



## Notes on Race and Gender in the USA: Poverty and Intersectionality

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**Abstract.** This is the first of a series of multidisciplinary notes with one goal in common: to draw a much needed “bigger picture” on some basic human rights in the USA. To achieve this, we will present data from different studies as well as from the USA census.

In this first note, we will examine overall poverty, unemployment, and wealth distribution in the USA while analyzing the unremitting socio-economic differences amongst the American population due to race and gender. Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to explain in depth all the reasons behind both racism and sexism due to the fact that these are rather ingrained complex issues with a long stance in America, despite multiple efforts to the contrary. We will, however, explore here the eugenics movement, which was quite influential during a good part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, informing policies that would affect both women and people of color for decades. Unfortunately, the basic core beliefs of this movement are still present in the American ethos today and, under this new administration, basic human rights are constantly under attack, aggravating the already existing levels of poverty and equality amongst women and people of color.

Subsequent notes will focus on women’s rights.

**Keywords:** human rights, race, gender, poverty, intersectionality, United States of America.

### [es] Notas sobre “raza” y género en los Estados Unidos de América: Pobreza e interseccionalidad

**Resumen.** Ésta es la primera de varias notas multidisciplinares con un único objetivo en común: describir el panorama general de algunos derechos humanos en los Estados Unidos de América. Para ello presentaremos datos estadísticos de varios estudios y del censo de los Estados Unidos.

En esta primera nota examinaremos los niveles de pobreza, desempleo, y distribución de la riqueza en el país, y observaremos las persistentes diferencias introducidas por las variables de raza y género examinando algunas de las razones más importantes de fondo para tales diferencias. Desafortunadamente, nos sería imposible examinar todas las causas de estos problemas a fondo, dada su complejidad, larga historia y persistencia. Sin embargo, exploraremos el movimiento de la eugenesia y la profunda influencia que tuvo durante gran parte del siglo XX en forma de políticas que afectarían a mujeres y personas de color durante décadas. Desafortunadamente, las creencias de base de este movimiento siguen estando muy vigentes en la sociedad norteamericana, y, bajo esta nueva administración, estos abusos en contra de los derechos humanos son una constante, agravando los elevados niveles de pobreza y desigualdad en mujeres y personas de color.

Las notas subsiguientes se centrarán en los derechos de la mujer.

**Palabras clave:** derechos humanos, raza, género, pobreza, interseccionalidad, Estados Unidos de América.

**JEL:** I3, O15, J7

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## Introduction

*“All the other stuff, the love, the democracy, the floundering into lust, is a sort of by-play. The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted.”*

D.H. Lawrence  
(Studies in Classic American Literature, 1923)

The United States of America is a country of profound contradictions and without understanding these contradictions it is impossible to understand its history and evolution as a country.

A couple of essential factors that need to be taken into account when analyzing any social issues in the USA are its extreme inequality and the effects of intersectionality, which we will define here as the interconnection of social categorizations such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age and the way they apply to specific individuals and/or groups, creating overlapping and interdependent systems, including institutionalized systems, of discrimination or disadvantage.

We will provide data on race, gender, levels of income, etc. as well as on other important related issues, such as access to health care and education, etc. which will in turn depict the general socio-economic context in which basic human rights should be encompassed in the USA. We will also explore a relevant movement, that of eugenics, in order to provide an idea of the importance of race historically in the USA and its influence in the shaping of some of the country's most relevant policies.

## Life Expectancy

Bezruchka (2014) states that one death out of 3 in the USA is a direct result of the country's very high income inequality. Indeed, it is long been proven that poverty leads, amongst other things, to lower educational attainment, poor eating habits and, therefore, higher levels of chronic illness, as well as the inability to access proper health care. All of the above is decreasing the USA's life expectancy<sup>2</sup>, especially

amongst the lower, and now middle, income brackets. Moreover, according to data provided by the World Economic Forum and its Report on Global Competitiveness for 2018, the years in which Americans can expect to live a healthy life is declining as well (this number is deducted from a combination of mortality rates and health status data); America is in 47<sup>th</sup> place out of 140 countries, with an average of 67.7 healthy years. This is a result of increasingly stressful lives, reduced access to health care and adequate pensions<sup>3</sup>, and poor life habits (poor diet, stress, and self-medication as well as drug consumption being the biggest culprits), etc.

In 2016 life expectancy declined for the first time since 1993, a steady trend since. Wealth and education determine how long we live; a study conducted by the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2018 stated that a 40 year old man in the top 1% could expect to live 14 years longer than his counterpart in the bottom 1%. By 55, the average American man in the richest 10% is likely to live another 35 years, while the average American man in the poorest 10% of the country is likely have only about 24 years left to live, that is a difference of 11 years.

As stated before, those in poverty are most likely to fall ill because of lower education, overcrowding, and poor nutrition. In

<sup>3</sup> In the USA, both systems are highly privatized. Even though there is a very basic social security system, most individuals need to engage a private retirement plan if they expect to have a decent living pension when they retire. These plans invest their money/savings in different stock portfolios within the financial system. Therefore, if the financial system collapses, so do their retirement savings, as it happened during the last recession. Moreover, the age of retirement has now been pushed back from 65 to almost 67 years.

