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Black Economic Empowerment: Educating in the Hood?

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BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:
EDUCATION IN THE HOOD?

by

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal
Studies in satisfaction of the capstone project requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT:
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by

Jeffrey C. Suttles

Advisor: Lisa M. Rhody

This digital capstone project is rooted in urban studies and digital

humanities; my aim is to explore *Black Economic Empowerment* and how education

in our urban communities will advance our community's battle for socioeconomic

mobility.   In this study the word education will represent the sharing of information

within urban communities. This website will take a detailed look at the power

of ownership, community organizations, and local businesses through text, audio

recordings, video clips and archives. I chose to share this information through a

website because education and community health, provided through a digital

domain, have the potential to heal some of the scars that have been thrust upon

people in urban communities. Through this digital platform I see the ability to

connect with millions of people in urban communities throughout the world about

community collaboration.

The research in this website, about *Black Economic Empowerment,* is broken down into 3 categories: community, opportunity, and self-efficacy. The possibility for urban communities to gain financial literacy, market diverse skills sets, and gain knowledge about their rights as citizens of the United States of America will be promulgated as an essential part of growth in urban communities. This project explores education through sharing information in the community, as a fundamental means of achieving socioeconomic mobility. This digital capstone website project will identify several aspects of *Black Economic Empowerment* through categories and segments created in an open-source content management system known as Word Press. I will attempt to incorporate articles, music, poetry, videos, and data visualizations to strengthen my argument that hood education is significant to socioeconomic mobility, which creates *Black Economic Empowerment.* The objective of this digital capstone project (website) is to provide a narrative through academic sources, as well as social references, which in turn should initiate conversations between scholars, activists, and community leaders, as well as everyday people, about the importance of *Black Economic Empowerment* in urban communities.

By providing this information about educating our urban communities about *Black Economics Empowerment*, I hope to build community awareness through literacy as well as exposure to resources. The opportunity to use this information to raise the bar in urban communities is the purpose of this information. By creating awareness we shed light on the vicious socioeconomic cycle that has unfortunately left many of the people in urban communities arid. Subsequently this website was

built to provide reliable information to online communities, as we cultivate new

forms of *Black Economic Empowerment* for the uplifting of our urban communities

as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my oldest nephew, Jalem Suttles, who I was informed upon finishing this project, had gotten into a fight that landed him in the hospital. This incident served as an eye opener to the actualities that continue to occur in communities throughout the world. Even though we believe that Jalem is going to be all right, the possibility of tragedy remains my reality. I would also like to pay homage, to all the families and communities that continue to struggle to achieve socioeconomic mobility in this country. Let's all make the initial steps to create sustainability for the next generation.

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Project database containing information on the economic status of people in urban

communities.

3. Visualizations a series of charts drawn from information included in the project

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4. Website An online version of BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: Does

Education Exist Beyond The Classroom?

https://beconomics.commons.gc.cuny.edu/

The economic philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that we have to become

involved in a program of reeducation. To educate our people into the importance of

knowing that when you spend your dollar out of the community in which you live

the community in which you spend your money becomes richer and richer; the

community out of which you take your money becomes poorer, and poorer.

Malcolm X

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Introduction

In this project urban communities that work to build finances, resources, and

social acceptance are building *Black Economic Empowerment*. As an Urban Studies

graduate student, I became interested in what was occurring in urban communities.

As an activist for human rights, I naturally gravitated toward social and

environmental justice issues; I begin to identify the need for more information and

resources in urban communities. My interest in digital humanities and data

visualization began to grow as a member of The New Media Lab; I eventually won

the Social Justice Award in 2017. Projects like Micki Kaufman's, "Everything on Paper Will Be Used against Me": Quantifying Kissinger and Steve Brier and Joshua Brown's American Social History Project captured my attention and imagination as I considered new possibilities of sharing information in the digital world.   To say the least, I was hooked and immediately began to wonder what would be possible if I combined my passion for justice and equality with the power of multi media outlets in the digital domain to educate or share information about urban communities. This inclination eventually became the seed to what would ultimately become a digital capstone project called *Black Economic Empowerment*: Educate in the Hood?

As I began to plan this project, my goal was to redefine the word educate. In this instance I believe that educating refers to sharing information in urban communities through text, audio, video, archives, and data visualization to produce content for growth and sustainability in urban communities. This type of education not only fills a void in our society but it incorporates technology, like handheld devices, as a way to reach and share information about *Black Economic Empowerment*. My thought was that this data or information would have the potential to be applied as sort of a fertilizer for socioeconomic growth within our inner cities. If this starts to take place within urban communities we build on the concept of associative democracy in which we begin to cultivate a self-governed society (Cohen and Rogers, 1992).   Although this concept of growth and education has been around for a while, I believe that modern technology, through multimedia outlets, which allows us to spread, share, and harvest information, could potentially wake up those who continue to sleep, or ignore the importance of grassroots issues,

such as rent control, employment equality, going green, and health care. In this way, the community prepares to heal itself from situations and mindsets that have proven to be destructive to the growth of urban communities.

