

BLACK WOMEN BEST:

THE FRAMEWORK WE NEED FOR AN EQUITABLE ECONOMY

ISSUE BRIEF BY **KENDRA BOZARTH, GRACE WESTERN, AND JANELLE JONES**
SEPTEMBER 2020

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis have cemented an American truth that's been ignored for too long by too many: Through its policy and political choices, the US continues to prioritize the interests of a wealthy, predominantly white few over the well-being of all its people, but especially over the protection of Black and brown lives.¹

People Are the Economy, Black Women² Especially

The government's insufficient response in this moment has largely failed the people. This brief will specifically explore how Black women's lives and livelihoods have been and are continuously jeopardized in this COVID-19 economy. Overall, Black women have consistently been on the frontlines of this crisis, as essential workers, as caregivers in both informal and formal labor markets, and as one of the groups hardest hit by massive unemployment.

Our economy was built in large part upon Black women's diminished power—through unpaid, exploited, and forced labor. Black women's labor is central to the functioning of our economy, and not just in times of crisis. Income gaps, wealth gaps, lack of coverage by worker protection laws, and a host of other socioeconomic indicators illustrate a system designed to keep Black women without power. As Black women remain undercompensated, the value of their work and labor is captured by white, wealthy, private interests. Economist Michelle Holder estimates that in 2017, \$50 billion of involuntarily forfeited wages provided by Black women led to significant cost-savings for the private sector (Holder 2020).

¹ In this brief, the phrases "Black and brown people," "people of color," and "communities of color," etc. are used to describe Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander people. We recognize the unique experiences of all people of all races, ethnicities, and identities, and we will use explicit terms when referring to distinct groups.

² When we refer to women, we mean cis and trans women and femme-identified people, which includes anyone who is not a cis or trans woman but who identifies as feminine or is typically read as feminine by others, including those among them who are nonbinary and/or gender-nonconforming.

This brief will argue that centering Black women in US politics and policymaking in the short and long term will bolster immediate recovery efforts, build durable and equitable institutions, and strengthen collective prosperity.

Black feminists have been saying from the beginning that when humanity becomes serious about the freedom of Black women, humanity becomes serious about the freedom of humanity.

-Dr. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*

We were unprepared to reopen cities and states the first time (Milbank 2020), jeopardizing public health to “restart the economy.” But people—especially workers, and especially Black women—are the economy. Now more than ever, that’s whom our policy and political choices must serve.

This brief proceeds as follows:

- First, we define a guiding principle of this brief, which we view as the foundational principle of the moment: Black women best.
- Next, we explain how policymakers can achieve long-overdue action to provide the public with an effective short-term response to the ongoing pandemic.
- Finally, we provide a long-spanning policy vision that will allow the US to truly reopen its economy and both provide immediate economic security and build long-term economic resiliency.

In the short term, as we continue to weather this pandemic and economic crisis, we must immediately implement policies that reduce racial disparities in economic and health outcomes and strengthen our economy writ large: guaranteed income and hazard pay. If we remain without adequate resources and relief, the prospects of an equitable economic recovery are low.

In the longer term, bold structural changes must also be made in order to emerge from this crisis: a federal jobs guarantee, a single-payer health care system, and automatic stabilizers for economic relief. Policies that build worker power must also be included.

This moment is not only about recovering from a pandemic and an economic crisis. It is an opportunity to redesign institutions built on generations of systemic exclusions that hold back Black women and all of us.

A FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE OF COVID-19 POLICYMAKING AND POLITICS: BLACK WOMEN BEST

Though the federal government has failed to protect everyone (Beggin 2020), there have been stark racial disparities in both economic and health outcomes—especially for Black people and Black women (Bozarth and Hanks 2020). This brief introduces race-forward policy solutions that address what’s happening now and build toward long-term structural change.

Defining "Black Women Best":

Coined by Janelle Jones (2020), “Black women best” is an economic principle that argues if Black women—who, since our nation’s founding, have been among the most excluded and exploited by the rules that structure our society—can one day thrive in the economy, then it must finally be working for everyone. “Black women best” refers to both cis and trans women and femme-identified people, which includes anyone who is not a cis or trans woman but who identifies as feminine or is typically read as feminine by others, including those among them who are nonbinary and/or gender-nonconforming.

“In other words, if we make the economy better for those who are suffering most, it stands to reason that those efforts would safeguard everyone else, too,” underscores Anna Gifty Opoku-Agyeman (2020a). “And by including Black women in the economic picture, we have a clearer idea of what our economy looks like, which allows us to make better decisions about it.”

The fact is that the US economy was built in large part upon Black women’s labor and bodies; Black women’s consistent economic insecurity and precarity is a result of deep-seated extraction that has lasted for centuries. Centering Black women also means centering other marginalized identities, all of which intersect with race and gender and are identities that Black women hold and live. It means centering trans and queer people; incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people; people with disabilities; and immigrants, documented and undocumented. Centering Black women in policymaking, and all the intersecting identities Black women hold, ensures that Black women can build economic security. But it also means that deeply entrenched racist, sexist, queerphobic, ableist, and xenophobic policies that harm the overall economy for everyone are ultimately unraveled.

Ultimately, we believe that COVID-19 policymaking and politics should be guided by the core principle of centering Black women in the choices made during the pandemic and economic crisis and beyond. While individuals and corporations have profited off of

Black women and their labor, deepening economic disparities have caused harm to our economy writ large (Bivens 2017). Anti-Black policies do not just harm Black people. For example, agricultural and domestic workers were excluded from New Deal provisions that built worker power and created worker protections. At the time, 90 percent of Black women were domestic and agricultural workers (Linder 1987). These industries were explicitly left out because of the racist and sexist viewpoints of those with power. Decades later, the failure to center Black women's economic experiences in policymaking means that racist exclusions that were presented as "race-neutral"—and continue to be presented that way—have spread to affect other sectors and other non-Black workers (Kashen and Mabud 2020). As a result, anti-Black policies result in economic harm to non-Black people as well.

Ultimately, we believe that COVID-19 policymaking and politics should be guided by the core principle of centering Black women in the choices made during the pandemic and economic crisis and beyond.

US history has long proven that the choice to center whiteness in our politics and policymaking ultimately leads to a failure in building inclusive and equitable public policies. It is also evident that "race-neutral" measures, or measures that assume whiteness is the norm, are woefully ineffective in addition to being harmful. In the rejection of a return to "normal," in which our economy and society were only working for the privileged, wealthy, and predominantly white few, America must demand a policy—and political—response to the COVID-19 pandemic that puts Black women first, and as a result, makes a stronger economy for everyone else.

