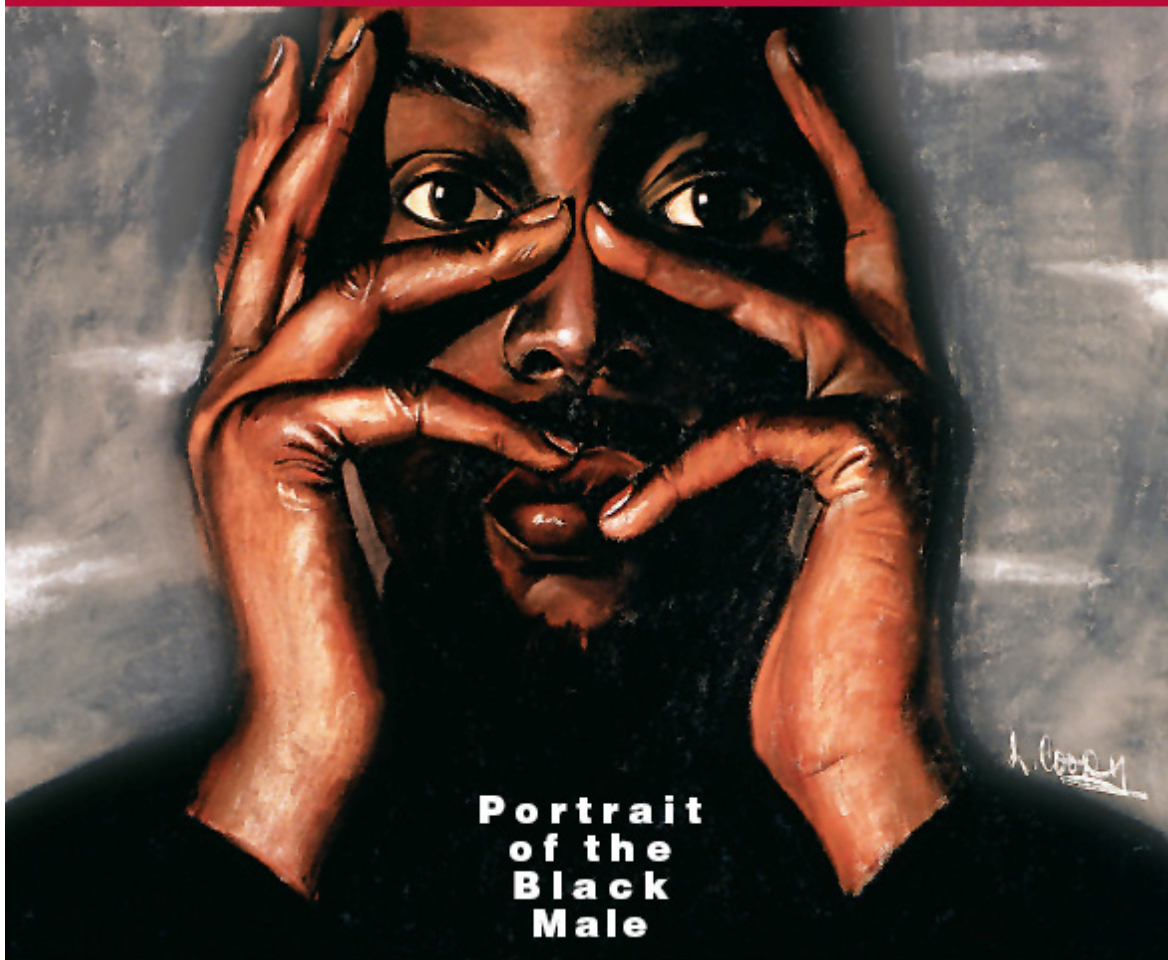


The State of Black America 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Portrait
of the
Black
Male**