In the case of the health care system, what is commonly known as the “Obama Care” (now “Trump Care”), has resulted in an unexpected collateral: insurance companies have substantially increased both their monthly premiums and their “deductibles” (a deductible is a specified amount of money, which varies depending on the health plan one has signed up for, that the insured must pay every year out of pocket before an insurance company will become responsible for the client's bills). This has important consequences for people's health in the long term because now more than ever before, when people become sick they wait until a visit to the doctor will be covered by their insurance plan (i.e.: preventative care, like annual exams). Early detection is therefore mostly forfeited in many instances. A simple visit to one's primary doctor is, around \$150-\$300, that is without including tests of any kind. The USA is widely known for being one of the most expensive health care system in the world.

<sup>2</sup> We will not include here data about the “opioid crisis”. The reason for this omission lies in the complexity of this issue.

fact, a college educated 25 year old will most likely outlive a high school dropout by over a decade (Rostron et al., 2010). And these are all averages that do not provide an accurate perspective of what is really happening to the more disadvantaged individuals in our society, women and people of color.

## Wealth Distribution

When we look at wealth in the USA and its distribution we can see that the middle class is steadily dwindling and that socio-economic differences are becoming ever deeper. Age is also a very important factor here, for we are an aging society, and given the nature of intersectionality, inequality is to become even more profound as the years pass. For instance, black and Hispanic families have less in liquid retirement savings than white families as a result of long-life lower salaries and other factors such as higher rates of incarceration<sup>4</sup>. The data shows that, in 2016 (Favreault, 2017), white families had about six times more in average liquid retirement savings than black and Hispanic families. Moreover, among Americans 65 or older, black people and Latinos are much more likely to rely solely on Social Security for income. Older women are more likely to live alone than men and are twice as likely to be poor, especially women of color, the reason being that they live longer lives naturally and have lower salaries<sup>5</sup> throughout their whole lives, which leaves them in a very vulnerable position when old age arrives.

Moreover, older people will make up almost a quarter of the U.S. population by 2060. That means that the number of seniors will more than double, from 46 million in 2016 to more than 98 million by 2060 and the number of older Americans needing nursing home care will increase from 1.3 million in 2010 to 2.3 million by 2030 (Vespa et al., 2018). If we look at poverty and race, we find that 8% of non-Hispanic white

people 65 years or older lived in poverty in 2014, compared to that of 18% of older Latinos and 19% of African-Americans, a difference of at least 10 percentage points in both cases. This trend will worsen with time because, although white people will indeed account for more than half of older Americans through 2060, their share will plummet by 23%, while the percentage of Latino older people will be soaring from 8% (2014) to 11% by 2030 and 22% by 2060, in short a reversal in numbers (USA census).

According to the census, in 2014, 47 million people lived in poverty in the USA. That means that the poverty rate was 15%, and about another 100 million lived in the boundary between poverty and middle class. Seventy millions of those were women and their children. This is not in the least surprising, for the majority, about 2/3 of the workers who receive the minimum wage, are women and they also tend to hold temporary and part-time contracts in a higher proportion than their male counterparts.

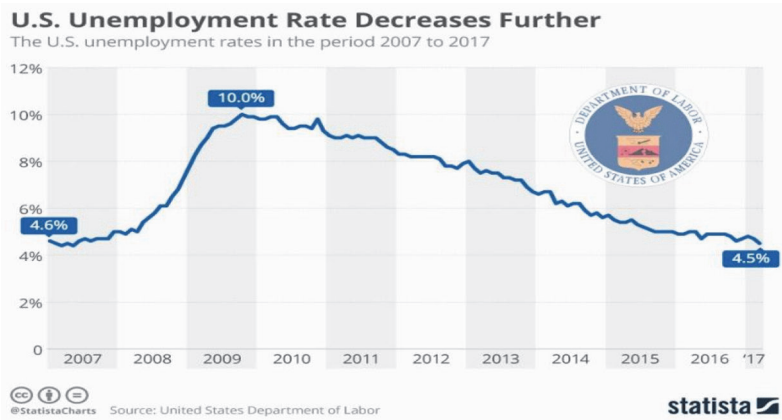
In fact, in the opinion of Guy Standing, author of the *Precariat*, wages have been stagnant for the last 20 years globally, if not declining. Moreover, the share of national income going to labor has declined over 10% in both Europe and the US. Most individuals are stuck in what he calls the “precariat” or people who take and endure high levels of labor insecurity (casual, temporal, etc.), jobs with no benefits, low and uncertain income, etc., which leads to high levels of unsustainable debt (i.e. USA credit card debt surpassed 1 trillion in March 2018, according to the Federal Reserve), or what some authors in development economics would call “poverty traps”. Although it is true that most of the society is affected by this socio-economic reality, women and people of color are especially vulnerable to these economic realities due to historical and pervasive forms of discrimination, especially in the labor market.