A LONG-OVERDUE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE: PROVIDE ECONOMIC RELIEF

As we continue to weather this pandemic and economic crisis, families, communities, and workers across the country are struggling to put food on the table and pay rent. Many people are making the impossible choice of feeding their children or paying their electric bill. This painful reality compounds a pre-COVID-19 economy in which 80 percent of workers in the US were living paycheck to paycheck (Reich 2018).

This economic insecurity is intensified for Black women, who have little to no wealth to fall back on due to generational inequality and ongoing discrimination (Prosperity Now 2018). As the people who “act as ‘canaries in the coal mine’ of our imbalanced, unfair economy” (Price 2020), Black women should be centered in immediate policy choices throughout this unprecedented pandemic. Ultimately, economic relief for all—in the form of cash—is needed, now.

Guaranteed Income and Direct Cash Transfers

Economic insecurity has been a longstanding, persistent problem in the United States. Well before the pandemic hit, millions of people were struggling to meet their basic needs, despite working one or more full-time jobs. In particular, Black and Latinx Americans have faced unjust disparities in wealth and income compared to their white counterparts (Urban Institute 2017). The median wealth for Black women is \$200, while the median wealth for white women is \$15,640, and the median wealth for white men is \$28,900 (Prosperity Now 2018). The already-rampant economic vulnerability experienced by so many in the US has only been exacerbated with the additional layers of economic and health insecurities caused by COVID-19. To provide economic security for all, we need to implement a guaranteed income policy with direct cash payments for everyone in the US.³

Guaranteed income would provide much-needed economic relief and security for families. We have seen a preview of what such a program could look like with the CARES Act, which (as of September 2020) provided one-time stimulus checks of \$1,200 to some American workers. Though an important first step, the CARES Act’s one-time payments were woefully inadequate. The \$1,200 payment, while critical and necessary, was not sufficient for most people when rent alone, on average, is around \$1,180 in the US (Scripps Media, Inc. 2019). Further, many in the US missed out on these checks. For those who did not file taxes in 2018 or 2019, they were likely ineligible to receive a stimulus check (Internal Revenue Service 2020). Dependents were also ineligible for cash payments, as well as individuals who are incarcerated, undocumented, or from mixed-status households. The Mother’s Magnolia Trust is another example of guaranteed-income implementation. In 2018, the initiative dispersed \$1,000 monthly for an entire year to 20 Black women in extreme poverty in Jackson, Mississippi. The program has been a success, providing recipients with the cash needed to not only cover their basic needs but also build toward longer-term economic stability (Ruiz 2020). A second cohort of Black women began receiving payments in March of this year.

³ Jhumpa Bhattacharya (2019) explores three types of cash transfer programs: monthly installments, an annual lump sum, and “universal plus basic income.”

A comprehensive direct cash payment program should be recurring and available to more people. Recurring payments would, of course, provide a steady source of income to people who have been rocked by the current economic crisis. A guaranteed income proposal can provide economic security in times of precarity, and beyond. A Federal Reserve study from 2018 found that 40 percent of adults said they would not be able to cover an unexpected \$400 expense. The same survey found that 30 percent of people are unable to pay their bills or are only one modest expense away from financial hardship. That rate is even higher for Black adults, especially for those who have a high school degree; 34 percent of Black adults with a high school degree or less report not being able to pay their bills, and after an unexpected \$400 expense, that number rises to a staggering 58 percent. Black adults with associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees also face extreme economic precarity: 29 percent of Black adults with an associate's degree report being unable to pay bills, and that number rises to 46 percent after accounting for a \$400 unexpected expense. For Black adults with a bachelor's degree or more, 22 percent report being unable to pay monthly bills, and that number rises to 28 percent after a \$400 unexpected expense (Federal Reserve 2019).

Policymakers have introduced a range of guaranteed income proposals that provide different levels of economic support. To serve Black women, guaranteed income needs to be recurring on a regular basis to consistently and predictably meet families' needs. The amount should take into account household size, and there should be payments specifically for children that go to their designated guardian. The American Family Act, put forth by Sen. Michael Bennett (D-CO) and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), guarantees \$300 per month for children aged 0–6 and \$250 per month for children aged 6–16 (Matthews 2019a), while the LIFT+ Act from Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) ensures a yearly \$3,000 basic income for single adults and \$6,000 for married couples, including those without jobs (Matthews 2019b). Dorian Warren—Community Change president and Economic Security Project co-chair—also advocates for a *universal+basic income* that calls for additional payments to Black families on top of the benefit given to other families (Bhattacharya 2019).

If we look at the economic experience of Black women, we can see how crucial and life-changing a permanent guaranteed income would be. And as the “Black women best” framework highlights, we also know how influential it would be for the economic security of other marginalized people. Furthermore, it offers an important foundation upon which other collective policies can be built.

Black Women Don't Need to Be Experiencing Economic Precarity: Policy Choices Prior to COVID-19 Could Have Mitigated Harm

Though the specifics fall beyond the scope of this brief, we recognize that other policy avenues, which should have been implemented long before COVID-19, could alleviate the deep level of precarity experienced by Black women. Economic structures have been created under the guise of being “race-neutral,” but are actually explicitly designed to uphold financial and political power for white people and create economic precarity for Black people, and particularly Black women. Because racist economic exclusions are seen as neutral, these policies have bled to negatively affect others, including non-Black people.

Reparations

Had the federal government fulfilled its promise of 40-acre land grants to freed people following emancipation, today's racial wealth gap would not be as deep, William “Sandy” Darity Jr. and Kirsten Mullen argue (2020). Wealth is often a key economic factor that keeps families from falling into economic devastation during times of crisis; due to the historical legacy of slavery and present-day racist economic structures, Black people have had resources withheld from them (as they accumulated for white people), making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to withstand hard times—let alone a recession and pandemic.

For Black American descendants of US slavery, reparations are, at minimum, 155 years overdue. At a time when individuals and families need cash, and when the health and economic consequences of generational violence and harm toward Black people are being exacerbated, reparations should be at the forefront of the discussion. As the Western Center on Law & Poverty (2020) states, “We can no longer ignore reparations as a plausible solution to remedy past wrongs.”