Foreword by Senator Barack Obama



National
Urban League

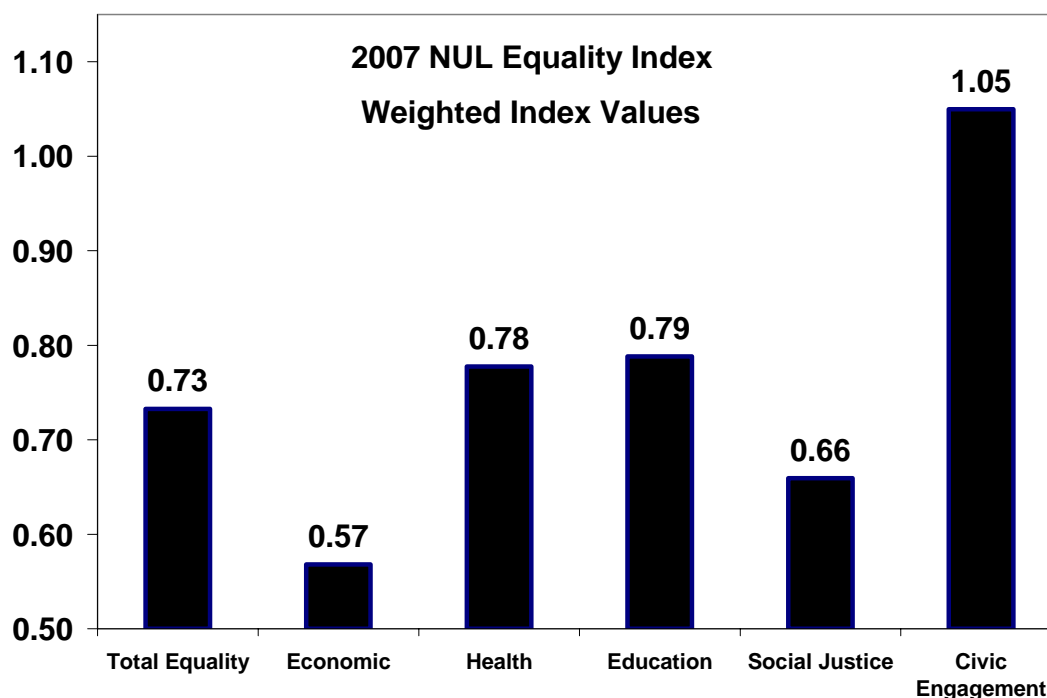
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2007 State of Black America Portrait of the Black Male

Executive Summary

Since 1973, the National Urban League has released its annual *State of Black America (SOBA)*, a barometer of conditions of the African-American community in the United States. The report's Equality Index, which was incorporated into it in 2004, provides a statistical measurement of the disparities or equality gaps that exist between African Americans and whites across five different categories: economics, education, health, civic engagement and social justice.



These components, comprised of sub-categories reflecting the latest data available, are weighted to produce an overall index representing the status of blacks with respect to whites in the United States. The Equality Index's Economic category, for example, is calculated using a range of economic measures, including annual income and unemployment rates, among other statistics.

This year's index puts the status of African Americans at 73.3 percent of whites, up slightly from 2006's 73 percent. In other words, blacks made minimal progress on the equality front in the past year. Just like in 2006, they performed best in the civic engagement category at 105 percent of whites, and worst in economics with 57 percent.

This year's *State of Black America*, which features a foreword written by Illinois Sen. Barack Obama and essays written by Marian Wright Edelman and Eric Michael Dyson among others, focuses upon black males, who are disproportionately worse off than white men, on many levels.

According to the SOBA Equality Index, African American men are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as white males and make only 75 percent as much a year. They're nearly seven times more likely to be incarcerated, and their average jail sentences are 10 months longer than those of white men. In addition, young black males between the ages of 15 and 34 years are nine times more likely to die of homicide than their white counterparts and nearly seven times as likely to suffer from AIDS.

Also, on several key measurements such as unemployment, annual income and high-school dropout rates, the report found greater disparities existing between black and white men existing than between black and white women.

The Urban League's Role in Empowering Blacks, Especially Males, to Reach their Full Potential

For almost a century, the National Urban League, through its more than 100 affiliates in 36 states, has been on the front lines in providing services designed to help close the equality gap between blacks and whites in the United States.

