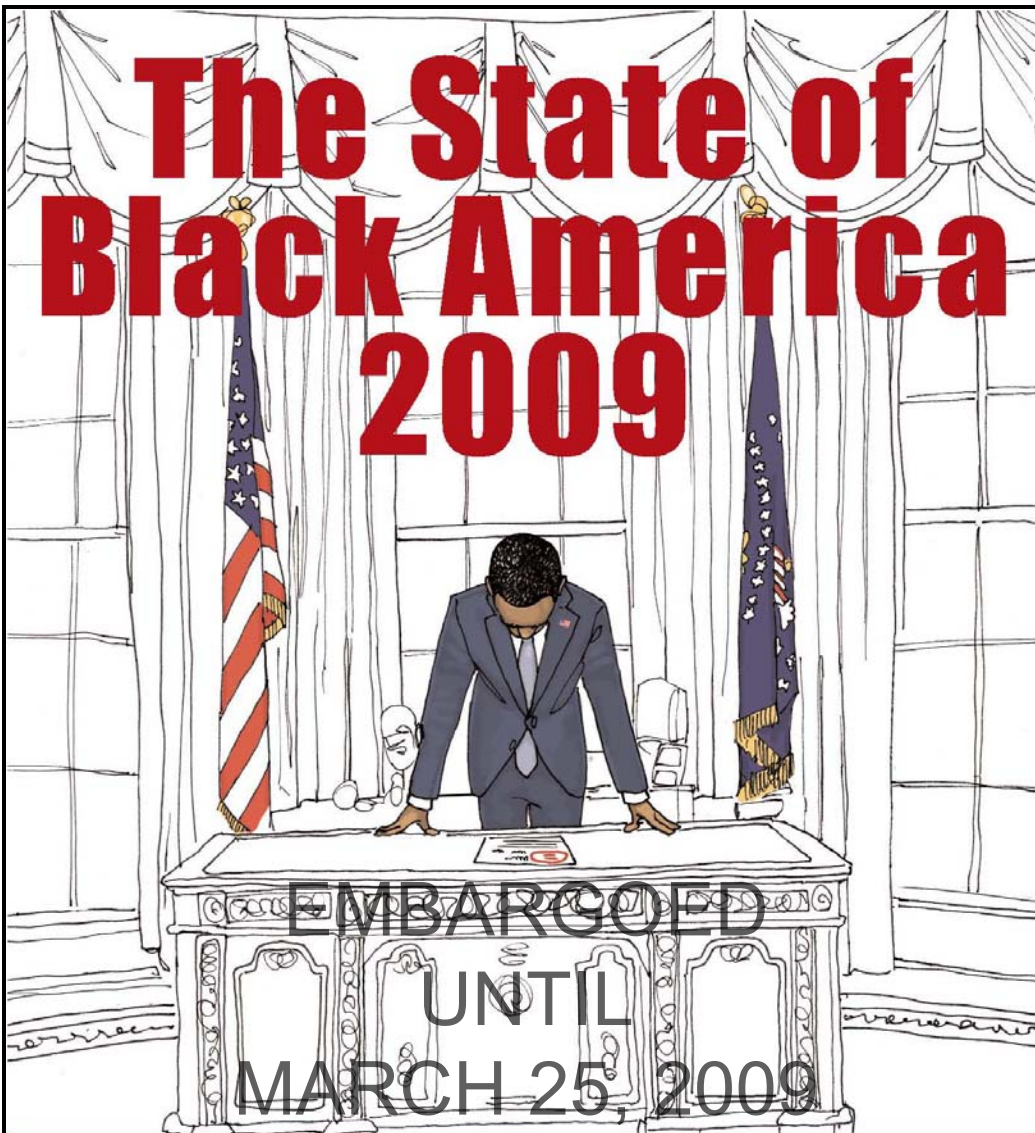


The State of Black America 2009



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UNTIL
MARCH 25, 2009

Message to the President



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AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE



National
Urban League

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

\$ 19.95

The Annual Barometer of the Conditions,
Experiences and Opinions of African Americans

The State of Black America[®] 2009

Message to the President

With the 2009 Equality Index™

At the dawn of Barack Obama's historic presidency, *The State of Black America 2009* examines the critical challenges—such as unemployment, home foreclosures, education and health care reform—his new administration must address. In this volume, the National Urban League presents the voices of leading scholars, analysts and practitioners, as well as ordinary citizens asking their government to respond to their concerns—and offers its specific recommendations for effectively tackling these issues. *The State of Black America 2009: Message to the President* is an invaluable guide, not only for the new President, but for anyone seeking solutions that will empower every American to Thrive, Earn, Own and Prosper.