Historical Background

Dr. Claude Anderson speaks about people in urban communities becoming producers instead of consumers. We need tools that give us clear direction and sense of togetherness. We need tools that prepare and guide us to evaluate and formulate our best interest (Anderson, 2004). In order to implement a new cycle or way of thinking, education and resources must be in place. *Black Economic Empowerment* in our urban communities should become a way of life, not as a trend or phase, but as a part the culture. The identification and support are what is commonly referred to as a "sense of community" or "sense of people-hood." It is what people feel when they have a strong psychological identification with a physical community and its habitants (Anderson, 2004). This is why I referred to urban communities as "the hood" in the title. Some of the questions can be answered by the way we speak in the community; it's the first line of defense, which lends itself to longevity and sustainability, which is what we are aiming for through the content of this project.

This website was built for the development and education of citizens in urban cultures who would like to achieve socioeconomic mobility. Key figures like W.E.B. Dubois, Gil Scott Heron, and Madam Walker serve as examples of individuals who originated from urban settings to become celebrated as historical leaders/icons

to the culture. We claim for ourselves every single right that belongs to a freeborn

American, political, civil, and social; and until we get these rights we will never cease

to protest and assail the ears of America (Du Bois, 1905). Not only did these

individuals realize the importance of economic freedom in urban communities, they

raised their voices to educate and inspire future generations.   This type of urban

leadership doesn't always get recognized, as sustainable resources are being built in

urban communities, but their lasting contribution to society is not only felt through

their bodies of work, but through the spirit upon which this work was created.

World and action are intimately interdependent. But action is human only when it is

merely an occupation but also a preoccupation, that is, when it is not dichotomized

from reflection (Freire, 2000). This is the goal of this website, to educate, enlighten,

and heal, to build streams of knowledge that should supersede our time to be

practiced and celebrated by generations to come.

Community

        The community section of my digital capstone project deals with the

information (initial steps) it will take to augment our urban communities. In this

section I chose to begin with issues like affirmative action, classism, education, youth

advocacy, and church. I interviewed a well-known entrepreneur, Tyrone "Fly Ty"

Williams, and the pastor of a small church in Harlem, Patricia A. Morris, to

characterize what it takes to establish community on a grass-roots level. The main

objective of this section is to distribute data based on building *Black Economic*

Empowerment in urban communities, as we work to achieve financial independence for future generations.

I started off this section with W.E.B. DuBois because he was very instrumental in the battle to end injustice in ancient urban communities. DuBois stated in his *Black Folk, Then and Now* essay, "There were half a million slaves in the confines of the United States when the Declaration of Independence declared "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Bierman and Schnedeker, 278). Even though I could have referred to Marcus Garvey or Booker T. Washington to begin this section, Dubois's approach to the issues in ancient urban communities came from a scholarly place, therefore I chose to begin with his ideology.

W.E.B DuBois spoke about the color lines that continue to divide our nation. He believed that Affirmative Action was constantly being attacked, especially in higher education and employment (Tierney 122). Depending on race, age, and background many people will disagree about how Affirmative Action affects our society. I added some statistics to clarify the economic status of people living predominately in urban communities. These bar graphs were inserted to motivate people in urban communities to take into consideration the power of finance, when working to achieve socioeconomic mobility in America. These graphs were also

chosen because color and length define the difference between each nationality and what was generated in 2016 and 2017.

The statistics in the community section indicate that people in urban communities struggle to compete financially, which translates to serious obstacles, when working to achieve sustainability in American culture. Unfortunately, Blacks and Hispanics recorded the lowest median incomes. These data visualizations represent the power of images when working to engage the viewer. They also help solidify my claim that employment equality is still an issue in urban communities. Another issue that concerns me is that these numbers did not increase from year to year but they decreased. My question is: what does this type of information speak to? My point of emphasis is that a conversation needs to begin about how this cycle can be broken to improve the median of urban communities. The objective of this information is to ignite a sense of urgency in the digital and grassroots community about getting these medians up. Otherwise we position our community for the same results every year, which would be quite a lugubrious scenario!

