



BLACK WOMEN

IN THE UNITED STATES

2016

POWER OF THE SISTER VOTE

BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Executive Summary

Black Women in the United States, 2016, continues the Black Women's Roundtable (BWR) annual tradition of providing a deep inquiry into the needs and condition of Black women across the nation. This year's report is situated around BWR's five pillar areas of focus: Inclusive Democracy; Economic Opportunity and Access; Quality Education and Access; Quality Healthcare and Health Justice; and Systematic Racism within the Criminal Justice System. Included herein are the voices of scholars and practitioners with deep expertise in each issue-area covered throughout the report. As such, this year's analysis is steeped in rigor, while providing an accessible analysis of those issue key to Black women's well-being throughout the nation.

The following are some of the key findings from the report:

Black Women are Critical Actors in the 2016 Election

- ❖ Black women are leveraging their voting power in the presidential primaries. Just as they did in 2008, in 2016 Black women are making the difference. Their support of Hillary Clinton has been key to her electoral victories as was the case for President Obama. In South Carolina, Clinton won 89% of Black women's votes, a state where 78% of Black women voted for Obama in 2008. She also won 93% of Black women's votes in Alabama, a state where she won just 18% of the Black woman's vote in her first presidential run.
- ❖ Black women vote largely out of a sense of responsibility and are greatly influenced by issues and not optics.
- ❖ Younger Black women are trending away from the Democratic party and identifying more as Independents. This leaves the door open for increasing numbers of Black women to vote for Republican or Independent candidates
- ❖ In the 2016 primary season, we've observed a significant increase in Blacks voting in Republican primaries. In the GA Republican primary, Blacks voting Republican increased 100%, where 7% of Black voters supported the GOP. And in Virginia, Blacks voting Republican jumped to 9%, a 400% increase.
- ❖ It's anticipated that Black women will be pivotal to the 2016 election. All indications suggest that Black women will continue to have strong voter turnout and perhaps lead the nation as they have done in the last two presidential elections.

Black Women are Reliable Voters but Trail Behind in Representation

- ❖ In both 2008 and 2012, Black women redefined voting history by becoming the largest demographic group to cast ballots in an election. Their vote, in fact, accounts for the gender gap in support of the Democratic party as white women supported Republican candidates in both elections.
- ❖ Despite our voting power, Black women engage in electoral politics with mixed results. On one hand, they are gaining increased access to political offices, often outpacing Black men in winning elections. On the other, they continue to face considerable obstacles to securing high-profile offices at both state and national levels.
- ❖ With no Black woman serving in the Senate since 1999, the 2016 election has the potential to change the course of history. Two Black women are vying for the Democratic nomination from their respective states. This could radically transform Congressional history since there has never been more than one Black woman in the Senate and never more than two Black Senators to serve at the same time.

Investing in Black Women's Leadership and Work in the South Should be a National Imperative

- ❖ Supporting black women leadership in the South is fertile ground for advancing social inclusion and progress. Many organizations and progressive efforts are being led by black women and women of color. Throughout the South there are strong civic organizations and social justice groups led by brilliant and committed black women. Organizations like the (SRBWI) Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative that organizes rural black women across three "deep south" states; Southerners on New Ground that continues to advocate for the reproductive rights of women and LGBTQ rights; Georgia Stand-Up a labor and community partnership and regional "think and act" tank for working families based in Atlanta; Blueprint North Carolina a statewide network of more than 43 non-profit, non-partisan organizations working together across issues and racial lines to advance equity and social justice and scores of many others.
- ❖ The South receives the least amount of philanthropic investment of any other region in the country. Additionally, programs that support black women and girls in the South also receive less philanthropic, public and private investment than other communities. According to the Unequal Lives report commissioned by the SRBWI, black women and girls' organizations in the South receive less than 1% of all philanthropic investment in the region.

Black Women Still Lagging Behind in the Economy

- ❖ Black women make up more than half (52.9%) of the Black workforce, but are still the most likely of any group of women in America to live in poverty (28%) due in large part to low pay.
- ❖ Since the recession officially ended in 2009, the pace of recovery of jobs, household income and wealth has been extremely slow, but even slower for African Americans.
- ❖ Black women made notable employment gains in 2014 and 2015, even as employment growth for whites and Hispanics slowed. The share of Black women with a job has increased 2.4 percentage points since 2013—more than whites (.4 percentage points) and Hispanics (1.4 percentage points). Over half of this increase occurred in 2015.
- ❖ Although more Black women are working, they've seen the largest decline in earnings between 2009-2014 (-3.6%), with most of that decline occurring in 2011. Earnings for whites (-0.2%) and Hispanic women (-0.8%) are down by less over the same period.
- ❖ As a result of the differential rates in earnings recovery, Black women have lost ground in closing the racial pay gap. In 2014, Black women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by white women (down from 80 cents/dollar in 2009).

