

DIFFvelopment MATTERS:

White Paper on the Importance of DIFFvelopment’s Mission of
“Re-empowering People of African Descent One Student at a Time”

DIFFvelopment

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Abstract

The following white paper comprehensively discusses the importance of DIFFvelopment’s mission of “Re-empowering people of African descent one student at a time.” It reviews the historical and current economic status of people of African descent—living in Africa and throughout the diaspora—in relation to disproportionate unemployment and underemployment rates and racialized wage and wealth gaps, particularly when it comes to graduates of African descent. Through the concise examination of a diverse set of research and data sources, it concludes that college graduates of African descent represent the global demographic most acutely affected by post-graduate employment and wealth disparities, presenting a powerful opportunity for college students of African descent to be made aware of these issues in a way that empowers them to actively seek and create solutions that benefit not only themselves, but future generations of people of African descent to come. DIFFvelopment fills this educational gap by providing college students of African descent with carefully curated programs that foster pre-graduate entrepreneurial activity; provide access to culturally specific entrepreneurial and financial information, learning materials and support; and raise awareness about post-graduate underemployment, the viability of entrepreneurship as a career option, and the importance of generational wealth and giving back to society.

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White Paper on the Importance of DIFFvelopment's Mission of "Re-empowering People of African Descent One Student at a Time."

Introduction: Why People of African Descent Need Re-empowerment

There are countless examples of how people of African descent have suffered and continue to suffer as a result of discrimination. Whether one is to examine slavery, colonialism or present-day institutionalized inequality and neocolonialism, there is absolutely no doubt that each issue is immensely problematic in its own right. However, the persistent evolution of the exploitation of the black race over time does not only call for society to examine the dreadful nature of human depravity, it also beckons us to examine the internal factors that are responsible for the group's incessant vulnerability.

If we are to look at any group of people who have successfully re-empowered themselves after a long stretch of economic and social exploitation (e.g., the Jews), it is evident that their success was and is directly linked to their ability to develop and maintain the strength of their group identity, livelihood and collectivity. Without shared pride in cultural integrity, joint effort in entrepreneurial activity and belief in the importance of intragroup collaboration, a disempowered group cannot achieve re-empowerment.

The global black community's failure to comprehensively rebuild its economic independence and collective sense of pride has impacted its ability to achieve notable re-empowerment in the areas of identity, livelihood and collectivity. The fact that we live in a world where it remains the rule rather than the exception to call into question black people's history, characteristics, intellectuality, professional ability, and worthiness—especially when it comes to whether or not they should have access to powerful spaces—is a testament to this failure.

Education and Identity

When it comes to issues of identity, Dr. Emmanuel Mutyaba reminds us that “The term education... means to lead forth, bring out, bring up, unfold the power of the mind. This means that education should lead to the development of the educated’s potentials to improve himself and [the] society of which he is part.”¹ In other words, how one is educated directly correlates with how one perceives themselves, who they become, and ultimately how they choose to leverage their accomplishments and resources to give back to society.

When it comes to people of African descent, the legacies of colonialism and slavery have made it so that regardless of whether a

black person is raised in Africa, the United States or anywhere else in the diaspora, the education they receive lacks much relevance to who they are and what their group has experienced and achieved, providing them with very little to connect with in relation to how they should view themselves individually and collectively. Furthermore, the Eurocentric education people of African descent receive teaches them how to work for institutions that do not effectively serve the local and global communities they belong to, institutions that historically, and to this day, would rather not employ them.

The Global State of People of African Descent's Livelihood

The US

US studies have found that regardless of a person of African descent's level of education, professional qualifications or clean criminal history, race stands out as the main factor determining their employability, salary and on-the-job treatment. Since the US Bureau of Labor Statistics began keeping track of unemployment data across racial lines in 1954, black unemployment has consistently been twice as high as white unemployment,² a gap Robert W. Farlie and William A. Sundstrom argue manifested as early as 1940.³

U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' “March Current Population Surveys” data reveals a similar pattern when it comes to underemployment rates. Since the 1960s, “Underemployment among black workers in both nonmetro and metro contexts [has been] consistently much higher than...[white worker underemployment], demonstrating the lasting power of racial stratification processes in the U.S.” More specifically, nonmetro white underemployment was 19.3 percent between 1964 and 1966 and 16.1 percent between 2015 and 2017, while nonmetro black underemployment was 50.7 percent between 1964 and 1966 and 33.6 percent between 2015 and 2017; and metro white underemployment was 12.6 percent between 1964 and 1966 and 12.4 percent between 2015 and 2017, while metro black underemployment was 28.4 percent between 1964 and 1966 and 23.1 percent between 2015 and 2017.⁴

When it comes to wages more specifically, “Black men and women earn significantly less than [their] white counterparts[,] largely due to job market discrimination, and this racial wage gap

² [Black Unemployment Rate is Consistently Twice That of Whites](#)

³ [The Emergence, Persistence, and Recent Widening of the Racial Unemployment Gap](#)

⁴ [Race, Residence, and Underemployment: 50 Years in Comparative Perspective, 1964-2017](#)

¹ [Colonial Education System is Killing Africa](#)

has significantly widened over the last 36 years.” For example, when comparing equally educated and experienced full-time black and white workers in 1979, blacks earned 16.9 percent less than whites, while in 2015, black men earned 22 percent less than white men and black women earned 11.7 percent less than white women, compared with 4.5 percent less than white women in 1979.⁵