Figure 1

	Population 2016	Median Income 2016	Population 2017	Median Income 2017	Percentage of change
White	99,400	63,188	100,065	65,273	*3.3
White, not Hispanic	84,387	66,440	84,681	68,145	*2.6
Black	16,733	40,340	16,997	40,258	-0.2
Asian	6,392	83,183	6,735	81,331	-2.2
Hispanic (any race)	16,915	48,700	17,318	50,486	*3.7

An asterisk preceding an estimate indicates change is statistically different from zero at the 90 percent confidence level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2016 and 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.
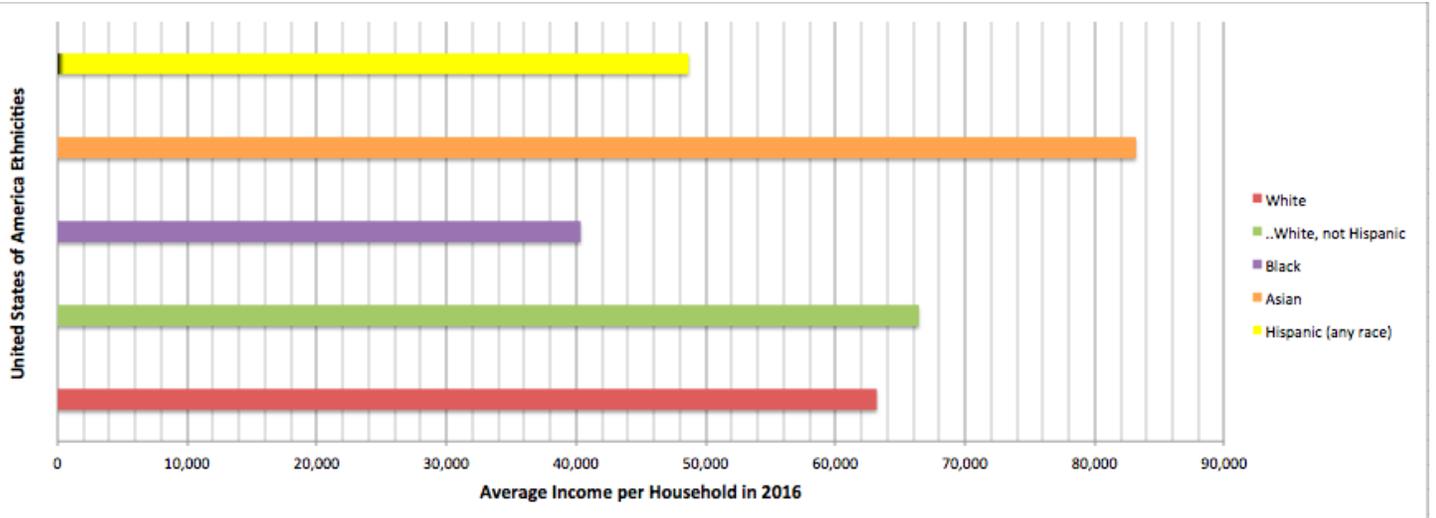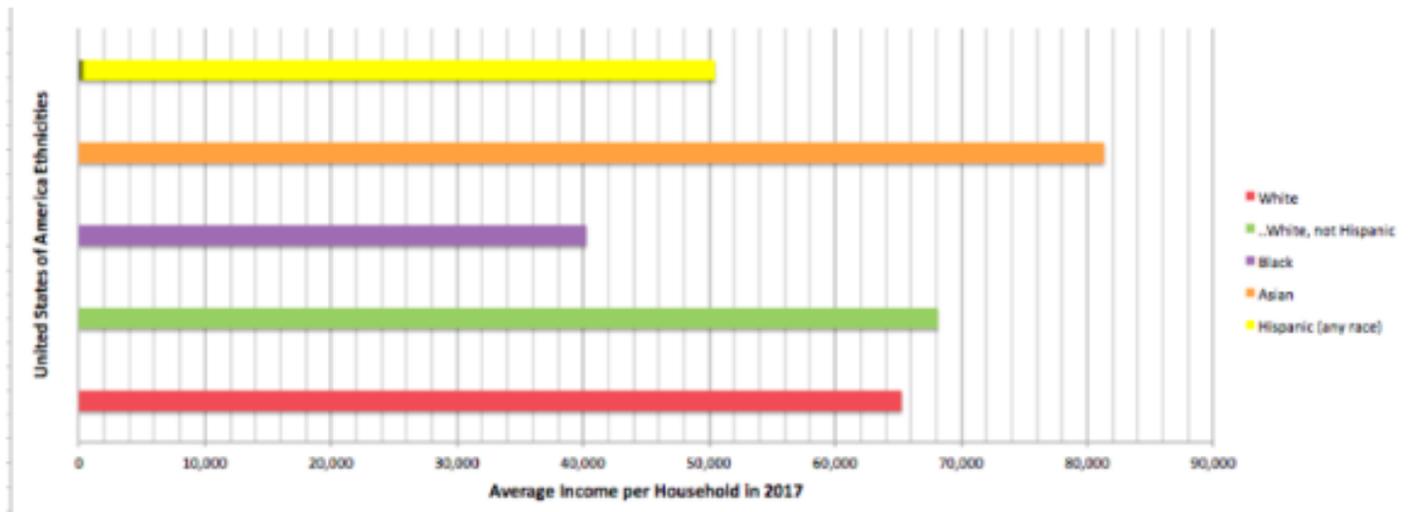
Figure 2