Therefore, even though there are jobs available in the USA, the nature of many of these jobs is precarious. In the graph below (1), we can see how unemployment is not very high and it even decreased further during 2018, reaching rates (below 4%) we had not seen since the 60’s. However, the following graph (2) may partly illustrate the rise in temporary jobs (a trend that started after the economic crisis in 2008) which is one of the

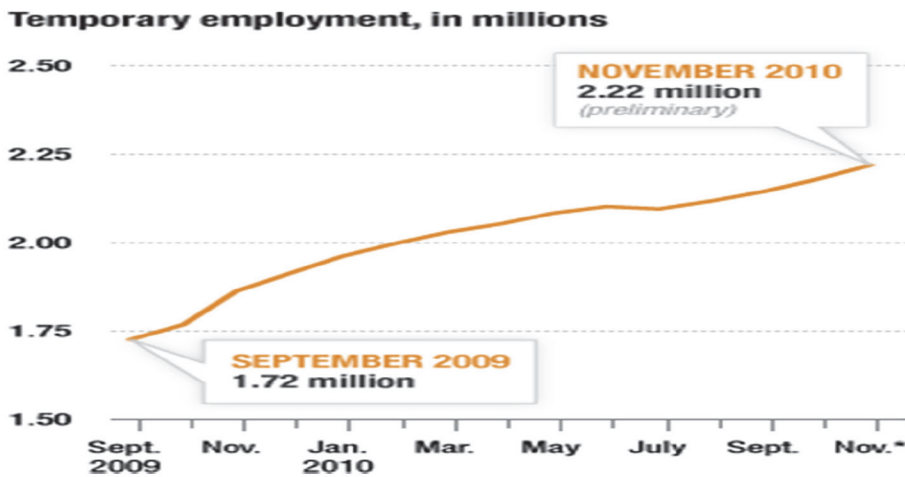
<sup>4</sup> The US has the largest incarcerated population in the world, with blacks and Latinos being over-represented. The reasons behind are multiple and the consequences for these communities quite devastating. Moreover, a person that has been incarcerated loses its right to vote and to certain social services for life, effectively losing essential basic rights.

<sup>5</sup> We will explore this topic further on further notes.

Graph 1. U.S. Unemployment Rates 2007-2017<sup>6</sup>.



Graph 2. The Rise of the Temporary Workforce, 2009-2010<sup>7</sup>.



Notes: \*Employment figures for October and November 2010 are preliminary.  
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Credit: Hurt, A./NPR.

reasons for precariousness in the American workforce.

If instead of looking at how the labor market has been performing, when we take a look at households income, data for 2014 shows that the median income for middle class households was 4% less than in 2000, a clear indicator of the effects of the housing market crisis and recession, which also affected families’ median wealth (= assets minus debts), decreasing by 28% from 2001 to 2013. In fact, the wealth gap between families of higher income and the middle class is growing because this last

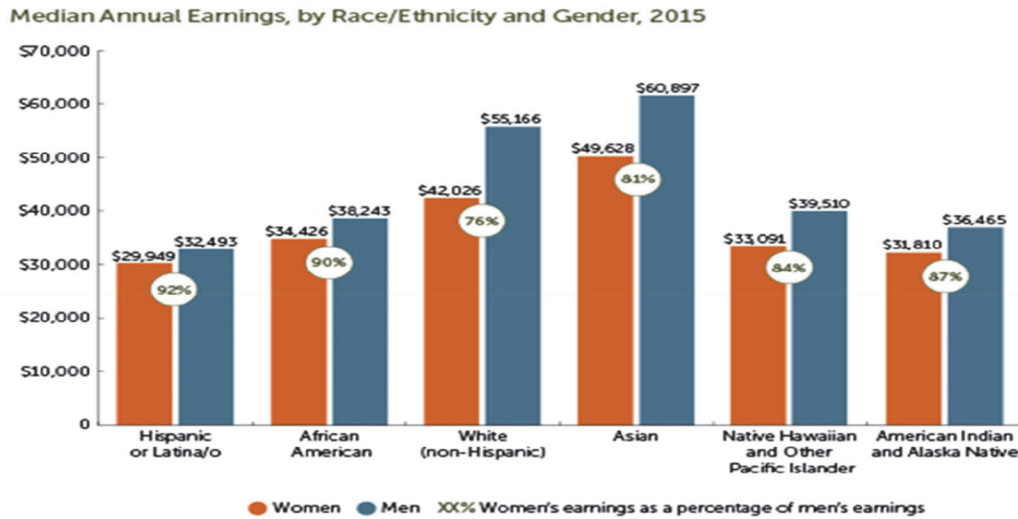
group is steadily losing its ground. Meanwhile, the percentages of people living in very poor households and very rich ones are increasing, which showcases the accumulation of wealth in a very small percentage of the population (Pew Research Center, 2014). According to economist E. Wolff, the top 20% controls 90% of the American economy, with the richest 1% getting a very large share, owning more wealth than the bottom 90%, which merely gets 10% of the whole pie.

Gender and race are extremely important variables when we look into poverty rates; in the USA nearly six in ten poor adults are women, and nearly six in ten poor children live in families headed by women; 40% of households with children 18 or younger are headed by women who are the main bread winners.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: <https://proxy.statista.com/chart/8974/us-unemployment-rate/>

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/14/131942175/a-temporary-solution-for-a-new-american-worker>

Chart 1. Wages, Race and Gender, 2015<sup>8</sup>.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



Poverty rates are especially high for single mothers, women of color, and elderly women living alone (census, 2014).

