



Justice League of Greater Lansing Michigan Reparations Scholarship Recipient — 2024

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Bridging the Racial Wealth Gap in America: A Path Towards Economic Equity

In the United States, the racial wealth gap stands as proof of the systemic inequalities ingrained in our society. Rooted in centuries of discrimination, exclusionary policies, and unequal opportunities, this gap disproportionately affects the minorities of America, and the Black community especially. These disparities are something that have impacted generations after generations and show themselves in some shape or form throughout countless Black families including my own. Addressing this issue already brings us a step closer to dismantling the system that is racism.

The origins of this wealth gap trace back to slavery, denying Black Americans the opportunity to accumulate wealth and intergenerational assets. Even after emancipation and the United States' attempt to give reparations, discriminatory practices such as Jim Crow laws, redlining, and segregation continued to deprive African Americans of a basic foot to beginning a new life after gaining freedom, leading to a lack of equity in education, and employment opportunities. While some progress has been made through civil rights legislation, the legacy of systemic racism continues to shape our society.

The racial wealth gap has cast a shadow over my family's financial stability. My parents work tirelessly to make ends meet, yet systemic barriers and discriminatory practices often limit their earning potential. Higher positions they are more than deserving of are snatched from them, given to employees who better "fit" their idea of "manager," "general manager," or "CEO." Opportunities for upward mobility are seemingly harder to grasp when you are Black, and it's no help having a lack of generational wealth to fall back on.

Beyond the tangible hardships, the racial wealth gap has caused an emotional toll on my family as well. The constant struggle to make ends meet, accompanied with the frustration of working twice as hard for half as much, weighs heavily on my family's mental health as a collective. These issues are something inevitably exposed to the youth at a much younger age than that of a white family, causing much higher levels of stress and anxiety to grow up with.

Despite the challenges posed by the racial wealth gap, my family's story is not defined by despair but by resilience and hope. We draw strength from our ancestors' resilience in the face of oppression and the enduring resilience within the Black community. Through perseverance, we strive for a brighter future, setting examples and as much of a foundation as we can for the generations of our family to come.

With changes in equitable policies like equal access to healthcare, education, housing and healthcare, as well as economic empowerment and wealth distribution such as supporting Black-owned businesses and organizations, giving back to poorer communities, and progressive taxation policies, we can strive for true equity. We can begin to dismantle discriminatory disparities and heal generational trauma dealt with by the Black community. By prioritizing racial justice and equity, we can create a more just and prosperous society where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.