Figure 3

Both charts show the median income for each nationality.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2016 and 2017 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Another issue that I dealt with in the community section of this website is the fact that social class remains a key issue in American education. Studies show that many of the schools in urban communities lack educational resources such as skilled teachers and quality curriculums (Hammond 1). The website reflects the fact that this in turn will affect the scores that these students receive, in regard to standardized testing. These issues become influential, as the community starts to shed light on median incomes in our neighborhoods. Studies reveal that the United States of America continues to harvest one of the most unequal educational systems, with a tremendous amount of its rationale being based on social status or what some would consider a form of classism (Hammond 1). So ultimately this is where the conversation should begin about the correlation between what each class earns annually, and how education along with social status dictate where we live, how we vacation, and what clubs/activities we engage in (socioeconomic mobility). As a community, the aim is to help people realize that income is only the result of seeds that have been planted or destroyed. Therefore education in our communities, constructed to avoid unhealthy cycles, or at least strengthen the citizen's approach to changing the narrative, is the way this portion of the website can be utilized to shape *Black Economic Empowerment*.

One of the interviews I conducted for this section of the website featured Hip Hop impresario, Tyrone "Fly Ty" Williams of the infamous Cold Chillin Records. Mr. Williams's record label was home to some of the most influential Hip Hop artists in the late 80's /early 90's. With artists like Big Daddy Kane, M.C. Shane, and the Juice Crew, Mr. Williams was among the music industry elite, simple as an entrepreneur

from the hood. Nowadays Mr. Williams runs a non-for-profit organization,

called <u>Brooklyn United</u>, which takes kids from urban communities, and creates an

avenue for them to attend college through scholarships. They do this by training

kids to play instruments, pushing them to excel academically, and encouraging them

to work in their communities with like-minded individuals. The importance of this

organization stems from their ability to change the narrative that has placed many

of these young people in prison, or simple presumed them as ineffectual members of

society.

In this interview "Fly Ty" opens up about his grandmother introducing him to

business at an early age, and the power that she instilled in him, as she encouraged

him to save money. As he recalls his days in the music business, he remembers

young talented artists believing that they would always be on top, but eventually

finding out that what goes up must come down, and the landing is always smoother

when you have put something aside for your future. This is also one of the facts of

life this website is built to discourse, which needs to be reiterated on a daily basis in

our urban communities. In the profound words of one of our most celebrated

forefathers, Benjamin Franklin, "Failing to plan is planning to fail."

Unfortunately, The United States of America is a place where your education

usually depends on what community your school is located in. This website

petitions the fact that prep schools are usually located on the outskirts of our

communities or the suburbs, while many of our public schools are smack dab in the

middle of some of our most problematic urban environments. In schools with high

percentages of African American students, which are often located and segregated in

urban settings, twenty-one percent of the teachers have less than 3 years of experience (Ford and Moore, 405). So the emphasis of this section is centered on community leaders like "Fly Ty" and what his rationale means to our communities. We can make the argument that his program is worth millions, or even billions to community expansion for socioeconomic growth, which should be designed to create *Black Economic Empowerment*.

The initial step to begin reversing low achievement and underachievement, as well as closing the achievement gap, is situated in finding and rectifying causal and correlational factors (Ford and Moore, 402). In other words, we are beginning by identifying why our urban communities continue to struggle with socioeconomic mobility. It's not a lack of intellect or determination; it's simple alignment with unproductive situations and possibly unproductive people. Programs like Fly Ty's, Brooklyn United, promote unification by creating change from the inside of our communities. Essentially this section was developed to promote the harvesting of education, through community development. Its ability to boost mental diversity is what we must measure because this positions the community for socioeconomic mobility, which yields *Black Economic Empowerment*.

Opportunity

This section of my project is dedicated to helping viewers of the website identify with ways to advance education about socioeconomic mobility for *Black Economic Empowerment*. I started with careers because in the last section I

explored the importance of career choices in regard to resources and exposure. My objective in this section is to provide options about ways to seize opportunities to create socioeconomic mobility through *Black Economic Empowerment* for the future of urban communities. In this section I also took into consideration history, statistics, and new methods of reaching audiences through social media. The goal here is to provide education, through community enhancement, to create resources for *Black Economic Empowerment*.