One of the reasons for this is the wage gap between men and women, although race also plays a part (Asians being the exception to the rule).

Most people living in the USA work long hours to make ends meet, and many are failing at it due to low wages. The educational system, what we economists think of as the bulletproof tool for economic development helping individuals to reach their dreams and full capacity to better themselves in their quest to advance socially, is also failing. Primary and secondary schools have innumerable problems but it is the highly privatized college education that reflects this reality even more, for it has become the privilege of the few that can afford attending college<sup>9</sup>, reproducing the class system even further down the line, where the privileged few are not only in control of the economy of the country but

also of its political system. According to a report elaborated in 2014 by the NGO “Center for Responsive Politics”, using official data disclosed by all members of Congress as well as prospective candidates, half of all US Congressional politicians were millionaires. In all, 268 out of the 534 members of Congress had an average net worth of \$1 million or more. Data from another 2014 national survey conducted by the NGO “The Reflective Democracy Campaign” showed that elected politicians are overwhelmingly white (90%) and male (71%), and although white men represent only 31% of the U.S. population, they hold 65% of all elected offices and have eight times as much political power as women of color.

To make matters worse, about 4 million Americans are failing at returning their student debt today. Higher education in the USA is quite expensive compared to that of other developed countries for most colleges are private in nature, especially those with the highest rankings. In the following chart (2), we can see how the percentage of student unpaid debt is very high, especially amongst people of color, and that whites lead in paid loans, which reflects their ability to pay for their tuitions upfront and, if in need of a loan, that of earning throughout their active professional lives compared to that of people of color. Having lingering debt throughout one’s life, hinders one’s

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.aauw.org/2014/04/03/race-and-the-gender-wage-gap/>

<sup>9</sup> The average yearly tuition in a private college is about over \$60,000/year or more per (undergraduate) student. According to the census (2018), only 21.9% of Americans have a Bachelor’s degree, with non-Hispanic Whites and Asians with the highest percentages (24.2 and 31.4% respectively), and blacks and Hispanics with the lowest (16.3 and 13% respectively). Only 2% of the total population hold a PhD degree.

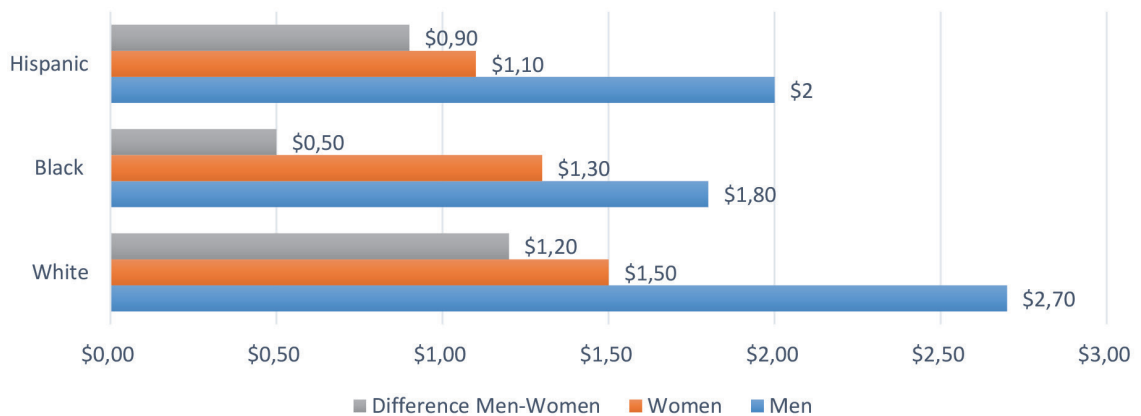


Chart 2. Payment Status of Student Loans Acquired for own Education by Race, Ethnicity, and Age, 2015<sup>10</sup>.

	Currently owe education debt, behind	Currently owe education debt, not behind	Paid off loans
White, non-Hispanic (ages 18-44)	5%	60%	35%
Black, non-Hispanic (ages 18-44)	14%	76%	10%
Hispanic (ages 18-44)	27%	58%	15%
White, non-Hispanic (all)	5%	42%	53%
Black, non-Hispanic (all)	16%	58%	26%
Hispanic (all)	23%	52%	25%

Source: Federal Reserve (2015).

Chart 3. Life Time Earnings by Race and Gender (in millions).



Source: Favreault, M. / Credit: Castanyer, P.

ability to save and to prosper as others (in this case white individuals) may do.