Care Work

Black women, and other women generally, have predominantly endured the brunt of care work, a profession (both informal and formal) that has always been undervalued and undercompensated in the US. The origins of care work lie in the institution of chattel slavery that forced Black women to care for children of white landowners (Kashen and Mabud 2020). As Kashen and Mabud note, “Childcare . . . has long been wrongly understood as a job performed by those lower in the social hierarchy—a hierarchy designed to codify white economic superiority and patriarchy.” Employers have long exploited care workers; in the midst of a global pandemic, many women are providing higher rates of informal care work—to their children, parents, grandparents, and neighbors—free of charge

(Boesch and Hamm 2020). As these individuals seek immediate economic relief while providing additional care, and as the demand for care work surges in coming years (as, for example, Gen X grows in age), adequate compensation for all forms of care work should be a priority. Immediately, federal legislation must also implement generous paid family and medical leave and paid sick days for all workers. Women are being forced to choose between having to take on additional unpaid care work or bringing home a paycheck (Kashen and Wood 2020). Future policymaking should also build toward both long-term care infrastructure and long-term worker power within the care work industry, including addressing monopsony power in care platforms and getting domestic workers labor rights.

Worker power is crucial because it builds power at an individual level, as well as broader power for workers in the labor market, and it also functions as a counter to corporate concentrations of power. Worker power is critical to building better economic outcomes for workers, and also for the economy writ large.

Hazard Pay

Even before the pandemic hit, one in three essential workers—defined by Vox reporter Anna North as those required to work outside the home—were living in households making less than \$40,000 a year (North 2020). Persistently low income has also led many workers to have fewer options for transportation, while public transit has become dangerous due to potential transmission of COVID-19. Essential workers, who are disproportionately Black and Latinx, are also among the highest-risk demographics for contracting the virus. Among the top six occupations held by Black women, four of the six are essential worker positions: nursing assistants, cashiers, registered nurses, and personal care aides. Elementary and middle school teachers are also in the top six occupations held by Black women, and as teachers are forced back into the classroom, they also face risks (Frye 2020).

Workers are also facing additional hazards as they're forced to take on new roles, like the enforcement of mask compliance. An SEIU survey found that 44 percent of McDonald's workers reported being verbally or physically assaulted after confronting customers who weren't wearing masks (Taylor 2020).

When the pandemic began, some companies instituted hazard pay for frontline workers, including grocery store clerks and hospital janitors, increasing their hourly wage or distributing one-time bonuses to employees risking their health.

Though hazard pay is an important step, these increases in pay were not commensurate with the value of the risk during a life-threatening pandemic, the increased value of the service, or the additional roles delegated, such as mask enforcement. Furthermore, many essential workers are struggling to make ends meet, even with the additional payments. By contrast, many of the corporations employing essential workers have enjoyed large boosts in sales since March (CNBC 2020). Grocery retailer Kroger, for example, cut its \$2/hour hazard pay (a minimal increase) in June as it was disclosed the month prior that CEO Rodney McMullen took home over \$20 million in compensation in 2019 (Melin 2020; Meyerson 2020).

Of the companies that provided hazard pay at the start of the pandemic, most have ended such bonuses. Meanwhile, coronavirus cases continue to skyrocket, and many states remain largely open (New York Times 2020). Workers deserve federally mandated hazard pay, like the “Heroes Fund” set aside in the HEROES Act, which would provide an extra \$13 an hour for essential, frontline workers (HEROES Act 2020). Failure to offer hazard pay commensurate with risk and value is an additional way that Black women, who are disproportionately employed in these occupations, see their labor undervalued and exploited and their lives treated as expendable.⁴

A LONG-TERM POLICY VISION: “REOPENING THE ECONOMY” AND BUILDING EQUITABLE INSTITUTIONS

We are seeking solutions to centuries of systemic exclusion, extraction, and exploitation that have continually undermined economic potential in the US.

A long-term policy vision is about foundational policy shifts. It is also about how these policies can transform an economic system to center Black women’s experiences, and as a result, create a stronger economy for everyone. It is not just the current crisis we must recover from. We are seeking solutions to centuries of systemic exclusion, extraction, and exploitation that have continually undermined economic potential in the US.

While providing economic relief to people across the US is an urgent and necessary response, bold policy choices that build long-term economic resiliency must go in tandem

⁴ In the webinar “Rebuilding the House That Anti-Blackness Built in Our COVID Response,” Dr. Rhonda Sharpe discussed how essential workers and workers on the frontlines are treated as expendable (Economic Policy Institute 2020).

with cash payments. In order to emerge from this economic and health care crisis—and not into a world that is even more unjust and segregated than it is now—foundational shifts like implementing a single-payer health care system and a federal jobs guarantee are essential. We must also tie economic relief to automatic stabilizers, and particularly to the Black unemployment rate. Otherwise, economic policy choices will continue to be influenced by the economic security of the white workforce and the greed of white elites and corporations. Lastly, we will never be able to “reopen the economy” safely unless workers have power and a voice in their workplace to advocate for their protection and worth.

Worker power is essential not only in identifying harmful and exclusionary practices in the workplace, often with compounding effects for Black women, but also in establishing systems and processes in the workplace. This can lead to combatting entrenched oppressive systems and can provide a new, sustainable way for power-sharing between employers and employees. The corrosive force of corporate power concentration has left an economy riddled with insecure, low-wage jobs—often held by Black women. A reversal of these trends over the past several decades, and future possibilities not yet realized, will require a reinvigorated movement around worker organizing.

Build Equitable Institutions

US institutions, including our labor market and health care system, were founded on racist and sexist notions, exacerbate disparities, and are still defined by long-standing injustices. By identifying these injustices through a “Black women best” lens, we are best-equipped to understand and build a new vision for an equitable economy. Here, we explore fundamental changes in our economy that will both address the moment and rectify deep-rooted worker disempowerment, economic precarity, and racial and gender inequality.

Ensuring a Federal Jobs Guarantee and a Living Wage

During this crisis, unemployment rates have reached staggering levels only seen during the Great Depression. But over the last few months, the white unemployment rate has steadily decreased from its peak of 14.2 percent in April and is now in the single digits. The unemployment rate for Black Americans, however, was higher in July than the unemployment rate peak that white Americans hit in April (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Furthermore, in July, while the unemployment rate declined for all groups, it declined the least for Black women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). These levels of unemployment—and involuntary unemployment in general—are preventable.

A federal jobs guarantee (FJG) program would provide universal job coverage and eliminate involuntary unemployment by offering, at a minimum, a \$15/hour wage and a public-sector job to anyone who wants it. Guaranteeing jobs would offer a feasible alternative for the 40 percent of workers who earn less than 15 dollars per hour, and it would reduce racial employment disparities by guaranteeing a job for *everyone* (Glover Blackwell and Hamilton 2020). Black women would also stand to gain a considerable amount: Black women’s median annual earnings for full-time year-round work in 2017 was just over \$36,000, and 80 percent of Black mothers are breadwinners in their families (Banks 2019).