The Economic Policy Institute’s “State of Working America: Wages 2018” findings indicate that “across various levels of education, a significant black–white wage gap remains, [making it clear that] black workers can’t simply educate their way out of the gap.” This is evident in the fact that “Even black workers with an advanced degree experience a significant wage gap compared with their white counterparts, and after controlling for age, gender, education, and region, black workers are paid 16.2 percent less than white workers.”⁶

In major American cities such as Los Angeles, California, the situation has grown so severe that the city has been deemed to be “in the throes of a Black jobs crisis,” with an average of 17 percent of black workers unemployed in contrast with 9 percent of white workers. According to a University of California, Los Angeles study, the lack of jobs available to black workers has led to a drastic decline in the black population.⁷

Europe

These realities are not exclusive to the US. In “Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015,” Ojeaku Nwabuzo states that despite the “dearth of information” regarding black employment discrimination across Europe, those “countries that have published relevant statistics” overwhelmingly find that “...people with an African origin have systematically higher unemployment rates than the national average in all [European] countries over years...[with] Black Africans [experiencing] the highest rate of unemployment and lowest rate of employment... [and] the highest rates of discrimination both in the workplace and when looking for work.”⁸

Canada

In Canada, where, like in Europe, race-based research is generally not prioritized, Statistics Canada found that black Canadians have consistently experienced much higher wage inequality, unemployment and underemployment than all other groups.⁹ More specifically, “second generation Black Canadians earn 10-15 percent less than second generation white Canadians” and experience more than “double the unemployment rate (9.2%) of white workers (4.1%),” regardless of educational attainment.¹⁰

In addition to earning less, black Canadians “generally face

5 [The Racial Wage Gap Between Black and White Workers is Getting Worse](#)

6 [Stark Black–White Divide in Wages is Widening Further](#)

7 [Ready to Work, Uprooting Inequity: Black Workers in Los Angeles County](#)

8 [Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015](#)

9 [Seeking Success in Canada and the United States: The Determinants of Labour Market Outcomes among the Children of Immigrants](#)

10 [Do Black Canadians Deserve to Earn 10-15% Less than White Canadians?](#)

above-average unemployment,” at a 12 percent unemployment rate compared to a 5 percent unemployment rate for non-Blacks. Black youth aged 15 to 24 have an unemployment rate that is twice the average for young Canadians as a whole despite having “educational backgrounds that are equivalent to those of other young Quebecers and Canadians of French or British origin.”

Myrlande Pierre concludes that “The integration of ethnic minorities, especially “racialized minorities,” into the [Canadian] labour market and other spheres of society remains problematic.”¹¹

Africa

While it is clear that discrimination is responsible for the livelihood disparities we see across the Western world, it is equally clear that fledgling neocolonial independent countries across Africa have yet to develop and maintain economies that effectively manage their ever-growing workforces.

More specifically, when it comes to Africa, “A weak structural transformation dynamic and the premature leveling-off of manufacturing is confining African economies to low-productivity sectors..., ultimately altering ‘Africa’s capacity to generate decent jobs.’” This has resulted in “Africa’s manufacturing output [stagnating] at around 10 percent of GDP since the 1970s; the employment share in manufacturing is even lower. Employment has moved from agriculture to low-productivity services sectors unconnected to international markets and with limited potential for productivity growth.”¹²

With 200 million people between the ages of 15 and 24, Africa has the largest population of young people in the world. These African youth experience unemployment at a rate more than two times that of African adults and account for 60 percent of Africa’s jobless population.¹³ Meanwhile, those who are employed experience extreme underemployment. More specifically, Sub-Saharan Africa “report[ed] the highest youth working poverty rates globally, at almost 70 per cent in 2016...[with] young workers in the region hav[ing] one of the highest probabilities of living in poverty in comparison to adults.”¹⁴ Brookings Institution found that this is due to the fact that “Young people [in Africa] find work, but not in places that pay good wages, develop skills or provide a measure of job security.”¹⁵ For example, it is not uncommon “to find young Nigerian university graduates doing menial jobs.” “They clean floors in hotels, sell mobile telephone calling cards—some even work in factories as labourers.”¹⁶

The Caribbean

Though many Caribbean countries struggle with similar fundamental economic issues as African countries, the reality of the region’s diverse racial character, historically and to this day,

11 [Eradicating Structural Racism for Black Canadians](#)

12 [Job Creation for Youth in Africa: Assessing the Potential of Industries Without Smokestacks](#)

13 [Africa’s Youth: A “Ticking Time Bomb” or an Opportunity?](#)

14 [World Employment Social Outlook 2016: Trends for Youth](#)

15 [For Africa’s Youth, Jobs Are Job One](#)

16 [Africa’s Jobless Youth Cast a Shadow Over Economic Growth](#)

manifests in “indirect discrimination” that is “...more complex and more subtle,” than that which we see throughout the West. While on one hand, countries like Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago struggle with Indo and Afro Caribbean relations, where the Indo Caribbean population controls a disproportionate amount of resources and dictates access and power on the basis of the darkness of one’s skin, other Caribbean nations struggle with having to operate within neocolonial business structures. This is due to the fact that the region’s “financial power is still largely in the hands of white minorities.” In Barbados, for example, “black entrepreneurs have greater difficulty...securing business loans and capital than their white counterparts.”¹⁷ Meanwhile, black people make up over 90 percent of the Bajan population.¹⁸

