beings having a human experience."*<sup>3</sup> The word "spirituality," derived from the Latin word *spiritus*, means "the breath of life."<sup>4</sup> The first book of the Old Testament of the Christian Bible speaks powerfully to the "breath of life" from our Creator. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being."<sup>4</sup>

The challenge for Black women, still faced with centuries-old systemic racism, is to embrace the remarkable beauty, magnificence, and excellence in which the Almighty "breath of life" created them. Black women, even when enslaved and forbidden from participating in organized communal worship, found a life-sustaining connection to God as the active divine presence in their lives and harsh circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Christianity was brought to the enslaved to control and oppress. Black women rejected that brand of white Christianity and found their way to Christ, the Liberator of the oppressed and the disinherited. As the Black church developed, typically with majority female members, Black women fostered their spirituality through nurturing community, supportive relationships, and other expressions of wonder and reverence, outside of organized religion. Even in my journey from agnosticism to faith in Jesus, during my darkest days, I never lost the sense that the God of my mother and grandmother was watching over me, and boosting my spirit. Today, Black church women, encountering the oppressive nature of many male-dominated Black churches, still find spiritual power in their relationship with a loving God, who strengthens and empowers them.<sup>6</sup>



### Still I Rise

In her iconic poem, "Still I Rise," Maya Angelou brilliantly captures the unwavering spirit and fierce determination of Black women to rise above historical and current barriers to reaching their highest potential. "You may write me down in history, With your bitter, twisted lies, You may trod me in the very dirt, But still, like dust, I'll rise."<sup>7</sup> Transplanted from advanced African civilizations into American enslavement followed by systemic racism, Black women struggle consistently for emotional and spiritual wholeness, to define themselves, and to carry out hopes and dreams for themselves and their communities. They have had to depend on both spirituality and religion to rise above the double weight of systemic racism, gender inequality, while remaining the primary breadwinner in 70% Black families compared to 24.7% of White women as the primary breadwinner.<sup>8</sup> Beyond these burdens, Black women, bearing society's cruel definition of them as, "angry," "man-hating," "b-----s", must continually seek a myriad of ways to nourish their souls.



### Ain't I A Woman

In the "Ain't I A Woman" spirit of Sojourner Truth, Black women fight persistently to make sure society's focus on women's equality, also includes women of color, who must forever carry the burden of race and gender.<sup>9</sup> From highly publicized sexual harassment charges brought by Anita Hill 29 years ago, to Congresswoman Maxine Waters, April Ryan, the historic Women's March and today's #MeToo movement, Black women still experience the pain of being ignored, marginalized, or demeaned, and must lean on both spiritual and religious values for inner strength.

Following are just a few ways that we as African American women can nurture our spirits and fortify ourselves in spirit, mind and body for the challenging days ahead.

- Nurture a Personal Relationship with the Creator
- Participate in Religious Activities
- Pray and participate in a Prayer Group
- Practice Meditation
- Maintain Family Connection
- Retain a Strong Support Circle
- Stay Focused on Who You Are
- Stay Focused on Your Core Values
- Experience the Awesomeness and Wonder of Nature
- Engage in Art, Poetry, Music, and other Creative Expressions
- Remain 'Other-Centered' and Support Others
- Cultivate Self-love and Self-Care

Whether through religion or spirituality, Black women are learning that loving God with reverence and awe, inspires self-love, love, and support of other Black women, and the capacity for building stronger communities.

## Resources

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<sup>ii</sup> Leila Foley-Davis, [www.blackamericaweb.com](http://www.blackamericaweb.com), 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Luci Horton, "Her Honor the Mayor," *Ebony*, Sept. 1973; Jean D. Murphy, "Doris Davis Running Hard and Fast," *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 1973; "Coast City Turns to Black Woman," *New York Times*, Jun 10 1973; <http://daisychilddevelopmentcenter.com/founder/>.

<sup>iv</sup> Simmonds, Yusef, "*The Senators: Carol Moseley Braun*". *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 20, 2008.

<sup>v</sup> Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, (<http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/history-women-color-us-politics>), March 2018.

<sup>vi</sup> See J. P. Kretzmann, and J. L. McKnight. *Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Mobilizing A Community's Assets*. ACTA Publications, Chicago, 1993, N. S. Mayer. *Neighborhood Organizations and Community Development*. Urban Institute Press, Washington, D. C., 1984; and L. A. Curtis, "Policies to Prevent Crime: Neighborhood, family and employment strategies," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 494:9+. 1987, among others.

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<sup>viii</sup> See Susan Taylor Batten. "Is Philanthropy Redlining Black Communities?" *ABFE Makes a Point Blog*, June 20, 2016, [www.abfemakesapoint.org/opinion/is-philanthropy-redlining-black-communities/](http://www.abfemakesapoint.org/opinion/is-philanthropy-redlining-black-communities/) and Susan Taylor Batten and Nat Chioke Williams. *The Case for Funding Black Led Social Change*. February 2017, Black Social Change Funders Network – a project of Association of Black Funding Executives and Hill-Snowdon Foundation, Washington, DC <http://www.blacksocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/BSCFN-Case-Statement.pdf>.

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<sup>ix</sup> Rick Cohen. "Dimensions of Racial Equity in Foundation Grantmaking," *Community Service Society*, May 2009.

<sup>x</sup> From The Washington Post, "Exit Poll Results: How Different Groups voted in Alabama". December 2017 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/politics/alabama-exit-polls/?utm\\_term=.573b4f486971](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/politics/alabama-exit-polls/?utm_term=.573b4f486971)

<sup>xi</sup> Brown, Nadia E. "Black Women's Pathways to the Statehouse."

<sup>xii</sup> Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute for Politics, Rutgers University, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2018>. (**Note:** This percentage includes Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) who is listed as multiracial, and House Del. Stacey Plaskett (D-VI), a Caribbean American from the U.S. Virgin Islands.)

<sup>xiii</sup> If successful, Stacey Abrams will not only be the first African American elected governor in the state of Georgia, but will also be the first African American female governor elected in American history.

<sup>xiv</sup> <http://www.drawdown.org/solutions/women-and-girls/educating-girls>

<sup>xv</sup> [http://www.energyjustice.net/files/coal/Air\\_of\\_Injustice.pdf](http://www.energyjustice.net/files/coal/Air_of_Injustice.pdf)

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.edf.org/blog/2013/07/10/surprising-connection-between-pollution-and-violent-crime>

<sup>xvii</sup> [http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy\\_url/13567/toxwrace87.pdf?1418439935](http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/13567/toxwrace87.pdf?1418439935)

<sup>xviii</sup> <https://www.treepeople.org/tree-benefits>

<sup>xix</sup> <https://actreesnews.org/alliance-for-community-trees-news/can-trees-help-decrease-urban-violence/>

<sup>xx</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/eere/articles/5-fastest-growing-jobs-clean-energy>