<div align="center">Careers</div>

Studies show that African Americans tend to gravitate to careers that derive from the social sciences. It seems that of the few studies that have focused on the career decision-making process of African Americans, most have been concerned with perception of career-decision barriers (Brown, 1995). This is ironic due to the fact that employment equality remains an issue in urban communities. The website is geared toward diversity when it comes to providing options, tools, and education about sharing information to strengthen community resources. The questions that I pose about racial divide and careers in the social sciences reflect an ongoing tradition of career choices in urban communities. I mentioned community dynamics in this section because the information provided represented a lack of contrast in career choices in urban communities. The commitment to career choices process reflects one's certainty about career choices and implies self-confidence and a stable sense of vocational future (Blustein et al. 1989). Conclusively, the website exemplifies a continuous bias toward career choices based on exposure, when it
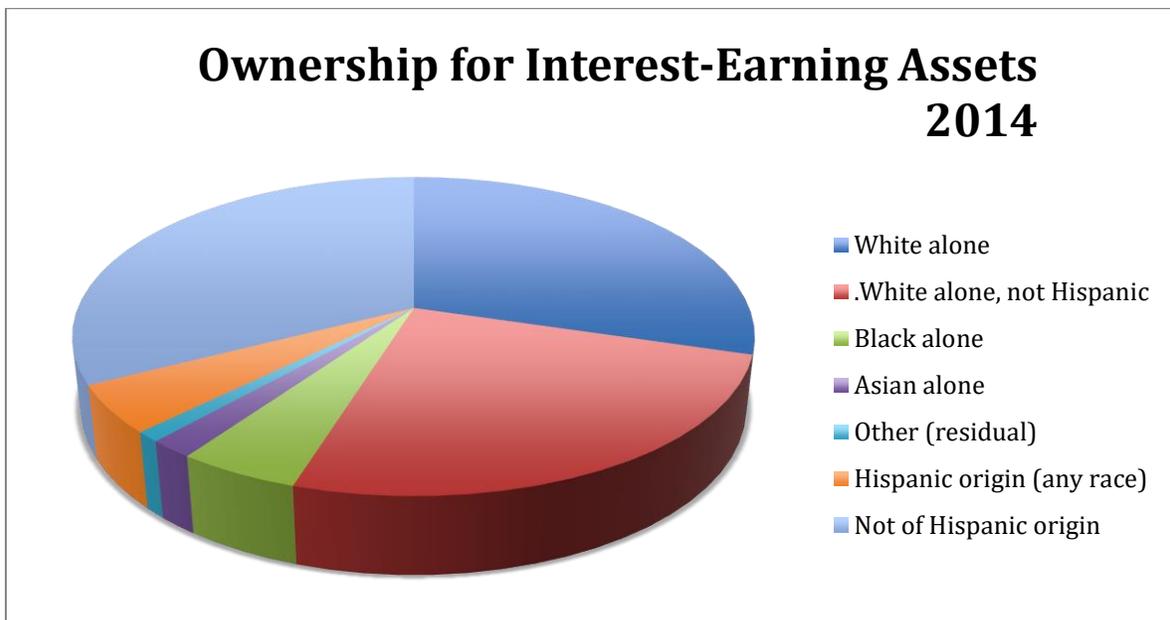
comes to career diversity. In my study, this component is indispensable, when

working position urban communities for socioeconomic mobility, which initiates

Black Economic Empowerment.

As I continued to explore African American career choices, I decided to

interview a longtime family friend Dr. Iris Grattan for the website. Dr. Grattan, a

board-certified naturopathic physician, admitted that as she entered medical school,

she felt that information, competition, and acceptance were obstacles that her and

her minority classmates had to conquer to achieve success. When I spoke to

Dr. Grattan about the opportunity she has to build her private practice, she spoke

about culture, marketing, and connecting to the people. We also spoke about how

travel and extending resources play a major role in creating diverse mindsets,

especially when choosing a career. Although Dr. Grattan has found success, I

featured her as black women from an urban community because her journey is

unique. Her opportunity to excel came with a price, the fact that she attended one of

the elite traditional black colleges (Spelman College) for her undergraduate studies

seem to provide diversity in her career path. We didn't get into her finances or the

sacrifices that she had to make to attend medical school, but it's likely that she had

to invest in her future, like most of us, to achieve socioeconomic mobility. I

employed her on the website due to the fact that I believe that some people in urban

communities might have to take a similar route to achieve socioeconomic mobility.