In the midst of this, in a region where over 70 percent of the population is of African descent,¹⁹ “youth unemployment is double that of the total population,” and “some Caribbean countries are among those with the highest youth unemployment rates in the world.”²⁰

Latin America

“Throughout Latin America, race and ethnicity continue to be among the most important determinants of access to opportunity and economic advancement.” This is evident in the fact that Afro-Latinos are more likely “than the general population to live in extreme poverty.” For example, 34 percent of Afro-Latinos in Peru live below the poverty line, in contrast with 23 percent of mestizos. Similarly, in Brazil, the per capita monthly incomes for Euro-Brazilians “are more than double those of Afro-descendants.”²¹

If we consider these realities in conjunction with the fact that “one out of every five Latin American youths in conditions to work cannot find jobs in their countries,”²² it would not be implausible to presume that this youth unemployment disproportionately impacts the Afro-Latino youth population across the region.

How a Lack of Collectivity Negatively Impacts People of African Descent’s Livelihood

It is important to be aware that the story of discrimination against people of African descent does not end with the West, the Caribbean or Latin America. Descendants of the East African slave trade, living across Asia and the Middle East, experience unbelievable poverty as they struggle to survive in countries that regard them as undesirable. Living on the margins of society in countries such as present-day Iran,²³ Iraq, Persia, Turkey,²⁴ and India, people of African descent existing in these parts of the world are no less discriminated against than

descendants of the transatlantic slave trade.

The reality is that regardless of where people of African descent live or how much education they have, they disproportionately struggle to attain a livelihood commensurate with their credentials. Yet they continue to almost exclusively turn to, or remain in, foreign countries and communities—outside of the ones they originate from—for employment. This is illustrated in the fact that “the willingness to migrate among youth is highest in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean,” all parts of the world where the majority or a substantial portion of the population is of African descent. While it is understandable that “An elevated unemployment rate, increased susceptibility to working poverty and a lack of good quality job opportunities are key factors shaping young people’s decision to migrate abroad permanently,” it is hard to understand why black communities and nations have yet to come together to develop solutions that address this issue as the collective black crisis that it is.²⁵

When we consider the discrimination starry-eyed black graduates face when they leave their black communities and nations for the predominantly white cities and countries of so-called opportunity, it is clear that this issue deserves serious internal attention. This collective issue requires people of African descent to make a concerted effort towards building their own major job markets. Doing so would not only reinforce the importance of recognizing and having pride in one’s identity, it would also grow each new black generation’s confidence in the fact that they belong to a collective global community that is empowered and responsible for supporting itself through its own brainpower and resources.

Why DIFFvelopment Re-empowers People of African Descent Through College Students of African Descent

By virtue of having joined the ranks of those on the journey to obtain a higher education, college students of African descent are generally regarded as a privileged group of people. To many, the fact that they overcame the challenges that come with being a member of the majority in a developing country or a minority in a developed country, exempts them from fully experiencing the challenges associated with the black experience. Though this could not be further from the truth, this misconception causes few to pay attention to, or to speak out about, the unique challenges people of African descent face after graduating from college.

With educated youth around the world suffering from the most unemployment and working poverty and graduates of African descent experiencing some of the highest unemployment and underemployment rates globally,²⁶ it can be confidently inferred that college graduates of African descent represent the global demographic most acutely affected by

¹⁷ [Report: Racism Persists in English-Speaking Caribbean](#)

¹⁸ [Demographics of Barbados](#)

¹⁹ [African Diaspora](#)

²⁰ [Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean](#)

²¹ [Behind the Numbers: Race and Ethnicity in Latin America](#)

²² [Latin America is Facing the Task of Alleviating Youth Unemployment](#)

²³ [The Face of African Slavery in Qajar Iran - in Pictures](#)

²⁴ [The Turks Who Lost Their Language](#)

²⁵ [World Employment Social Outlook 2016: Trends for Youth](#)

²⁶ [World Employment Social Outlook 2016: Trends for Youth](#)

post-graduate unemployment and underemployment. This unresolved precarious set of circumstances presents the opportunity for college students of African descent to be made aware of these issues in a way that empowers them to seek solutions.

Possessing the intellectual and social experience that comes with acquiring a degree, college students of African descent are inherently the demographic within the global black community that is in the best position to readily adopt effective entrepreneurial and financial habits that have the potential to dramatically expand the black-owned job market. An increase in the number of new, successful black-owned businesses would increase the employment and wealth-building prospects for future graduates of African descent for generations to come. It is for these reasons that DIFFvelopment chose college students of African descent as the target group through which to empower the larger community of people of African descent.

The following section summarizes important research and data that further details the extent to which people of African descent experience unemployment and underemployment after graduating, focusing on the US and Europe—two places where the majority of black youth desire to be.

A Deeper Look into the State of Opportunity for Graduates of African Descent in the US and Europe

When it comes to higher education, regardless of race or economic background, all can agree that earning a degree requires a great deal of dedication, money and optimism. Optimism is inherent in the general sentiment that possessing a degree will automatically open up relevant career opportunities that would otherwise be closed, ultimately leading to a lifetime of greater career satisfaction and economic stability. No one enters school with the intention of graduating and taking on jobs that are far beneath their intellectual or practical abilities.