Guaranteeing jobs would offer a feasible alternative for the 40 percent of workers who earn less than 15 dollars per hour, and it would reduce racial employment disparities by guaranteeing a job for everyone.

Furthermore, the public sector has been a key employer for Black people and women, and it has smaller racial wage disparities than the private sector (Cooper, Gable, and Austin 2012). The public-sector workforce also accounts for half of the unionized workforce in the country (Bloch and Sachs 2020). A federal jobs guarantee would expand the social safety net for all workers, while increasing bargaining power. According to Angela Glover Blackwell and Darrick Hamilton (2020), two proponents of a federal jobs guarantee, it would also “operate as an automatic stabilizer in perpetuity, maintaining consumer spending and protecting us from recessions—making our economy more resilient as well as more inclusive.”⁵

An FJG program would be funded by the federal government but administered locally, shaped to meet the specific needs of a given locality. Communities would have direct input in identifying “projects that address long-term physical and care infrastructure needs” (Blackwell Glover and Hamilton 2020). This ensures that every community’s distinct

⁵ A comprehensive federal jobs guarantee program provides even more benefits to the broader economy and society. Most notably, an FJG would support the mass mobilization necessary to combat our planet’s greatest threat: the climate crisis, which we know disproportionately impacts Black and brown communities. It would also further economic security by offering a living wage to all, in addition to a wide assortment of public goods that are desperately needed. These needs include greater investments in physical infrastructure (including broadband) and more public investment in human infrastructure, such as public schooling, the arts, hospitals, and quality childcare. During the pandemic, job creation could also exist in robust contact tracing and other disaster preparedness (Blackwell Glover and Hamilton 2020). Such changes are beneficial not only for people across the US, but for the economy as well, as these investments will stimulate economic growth and shared prosperity.

needs are being met from within, while still receiving much-needed federal assistance. This model has the potential to create a positive feedback loop, with new jobs promoting economic growth, and economic growth promoting more jobs and greater societal health more generally. As the “Clean Slate: Worker Power and Voice in Pandemic Response” report concludes, in this time of political and economic turmoil, everyone other than the extremely wealthy stands to benefit from a vibrant public-sector workforce (Block and Sachs 2020). A “Black women best” approach could help create it.

This model has the potential to create a positive feedback loop, with new jobs promoting economic growth, and economic growth promoting more jobs and greater societal health more generally.

A Long-Term Solution: Implementing a Single-Payer Health Care System

Our current economic crisis is tied to a health crisis, and our economy will not be able to recover until we have the virus under control. For that reason, our health care system has become even more of an economic problem.

The pandemic has illuminated what many people already know: The US health care system is deeply flawed, and Black and brown communities are disproportionately bearing this burden. Eighty-seven million people across the US are underinsured (Collins, Bhupal, and Doty 2019), with rates varying by race and ethnicity and the pandemic exacerbating the problem. Nineteen percent of Hispanic⁶ people are uninsured, 11 percent of Black people are uninsured, and 8 percent of white people are uninsured (Tolbert et al. 2019). Between February and May of this year, 5.4 million people lost their health insurance after losing their jobs (Dorn 2020). For those with health insurance, cost and quality of care remain ongoing challenges. The costs of insurance premiums, drugs, and individual services continue to increase for US families. In 2019, insurance premiums rose more than workers’ wages or inflation (Kaiser Family Foundation 2019). Studies show that Black women, whether insured or uninsured, receive worse care by health-care professionals, often at the expense of their lives (Taylor et al. 2019).

⁶ The term “Hispanic” is used here to mirror the terminology of the original source, although the authors of this paper prefer the term “Latinx.”

The pandemic has illuminated what many people already know: The US health care system is deeply flawed, and Black and brown communities are disproportionately bearing this burden.

At a time when the country needs sustained massive testing and contact tracing, testing sites across the US are scattered and often inaccessible to the people who need them most, whether due to location or cost (Barry-Jester, Hart, and Bluth 2020; Fehr et al. 2020). Contact tracing is state-dependent, inconsistent, and—for the most part—inadequate (Simmons-Duffin 2020). Additionally, people are fearful of the associated costs of getting tested, and rightly so. Although the cost of a test is largely free across the US, a trip to the doctor could result in other tests and fees to be paid out of pocket or missed work shifts for an appointment. As of early September, the virus has claimed over 192,000 lives in the US, and yet people are afraid to get the care they need as they see others, insured *and* uninsured, emerge from the hospital with bills they are unable to pay (Goldstein 2020). And as the virus rages on, studies continue to show that Black communities are facing a higher number of cases and a higher mortality rate from the virus (Zephyrin et al. 2020).

Nearly 5.5 million people have lost their health insurance between February and May 2020, after also losing their jobs (Dorn 2020). Meanwhile, one in eight essential workers, who are exposed to risk daily, don't have health insurance. According to new research from Ofronama Biu (Biu et al. forthcoming), 30 percent of essential workers do not have employer-sponsored health care. The coverage for Black women in essential work is even lower, with one in three Black women not having employer-sponsored coverage.

As we plan a long-term recovery, and an economy that centers Black women instead of exploiting them, the US needs a single-payer health care system. Countries with centralized health care systems have been more equipped to roll out testing and contact tracing quickly and efficiently (Public Citizen 2020). Under a similar system, everyone in the US could also have access to the testing and treatment they need, without the fear of costs and surprise bills compounding the fear for their lives. A single-payer system also ensures higher-quality health care for Black women, whose fatal experiences in our current health care system are attributed to many factors but include the quality of care they have access to. Black and low-income women are more likely to be treated at under-resourced hospitals; hospital quality can be attributed to 50 percent of the racial disparities experienced by those during childbirth (Center for Popular Democracy 2019).

While the implementation of a single-payer system will likely take years, if not decades, it is a crucial component to moving beyond current racist policy choices—ones that have made Black and brown communities bear the deadly weight of this crisis. It will ensure that the next crisis, which will happen, does not again repeat this injustice. In the meantime, federal policymakers can make sure all health-care costs related to COVID-19 are free, including testing, treatment, and treatment for any long-term health effects from exposure to the virus.