*Earning Assets. The term "**earning assets**" refers to any **assets**, which yield **interest**,*

*dividends or other returns without significant effort on their **owner's** part. Money*

*invested in a business, held in an **interest-bearing** bank account or invested in stocks,*

*bonds or medium term notes are examples of **earning assets**. (**Figure 4**)*

Figure 4

Ownership for Interest-Earning Assets 2014

- White alone
- .White alone, not Hispanic
- Black alone
- Asian alone
- Other (residual)
- Hispanic origin (any race)
- Not of Hispanic origin

*The Market **Value of Debt** refers to the market price investors would be willing to buy*

*a company's **debt** at, which differs from the book **value** on the balance sheet. It looks*

*at the entire market **value** rather than just the equity **value**, so all ownership interests*

*and asset claims from both **debt** and equity are included (**Figure 5**).*

Figure 5

Median Value of Debt for Households 2014

Legend:
- White alone
- .White alone, not Hispanic
- Black alone
- Asian alone
- Other (residual)
- Hispanic origin (any race)
- Not of Hispanic origin
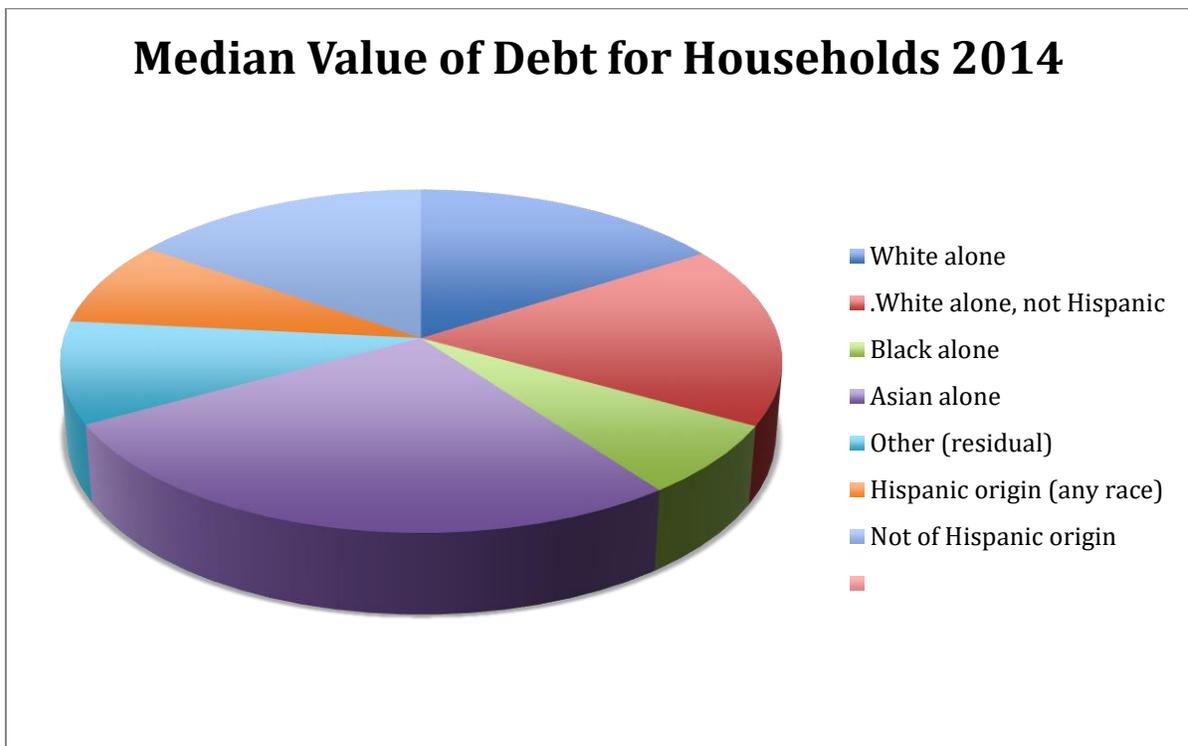
Source: These data on income, earnings, income inequality & poverty in the United States based on information collected in the 2014 and earlier CPS ASEC.

Both of these pie graphs tell a story based on the assets of citizens in urban communities. I chose to represent this data through pie graphs because the colors and the circle give the viewer a quick assessment of each nationalities worth. We see in figure 4 that red and blue dominant interest earned of ownership, we see in figure 5 that the purple section holds the most value when it comes to investing for future growth. I added these data visualizations to the website to accentuate the work that people in urban communities must commit to in order to gain wealth which in return would create socioeconomic mobility for *Black Economic Empowerment*.