Unfortunately, however, despite gains made by people of African descent in higher education, statistics show that for them, attaining employment that is commensurate with their academic and professional experience cannot be taken for granted. There is no shortage of information regarding the enduring disparity between how young people of African descent fare post graduation, in contrast with their white and non-white counterparts. Countless articles and studies grapple with why, despite holding at least one degree, black graduates are “Still at a Disadvantage,”²⁷ or why, “For Recent Black College Graduates, a Tougher Road to Employment”²⁸ remains customary.

Employment Discrimination

Researchers have found a diverse set of indicators that support the fact that racism and “subconscious”²⁹ or “unconscious”³⁰ bias are at the core of the employment discrimination black people face throughout the Western world.

In the 2014 audit study, “Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market,” S. Michael Gaddis finds that even when holding degrees from elite universities, US black job candidates experience a 12.9 percent employer response rate, while their white counterparts experience “the highest response rate” among any group at 17.5 percent. Tellingly, black non-elite degree holders experience “the lowest response rate” among any group at 6.5 percent, while white non-elite degree holders experience an 11.4 percent response rate—dishearteningly close to black elite degree holders’ 12.9 percent response rate. This sad state of affairs is further illustrated by the fact that on top of not receiving equal attention from employers—when they do receive consideration—black candidates are offered less prestigious positions and lower salaries than their white peers.³¹

In American Psychological Association research report, “Bargaining While Black: The Role of Race in Salary Negotiations,” researchers “find that Black job seekers are expected to negotiate less than their White counterparts and are penalized in negotiations with lower salary outcomes when this expectation is violated.” They conclude that “Collectively, our findings demonstrate that racially biased perceptual distortions can be used to justify the provision of smaller monetary awards for Black job seekers in negotiations.”³²

Nwabuzo sheds light on identical patterns across Europe.³³ “There are patterns of disadvantage at all levels,” including disparity that impacts those who “attended [prestigious] Russell Group universities,” as “they still experience lower levels of employment than their White peers,” as highlighted by the UK’s 2014 Runnymede Trust piece, “When Education Isn’t Enough.”³⁴ After comparing patterns across Austria, Belgium, France, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Spain and the UK, Nwabuzo concludes that “a significant number of Black people are unable to find employment that matches their level of qualifications, skills and experience,” with “people of African descent [being] less likely to be invited for a job interview.”

Gaddis refers to this multidimensional employment opportunity disadvantage as “a double penalty” that suggests “...a bachelor’s degree, even one from an elite institution, cannot fully counteract the importance of race in the labor

29 [College Debt is Crippling Black Graduates’ Ability to Gain Wealth](#)

30 [Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015](#)

31 [Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market](#)

32 [Bargaining While Black: The Role of Race in Salary Negotiations](#)

33 [Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015](#)

34 [When Education Isn’t Enough](#)

27 [Still at a Disadvantage](#)

28 [For Recent Black College Graduates, a Tougher Road to Employment](#)

market,” indicating that “both discrimination and differences in human capital contribute to racial economic inequality.”³⁵

It is unsurprising therefore that the same dynamic exists within the low-wage labor market. In the field experiment, “Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment,” researchers find that in-person white male applicants with criminal records are far more likely to receive job callbacks than equally qualified, in-person, non-record holding black male applicants.³⁶

Equally offensive situations exist across Greece, Austria and Germany, where black people are only able to get low level jobs or positions that do not require communicating or being seen by customers.³⁷

In Britain, a 2016-2017 Nuffield College, University of Oxford Centre for Social Investigation study found that black applicants “had to send 80% more applications to get a positive response from an employer than a white person of British origin.” Researchers describe the level of labour market discrimination Black Britons face as “shocking” and “unchanged since the late 1960s.”³⁸

High Unemployment and Underemployment

The 2014 Center for Economic and Policy Research study, “A College Degree is No Guarantee,” found that “the [employment] starting points are very different for” black and white graduates. For example, “For black 22-year-olds at the beginning of their transition from college, 67.1 percent were underemployed in 2011-2013, compared to 56.2 percent [of] all college graduates. Between the ages of 22 and 35, the underemployment rate falls by more than 20 percentage points for both groups. However, at every age, black graduates are more likely to be underemployed than all graduates.”³⁹

Even worse, “...blacks who finished four years of college are suffering from unemployment rates that are painfully high compared with their white counterparts,” with unemployment impacting 12.4 percent of blacks between the ages of 22 and 27, and only 4.9 percent of their white counterparts. Those holding degrees in STEM fields are no exception, with 10 percent of black engineers experiencing unemployment and 32 percent of them experiencing underemployment.⁴⁰

In a study titled “Labor Day 2019: How Well is the American Economy Working for Working People?,” the Economic Policy Institute shows that even five years after its “A College Degree is No Guarantee” study, not much has changed. The 2019 study found

³⁵ [Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market](#)

³⁶ [Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment](#)

³⁷ [Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015](#)

³⁸ [Minority Ethnic Britons Face ‘Shocking’ Job Discrimination](#)

³⁹ [A College Degree is No Guarantee](#)

⁴⁰ [For Recent Black College Graduates, a Tougher Road to Employment](#)

that educated black people are twice as likely to be unemployed as white people at almost every education level, with black degree holders being more likely to be unemployed than similarly educated white workers at 3.5% versus 2.2%, respectively. When it comes to underemployment, black college graduates are 28% more likely to be in a job that doesn’t require a college degree, with 40% of degree-holding blacks in a job that typically does not require a college degree, compared with 31% of white college graduates.⁴¹