Tying Economic Relief to Automatic Stabilizers

Following the devastating, lingering effects of the Great Recession, economists and policymakers learned that stopping fiscal stimulus for the economy too early is disastrous (Stone 2020). Even worse, the economic fallout of stopping fiscal stimulus too early—or not spending enough upfront—disproportionately falls on the backs of Black and brown people in the US. Following the Great Recession, Black unemployment rates across gender, age, and education remained high, while white rates fell. For example, in 2011, two years after the official “end” of the Great Recession, Black unemployment rates in April, May, and June averaged 16.1 percent, while the average for white people over the same period was only 7.9 percent (Weller and Fields 2011). During today’s economic crisis, Black women are again experiencing some of the worst economic hardship. As of July 2020, unemployment rates had declined for all groups, but declined the least for Black women (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). We need to target timely and sustained relief to those experiencing some of the most economic precarity: Black women.

Provision of that relief must be tied to metrics that accurately reflect the economy. Automatic stabilizers are a fiscal policy response triggered by a set of economic indicators and would prevent the use of arbitrary program end dates, such as the July 31 termination of Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (PUC), which added \$600 to workers’ unemployment insurance benefits (National Employment Law Project 2020). Because Congress failed to extend PUC beyond that date, 25 million workers now face significant cuts in their benefits, with the largest cuts coming in states with large shares of Black claimants (Stettner 2020).

It did not have to be this way. For example, workers could have continued to receive their expanded unemployment benefits for as long as claims reached a specific threshold. In addition to action taken by state and local policymakers (Richards 2020), automatic stabilizers can often solve the problem of inaction or insufficient action from Congress. If tied to the right measures, they can also ensure that economic stimulus starts and continues before policymakers even know they need to take action, thus limiting the political stalemate that occurs in times of crisis.

Furthermore, if relief is to be experienced equitably, automatic stabilizers can and should be tied to economic indicators that center race. Tying automatic stabilizers to unemployment rates, and specifically to certain demographic statistics such as the Black unemployment rate, guarantees relief will continue until Black people are experiencing economic recovery. Another option is tying automatic stabilizers to states' unemployment rates by demographic groups. States' varying approaches, along with the broader failure of the federal government's response to this crisis, mean that states will have different needs as this crisis moves forward.

If relief is to be experienced equitably, automatic stabilizers can and should be tied to economic indicators that center race.

“Reopening the Economy”: Increase Worker Power

The pandemic has elevated to the mainstream conversation what so many workers already knew: Current workplace practices mean that many low-income workers, who are disproportionately Black women, are treated as expendable, are exposed to unsafe working conditions, are not paid living wages, and are stripped of access to build worker power.⁷

Worker power is always crucial, but it's essential in keeping people and communities safe as state economies continue to fluctuate between “opening” and “closing”; it's also vital for building sustained and equitable change in our economic system in the long term. First, worker power can help identify and dismantle racist and sexist economic policies and structures that exploit, extract, and exclude people of color, particularly Black women, and also undermine our shared economic potential and stability (Hanks, Solomon, and Weller 2018). Second, building worker power means redistributing power—from corporations and the often white, wealthy few—to all workers and particularly to Black workers.

⁷ In the webinar “Rebuilding the House That Anti-Blackness Built in Our COVID Response,” Dr. Rhonda Sharpe discussed how essential workers and workers on the frontlines are treated as expendable (Economic Policy Institute 2020).

The pandemic has elevated to the mainstream conversation what so many workers already knew: Current workplace practices mean that many low-income workers, who are disproportionately Black women, are treated as expendable, are exposed to unsafe working conditions, are not paid living wages, and are stripped of access to build worker power.

It is only through an equitable distribution of power—in which Black women have a platform—that harmful and racist economic practices can stop and our collective economy can thrive. An economy stratified across race and gender will never be a strong economy because it limits economic potential and undermines economic stability (Hsieh et al. 2019). In the end, people who experience racism and sexism know best how to move toward an equitable and resilient workplace and economy. Reclaiming worker power will ensure a stronger economy, because a stronger economy is one that is working for all of us. To do so, we must employ sectoral bargaining and extend fundamental labor law protections.

In the end, people who experience racism and sexism know best how to move toward an equitable and resilient workplace and economy.

Guaranteeing Sectoral Bargaining

Unions are the cornerstone of worker power, and strengthening workers' collective bargaining rights is imperative. For system-wide transformation, workers must be able to engage in sectoral bargaining: organizing and bargaining across an entire industry, not just in their workplace. Sectoral bargaining provides wage floors and contract coverage across an industry. It is particularly useful for fissured workplaces, misclassified workers, and disaggregated industries like domestic work, in which Black women and other workers of color are disproportionately represented (Weil 2019). Sectoral bargaining also leads to higher levels of collective bargaining coverage and is more effective at reducing income inequality and addressing racial and gender pay gaps (Block and Sachs 2020). Additionally, sectoral bargaining hinders corporations' ability to race to the bottom for lower wages and more hazardous work conditions, a race that deepens economic

and racial inequities, particularly for Black women and other women of color who are consistently the lowest-paid workers (Blackett and Sheppard 2002; Institute for Women's Policy Research 2018).

Sectoral bargaining is even more crucial in the era of COVID-19 (Block et al. 2020). Not only are many essential workers not receiving hazard pay while they put their lives on the line, but Black women are not even making the same amount as their white essential worker counterparts. Overall, Black women earn 85 percent of what white women make. The pay gap is even wider in essential work, where Black women only earn 81 percent of what their white women counterparts make (Biu et al. forthcoming).

Strengthening workers' rights would raise the floor across entire industries, and workers would see higher wages and better benefits without being forced to compete over it (Block and Sachs 2020).

Extending Fundamental Labor Law Protections

To build worker power that centers race and gender, we must rectify longstanding labor laws that have fostered racist and sexist exclusion, including the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Though they created protections for employees and collective bargaining and a floor for wages and benefits for most workers, they excluded the predominantly Black occupations of domestic workers and agricultural workers, who today are still left out of some federal protections (Kashen 2019). In the 1930s, at the time the laws were passed, 90 percent of Black women either worked as a domestic worker or in agriculture (Block and Sachs 2020). Today, even though these fields are no longer disproportionately Black, people of color are still disproportionately represented, and many domestic and agricultural workers are considered essential workers.

Historic labor laws can account for the abysmal benefits—or lack of benefits—in these industries. For example, the share of workers in the food and agriculture sector with employer-sponsored health care is 54 percent, and when broken down by race and ethnicity, only 49 percent of Black women and 38 percent of Latinx women in the sector have employer-sponsored health care. In contrast, 65 percent of white men in the sector have employer coverage (Biu et al. forthcoming).