The website indicates the fact that many of our young people in urban communities have embraced hip-hop as a way to identify with the culture. Although many in the academic world have shun or simply not taken time out of their personal challenges to take a in-depth look at how hip hop has changed the way we educate our communities is mind-boggling.   Teachers now have the ability to transfer hip-hop lyrics into instructional practice, which shapes young people's awareness to current topics, political issues, and international dilemmas. It also serves to counter the anti-intellectualism pervading many social and cultural circles (Ali, 2015). Professor Christopher Edmin and the Hip Hop Ed program are on the website because they have found a way to transform this art form into pedagogy for urban communities.

Much research has indicated that the nature of teaching in urban schools focuses more on classroom management and keeping students in line than on

connecting them to an academic discipline (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Even though Professor Edmin and Hip Hop Ed's main focus is on using hip hop to educate students about science, his theory about what should be occurring in the classroom can be adapted to teaching or sharing information in urban communities. Hip Hop has a legacy of educating and expanding youth's cultural knowledge, professional aspirations, and academic pursuits (Kitwana, 2002). I chose to highlight this program on the website because I believe that community education can be cultivated through hip-hop, to create socioeconomic mobility for *Black Economic Empowerment*.

As we look at these examples of opportunities to educate urban communities, we must factor in what has occurred historically in our urban communities. Not as an excuse, but as a model for what needs to take place as we enter the 22nd century. The website was constructed to prepare the community for the long hall, which alleviates depression and unrealistic goals. The boom in wartime industrial jobs started a migration of African-Americans and people from other racial minorities in search of economic opportunity that lasted into the Cold War (Hoffman, 2012). Many of the people in urban communities are oblivious to the modern day cold war that has broken and destroyed its citizens, this website is simple away to wake up and inspire those who have become phlegmatic to the struggle. In this way the website will change the narrative, and position the commonwealth for sustainability and *Black Economic Empowerment*.

I concluded the opportunity section of the website with a piece that I wrote called, 'Justice and Peace.' This poem expresses how a generation of people

can labor for all the right things, yet come up with the short end of the stick. This piece reeks from issues that have traumatized our urban communities, yet were told to walk it off or act like nothing ever happened. But they don't know what they doing, they could hardly understand, that they're only arresting, pieces of a man (Scott-Heron, 1971). I concluded with this piece to demonstrate the power of healing through words and melodies. I truly believe that until you take time to heal, moving on remains an obstacle that will ultimately become an issue, which will continue to affect the way we deal with failure as well as success.

Self –Efficacy

> **Self-efficacy** refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997). **Self-efficacy** reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment.

I chose Edwards Perkins first to explore the idea of self-efficacy. On the website, I wanted to present a guy from the neighborhood as an example of what hard work and diligence means as we work to achieve socioeconomic mobility. Let's begin by acknowledging the fact that beliefs about personal abilities influence occupational choices, career paths, job-seeking behavior, and job performance (Bandura, 1997). I chose to begin this section with this citation because although Ed was lucky enough to find something he was really good at early in life, many people

in urban communities aren't that fortunate. I knew that as a grassroots business owner Mr. Perkins would keep his answers raw and real. I believe that honesty about what it takes to be successful is just as important as becoming successful. The fact that we need more people in the community to take initiative and ownership in the community is undeniable; therefore having people around like Ed as a reference is healthy, if we are truly working to achieve socio economic mobility.

I also chose Mr. Perkins because his barbershop provides a space for the community share information. On any given day you can enter EP's (nickname) shop and in engage in conversations with lawyers, judges, councilmen, musicians and athletes. The historical recognition of the black barbershop as a significant racial and communal institution makes it an ideal location to better understand how blacks construct their identity (Harris-Lacewell 2004). His business serves as a perfect example of how we should us space to build awareness in regards to self-efficacy and building camaraderie in our urban communities. The key characteristics of any concept of community are organization of population by geographic neighborhood, the individual feeling of belonging to a group, and relationship based on functional interdependence (Park 1936). Ed's barbershop gives the community character and depth through the building of relationships. This great example of what the community should concentrate on honing, if we are truly working to cultivate *Black Economic Empowerment*.

After hanging out with Ed and the guys at the barbershop I decided to get another perspective about personal efficacy through 38-year-old entrepreneur Scooter Brauner. Scooter is a self-made businessman that started promoting college

parties in Atlanta. I added Scooter to the self-efficacy section because he comes from a totally different back ground than most of my target audience.   The game is designed, in part, to understand prosocial behavior or voluntary actions such as sharing that can benefit others or groups (Gurven and Winking, 2008). Brauner runs a company, so he manages his staff and recording artists such as Ariana Grande, Black Eyed Peas, Kanye West, and Justin Bieber. I added Scooter to the website because he is a great example of self-efficacy through service to others. Truth be told, Scooter had to work just as hard as or even harder than many of the people that started with him as they pursued careers in the music business. Braun attributed much of his success to hard work, good timing, and trust in the process of growth, which is why I felt he was perfect for the self-efficacy section of the website. Looking at his story from the reverse side leads me to believe that self-efficacy is with out prejudice or discrimination, either you have the heart and desire to be successful or you don't. The moral of this story is that nobody is going to hold your hand. The section was added as inspiration, our urban communities must breed individuals that possess the mentality to strive for greatness. Ultimately, these are only initial steps in achieving socioeconomic mobility to build *Black Economic Empowerment*.