The same is true in Europe, where in Sweden, for example, the 2014-2015 shadow report on Afrophobia revealed that African migrants “have the highest rates of unemployment regardless of how long they have lived in the country and no matter how qualified they are[,]... [with] 19% of people of African descent with a university degree...in low-skilled jobs, as they were unable to get a job which matched their qualifications.”⁴²

Meanwhile, the more recent “Racism & Discrimination in Employment in Europe 2013-2017” shadow report shares that “In Germany, people of African descent are highly represented in the lowest rungs of society. Their monthly income is almost 25% less than the national mean monthly net income.” Similarly, “In Portugal, people of African descent are overrepresented in the secondary sector of the labour market, consisting in low skilled jobs, low salaries, few promotion opportunities, and job insecurity.”⁴³

Based on these findings, the European Network Against Racism concludes that there is “no progress in curbing racial discrimination in the European labour market.”⁴⁴

A Cyclical Wealth Gap That Translates into a Lack of Generational Wealth

In “The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters,” researchers argue that in the US, present-day economic inequality is caused by “the continuing impact of redlining on American homeownership” and the “retreat from desegregation in public education.”⁴⁵

While homeownership redlining has led to decades of unequal access to wealth building opportunities, desegregation in public schools has led to decades of de facto segregation within schools, leading to achievement gaps that have lifelong implications. Both of these issues connect with the persistent disparities we see in household wealth today.

Similar to how the unemployment and underemployment rates have remained higher for blacks over the past five decades,

⁴¹ [Labor Day 2019: How Well is the American Economy Working for Working People?](#)

⁴² [Afrophobia in Europe, ENAR Shadow Report 2014-2015](#)

⁴³ [ENAR Shadow Report: Racism & Discrimination in Employment in Europe 2013-2017](#)

⁴⁴ [No Progress in Curbing Racial Discrimination in the European Labour Market – in Particular for Women of Colour](#)

⁴⁵ [The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters](#)

“The income of households headed by blacks has persistently lagged behind that of white households since the U.S. Census Bureau began collecting these data in the late 1960s.” More specifically, if we are to look at the median household data over time, we find that “The wealth gap between black and white households has widened since 1983,” with the exception of the 1990s and early 2000s, when the gap narrowed. In 1983, the median wealth of white households (\$98,700) was eight times that of the wealth of black households (\$12,200).⁴⁶ Tellingly, in 2016—over 30 years later—the median wealth of white households was \$171,000, compared to \$17,409 for black households.⁴⁷

And “While median net worth tends to increase as levels of educational attainment rise, the white-black gap in wealth persists even [when] controlling for educational differences.”⁴⁸ For example, in 2016, the median net worth of black households headed by someone with at least a bachelor’s degree was \$68,200, compared to \$397,100 for white degree holders. Meanwhile, the average net worth of white households headed by college graduates was \$1,821,300 versus \$271,200 for black households headed by college graduates.⁴⁹

Unsurprisingly, this household wealth disparity directly correlates with the high amount of debt black students incur to obtain a higher education. In fact, black graduates leave school with the highest percentage of high debt (i.e. owing \$100,000 or more), with “an astonishing 30 percent of African-American graduate students [having] at least \$100,000 in debt” in 2016, “nearly three times the rate of white students.”⁵⁰ This massive debt follows black graduates throughout their lives, with approximately “42 percent of families headed by black adults ages 25 to 55 [having] student loan debt, compared with 34 percent of similar white families.”⁵¹ This combination of meager wealth with high student loan debt generates a cyclical wealth gap that translates into a lack of generational wealth within the black community.

Although such statistics remind us that employment discrimination is just one of many factors responsible for the historical black-white wealth gap, the central role it plays in determining one’s quality of life makes it inherently the most important. Regardless of which combination of non-employment related factors negatively impact a person of African descent’s ability to generate wealth, the fact remains that if they continue to pursue external Eurocentric opportunities that lead to long stretches of unemployment and underemployment, they will inadvertently strengthen the very institutions that compete with their ability to generate the sort of collective wealth necessary to foster transformative generational progress within the global black community.

46 [On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart](#)

47 [Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America \(Updated\)](#)

48 [On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart](#)

49 [Recent Trends in Wealth-Holding by Race and Ethnicity: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances](#)

50 [New Evidence Adds to Troubling Picture for Black Borrowers of Student Loans](#)

51 [Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America \(Updated\)](#)

Why Entrepreneurship is a Viable Solution for People of African Descent’s Weak Economic Standing

It is clear that the ever-evolving perennial nature of employment and economic inequality has far-reaching implications for young black people’s quality of life. In addition to putting them at a perpetual financial disadvantage, the unfavorable circumstances they face make it difficult for them to gain the sort of job experience they need to progress in their careers, negatively impacting their ability to pay off debt and build wealth. Before entering the workforce, college students of African descent need to be fully informed, not only with respect to the nature of these realities, but also in terms of what they can do to intelligently circumvent them.

While the authors of “The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters” argue that “public policy has shaped these disparities, leaving them impossible to overcome without racially-aware policy change,”⁵² DIFFvelopment believes that when youth of African descent are educated about entrepreneurship from a culturally specific perspective, they become empowered to overcome these disparities in a way that not only transcends the limitations of public policy, but that also reawakens the black public’s consciousness to the transformational power of collective group determination.

