

# Dissecting Structural Racism

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To Dissect Structural Racism, You Need the Right Conceptual Tools—Knowing All the Anatomical Parts and How They Work Together to Either Promote or Undermine Our Well-Being

# Essentialism

- a belief that people/things have a set of characteristics that make them who/what they are, and that if we know what these characteristics are, then we understand the essence of the person/thing.

# Racial Essentialism

- **Ideology of Racism:** The belief that the essence or fundamental **nature of a person** can be understood by knowing their race, and that some races are superior to others.
- **Institutional/Structural Racism:** Public policies, practices and/or governmental programs that promote this belief and promote the dominance of one race over others

# The Pseudo-Science of Race Has Been Debunked

- Race as a **biological concept is nonsense**. Nonetheless:
  - **many** people continue to believe that one's race defines something fundamental about people—something about their very essence.
  - **Most** of us maintain unconscious racial biases that affect our attitudes and behavior.

**Race as a social construct is real** in the sense that:

- **people believe it exists,**
- **have racial identities,**
- **their behavior** and cultural preferences may be related to it, and
- **People's life chances are correlated with their race,**

# Structural Racism Combines with Other Forms of Structured Inequality to Perpetuate the Status Quo

- So, If we could just eliminate structural racism, would structured racial inequality (eg., health, wealth, income) disappear?

While Many of Our Principal Economic and Political Institutions are Structured in a Way that Perpetuates Racial Inequality, We Need to Understand that Institutions Do Many Things, Good and Bad, and Produce Other Forms of Inequality (eg, economic), as well.

We Need to Move from an Understanding of Structured Inequality based Solely on Racial Essentialism to Understanding It as Resulting from More Complex Systems that Do Many Other Things, as Well



# Does Structural Racism Structure Inequality by Race?

- **Yes, Absolutely**--But there is Much More to the Story
- Understanding structural racism is necessary but not sufficient
- To dissect the problem, we need to know all the parts of the system, and how they work together—you need the right conceptual tools



- What are the forces that structure and replicate racial inequality in 2018?
- What is similar to and different from how racial inequality was structured in the past?
- Most importantly, how do we fix our social and institutional structures so that race finally becomes obsolete as a social construct?

# Dissection or Emergency Surgery?

- Institutions tend to replicate the status quo—unless people take deliberate steps to change the way institutions structure inequality
- Aggressive action to eliminate racial discrimination – especially in hiring, in housing, and in the criminal justice system.
- Economic and political institutions that do not address income inequality, and the related marginalization of the poor and working poor, affect people of all races, but disproportionately affect people of color.
- With structured inequality involving both race and class, our proverbial patient suffers from both cancer and heart disease.
- She needs emergency surgery now!!!

**This Moment in History**

## For Trump and GOP, subtle racial rhetoric is out. Overt rallying of white support is in.

The president's push in the final days before the election is dominated by anti-immigrant talk about a migrant caravan slowly making its way north through Mexico.

By Philip Rucker and Felicia Sonmez



**Fact Checker: Trump has made 6,420 false or misleading claims over 649 days**



**The Fix: 5 reasons Trump's 'immigration crisis' is a made-up one**



**Trump's new immigration ad, panned as racist, was based on a falsehood**

Data from IndiaSpend, which tracks reports of violence in English-language media, shows that Muslims are overwhelmingly the victims and Hindus the perpetrators. (Sally Deng for The Post)

## Rising hate in India: 'Beat, beat, beat him more!'

Reports of hate-crime incidents, many involving "cow vigilantes," have increased dramatically since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party came to power in 2014.

By Annie Gowen

## Bandaged feet, bleeding hands, violent coughs: The caravan takes its toll

Even the strongest migrants are feeling the effects of walking hundreds of miles in harsh conditions.

By Michael E. Miller

- **Trump announces plan to block some migrants from seeking asylum at border, offers few details**
- **Today's WorldView: Trump deploys the fascist playbook for the midterms**

# Racism, Ethno-Nationalism and Fascism

## Close Cousins, but Not Exactly the Same

- **Institutional/Structural Racism:** Public policies, practices and/or governmental programs that promote this belief and promote the dominance of one race over others
- **Fascism:** a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition
- **Ethno-Nationalism:** a form of nationalism wherein the nation is defined in terms of ethnicity. The central theme of ethnic nationalists is that "nations are defined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry".

# Structured Inequality and Race

- Fighting racialized structured inequality STILL REQUIRES eliminating racism at both the interpersonal and institutional levels.
- But it also requires that our institutions prioritize true equality in access to childcare, transportation, education, healthcare and jobs for low income children, adults and families.
- Through Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo, our community COULD successfully address both forms of structured inequality? Are we prepared to use the right tools?