Until current labor law protections are fully inclusive, the most marginalized people, often Black women, will continue to be excluded and exploited.

We must extend basic labor law protections to *all* workers before building upon these foundational policies, or else we will continue to exacerbate racist and sexist policies. “All workers” includes but is not limited to: domestic workers and farm workers; home care workers, gig workers, and others often misclassified due to fissured workplaces; workers who are incarcerated; workers with disabilities; and immigrant and undocumented workers. Until current labor law protections are fully inclusive, the most marginalized people, often Black women, will continue to be excluded and exploited.

CONCLUSION

Today’s economy was built for the white and wealthy few. This means that the economy is not working for most people, and it is definitively not working for Black women. This was true before the COVID-19 crisis began and is especially true now.

As many have noted throughout this crisis, the pandemic has further spotlighted existing economic and societal inequalities that are now harder to ignore for those with power and privilege. However, Black women and people with other marginalized identities have been living this structural and economic oppression and have been advocating for themselves and for our nation’s collective well-being, finding community-based solutions for centuries. Strong federal action is long overdue.

By making policy and political choices through the lens of “Black women best,” the US can begin not only to rectify its racist and sexist economic structures but to also cultivate an economy in which all people have power, security, dignity, and prosperity—in this crisis and beyond.

REFERENCES

- Asher Hamilton, Isobel. 2020. "Amazon Drops \$2 Coronavirus Pay Rise for Warehouse Workers as CEO Jeff Bezos' Fortune Nears \$150 Billion." *Business Insider*, June 3, 2020. <https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-cuts-2-dollar-hazard-pay-bezos-150-billion-2020-6>.
- Banks, Nina. 2019. "Black Women's Labor Market History Reveals Deep-Seated Race and Gender Discrimination." Economic Policy Institute (Working Economics Blog). <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-womens-labor-market-history-reveals-deep-seated-race-and-gender-discrimination/>.
- Barry-Jester, Anna Maria, Angela Hart, and Rachel Bluth. 2020. "California's Coronavirus Testing Still a Frustrating Patchwork of Haves and Have-Nots." *NPR*, May 3, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/03/849243723/californias-coronavirus-testing-still-a-frustrating-patchwork-of-haves-and-have>.
- Beggin, Riley. 2020. "Trump Says WHO Didn't Share Early Information about COVID-19. A New Report Shows That's Not the Case." *Vox*, April 19, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/covid-19-coronavirus-us-response-trump/2020/4/19/21227175/coronavirus-trump-who-information-china-embeds-december>.
- Bhattacharya, Jhumpa. 2019. "Exploring Guaranteed Income through a Racial and Gender Justice Lens." New York: Roosevelt Institute. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/exploring-guaranteed-income-through-a-racial-and-gender-justice-lens/>.
- Biu, Ofronama, Darrick Hamilton, Shahrzad Shams, and Kyle Strickland. Forthcoming. "The Expendables: The Data Story of Essential Work and the COVID-19 Pandemic in the US" (working title). Kirwan Institute, The New School, Roosevelt Institute.
- Bivens, Josh. 2017. "Inequality Is Slowing US Economic Growth." Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/secular-stagnation/>.
- Blackett, Adel, and Colleen Sheppard. 2002. "The Links between Collective Bargaining and Equality." Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations. <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=freedom>.
- Block, Sharon, and Benjamin I. Sachs. 2020. "Clean Slate for Worker Power: Building a Just Economy and Democracy." Clean Slate for Worker Power. https://assets.website-files.com/5ddc262b91f2a95f326520bd/5e28fba29270594b053fe537_CleanSlate_Report_FORWEB.pdf.
- Block, Sharon, Suzanne Kahn, Brishen Rogers, and Benjamin I. Sachs. 2020. "How and Why to Empower Workers in the COVID-19 Response." New York: Roosevelt Institute. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/how-and-why-to-empower-workers-in-the-covid-19-response/>.
- Boesch, Diana, and Katie Hamm. 2020. "Valuing Women's Caregiving During and After the Coronavirus Crisis." Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/06/03/485855/valuing-womens-caregiving-coronavirus-crisis/>.
- Bozarth, Kendra, and Angela Hanks. 2020. "Structural Racism Is Exacerbating the Coronavirus Pandemic for Black People—Especially Black Women." *Ms. Magazine*, April 9, 2020. <https://msmagazine.com/2020/04/09/structural-racism-is-exacerbating-the-coronavirus-pandemic-for-black-people-especially-black-women/>.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020. "Economic News Release." July 2020. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm>.
- Center for Popular Democracy. 2019. "Medicare for All Is a Racial Justice Issue." July 10, 2019. <https://populardemocracy.org/news-and-publications/medicare-all-racial-justice-issue>.

- Center for Popular Democracy. 2020. "Amazon Endangers Workers, Delivers Contagion, Reaps the Profit." <https://populardemocracy.org/protectamazonworkers>.
- Collins, Sara R., Herman K. Bhupal, and Michelle M. Doty. 2019. "Health Insurance Coverage Eight Years After the ACA." The Commonwealth Fund. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2019/feb/health-insurance-coverage-eight-years-after-aca>.
- Cooper, David, Mary Gable, and Algernon Austin. 2012. "The Public-Sector Jobs Crisis: Women and African Americans Hit Hardest by Job Losses in State and Local Governments." Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/publication/bp339-public-sector-jobs-crisis/>.
- Darity Jr., William "Sandy," and A. Kirsten Mullen. 2020. "Resurrecting the Promise of 40 Acres: The Imperative of Reparations for Black Americans." *New York: Roosevelt Institute*. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/resurrecting-promise-of-40-acres-reparations-for-black-americans/>.
- Dorn, Stan. 2020. "The COVID-19 Pandemic and Resulting Economic Crash Have Caused the Greatest Health Insurance Losses in American History." Families USA. <https://www.familiesusa.org/resources/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-resulting-economic-crash-have-caused-the-greatest-health-insurance-losses-in-american-history/>.
- Federal Reserve. 2019. "Report on the Economic Well-Being of US Households in 2018 – May 2019." Washington, DC: Federal Reserve. <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2019-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2018-dealing-with-unexpected-expenses.htm>.
- Fehr, Rachel, Cynthia Cox, Karen Pollitz, Jennifer Tolbert, Juliette Cubanski, and Robin Rudowitz. 2020. "Five Things to Know about the Cost of COVID-19 Testing and Treatment." Kaiser Family Fund. <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/five-things-to-know-about-the-cost-of-covid-19-testing-and-treatment/>.
- Frye, Jocelyn. 2020. "On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color." Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home/>.
- Gifty Opoku-Agyeman, Anna. 2020a. "Black Women Best: Economics Has a Diversity Problem, And Here's How It Affects Everyone." *The Financial Diet*, May 28, 2020. <https://thefinancialdiet.com/black-women-best-economics-has-a-diversity-problem-and-heres-how-it-affects-everyone/>.
- Gifty Opoku-Agyeman, Anna. 2020b. "Black Women Best: Why Putting Black Women First May Save Us from Economic Disaster." Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute (blog post). <https://www.epi.org/blog/black-women-best-why-putting-black-women-first-may-save-us-from-economic-disaster/>.
- Glover Blackwell, Angela, and Darrick Hamilton. 2020. "Will We Face Depression-Era Job Losses? Let's Not Find Out." *New York Times*, May 9, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/09/opinion/federal-jobs-guarantee-coronavirus.html>.
- Goldstein, Joseph. 2020. "She Survived the Coronavirus. Then She Got a \$400,000 Medical Bill." *New York Times*, June 14, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/14/nyregion/coronavirus-billing-nyc.html>.
- Hanks, Angela, Danyelle Solomon, and Christian E. Weller. 2018. "Systematic Inequality: How America's Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap." Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2018/02/21/447051/systematic-inequality/>.
- Heredia Rodriguez, Carmen. 2020. "COVID Tests Are Free, Except When They're Not." Kaiser Health News, April 29, 2020. <https://khn.org/news/bill-of-the-month-covid19-tests-are-free-except-when-theyre-not/>.