It is therefore crucial for college students of African descent to be exposed to entrepreneurship as a viable career option that has cultural relevance. This argument is further developed in the following sections, where a deeper look is taken into how a lack of relevant historical awareness impacts young people of African descent’s belief in their entrepreneurial abilities, how entrepreneurial education empowers youth and how DIFFvelopment provides college students of African descent with culturally specific post-college, entrepreneurial and financial education.

Connecting Culturally Specific Entrepreneurial Education and Collective Group Success

As detailed within the “Why College Students of African Descent” section of this white paper, when it comes to comparing and analyzing group success in terms of wealth and employment, regardless of how they are being compared—that is, regardless of whether diasporans are compared to their non-black counterparts within the foreign countries in which they reside, or whether Africans are compared to non-Africans around the world—people of African descent are at the bottom of the global economic list.

While it is indisputable that the legacies of slavery and colonialism are responsible for this disparity, many argue that people of African descent missed the opportunity to become significantly re-empowered when they allowed American educational institutions to desegregate and colonies to morph

52 [The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters](#)

into neo-colonies, thwarting progress towards genuine intellectual and economic collective group independence. Though these are important historical perspectives to consider, when we do not explore beyond them, we overlook important triumphs, including people of African descent's incredible ability to continue creating remarkably influential things and ways of being, even in the midst of devastating psychological, intellectual, physical and social oppression.⁵³ This triumph, in particular, illustrates people of African descent's unmatched ability to not only persevere, but to literally survive by being creative—by being entrepreneurial.⁵⁴

So how can such exceptional entrepreneurial creativity be cultivated to generate strategic collective group success? It is clear that formal education and popular mass media cannot be relied upon to achieve this. Systematic miseducation and the ongoing dishonorable revision of history have eliminated any truly inspiring or notable presence of black inventors, trend-setters and disruptors from standard history books. Outside of the intellectually non-threatening world of entertainment, people of African descent's accomplishments are often disregarded and replaced by negative, uninspiring stereotypical representations and narratives. Contrastingly, white luminaries—regardless of whether their success was achieved legitimately or through appropriation—fill the pages of every textbook and dominate the visual standard of what success “looks like.” Naturally, feelings of dispossession and inferiority are exacerbated by such renditions of history, making many people of African descent uncomfortable with the idea of exploring their past—leaving them with little to no point of reference from which to source their inner greatness. As a result, people of African descent harbor a collective sense of skepticism when it comes to believing that if they were to achieve high levels of success, their accomplishments would be recognized, and even greater skepticism when it comes to believing that they are capable of achieving anything notable as an independent collective group.

All of these issues come together to reveal two things: firstly, if people of African descent are to effectively tap into their greatness in a way that transforms and ultimately elevates their overall collective global standing, they must re-educate themselves about who they are, what they have accomplished and what they are capable of achieving; secondly, they must understand the full importance of collective group success, especially when it comes to understanding how individual success should be utilized to reproduce greater success within the group at large. Though this may seem an impossible task, DIFFvelopment believes that if given the appropriate support and direction, young people of African descent can lead in effecting such change.

The energy and optimism young people inherently have has proven to be the key element driving almost every successful

transformative moment in history. It is for this reason that when it comes to people of African descent's collective lack of economic group success, we need to consider how young people of African descent can be groomed to form and perpetuate new patterns of creativity that lead to effective, long-term change. Moreover, as descendants of people whose creative genius has blessed the earth since time immemorial, it behooves people of African descent to reconnect with entrepreneurship in a way that fosters collective group consciousness and prosperity.

The Importance of Entrepreneurial Education

“Entrepreneurship is a key twenty-first century workforce skill” that empowers those who possess it with an unlimited array of professional ability and opportunity. For one, those who are fortunate enough to learn about entrepreneurship at a young age attain higher levels of education and take on what NYU describes as an overall “entrepreneurial mind-set.”⁵⁵ As a result, they “communicate better...persist through failure...take smart risks,” and are more “flexible and adaptable when facing obstacles,” ultimately making them exceptional “problem solvers and opportunity finders.”⁵⁶ Ultimately, exposure to entrepreneurship enables students to reimagine their college majors, “empowering them to pursue their career objectives entrepreneurially, rather than [rely] on traditional pathways in their chosen fields.”⁵⁷

Beyond providing young people with the tools they need to start their own successful businesses, entrepreneurial education prepares new entrepreneurs to “avert early miscalculations and more efficiently allocate limited resources.” By operating from this sort of informed perspective, those with entrepreneurial training are strategically positioned to positively impact the social and economic markets they work within, preparing them to go on to not only be adept business owners, but to also be incredible social entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs within reputable social and governmental institutions and organizations. Entrepreneurship therefore equally benefits both those who pursue traditional careers and those who pursue nontraditional careers.⁵⁸

In Entrepreneur’s article, “What Young People Must Know About Entrepreneurship,” Miles Jennings argues that “Entrepreneurship, above all else, solves problems. Look for problems and you’ll find answers.”⁵⁹ Furthermore, entrepreneurship is one of the few disciplines that teaches both “soft and core skills, including: problem-solving; team-building; transversal competences - such as learning to learn, social and civic competence, initiative-taking...and cultural awareness.” Entrepreneurship’s capacity to cover this wide range of skill sets is what makes it such an effective learning tool for young people. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, possessing soft skills has become as important as possessing a degree from a reputable institution.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ [Study Finds Summer Entrepreneurship Programs Have Benefits Beyond Business Skills](#)