# Life Expectancy in Kalamazoo County

## Black-White Gap at Birth

- **Kalamazoo: 5.4 years gap** - black-white gap in life expectancy at birth
- **US: 3.6 years** - black-white gap in life expectancy at birth
- **White Life Expectancy: 78.8 Years**
  - Equal to 52<sup>nd</sup> in world ranking
    - 51 Bahrain
    - **52 Kalamazoo (white)**
    - 52 Chile
    - 53 Cyprus
- **Black Life Expectancy: 73.3 Years**
  - Equal to 132<sup>nd</sup> in world ranking
    - 131 Vietnam
    - **132 Kalamazoo (black)**
    - 133 Bangladesh
    - 134 Nicaragua

\* Source: National Center for Health Statistics

## Gap at Age 40 by Income Percentile

Percentile	Men	Women
5 <sup>th</sup>	72.8	78.0
10 <sup>th</sup>	74.5	81.7
25 <sup>th</sup>	77.8	82.8
50 <sup>th</sup>	82.9	84.7
75 <sup>th</sup>	84.1	88.2
90 <sup>th</sup>	87.3	88.9
95 <sup>th</sup>	89.0	89.2
	M	F
5th to 95th percentile gap	15.21	11.2
10th to 90th percentile gap	12.79	7.22
25th to 75th percentile gap	6.49	5.41

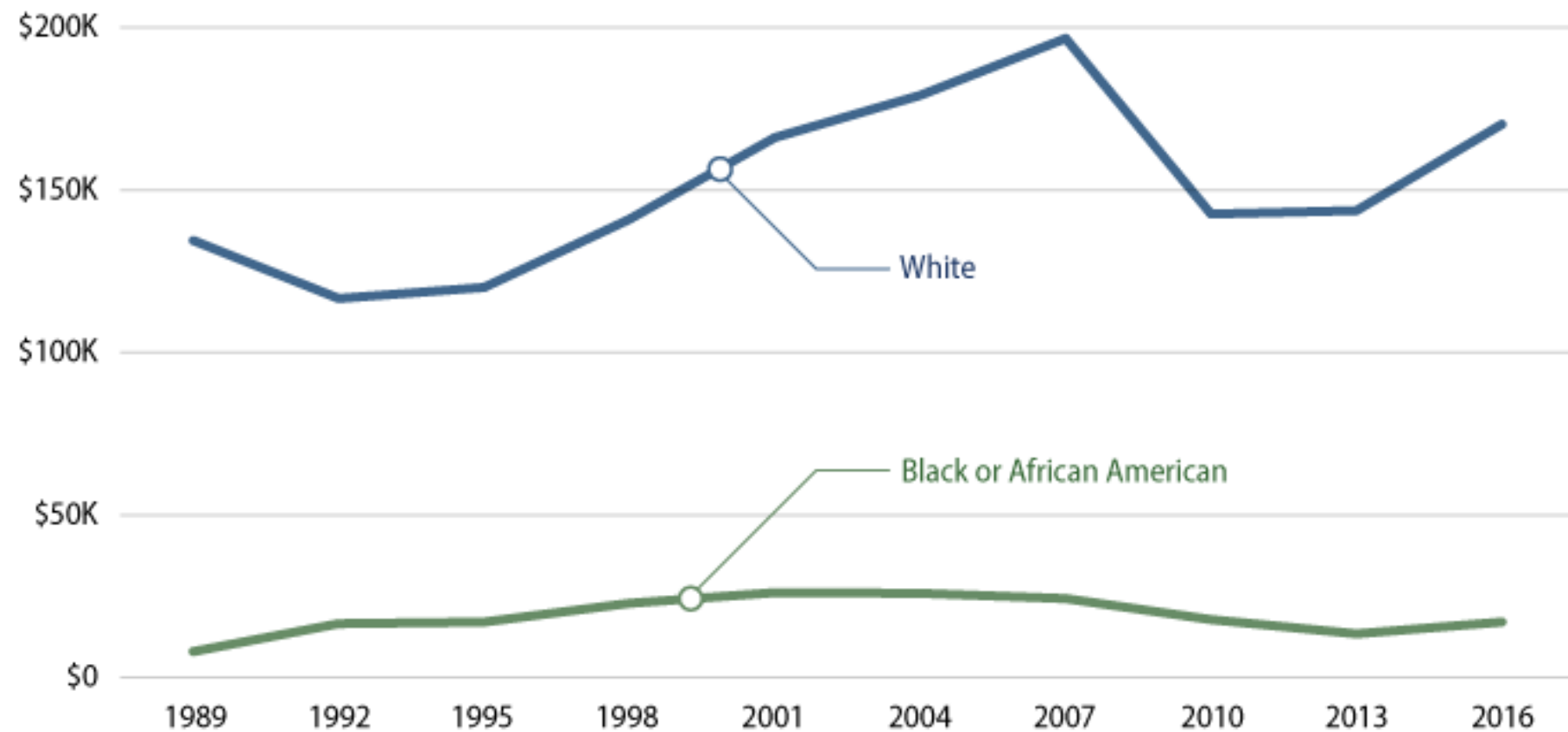
\* Source: Raj Chetty, The Health Inequality Project