Through highly effective Head Start and early childhood education programs, our affiliates served nearly 270,000 parents and children in 2005. They also assisted 40,000 parents in helping develop their children's language and pre-reading skills.

Through the Urban Youth Empowerment Program (UYEP), we helped thousands of out-of-work and out-of-school youths as well as ex-offenders get second chances with educational assistance, skills training and on-the-job experience. In 2005, the program achieved significant results: 1) 25 percent of participants earned GEDs and/or high school diplomas; 2) 40 percent saw improvement in reading and math scores; and 3) average earnings of participants rose by 12 percent over the targeted goal of \$7 an hour.

The Urban League's home ownership programs served nearly 34,000 Americans in 2005, assisting them in a wide array of services, including the purchase of new homes and prevention of foreclosure. As a result of these programs, a total of \$50 million in new mortgage investments was made, 700 Americans became new homeowners, and 700 foreclosures were prevented, among other achievements.

But despite our best efforts, they are just not enough to close the substantial equality gap that persists between blacks and whites in the United States. While small improvements have been made over the years, particularly in early-education programs, there are bigger problems that continue to plague the black community, especially young men.

Statistical Highlights of the 2007 State of Black America

Education

The educational status of blacks has improved slightly in 2007 to 79 percent of whites, up from 78 percent in 2006. This sub-index, which is weighted to make up 25 percent of the full Equality Index, is calculated across five major categories: quality, attainment, scores, enrollment as well as student status and risk factors.

Earlier in life, black children excel until the middle-grades and high-school years when their achievement falls off significantly. More than two-thirds of young black children are enrolled in early childhood education programs such as Head Start, compared to slightly more than 64 percent of white children. They have also improved in the areas of school readiness – scoring at 94 percent of that of whites, up from 81 percent in 2006. They have even surpassed or nearly matched white children in terms of some home literacy activities; 81 percent were taught words or numbers three times a week, compared to 76 percent of whites, and 54 percent were read a story once a week, compared to 56 percent of whites.

A major disconnect, however, starts to occur after elementary school as black students, especially males, begin to fall behind or drop out completely. The disparities in writing proficiency scores widen as blacks grow older. At 4th grade, they score at 87 percent of whites – a 13 percentage point deficit. By the time they get to 12th grade, the gap doubles to 26 percentage points with blacks scoring at 74 percent of whites.

By the time they get into their teens, blacks are more likely to have dropped out of high school than their white counterparts – 15 percent compared to 12 percent for whites. For black males, the percentage rises to 18 percent compared to 14 percent of white males. But those numbers only measure the drop-out rates of students who are on the school rolls in the first place – not the ones who never show up.

The reason for the widening achievement between black and white students is likely related to differences in teacher quality and educational spending. According to this year's Equality Index, 21 percent of teachers in majority black districts had less than three years experience, compared 10 percent in majority white districts. Also, 49 percent in the middle grades taught in subjects outside their college major or minor, compared to 41 percent of middle grade teachers in white districts. On top of that, dollars spent per black student was only 82 percent of what was spent per white student.

By age 25, 81 percent of blacks hold high-school diplomas, compared to 86 percent of whites, and 18 percent have college degrees, compared to 28 percent of whites.

Economics

The economic status of blacks compared to whites increased slightly to 57 percent in 2007 from 56 percent in 2006. This sub-index, which is weighted to make up 30 percent of the total Equality Index, is comprised of six separate categories: annual median income, employment issues, poverty, housing and wealth formation, transportation and the digital divide.

In terms of annual median income, black men earned less than three-quarters of what white men earned (\$34,443 vs. \$46,807), roughly a \$12,000 gap. Black women made 87 percent of what white women made and \$5,000 less than black men (\$29,588 a year).

Unemployment was highest among black men – 9.5 percent compared to 4.0 percent for white men – a 5.5 percentage point gap. Black women experienced an unemployment rate of 8.5 percent, 4.4 percentage points above the 4.1 percent of their white counterparts.