Black Women Struggle in Retirement Years

- ❖ Black women are especially likely to rely on Social Security for a significant amount of their retirement income. In fact, depending on age, anywhere from one-fifth to one-half of Black women are totally reliant on Social Security to fill their income needs.
- ❖ If Social Security were to disappear, the poverty rates of senior Black women would more than double.

Black Women Embrace Entrepreneurship

- ❖ Black women are the most likely demographic group in America to start their own business. Between 1997 and 2015, the number of companies started by Black women grew by 322% culminating in over 1.3 million businesses nationwide.
- ❖ Although Black women are especially likely to start a business, they tend to fall behind when it comes to revenue generation. Business own by Black women tend to produce just under \$40,000 annually compared to average per-firm revenues of over \$68,000 for Latina-owned firms, more than \$170,000 for Asian American woman-owned firms, and nearly \$190,000 for firms owned by white women.

Black Women Largely Absent from Tech Companies

- ❖ While major tech company giants like Apple, Facebook, Google, Intel, Microsoft and Twitter are collectively hiring thousands of workers, on average, their employment of Black women comes in at only 3%.
- ❖ It is common perception that a high degree of technical skill and education is required in order to gain employment in the tech industry. In reality, not all jobs in the tech industry require an advanced STEM degree at all. By the time a tech company grows to reach the level of the major companies like Google or Facebook, it has increasing needs for employees with non-technical skills and expertise in areas like accounting and finance, advertising, community outreach, law, project management, public policy and recruiting. There is an abundance of Black women who are graduating from colleges and universities throughout the nation, who have the requisite education, training and skills to fit the bill.

Apprenticeships and Career and Technical Education Offer Untapped Opportunities for Black Women

- ❖ Apprenticeships and CTE programs provide access to higher wage, higher demand jobs in emerging industry sectors. Almost thirty percent of people with less than an Associate's degree, including licenses and certificates in key areas, earn more than the average Bachelor's degree recipient.
- ❖ Apprenticeships and CTE occupations in STEM such as environmental engineering and science technicians require an Associate's degree and will experience faster than average job growth.
- ❖ Increasing Black women's participation in these high-wage, traditionally male-dominated fields will boost their overall earnings and help to close the wage gap.

Black Women and the HBCU Experience

- ❖ While it is true that women of all races outnumber men on college campuses throughout the nation, among select HBCUs, Black women make up the overwhelming majority of students enrolled. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, as of 2013, Black women made up nearly two-thirds (61%) of HBCU enrollment. That represents a stark increase since 1976, when Black women accounted for just over half (53%) of all HBCU students.
- ❖ Recent studies suggest HBCU graduates are more likely to thrive financially, socially, physically, and otherwise than Blacks who did not graduate from HBCUs.

Black Women Face Critical Health Disparities

- ❖ For the first time ever, Black women were found to be nearly just as likely as white women to be stricken with breast cancer. This is especially concerning because Black women are the more likely to be saddled with an especially aggressive form of the disease and are more likely than all other women to die from the illness.
- ❖ Maternal mortality remains at crisis levels for Black women. Over the past 25 years, the maternal mortality rate in America has doubled and that trend can be almost fully attributed to the skyrocketing rates of maternal mortality among Black women.

Black Women and Girls Suffer Disproportionately in the Criminal Justice System

- ❖ Black girls are disproportionately impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline. Like their male counterparts, Black girls are impacted by high public school suspension rates. In fact, Black girls are more likely to be suspended from school than all other girls and most other boys.
- ❖ Childhood trauma, and particularly sexual abuse is significantly tied to juvenile justice involvement for girls.
- ❖ Black girls and young Black women comprise just 14% of the general youth population, yet they comprise fully 1/3 of all girls and young women being detained and committed to the juvenile justice system.
- ❖ Black girls are 20% more likely than white girls to be formally charged in the context of juvenile delinquency cases.
- ❖ Black women are often subjected to violence and sexual assault within the criminal justice system. In fact, 440 officers within the criminal justice system have lost their licenses/badges for a number of sexual infractions.

Black Women on the State and Federal Judiciary

- ❖ Data on racial and gender diversity in the American judiciary reveals that although a Black female judge is not a rare phenomenon, the American judiciary is still overwhelmingly white and male.
- ❖ There are 185 white female and 66 Black male federal judges, compared to a mere 42 Black women serving as judges at the federal level.
- ❖ Over the past five years, there has been a slowdown in the appointment of Black women judges in comparison to Black men judges. For instance, Black male Court of Appeals

judges have increased by five while Black women have only seen an increase of only two.

- ❖ Since its inception, 112 Justices have served on the Supreme Court. Of the 112, only four have been women and just two have been African American. A Black woman has never been nominated or served on the Supreme Court.