I hope that The State of Black America 2009: Message to the President will find its way to the desks of decision makers from the White House to both Houses of Congress to every state house and to local governments throughout the nation. I also hope that it will lead to a national dialogue that spawns an agenda with support from the private sector and its civic counterpart. With this hope we can hasten the realization of my father's dream so that the narratives of all Americans can be one.

—From the Foreword by Martin Luther King, III



State of Black America® 2009 Message to the President

With the 2009 Equality Index™



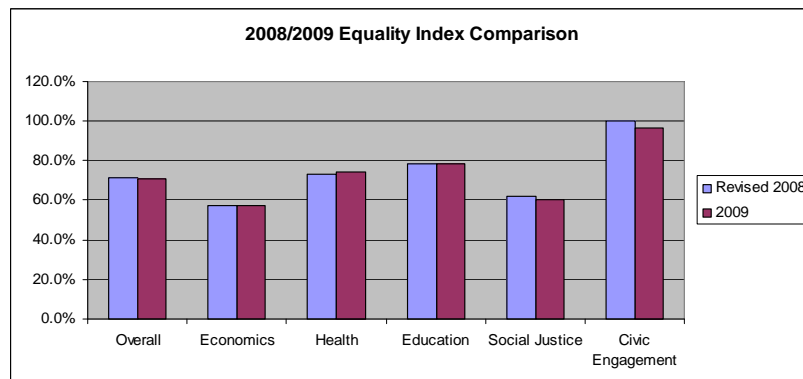
Executive Summary

At the dawn of Barack Obama's historic presidency, the National Urban League's *The State of Black America 2009* examines the critical challenges — such as unemployment, home foreclosures, education and health care reform — his new administration must address. With a Foreword by Martin Luther King III, this volume — the 33rd edition — features essays and commentaries by leading scholars, analysts and practitioners, as well as ordinary citizens and offers its specific recommendations for effectively tackling these issues

The 2009 Equality Index™

As the Obama Administration ushers in a new era of hope, change, and to some extent, unity for this nation, many are asking whether racial barriers have now been erased in America. Are discrimination, division and inequality antiquated relics of the past? For a quick answer to that question, one has but to review some of the sobering statistics presented in the 2009 Equality Index. Ironically, even as an African-American man holds the highest office the country, African Americans remain twice as likely as whites to be unemployed, three times more likely to live in poverty and more than six times as likely to be incarcerated.

The 2009 Equality Index stands at 71.1% compared to a revised 2008 index of 71.5%. Relative to 2008, the change in this year's overall index was marginal, indicating a general continuation of the status quo. Economics remains the area with the greatest degree of inequality (from 57.6% in 2008 to 57.4% in 2009), followed by social justice (from 62.1% to 60.4%), health (from 73.3% to 74.4%), education (from 78.6% to 78.5%) and civic engagement (from 100.3% to 96.3%).





This year we also offer an analysis of some key economic statistics from the Equality Index – median household income, the poverty rate, the unemployment rate and the homeownership rate -- to compare the relative “success” of the two most recent economic expansions. The analysis shows that while important gains were made, both for blacks and whites, in each of these areas during the 1990s expansion, there was actually a loss of ground in median household income, poverty and homeownership during the 2001-2007 expansion, known as the jobless recovery.

Finally, this year’s Equality Index provides an opportunity to examine observed trends in the indices of key indicators from four of the sub-sections of the index – economics, health, education and social justice – between the 2005 and 2009 Equality Index.

Results were mixed in economics, with two indices showing a decline (poverty rate – from 42% to 33%; homeownership rate – from 64% to 63%) and two others showing improvement (median household income – from 61% to 65%; unemployment rate – from 43% to 51%).

In education, attainment and enrollment data suggest that although achievement in these areas is similar for blacks and whites, over the observed period, there has been a growing, rather than a diminishing, gap.

There were some improvements in the health insurance gap overall (2 percentage points) and for children (3 percentage points) with the most ground being made among uninsured African American children who went from almost 14 percent to 12 percent.

