

FORUM

The value of White privilege and the American Dream



Charlene Crowell
Guest Columnist

As 2017's Black History observances unfold in communities across the country, new research on racial wealth gaps refutes the age-old advice for people of color to pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps.

According to researchers at Demos and the Institute for Assets & Social Policy at Brandeis University, historical and systemic privileges afforded Whites and denied to Blacks are the true root causes.

"The Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap," analyzed data from the 2013 Survey of Consumer Finances. After examining

individual differences by race in consumer spending habits, education, family structure, and employment, the report concluded that these factors are not "sufficient enough to erase a century of accumulated wealth."

"For centuries, White households enjoyed wealth-building opportunities that were systematically denied to people of color," said Any Traub, report co-author and Associate Director of Policy and Research at Demos. "When research shows that racial privilege now outweighs a fundamental key to economic mobility, like higher education, we must demand our policymakers acknowledge this problem and create policies that address structural inequity."

The significance of these new findings must not be lost during the month set aside to observe Black History. As obser-

vances honor those whose sacrifices and dedication led to notable achievements, February should also be a time to rededicate ourselves to the battles not yet won.

Public policies of the past systemically advantaged Whites and allowed their families to create intergenerational wealth that now serves as a financial springboard for future generations. New public policy reforms must be enacted to correct and replace the harms Blacks have faced as a result of our financial exclusion.

For example, a college education is often cited as an essential gateway to higher incomes and America's middle class. Yet Blacks frequently pay the cost of higher education with a greater student loan indebtedness than their White counterparts.

"With less student loan debt to pay off over their working years, the typical

White college graduate has a head start on building wealth compared to their Black peers," states the report.

Independent findings from the Center for Responsible Lending support the new report. Today more than half of Black families with a college student borrow to pay for college. Further, on average Black college graduates owe \$7,400 more on student loans than their White classmates.

When it comes to wages and employment, in 2012, the median full-time wage earned by Blacks was \$621 per week while the median wage for Whites was \$792 each week, the equivalent financial loss of \$8,892 per year. When gender was added, Black women fared even worse and earned only 68 percent — or \$28,005 of the \$41,184 made by similar White males.

With smaller paychecks

and fewer discretionary dollars in household budgets, it is little wonder that the report also found that the median White single parent has 2.2 times more wealth than the median Black two-parent household, and 1.9 times more wealth than the median Latino two-parent household.

The only area where the new report found consistently higher Black consumer spending was for utility costs: electricity, heating fuel, water and sewer charges. The report cited risk-based pricing that often connects mandatory deposits or low credit scores for these services.

"We can only create a more equitable future by confronting the racial wealth gap and the public policies that continue to

fuel and exacerbate it," concludes the report.

In other words, targeted public policy reforms are the key to closing the nation's wealth gap. These changes will require the same focus, vigilance and endurance of our historical efforts that forged laws addressing fair housing, voting rights, and equal employment opportunities.

It's past time for our 'fair share' of America's wealth.

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This is why Trump is lying about voter fraud and crime



Lauren V. Burke
Guest Columnist

There are two subjects in particular that the Trump Administration lies about the most: crime and voting.

During a recent interview on "This Week" with George Stephanopoulos, President Trump's senior adviser Stephen Miller lied about voter fraud during the 2016

elections.

Miller said that, "And you have 14 percent of noncitizens, according to academic research, at a minimum, are registered to vote, which is an astonishing statistic."

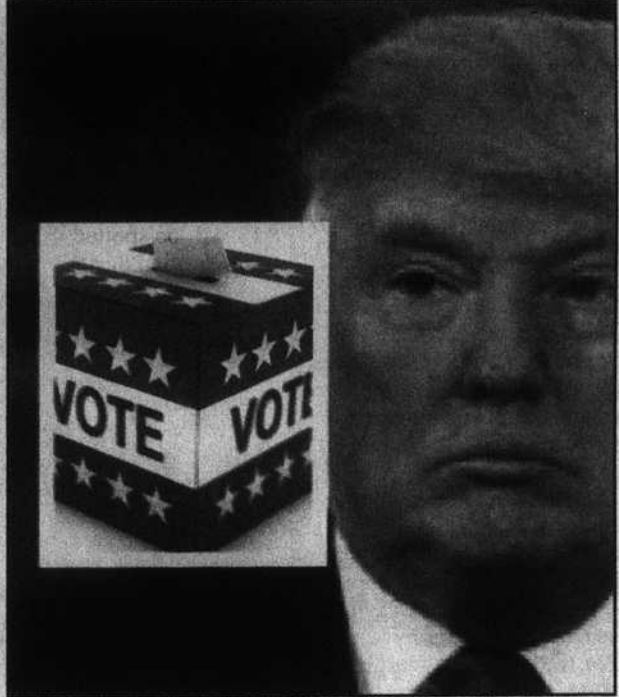
That statement is simply false. Miller couldn't produce a single shred of evidence when Stephanopoulos pressed him on the subject.

But Miller was just repeating what his boss said shortly before the election.

At a rally in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 23, 2016, presidential candidate Donald Trump said that, "14 percent of noncitizens are registered to vote."

President Trump entered office lying about voter fraud and threatening an investigation. Civil rights leaders have called for an investigation of voter suppression during the 2016 presidential election. More recently, the lying crossed over into the topic of an increased "crime wave" that doesn't exist. Now, the lies about a vast American crime wave and record-levels of illegal voting seem to be coming together.