I ended the self-efficacy section with a piece I wrote about reaching for the next level. Although the previous sections about education and opportunity acted as a prerequisite for this section, I felt the need to examine the importance of finding strength from within to strive for better living conditions and sustainability in our urban communities. This song is about rising above one's current situation to create

better circumstances socially, economically, and spiritually. Through lyrics like, "to that mother that raises a child on her own, to that father that loves his kids, but can't come home," I explore situations that are unfortunately common in many of our urban communities. This section on self-efficacy allows us to deal with what it will take to motivate people from the inside to achieve socioeconomic mobility on the outside.

Self-Efficacy through Social Media

As we work to educate to achieve socioeconomic mobility in our urban communities, we have to take in consideration the power of social media. Digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram provide informational opportunities to connect with people that we normally would not encounter on a daily basis.   I added this part to the self-efficacy section because social media has increased our ability to promote organizations, pages, and individuals who are committed to providing substance, especially when it comes to *Black Economic Empowerment*. Jeff Desjardins, Founder and Editor-in-Chief at Visual Capitalist stated, "Social media is deeply linked to a series of platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.) that control distribution. They are the plumbing that allows (or doesn't allow) content to spread." Zibu Mthiyane – founder and president of enterprise development organization, MMC South Africa, stated, "Civil society has even more power through social media, we can boycott brands now and question them live." My goal was to provide tools and objectives on ways to start conversations about *Black Economic Empowerment*. We have all learned that in

economic development, social media is a critical tool for business promotion and attraction. With that being said, we must embrace social media, the right way, and expose the fact that many people in our urban communities will never make it to the town hall meeting about *Black Economic Empowerment*, but will check their phones for updates and messages. Let's give them relevant information in this digital spaces, let's work to present content centered on sustainability.

Example

On July 17, 2018, CEO, President of Mind Money Inc., Stacy Tisdale hosted a financial literacy conversation on Twitter Town Hall. Intrigued by Ms. Tisdale's decision to bring her Twitter account to the community on an issue that I was currently researching, I followed the thread #BlackWealthGap. Tisdale examined facts like why the economics of urban communities is not transferring into wealth. She highlighted the fact that black households in the US earning $200,000+ or more are the fastest growing income group in the U.S. She also tweeted that many people in urban communities lack understanding in regard to market patterns and financial wellness. The fact that between 2013 and 2016 black net worth rose 29% is amazing, yet many black Americans in the inner cities continue to struggle to make ends meet. Ms. Tisdale finally commented, "Wealth is realizing net worth has nothing to do with self-worth, and not being defined by numbers, stereotypes, & self-doubt."

Ultimately, I was really excited about Ms. Tisdale's attempt to bring substance and awareness to the online communities. The #BlackWealthGap thread has reached hundreds of people since it was first recorded on June 4, 2014. I believe that this method of communication will increase our ability to reach people outside of daily interactions. This display also heightened my awareness about the economic status of African Americans for which in this study are identified primarily with urban communities. After this research, it seems obvious that educating our communities is the first step to achieving *Black Economic Empowerment*; ultimately the academic world should be positioned to enhance what we already know, but due to a lack of understanding our inner cities are failing to achieve this goal.

Figure 6

Source: These tweets were taken from Stacy Tisdale's twitter posts on July 17, 2018.

Goals

The goals section was added to the website to summarize the topics that the website highlighted. By incorporating interviews from veteran scholars like Stephen Brier and John Hammond, I added experience, as well as objectivity in regards to this study. My Black Lives Matter playlist was added as a soundtrack to the movement. It's in place to inspire and cultivate an elevated mindset as we push for socio economic mobility in urban communities. The trailer I created works as a Public Service Announcement that reminds the visitor about the struggles that are ahead, if we are truly working to define *Black Economic Empowerment.* Finally I added a song I recorded about police brutality, unfortunately this remains an issue that urban communities continue to struggle with. All of these forms of communication are important to connecting with people to change the narrative of urban communities. My website is here to break down barriers that continue to divide our communities, it's not an easy task, but through creativity and diligence we can build awareness and change in the hood.

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