⁵⁶ [Young People Need to Know Entrepreneurship is Hard](#)

⁵⁷ [Giving Students an Enterprising Path to Start On](#)

⁵⁸ [Young People Need to Know Entrepreneurship is Hard](#)

⁵⁹ [What Young People Must Know about Entrepreneurship](#)

⁶⁰ [We Need to Teach Young People More Entrepreneurial Skills](#)

⁵³ [The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship: Volume 1, To 1865 2nd Edition](#)

⁵⁴ [Entrepreneurship in Africa: A Historical Approach](#)

The positive outcomes credible entrepreneurship programs such as BizCamp experience support the idea that entrepreneurship education broadens young people's perspective on employment, enabling them to tap into their genuine interests. For example, after just two weeks of participating in an entrepreneurial simulation camp, students between the ages of 13 and 18 were "less likely to see their youth and lack of money as serious obstacles to entrepreneurship," with 38 percent of them reporting that they would start a business in as soon as one year after completing the program, compared to only 25 percent of them feeling that way before starting the program.⁶¹

Young People Want to Learn about Entrepreneurship

Joseph E. Aoun argues that beyond potentially being the key to accelerating sluggish economies, teaching students about entrepreneurship fulfills their own collective desire to learn the fundamentals of enterprise.

A Northeastern University poll found that "more than two-thirds of Americans between 18 and 30 [feel that it is] "extremely important" or "very important" for colleges and universities to teach students about entrepreneurship, including how to start their own business."

In 2013, Aoun attributed this to young people's awareness of the unfavorable global economic situation that had negatively impacted graduates for nearly a decade. He argued that this awareness inadvertently led young people to recognize entrepreneurship as an invaluable and practical professional concept that can protect them "from a weak job market by giving them the tools they need to create their own jobs."⁶²

When it comes to college students of African descent more specifically, a 2014 Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development study looking at 1,005 students attending the College of Business at Bowie State University, a historically black institution, found that 46.7 percent of students were interested in entrepreneurship, with 22.8 percent desiring to become social entrepreneurs and 23.9 percent preferring to become business entrepreneurs.⁶³

Business Ownership Fosters Wealth and Narrows the Wealth Gap

Beyond protecting graduates of African descent from employment discrimination and weak job markets, when effectively applied in the real world in the form of successful business ownership, entrepreneurship has the power to create much-needed communal and generational wealth within the global black community—ultimatley narrowing the black-white wealth gap.

The Association for Enterprise Opportunity's report, "The Tapestry of Black Business Ownership in America:

⁶¹ [Young People Need to Know Entrepreneurship is Hard](#)

⁶² [Giving Students an Enterprising Path to Start On](#)

⁶³ [Business Students' Interests in Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship at a Historically Black Institution](#)

"Untapped Opportunities for Success," reveals that "There are substantial wealth advantages for business owners compared to nonbusiness owners...In fact, the median net worth for Black business owners is 12 times higher than Black nonbusiness owners. Additionally, business ownership is a path to narrowing the racial wealth gap: while White adults have 13 times the wealth that Black adults do, when we compare median wealth of Black and White business owners, the median wealth gap decreases to a multiplier of three."

Based on these findings, the report goes on to argue that "Investing to support the launch and growth of Black-owned businesses could build wealth for individuals and their families, assist with closing the wealth gap, revitalize communities, and contribute to an overall healthier economy, which benefits us all. To do so, thoughtful and innovative approaches are required to overcome the exponential effects of the interplay among the wealth gap, the credit gap, and the trust gap. While challenging, this is worth striving for so that we can move one step closer to an inclusive economy."⁶⁴

DIFFvelopment's Re-empowering Programs: Culturally Specific Entrepreneurial Education Solutions

DIFFvelopment seeks to produce a generation of people of African descent who are unafraid to leverage their intelligence and creative power from a position of radical consciousness. It achieves this through carefully curated programs for college students of African descent that foster pre-graduate entrepreneurial activity; provide access to culturally specific entrepreneurial and financial information, learning materials and support; and raise awareness about post-graduate underemployment, the viability of entrepreneurship as a career option, and the importance of generational wealth and giving back to society.

Alternative Career Services: Fostering Post-College Preparedness

DIFFvelopment's Alternative Career Services program offers college students of African descent a culturally specific and action-oriented workshop experience that challenges them to examine their socioeconomic status in relation to the wealth-building process and to explore entrepreneurship as a viable career option that facilitates economic advancement. In addition to having students complete a brief survey that provides them with perspective on how their socioeconomic background, level of financial responsibility and anticipated debt will dictate the steps they need to take to build generational wealth, the two-hour workshop concisely covers important topics such as the economic status of black college students, the meaning and importance of building generational wealth, the employment status of black graduates, entrepreneurship as a viable career option, ownership and giving back to society.

In addition to administering workshops throughout the

⁶⁴ [The Tapestry of Black Business Ownership in America: Untapped Opportunities for Success](#)

academic year, Alternative Career Services will eventually offer students access to a rigorous entrepreneurial online resource center platform. The resource center will provide students with access to culturally specific video, webinar and template based educational materials, a newsfeed, a calendar of minority-focused funding and contract opportunities, live business support chat assistance and an annual startup funding competition opportunity.