- HEROES Act, H.R. 8192, 116th Cong. (2020). <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20200511/BILLS-116hr6800ih.pdf>
- Holder, Michelle. 2020. "The 'Double Gap' and the Bottom Line: African American Women's Wage Gap and Corporate Profits." New York: Roosevelt Institute. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/the-double-gap-and-the-bottom-line-african-american-womens-wage-gap-and-corporate-profits/>.
- Hsieh, Chang-Tai, Erik Hurst, Charles I. Jones, and Peter J. Klenow. 2019. "The Allocation of Talent and US Economic Growth." *Econometrica*, Vol. 87, No. 5 (September 2019), 1439–1474. <http://klenow.com/HHJK.pdf>
- Hughes, Chris. 2020. "Why Americans Need a Guaranteed Income." *New York Times*, May 1, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/01/opinion/universal-basic-income-coronavirus.html>.
- Institute for Women's Policy Research. 2020. "The Gender Wage Gap: 2018; Earnings Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity." <https://iwpr.org/publications/the-gender-wage-gap-2018-earnings-differences-by-gender-race-and-ethnicity/>.
- Internal Revenue Service. 2020. "Economic Impact Payment Information Center." <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center>.
- Jones, Janelle. 2020. "Black Women Best." Data for Progress. <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2020/7/15/black-women-best>.
- Kaiser Family Foundation. 2019. "2019 Employer Health Benefits Survey." <https://www.kff.org/health-costs/report/2019-employer-health-benefits-survey/>.
- Kashen, Julie. 2019. "Domestic Workers Bill: A Model for Tomorrow's Workforce." The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/domestic-workers-bill-a-model-for-tomorrows-workforce/>.
- Kashen, Julie, and Sarah Wood. 2020. "Child Care and COVID-19: The Top Five Actions Congress Must Take Now." The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/child-care-covid-19-top-five-actions-congress-must-take-now/>.
- Kashen, Julie, and Rakeen Mabud. 2020. "Nevertheless, It Persists: Disrupting the Vicious Cycle of Institutionalized Sexism." Times Up Foundation. https://timesupfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TIMES-UP_Jul2020_Structural_Sexism_Paper.pdf.
- Kearney, Audrey, and Cailey Muñana. 2020. "Taking Stock of Essential Workers." Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/taking-stock-of-essential-workers/>.
- Kendi, Dr. Ibram X. 2019. *How to Be an Antiracist*. Penguin Random House LLC.
- Kochhar, Rakesh. 2020. "Unemployment Rose Higher in Three Months of COVID-19 Than It Did in Two Years of the Great Recession." Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/11/unemployment-rose-higher-in-three-months-of-covid-19-than-it-did-in-two-years-of-the-great-recession/>.
- Linder, Marc. 1987. "Farm Workers and the Fair Labor Standards Act: Racial Discrimination in the New Deal." *Texas Law Review* 65: 1335–93. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2205898#.
- Matthews, Dylan. 2019a. "Democrats Have United Around a Plan to Dramatically Cut Child Poverty." *Vox*, May 2, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/3/6/18249290/child-poverty-american-family-act-sherrod-brown-michael-bennet>.
- Matthews, Dylan. 2019b. "Rashida Tlaib Wants to Give Low-Income Adults \$3,000 a Year Each, No Questions Asked." *Vox*, June 12, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/6/12/18661492/rashida-tlaib-basic-income-cash-earned-income-tax-credit>.

Melin, Anders. 2020. "Some CEOs Are Keeping Those Massive Bonuses—Even after Cutting Thousands of Jobs." *Fortune*, May 18, 2020. <https://fortune.com/2020/05/18/coronavirus-layoffs-furloughs-ceo-pay-bonuses-stock-options-salaries-compensation-covid-19-unemployment/>.

Meyerson, Nathaniel. 2020. "Retailers Are Canceling Coronavirus Hazard Pay. That's a Mistake." *CNN Business*, July 20, 2020. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/20/business/hazard-pay-essential-workers-coronavirus/index.html>.

Milbank, Dana. 2020. "We Are Only Beginning to Suffer the Consequences of Trump's Failures." *New York Times*, August 7, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/08/07/we-are-only-beginning-suffer-consequences-trumps-failures/>.

National Employment Law Center (NELP). 2020. "Unemployment Insurance Provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act." Washington, DC: NELP. <https://www.nelp.org/publication/unemployment-insurance-provisions-coronavirus-aid-relief-economic-security-cares-act/>.

New York Times. 2020. "Coronavirus in the US: Latest Map and Case Count." *New York Times*, August 12, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html> (last visited August 12, 2020).

North, Anna. 2020. "Essential Workers Are Losing Their Hazard Pay Even Though the Hazard Isn't Over." *Vox*, May 18, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/2020/5/16/21258834/coronavirus-essential-workers-hazard-pay-kroger-target-covid>.