More to the point, and according to Melissa Favreault, tabulations from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation matched to that of the Summary Earnings Records through 2012 show that “The average white man earns \$2.7 million over a lifetime, while the average black man earns \$1.8 million and the average Hispanic man earns \$2.0 million...the average white woman earns \$1.5 million, while the average black woman earns \$1.3 million and the average Hispanic woman earns \$1.1 million.”<sup>11</sup>

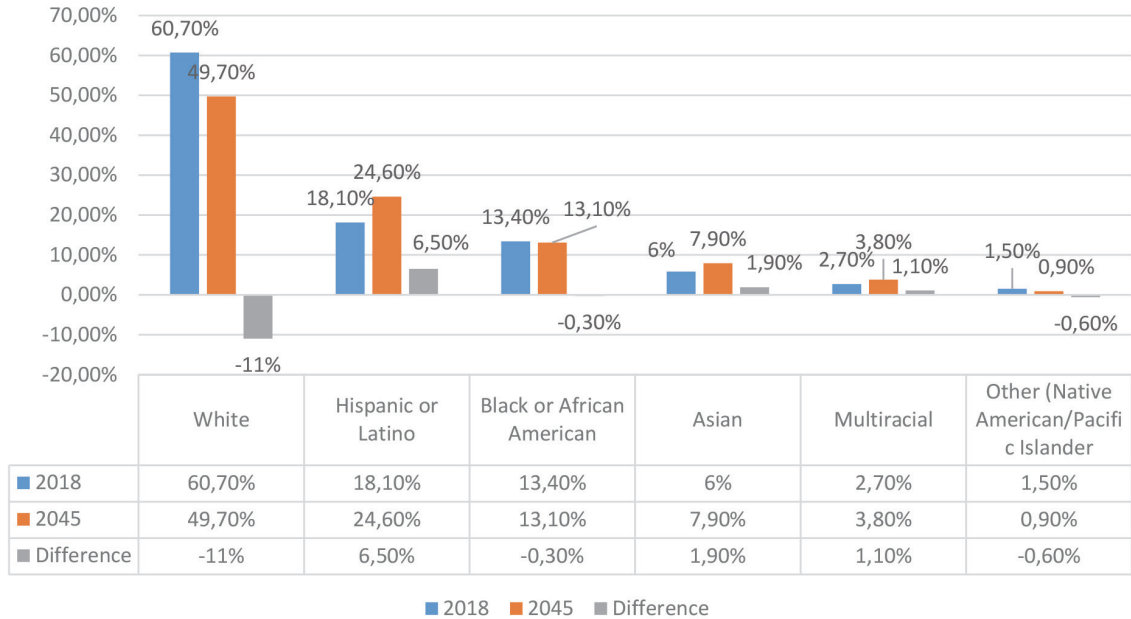
This reality will become even more aggravated in future due to the fact that families of color will soon make up the majority of the population in the USA, as the following graph illustrates, with whites falling by over 10% and Latinos increasing their numbers by about 7%.

Nevertheless, people of color continue to fall behind whites in building wealth, as Favreault finds in her study: “In 1963, the average wealth of white families was \$121,000 higher than the average wealth of nonwhite families. By 2016, the average wealth of white families (\$919,000) was over \$700,000 higher than the average wealth of black families (\$140,000) and of Hispanic families (\$192,000).” “White family wealth was seven times greater than black family wealth and five times greater than Hispanic family wealth in 2016.” This disparity is as high as it was

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/data/2016-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2015-education-debt-student-loans.htm>

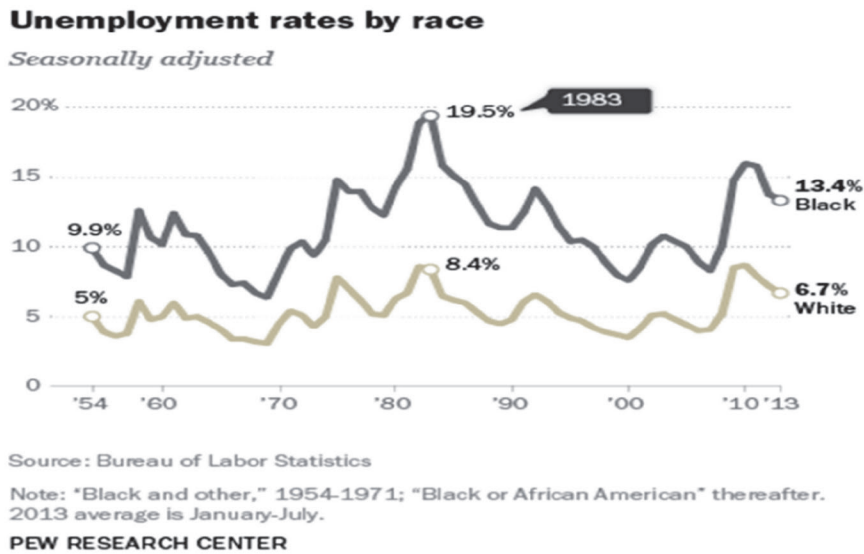
<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: <http://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>

Chart 4. Population Distribution by Race. Projection 2018-2045.



Source: US Census Population Projection / Credit: Castanyer, P.

Graph 3. Unemployment and Race, 1954-2013<sup>12</sup>.