Consultrepreneurship: An Intellectual and Practical Internship Program

DIFFvelopment's Consultrepreneurship is a 10-week summer internship program that gives college students of African descent the opportunity to develop a business concept with the support of DIFFvelopment and an assigned entrepreneur advisor; gain practical entrepreneurial experience through a consulting practicum at an assigned small black-owned business, and compete to be recognized for exceptional business concept, consulting report or overall performance. An intensive week of orientation, weekly seminars and guest entrepreneur lectures and workshops provide students with culturally specific entrepreneurial and financial education throughout the program. Students who display the necessary readiness have the opportunity to legally form their business with DIFFvelopment's financial support.

The Intellectual Component

The intellectual component of the Consultrepreneurship provides students with a solid foundation from which to not only build meaningful business concepts and consulting reports, but to also gain historical and contemporary awareness of how people of African descent's previous entrepreneurial accomplishments connect to what they themselves are capable of accomplishing today.

More specifically, students are introduced to the fundamentals of the small business industry; how to start, maintain and grow a business; how to build generational wealth; how to identify and circumvent familial and societal issues that commonly impact black graduates; and how to leverage business ownership to give back to society.

Subjects are explored through key illustrative historical and contemporary matters, including ancient African entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial activity among enslaved Africans; the rise, fall and rebirth of Black Wall Street; publicly traded black-owned businesses; and the stories of successful black entrepreneurs, spanning Africa and the diaspora.

To successfully complete the intellectual component of the program, students must submit a unique business concept that inherently gives back to a notable element of the global black community. The information students are exposed to through orientation, seminars and entrepreneur lectures organically supports the business concept development process by instilling students with the desire to create

authentic opportunities that uplift and re-empower people of African descent to pursue lifestyles and endeavors that not only serve them individually, but that also serve the collective group more broadly.

The Practical Component

While it is most definitely enlightening for students to learn about entrepreneurship within a classroom setting, experiential learning opportunities that allow students to practically apply the knowledge they gain in the classroom to real-world experiences are transformative.

As consulting and marketing expert Neil Patel points out in "Why Consulting is a Job Everyone Needs to Experience," consulting teaches one how to "work in any field...[and] adapt to any environment." Furthermore, Patel argues that experience as a consultant provides one with the confidence they need to not be "shy to speak [their] mind and tell companies what they are doing wrong." This, he goes on to say, "is a really important trait...," just as important as learning "how to communicate effectively" and how to meet deadlines since consultants "have to keep providing results... through reports, emails, phone calls, meetings and any other form of communication you can think of." When it comes to issues of work ethic and servicing high-level executives, providing consulting services makes one aware of the many contingencies involved in working with others, forcing them "to learn how to manage people and timelines..., convince executives to do what [they] think is best for them..., [and] figure out ways to be more efficient" in terms of working within their client's budget constraints.⁶⁵

It is for this reason that during the Consultrepreneurship, students are tasked with applying what they learn regarding entrepreneurship and business development—during orientation, seminars and lectures—to a consulting practicum, where they provide professionally supervised consulting services to an assigned small black-owned business.

Over a period of roughly eight weeks, students identify their small business client's most pressing needs through weekly owner or designated manager consultation meetings and what DIFFvelopment has coined as "Evaluative Observational Analysis" sessions, where students carefully examine the intricacies of their business client's daily operations.

To successfully complete the consulting component of the program, students must submit a high-level consulting report that is quantitative, qualitative, cost-effective and creative. It must include a research-based analysis of the top three issues they recommend be addressed, an explanation of the various methods and approaches used to analyze the given set of issues, and at least three solution-based plans of

⁶⁵ [Why Consulting is a Job Everyone Needs to Experience](#)

action to address each issue.

By learning about entrepreneurship from a perspective that is relevant to them, providing free consulting services to small black-owned businesses that are looking to grow, and receiving attentive one-on-one professional guidance from black entrepreneurs, the Consultrepreneurship gives black college students the rare opportunity to learn about entrepreneurship and act as an entrepreneur within learning situations that are culturally reinforcing and exceptionally empowering.

Additionally, the adaptable and practical problem solving, communication, work ethic, high-level executive and money management skills they gain, equip them with the know-how to think critically and creatively in any professional setting.

Conclusion: Why DIFFvelopment MATTERS

While mainstream western notions of success have shifted the general public's consciousness away from the importance of the group to the importance of the individual, history consistently shows us that no matter how accomplished any one person may be, how they are judged, more often than not, directly correlates with how the group they belong to is perceived. In other words, the tapestry of the histories and ancestries each of us represent, come together to subconsciously tell the story of who we "are," inevitably reproducing patterns of times past. The persistent and comprehensive disparity we see across racial lines is therefore no accident, and has deep repercussions for how the powers that be label those less powerful, translating directly into how the rest of the world interacts with them. That people of African descent have and continue to endure the shortest end of this perceptual stick goes without saying.

DIFFvelopment's mission, "Re-empowering people of African descent one student at a time," was birthed out of the determination to reposition the dynamics that govern these realities by offering the next generation of black professionals access to the culturally specific world-class professional direction and support they need and deserve. By equipping college students of African descent with the knowledge and experiences they need to reimagine their individual capacity in a way that generates newfound appreciation for who they are, what they represent and the importance of authentic collective group progress, DIFFvelopment inspires them to be alive to the power inherent in sharing a strategically crafted collective future that prioritizes building generational wealth and giving back to their community, all while empowering them to recognize that when it comes to their careers, they have the option to choose themselves as entrepreneurs—in the field of their choice—instead of waiting to be chosen.

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