Under the heading of social justice, the incarceration rate declined for both whites and African Americans, resulting in a 3 percentage point increase in the incarceration rate index. A decline in prisoners as a percentage of arrests for African Americans (-1.7 percentage points) also contributed to a 3 percentage point increase in the index for this variable.



Essays on *The State of Black America*

Letters to the President

Each Essay section begins with a Letter to the President from a person who has benefited from Urban League programs in their communities asking the President to address a particular area of concern.

Education

The opening essay, "The Questions Before Us: Opportunity, Education and Equity," by Dr. Hal Smith, vice president of Education and Youth Development at the National Urban League, examines the current school dropout crisis plaguing America, particularly in many urban communities. He proposes that elements such as expanded learning and developmental opportunities, improved engagement of youth, and strengthened education partnerships are key to improving the educational system in the United States and reduce the exceedingly high student dropout rate.

In "Needed: Equality in Education," Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA), author of the Student Bill of Rights Congressional bill, attributes the current achievement gap in the U.S educational system to the disparity of resource distribution. He maintains that in order for students to achieve equality in scholastic achievement at the elementary and secondary levels throughout the U.S educational system, adequate educational facilities and the quality of educational instruction must be universal.

In his essay, "From Miracle to Movement: Mandating a National Opportunity to Learn" Dr. John Jackson, president and CEO of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, examines how several Supreme Court cases subsequent to the high court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling stagnated equal opportunity in U.S. education . Jackson proposes a new, more expansive federal role in U.S. education to ensure that every American student has an equal opportunity to learn as a federally-protected right.

Health

In "Improving African Americans' Access to Healthcare," Dr. Darrell Gaskin, associate professor of health of economics at the University of Maryland, asserts that in order to eliminate inequity in the quality of healthcare treatment in U.S. healthcare system, racial disparities with respect to health insurance coverage, income and sources of care must be addressed. Gaskin calls for a more a comprehensive approach to eliminate healthcare racial disparities in the United States, which includes the expansion of healthcare insurance coverage to the uninsured, raising Medicaid reimbursement rates and making healthcare providers more accessible to underserved African-American communities.

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“Health Is Where the Home Is: The Relationship Between Housing, Neighborhoods and Health Status” is an in-depth analysis by Eboni Morris, a health policy fellow at the National Urban League Policy Institute, and Lisa Bland Malone, vice president at the National Urban League Policy Institute, that examines how the urban environment can adversely affect the health of its residents. Morris and Malone recommend improvements in community infrastructure and planning to improve healthy living conditions in urban areas.

Jobs

In “Infrastructure and Job Creation—A Priority for Urban America” Sen. Christopher John Dodd (D-CT) explains how infrastructure investment, modernizing the nation’s electrical grid and creating a National Infrastructure Bank not only improves living conditions for urban residents, but how it also creates hundreds of jobs for many residents of these communities.

The unemployment rate for African-American men has been significantly increased over the last two years. In “Why Reduce African-American Male Unemployment,” economist Dr. William Rodgers III explains how reducing black male unemployment during the current recession is beneficial to the U.S economy, because it reduces poverty as well as spending in unemployment insurance and welfare benefits.

“Nothing Trickles Down: How Reaganomics Failed America” by William E. Spriggs, professor and chair of the department of economics at Howard University, examines the damaging aspects of Reaganomics, and how it was economically detrimental to African-Americans.

In the “The Coming Green Economy,” J. Phillip Thompson, associate professor of Urban Politics in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explains how going “green” is not only beneficial to urban environments but can also create hundreds of thousands of job opportunities for its residents.

Home Ownership

In “What Must Be Done? The Case for More Homeownership and Financial Education Counseling,” Cy Richardson, National Urban League vice president for housing and community development, explains how pre- and post-purchase home ownership counseling is essential to resolving the current home foreclosure crisis in the United States. He also stresses the need for more funding to subsidize counseling programs to prevent home purchasing default and assist victims of predatory lenders.

“The Subprime Meltdown: Disarming the “Weapons of Mass Deception” by Stephanie Jones, executive director of the National Urban League Policy Institute

and editor of *The State of Black America*, explores the myths that minorities and/or low-income borrowers are to blame for the nation's subprime crisis.