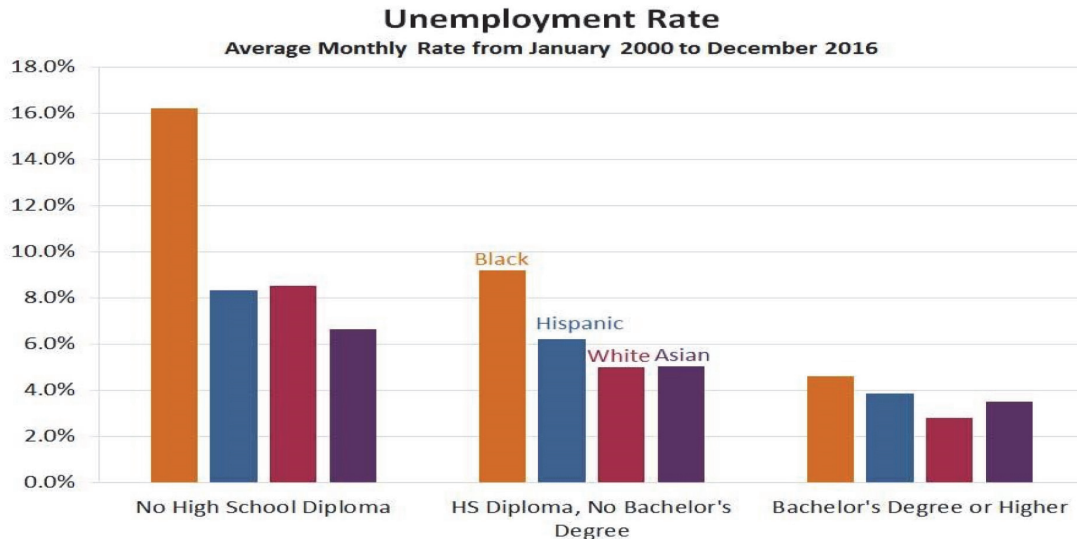


in 1963, before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned employment discrimination. Moreover, unemployment has remained consistently higher amongst African-Americans, as the graph below confirms.

And this is regardless of educational attainment, for college-educated African-Americans are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to whites with the same level of education.

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/21/through-good-times-and-bad-black-unemployment-is-consistently-double-that-of-whites/>

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2017/february/why-unemployment-rates-vary-races-ethnicity>

Chart 5. Unemployment, Race, and Education Levels, 2000-2016<sup>13</sup>.

SOURCES: Bureau of Labor Statistics and Haver Analytics.

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK of ST. LOUIS

## Immigration, a Forgotten Story

However, to really understand how relevant race is regarding levels of poverty, we need to explore the very foundation of the country: immigration, and more importantly, the story of the eugenics movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Before the 1890s, most immigrants came from the British Isles and Germany, and most were white evangelicals. After that there was a shift, and people who were originally from Eastern and Southern Europe started to arrive to the United States. Amongst these last groups most were peasants and many were Jews escaping from persecution and/or oppression. Then, the first wave of arrivals started to set themselves apart as the “rightful” residents of the country, and even some groups of whites were not included, like Irish immigrants, who were considered “people of color” at the time (Ignatiev, 2009) and had to go through a process, as many other groups before and after them, of “becoming white”, or what is known as “whitewashing”, a process of full integration and/or assimilation, which in every case is intrinsically different but usually includes forsaking one’s own culture and traditions, including one’s own mother tongue<sup>14</sup>, with the exception

of one’s religion (since religious freedom is a founding right protected by the Constitution)

After the devastating Great War (WWI), the USA received up to 75,000 new arrivals every month. This massive influx of immigrants was a matter of concern for several groups, such as labor unions, conservationists, and social workers, but one of the groups that lobbied the most to stop immigration was the eugenics movement.

In the graph below (4), we can see that US immigration has occurred in waves.

The eugenics ideology was first pioneered by Harvard graduate Charles Davenport at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the Nazis adopted its thesis’ as their own and applied its pseudo-scientific methods to Germany first and then to the rest of Europe.

Davenport, alongside with Grant, Laughlin and other men of science, created the American Eugenics Movement which was mostly supported by white evangelical men. Their influence in American society was considerable for it became mainstream for about 20 years (from the 20’s to the 40’s) through media, political lobbying, etc.