FIGURE A1

## Black or African American households hold significantly less wealth than white households

Household wealth from 1989 to 2016, by race



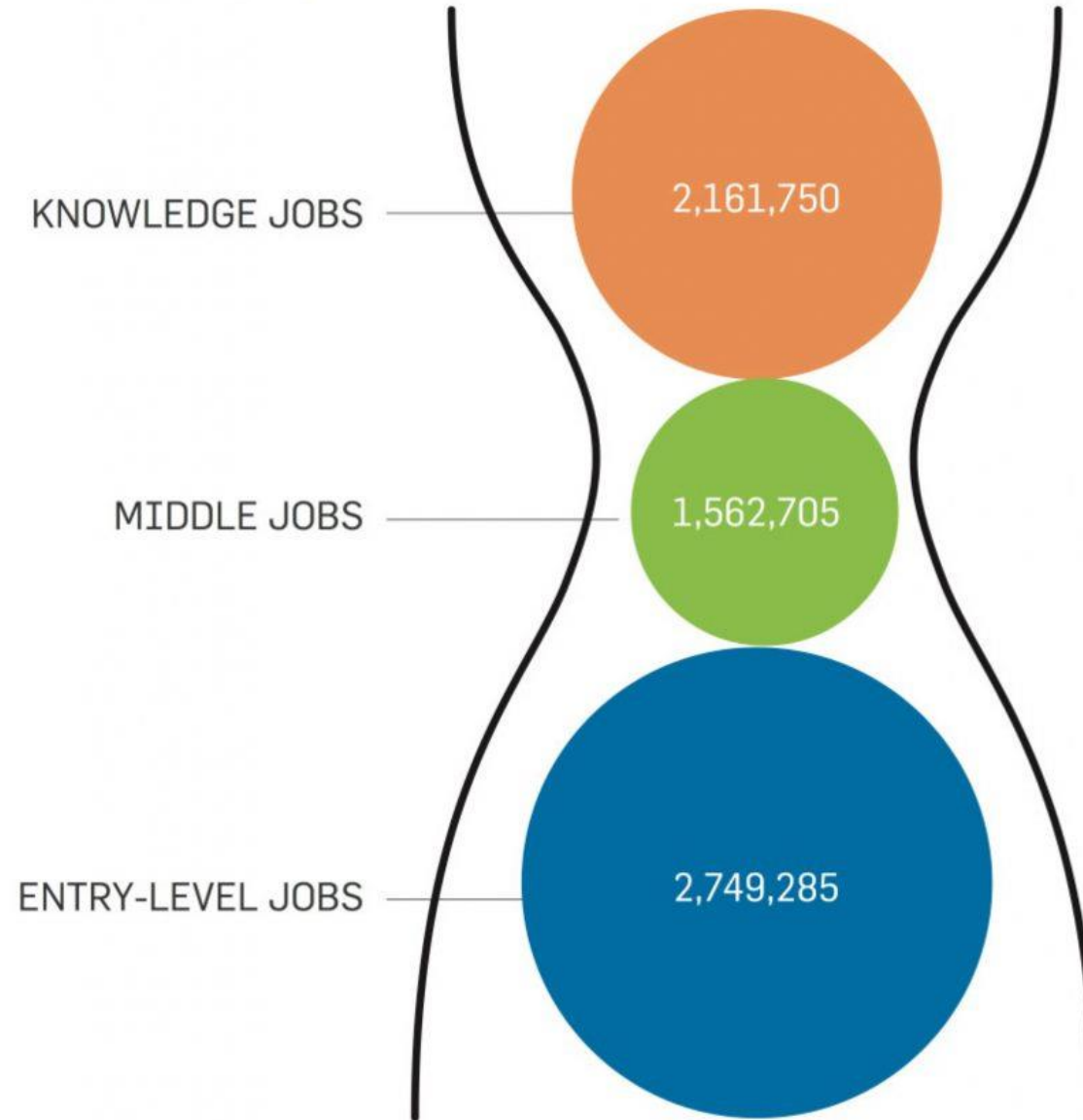
Note: Shares are based on separate distributions for all white and black or African American households.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data in survey years from 1989 to 2016 from Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, "Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF)," available at <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm> (last accessed October 2017).



## THE HOURGLASS ECONOMY

Distribution of job types, 2006



# Dramatic Rise in Income Inequality in the US



Source: WDI/world (2017). See wdi2018.world for data series and notes.

In 2014, 12% of national income was received by the top 1% in Western Europe, compared to 20% in the United States. In 1980, 10% of national income was received by the top 1% in Western Europe, compared to 11% in the United States.

# Some of the Things We Must Do to Overcome Structured Inequality

- Demand Enforcement of Civil Rights Laws to Combat Discrimination in Employment, Housing, the Criminal Justice System and Elsewhere
- Advocate for Public Policies to Reverse Income Inequality and Eliminate the Economic Insecurity of the Working Poor and Others
- Become involved in Local Politics to Make Sure Our Schools and Other Local Institutions Are Responsive to the Needs of Those Who Have Not Been Well-Served
- Put the Healthy Growth, Development and Learning of Kids First
- Research and Then Implement Policies that Work to Promote Shared Prosperity—Don't Settle for Slogans and Overly simplistic Solutions
- Be an Active Stakeholder in Your Own Future, and the Future of Your Community! Get Involved!

# Structured Inequality by Both Race and Class



**Emergency Surgery with the  
Right Tools Needed Now!**