On Jan. 23, during a meeting with members of Congress and the White House, President Trump lied about voting again. Trump and his 31 year-old aide Stephen Miller, who was sent out on all the Sunday morning talk shows on Feb. 12, appear to be lying for two reasons. First, Trump can't come to terms with the fact that



Hillary Clinton received almost 3 million more votes than he did, and second, the Trump Administration would appear to be laying the groundwork to justify a new law that would make it harder for people to vote, particularly minorities.

Trump's attorney general, former Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, had a history of prosecuting African-Americans, who were registering too many other African-Americans to vote, as an assistant U.S. attorney. Having provided no explanation or apology for his past prosecutions, particularly that of the late Albert Turner Sr., there's

no reason to believe that Sessions won't pick up where he left off in Alabama in the 1970s.

Even though, Sessions' past statements and actions as a prosecutor in Alabama are clear, the public perception of Sessions, the man, is mixed.

Turner's son, Albert Turner, Jr., issued a statement endorsing Sessions that said, "I believe that he is someone with whom I, and others in the civil rights community can work with if given the opportunity."

Still, American history of the disenfranchisement of African-American (and other minority) voters is also clear. In the late 1800s, it was a poll tax, literacy tests and other requirements that Black voters were unlikely to meet. Today it's voter ID, closing polling places, cutting Sunday voting and purging voting rolls.

The continued strategy used by present day Republicans is still the "Southern Strategy" — they've just added Hispanics to the list of targets. The Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids started only two days after Attorney General Sessions was sworn-in.

Many immigrant rights advocates knew the raids were not routine before anyone communicated anything.

Republicans have lost the popular vote over two presidential elections since 2000. The demographics in the country are becoming more Black and Brown and researchers estimate that the share of White voters will fall a few percentage points every four years.

Trump, Stephen Miller and many others in the Republican Party are well aware of the math.

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Serena and Venus Williams are champions on and off the court



James B. Ewers Jr.
Guest Columnist

History being made has defined Serena and Venus Williams since they started playing tennis as children. While neither was born in Compton California, their family moved there when they were youngsters. Venus, who is older, was born in Lynwood, California and Serena was

born in Saginaw, Michigan.

Their parents, Richard and Oracene Williams, were their initial coaches. The Williams sisters began their ascent to greatness at East Compton Park Tennis Courts in Compton, California. Richard and Oracene Williams did not have a traditional tennis background.

What they did have was a strong belief that their daughters could excel in the sport of tennis. When you think about this scenario, it is even more remarkable as Serena and Venus could have excelled in any academic pursuit or sport. They chose tennis.

When Venus was 10 years old and Serena a bit younger, their family moved to West Palm Beach, Florida. There, they were students at the Rick Macci Tennis Academy. It was the wisdom and discernment their parents had to make this type of cross country move. Think about it! The entire family made a major geographical move with the belief that Serena and Venus had a future in tennis.

The Williams Sisters became a dominant force on the tennis courts. At one point, Venus was 63-0 on the USTA (United States Tennis Association) Junior Tour. Serena's dominance was just as great.

Their list of accomplishments is awe inspiring. For example, Venus has won five Wimbledon titles and little

sister, Serena has won seven Wimbledon titles. They have won on all surfaces in convincing fashion. Their titles include singles, doubles and mixed doubles championships.

In their championship run, they have represented the USA in the Olympics and have won four gold medals. In all, Venus and Serena Williams have won over 100 singles titles. Oh my!

While some may debate this point, I don't know if there has ever been another more formidable family duo and there seems to be no end in sight. In January, Serena Williams won her 23rd Grand Slam tennis title as she lifted the Australian Open Trophy. Even if you are a casual tennis and/or sports fan, you know that she defeated her sister, Venus in the final. This is just incredible!

Serena has now won seven Australian Open titles which is a record. She now goes ahead of Steffi Graf for the most major titles in the Open era.

There is one last record that Serena will achieve in the future. Australian Margaret Court won 24 major titles however thirteen of those titles came before the Open era which began in 1968.

So, I believe she will win another major title sooner and not later. Serena Williams is 35 years of age and still playing at a very high level. She is as quick as a cat and the power in her serve rivals the serves of some professional male tennis players.

Almost lost in her 23rd Grand Slam major victory is the fact she regained her Number 1 ranking. Angelique Kerber from Germany had been ranked number 1 since September 2016. Before that time, Serena Williams had been ranked Number 1 in the world for 186 consecutive weeks. Are you kidding me! If you follow the sport like I do, the only person that can beat Serena Williams is Serena Williams.

So, you had in the first Grand Slam major of the season (Australian Open) the Williams Sisters both in their middle 30s. After winning, Serena said, "This was a tough one." She added, "I really would like to take this moment to congratulate Venus, she's an amazing person; she's my inspiration."

The "amazing person" comment made about Venus by Serena is most appropriate. Venus Williams was diagnosed with Sjogren's Syndrome in 2011. Through medication, Venus is back to her winning ways. Rest assured, we have not heard the last from Venus Ebony Starr Williams on the tennis courts.

In the next few months, the French Open will be held in Paris, France at the famous Roland Garros Tennis Courts. Venus and Serena have experienced success there.

You can run out of superlatives talking about the Williams Sisters. We are experiencing history right in front of our eyes. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to take a picture with Serena and to meet her parents. Watching the Williams Sisters practice was truly a highlight for me.

The Williams Sisters have been successful both on and off the court. They are role models for sure; so parents and love providers have your daughters study them.

When they make the International Tennis Hall of Fame, there should be a place for their parents. Richard and Oracene Williams deserve to be there. They have raised their daughters to be champions on and off the court.

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