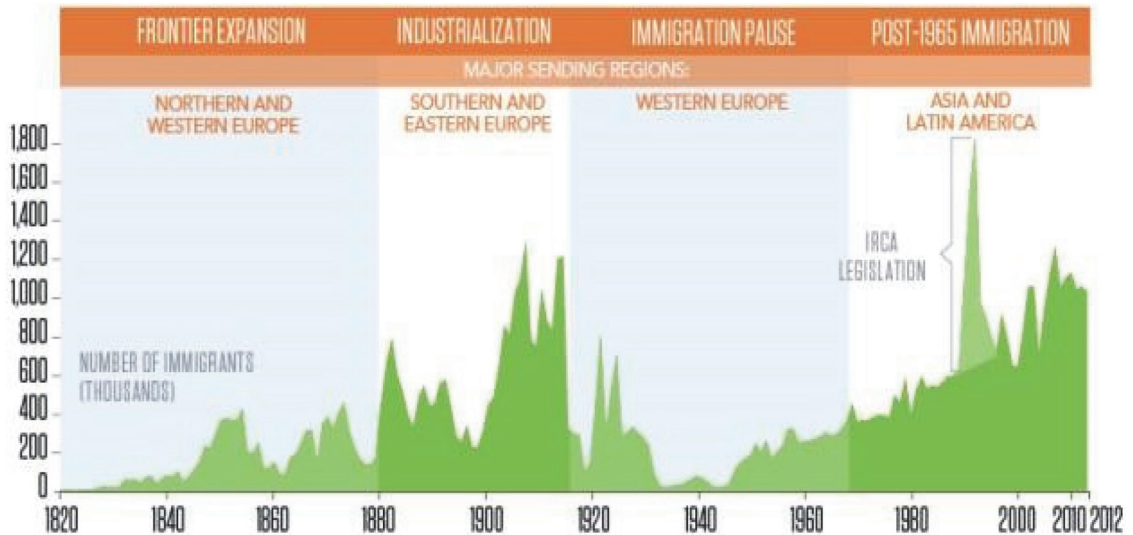
The eugenics movement rested on already existing hierarchies and racism as well as “protestant ethics”. Its aim was to preserve the “original stock” of the first settlers and improve it, creating a better American race by;

<sup>14</sup> It is not rare to find grandchildren that can’t communicate with their grandparents for they were taught only English in the hopes that discrimination wouldn’t be as hard as on them has it was on the first (grandparents) and second generations (parents) of migrants.

<sup>15</sup> Retrieved from: <https://www.prb.org/us-migration-trends/>



Graph 4. U.S. Immigration Waves since 1820<sup>15</sup>.



Source: US Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigration Statistics (Washington DC, 2012)

Note: IRCA adjustments refer to the amnesty provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, under which 2.7 million undocumented foreign US residents obtained legal immigrant status.

1. Eliminating “febleness” within American society, through sterilizations.
2. Avoiding marriages with undesirable newcomers or “cheaper races” as Davenport dubbed them, which would dilute and contaminate the American race.

The first line of action is intrinsically important to this study for it showcases the first institutionalized attempt by the American government, more specifically at the state level by eugenics boards, to interfere in its citizens reproductive rights<sup>16</sup>. The second has provided ideological background for many migratory policies since.

To eliminate “febleness”, the movement and its supporters all over the country set on a mission that eventually resulted in over 60,000 sterilizations nationwide, in an attempt to avoid the passing down of faulty genes through the generations. The objective was to identify individuals that were “mentally deficient” or unfit to reproduce such as alcoholics, criminals, individuals with mental deficiencies of any kind, as well as “loose” women and men. This last group of people were normal-

ly identified under the also quite loose category of “morally deficient” which in itself implied “mental deficiency”. People in this group were mostly women, and anything from going out late at night to being a prostitute would qualify. In all, anyone who was not part of the social norm was considered to be a mentally deficient individual.

If a woman had a child out of wedlock, even if she had been raped, she was considered to be “morally deficient”, as was the case of Carrie Buck, the daughter of a woman also considered to be “mentally deficient”. The case against Buck was presented to the Supreme Court by the state of Virginia in 1926, seeking her sterilization. The Supreme Court upheld the case in 1927, which eventually opened forced sterilization of individuals considered to be “mentally deficient” all over the country. With the Buck’s case, who was herself sterilized in 1927, the experimental period of eugenics had come to an end for in the two decades before this ruling, “only” 6,000 people had been sterilized nationwide. Following the Supreme Court ruling, thirty two U.S. states passed sterilization laws between 1907 and 1937 and, by the 1930s, 30,000 people had been sterilized against their will. By the 1970s the numbers rose to over 60,000 (20,000 only in California), even though the celebrity of eugenics had declined

<sup>16</sup> Reproductive rights will be analyzed in the last note of this series. Therefore, it is important to refer to this historical precedent regarding the state’s control over individuals’ reproductive rights here.

during the 30's, when the Great Depression proved that poverty and its outcomes were rather a social problem, not a genetic one. However, and despite of the evidence of the horrors of eugenics carried to their very limits by the Nazis in Europe before and during WWII, eugenic inspired policies remained in place until the 1970s in the USA, forbidding people from different races to intermarry and submitting many to forced sterilizations by their states.

Of course, those most affected by these laws were people who were poor and belonged to racial minorities. According to research conducted by professor Stern "those sterilized in state institutions often were young women pronounced promiscuous; the sons and daughters of Mexican, Italian, and Japanese immigrants, frequently with parents too destitute to care for them; and men and women who transgressed sexual norms." Moreover, "Preliminary statistical analysis demonstrates that during the peak decade of operations from 1935 to 1944 Spanish-surnamed patients were 3.5 times more likely to be sterilized than patients in the general institutional population." Sadly, the trend of sterilizing Hispanics continued in California during the 60's and 70's as is showcased by the Mexican American women who were sterilized under duress after giving birth at Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center.

Amongst Native American the trend persisted into the 1980s, with as many as 25-50%, according to several studies, of Native American women being forcibly sterilized between 1970 and 1976, six years during which this practice was regularly enforced (Lawrence, J., 2000, pp.400-419).