Under the age of 25 years, a higher percentage of whites are in the workforce, compared to blacks. Of whites between the ages of 20 to 24, 76.5 percent are employed compared to 68.8 percent of blacks. However, with increasing age and educational level, African Americans are more likely than whites to be employed.

For example, for blacks over 25 who have less than a high school education, only 40 percent are part of the workforce, compared to 47 percent of whites. That rate rises to 82.1 percent when they have college degrees, which is five percentage points above the 77.5 percent participation rate of their white counterparts.

Poverty, much like unemployment, also tends to affect blacks, especially those under 18, at a higher rate than whites; nearly 25 percent live below the poverty line, three times the percentage of whites. Of blacks under 18, 33.5 percent lived in poverty compared to 10 percent of white youths.

Homeownership among blacks is substantially lower than among whites (47.9 percent compared to 75.8 percent) and they're three times more likely to get high-priced mortgage loans (54.7 percent of blacks vs. 17.2 percent of whites).

Social Justice

In terms of social justice, which is weighted at 10 percent of the entire Equality Index, the status of blacks is 66 percent of that of whites. This is down from last year's 74 percent, due largely to changes in the way it is calculated. This year's index eliminates the government equality section used in the past, which consisted mostly of older data that could not be updated, and includes only two categories -- equality before the law and victimization.

A higher percentage of blacks (especially males) than whites continue to be convicted and receive longer sentences, raising the question of bias in the U.S. Justice system. As a percentage of the population, seven times as many African Americans than whites are in prison. Black men have an incarceration rate that is over 20 times that of black women.

Overwhelmingly, blacks are more likely than whites to die as a result of homicide. Overall, blacks are five times more likely to be murdered than whites and black men under 25 years of age are 15 times more likely to die by homicide than their white counterparts. The murder rate for black males over 25 is nearly seven times that of white males. The homicide rate for black females is nearly three times that of white females.

Solutions

To help address the problems facing blacks, especially young males, the National Urban League is proposing the following:

1. Universal Early Childhood Education

All children in this nation have a right to comprehensive early childhood education, which as Head Start proves, is very effective in giving them, especially ones from disadvantaged backgrounds, a leg-up when they start school.

2. Greater Experimentation with All-Male Schools, Longer School Days and Mentoring

All-male schools such as the Eagle Academy and Enterprise School in the New York City area combined with mentoring and longer days help keep young boys focused on education and away from the distractions that could lead them down the wrong paths. The Urban League proposes the establishment of more of these kinds of schools that feature longer school days and provides students with mentors to help with their educational and social growth.

3. More Second Chance Programs for High School Drop-Outs, Ex-Offenders

The Urban League proposes the establishment of more second-chance programs to bring ex-offenders and disadvantaged individuals who are out of school and out of work back into the mainstream. Such programs help steer more Americans, especially those at-risk, back on track by providing assistance in getting GEDs, skills training and new jobs.

4. Restore The Federal Summer Jobs Program to Its Previous State

At the end of the 21st Century, federal lawmakers agreed to "reinvent" the federal Summer Jobs Program that had been in place for decades by changing its status from a stand alone mandatory program to one of 10 optional youth services programs. Under this reform, cities and municipalities had the option of offering the program or not. It resulted in a major scaling back of this successful federal program. The Urban League proposes reimplementation of the Summer Jobs Program in its previous form.

5. Drive Home the Message That Education Pays Dividends in the Long Run

Parents need to instill into their children the value of education in achieving their dreams and improving their financial security. They must continually talk to their children about how much better off they will be by graduating from high school and college. They must tell them that their opportunities for professional and economic advancement are much greater with a college degree or higher than without.

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National Urban League (www.nul.org) *Established in 1910, The Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. Today, the National Urban League, headquartered in New York City, spearheads the non-partisan efforts of its local affiliates. There are over 100 local affiliates of the National Urban League located in 35 states and the District of Columbia providing direct services to more than 2 million people nationwide through programs, advocacy and research.*