Preparing for the Future of Work through Understanding the Present of Work: A Fissured Workplace Perspective, before Cong. Joint Subcommittee hearing on "The Future of Work: Preserving Worker Protections in the Modern Economy" 116th Cong. (2019) (statement of Dr. David Weil, Brandeis University Heller School for Social Policy and Management). <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/WeilTestimony102319.pdf>.

Price, Anne. 2020. "Don't Fixate on the Racial Wealth Gap: Focus on Undoing its Root Causes." New York: Roosevelt Institute. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/racial-wealth-gap-undoing-its-root-causes/>.

Prosperity Now. 2018. "Racial Wealth Divide Snapshot: Women and the Racial Wealth Divide." <https://prosperitynow.org/blog/racial-wealth-divide-snapshot-women-and-racial-wealth-divide>.

Public Citizen. 2020. "How Would the Response to COVID-19 Differ Under Medicare for All?" <https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/How-Would-the-Response-to-COVID-19-Differ-Under-Medicare-for-All-March-2020.pdf>.

Reich, Robert. 2018. "Almost 80% of US Workers Live From Paycheck to Paycheck. Here's Why." *The Guardian*, July 29, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/29/us-economy-workers-paycheck-robert-reich>.

Repko, Melissa. 2020. "Kroger Stuns with 92% E-Commerce Gain, but It Has to Prove It's Not a Coronavirus Blip." *CNBC*, June 18, 2020. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/18/kroger-stuns-with-92percent-e-commerce-gain-but-it-has-to-prove-its-not-a-coronavirus-blip.html>.

Richards, Kitty. 2020. "Bolstering State Economies by Raising Progressive Taxes." New York: Roosevelt Institute. <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/bolstering-state-economies-by-raising-progressive-taxes/>.

Ruiz, Rebecca. 2020. "Give Poor People a Guaranteed Income and Let Them Spend It However They Please." *Mashable*, April 28, 2020. <https://mashable.com/article/basic-income-trust-people/>.

Scripps Media, Inc. 2019. "Average Rent in the United States Is Really High." *ABC Action News*, May 15, 2019. <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/national/average-rent-in-the-united-states-is-really-high>.

Simmons-Duffin, Selena. 2020. "As States Reopen, Do They Have the Workforce They Need to Stop Coronavirus Outbreaks?" *NRP*, June 18, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/18/879787448/as-states-reopen-do-they-have-the-workforce-they-need-to-stop-coronavirus-outbre>.

- Stettner, Andrew. 2002. "More than 25 Million Americans Are about to Lose an Essential \$600-a-Week Unemployment Insurance Benefit." The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/25-million-americans-lose-essential-600-week-unemployment-insurance-benefit/>.
- Stone, Chad. 2020. "Fiscal Stimulus Needed to Fight Recessions: Lessons from the Great Recession." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/fiscal-stimulus-needed-to-fight-recessions>.
- Taylor, Jamila, Cristina Novoa, Katie Hamm, and Shilpa Phadke. 2019. "Eliminating Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Mortality." Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/02/469186/eliminating-racial-disparities-maternal-infant-mortality/>.
- Tolbert, Jennifer, Kendal Orgera, Natalie Singer, and Anthony Damico. 2019. "Key Facts about the Uninsured Population." Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>.
- Urban Institute. 2017. "Nine Charts about Wealth Inequality in America (Updated)." <https://apps.urban.org/features/wealth-inequality-charts/>.
- Western Center on Law & Poverty. 2020. "Black Americans Deserve Reparations — California Can Lead the Way." <https://wclp.org/black-americans-deserve-reparations-california-can-lead-the-way/>.
- Weller, Christian E. 2011. "The Black and White Labor Gap in America." Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2011/07/25/9992/the-black-and-white-labor-gap-in-america/>.
- Wilson, Valerie. 2020. "State Unemployment by Race and Ethnicity." Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/indicators/state-unemployment-race-ethnicity/> (last visited August 12, 2020).
- Witters, Dan. 2020. "In US, 14% with Likely COVID-19 to Avoid Care Due to Cost." Gallup, April 28, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/309224/avoid-care-likely-covid-due-cost.aspx>.
- Zephyrin, Laurie, David C. Radley, Yaphet Getachew, Jesse C. Baumgartner, and Eric C. Schneider. 2020. "COVID-19 More Prevalent, Deadlier in US Counties with Higher Black Populations." The Commonwealth Fund. <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2020/covid-19-more-prevalent-deadlier-us-counties-higher-black-populations>.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kendra Bozarth is the managing director of communications at the Roosevelt Institute. Prior to joining Roosevelt in 2017, Bozarth worked on state-level budget and tax policy campaigns in Kansas as a member of the State Priorities Partnership with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and she worked as the communications manager for *The Homecomers with Sarah Smarsh* podcast project in 2019. Bozarth is a member of the Economic Justice Advocates of Color Network (EJACN).

Grace Western is a policy analyst at the Groundwork Collaborative. Previously, Western was a policy and research manager at The Hub Project, where she provided policy analysis and research support for various issue advocacy campaigns, most notably on economic and health care issues.

Janelle Jones is the managing director for policy and research at the Groundwork Collaborative. Before joining Groundwork in 2018, Jones was an economic analyst at the Economic Policy Institute working on a variety of labor market topics within EPI's program on race, ethnicity, and the economy. Prior to that, she worked as a research associate at the Center for Economic Policy Research and at the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Rakeen Mabud and Rhonda Sharpe for their thoughtful comments and insight; special thanks to Ofronama Biu, Shahrzad Z. Shams, and Kyle Strickland for exceptional research and writing assistance. Roosevelt staff Matt Hughes, Suzanne Kahn, and Anna Smith all contributed to the project.



ABOUT ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE

Roosevelt Institute is a think tank, a student network, and the nonprofit partner to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum that, together, are learning from the past and working to redefine the future of the American economy. Focusing on corporate and public power, labor and wages, and the economics of race and gender inequality, the Roosevelt Institute unifies experts, invests in young leaders, and advances progressive policies that bring the legacy of Franklin and Eleanor into the 21st century.

ABOUT GROUNDWORK COLLABORATIVE

Groundwork Collaborative is a research and policy advocacy organization working to advance a coherent and persuasive progressive economic worldview capable of delivering meaningful opportunity and prosperity for everyone. Groundwork envisions an economic system that produces strong, broadly shared prosperity and power for all people, not just the white, wealthy few. Groundwork works in deep collaboration with economic policy experts, progressive movement leaders, labor leaders, and activists on the frontlines of progressive causes in communities across the country.