The second offensive line, that of trying to stop immigration, had its roots well embedded in a book written by Madison Grant, a lawyer and active member of the eugenics movement. This book, greatly admired by Hitler while in jail before his ascension to power, identified what he called "the Nordic race" as well as the dangers of diluting their blood by intermixing with other "inferior" races. In fact, before writing this book, Madison organized eugenics supporters around lobbying in favor of a more restrictive immigration law that was already temporarily in place since 1921; the Emergency Quota Act created by Congress restricting immigration by 97%. Three years later (in 1924), President Calvin Coolidge signed the

temporary act into permanent law (which was upheld until the end of WWII).

Hispanics specifically, and especially those of Mexican origin, were confronted then with a massive program of deportations enforced in the 30's and 40's; an estimate of 2 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans were "repatriated". Of those, roughly one million were actually US citizens.

Citizens of black descent, on the other hand, were not considered that much of a problem by the eugenics movement since segregation (Jim Crow Laws) kept them in check, and neither were Asians, for the Chinese Exclusion Act, first enforced in 1882, would effectively encompass all individuals of Asian descent until 1943, when it was legally repealed by the Magnuson Act<sup>17</sup>.

Despite of the regulations aimed at curbing racist attitudes within American society in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is evident that racist practices are well and alive even to this day. Proof of it are the current immigration policies as well as the surveillance by the FBI of black individuals who seek social justice through civil rights associations or the like, and are categorized as "Black Identity Extremists".

In short, the treatment of people of color born and raised in the country for generations, has remained dreadful throughout the 20th century and continues to be so in the 21st century. Native Americans, African Americans, American Latinos, and American Asians are effectively treated as second class citizens in multiple and different ways and are constantly faced with mounting challenges to, for instance, be able to vote. However, these are issues for a whole other note on the political side of it all, which would no doubt include the infamous question the Trump administration wants to include in the 2020 census on whether a person is a citizen or not with the objective to deter people who are not citizens, that is everybody holding a visa (or not), mostly people of color, from filling up the census questionnaire (quite understandably, given the brutal immigration policies enforced by this administration). In that way, if they do not exist, neither do their rights, for the census determines not only how the federal budget (essential funding for

<sup>17</sup> Asians are the only group that were systematically excluded from the right of obtaining citizenship, since their arrival in the 1850s.

schools, health care, housing, etc.) is allocated amongst states but also the apportionment or “the determination of the proportional number of members each state sends to the House of Representatives, based on population figures.”

Moreover, how we perceive immigration easily measures racist attitudes. According to the latest Gallup poll available (2018) over 25% of Americans believe that immigration isn't good for America and 1/3 agreed with the statement “immigration correlates with crime”, even though evidence shows that when immigration was at its peak (1994-04) crime was indeed decreasing. In fact, over the last 20 years, areas with higher levels of immigrants had significantly lower levels of crime, particularly violent crime. However, when illegal immigrants are forcibly removed, violence spikes, for the social fabric is abruptly disrupted and broken. In recent history, illegal immigrants have been subjected to the most brutal kind of treatment under both the Obama Administration, with over 3 million deportations (roughly about the same number of illegal immigrants that were legalized under the Reagan Administration in the 80's), and now the Trump administration, which has proven to have a total disregard for basic human rights. It is only fair to add here that the much touted “Trump Wall” was first approved in 2006 by then Senators Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, John McCain and that its construction was well under way before Trump reached presidency.

## Conclusions

Institutionalized and deeply ingrained sexism and racism have prevailed and persisted throughout the decades in the USA as the institutionalized practices driven by the eugenics movement showcase. Both determine greatly one's ability to prosper and are a constant in everyday life, mostly in underhanded and cunning ways, despite existing laws pro-

tecting both women and people of color from discrimination in the USA, for unconscious bias, as well as conscious, is very difficult to uproot.

Moreover, this is a much divided country and its white “majority”, so used to get their bidding, is now fighting to “get their country back” by all means possible. Demographic projections show that families of color will be majority soon enough, which this new government is partly ignoring, partly tackling down, with cunning and multiple actions that would guarantee the powerful stance of the white population despite of such tilting of the demographic scale, such as the census’ “citizenship question”, which would in fact help allocate a larger part of the budget in white rural communities and states for years to come. The endgame is to deny access to fundamental rights to very specific groups and, in this way, prevail.

What is lacking here is the inability to understand that an economy is only as strong as its most weakened groups, for they lag behind pulling down the whole of the economy. If the numbers of these disadvantaged groups are on the rise, it will be ever more difficult for the USA to grow and remain economically sustainable globally speaking.

We barely survived Reagan's socio-economic policies and their collateral damages, including his rekindling of the war on drugs which effectively targets people of color and forces their incarceration in massive proportions to this day. We are now finding ourselves again immersed in a new wave of policies restricting people's access to basic rights. Unfortunately, these policies will have staggering and long-lasting consequences for it is unlikely that the increasing poverty rates, the lack or limited access to health care and education, the high wage gaps and debt levels, etc. will improve for women and people of color in the USA any time soon, especially in some states.

Local damage at first, national damage then, and global damage last is the name of the game.

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