In "Wealth for Life," Earl Graves, Jr., president and CEO of *Black Enterprise* magazine, explains why economic prosperity is vital to African-American families. Through *Black Enterprise's* "Black Wealth Initiative," a 10-step program, he also explains how minority families can build wealth and transfer it to future generations.

Lessons From The President

"The Fullness of Time for a More Perfect Union" is an Op-Ed by Gwendolyn Grant, president & CEO of the Urban League of Greater Kansas City. She feels that while many African Americans are elated over an African American becoming a U.S. president, they should not allow this historic milestone to lead to complacency with regard to civil rights engagement. She calls for a "new" civil rights movement built on three key elements: idealistic pragmatism, participatory interdependence, and personal responsibility.

Report From the National Urban League Policy Institute

In early December 2008, the National Urban League called for an Economic Recovery Plan to create jobs in urban America and provided Congress and then President-Elect Barack Obama with a set of recommendations aimed at job creation to help stabilize the economy. This essay discusses recent trends in urban unemployment and sets forth six proposals for providing much needed employment growth and job training in urban areas.

Commentaries: Reflections on the Obama Presidency

In "The Congressional Black Caucus and President Barack Obama: Speaking With One Voice to Fill the Moral Gaps in Our World" Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) explains the historic role of the Congressional Black Caucus and its vow to work with the President Obama in resolving the "moral gaps" of education, jobs, housing and healthcare which continues to hinder Black America.

"The Game Changer: Are We Beyond What is Next What is Now?" is a commentary by Cassye Cook, national president of the National Urban League Young Professionals, in which she contends that Barack Obama's ascendance to the U.S. presidency is a return to "participatory democracy" among young American citizens.

And in "Reflection on an Election: Did I Ever," the Honorable Nathaniel Jones, former judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and general counsel of the NAACP, reflects on his personal experiences growing up in a segregated society, in the American Civil Right movement and the historical

State of Black America 2009: Message to the President



impact of President Obama's inauguration as the nation's 44th President on his life.

The *State of Black America 2009* concludes with "The Journey Continues," where Editor-in-Chief Stephanie Jones honors Barack Obama's ascendancy to the Oval Office and offers *The State of Black America 2009* to President Obama as a "roadmap for the strong, bold and decisive action needed to set our nation on the road to full economic and social equality for all of its citizens."

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NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE
THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA 2009
RECOMMENDATIONS

OPPORTUNITY TO THRIVE

Education

1. Fully fund No Child Left Behind, ensure that all monies authorized are appropriated to reach all eligible children and close the Equality Gap by ending resource inequities in Our Schools
2. Require states to compare and publicly report resources available to achieve a sound and basic education for every child in every school
3. Replace Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) with a Comprehensive Accountability Framework that can more accurately capture student performance using multiple measures of achievement;
4. Enact a federal teacher and principal supply policy to identify and support highly qualified and effective teachers and leaders for all students;
5. Establish a private right of action that gives parents and other concerned parties the ability to hold districts, states, and the US Department of Education accountable for implementing the requirements of NCLB;
6. Guarantee that all three- and four-year olds have access to full day, developmentally appropriate, high quality early childhood education;
7. Change Supplemental Education Services (SES) eligibility requirements to offer immediate academic support to all students not "proficient;"
8. Provide increased funding to states for SES and require districts to provide academic support to ALL eligible students;
9. Create a new federal secondary school improvement fund to support low-performing middle and high schools;
10. Increase funds to provide for more meaningful, understandable and timely information regarding key school and student performance data.



Health

1. Implement a comprehensive and universal health insurance system for all Americans;
2. Develop a comprehensive health infrastructure for the delivery of health education, prevention and intervention initiatives for African Americans;
3. Conduct a thorough examination of the criminal justice system as it relates to treatment and rehabilitation of African-American males;
4. Examine chronic health conditions in a context of economic, sociologic and environmental contributors;
5. Increase the Career Pipeline and Access for Minorities in the Health Professions

OPPORTUNITY TO EARN

1. Increase funding for proven and successful models of workforce training and job placement for under-skilled workers between the ages of 16 and 30 such as the Department of Labor's "Responsible Reintegration of Youthful Offenders;"
2. Direct a percentage of all infrastructure monies to job training, job placement and job preparation for disadvantaged workers;
3. Target workforce investment dollars to the construction industry jobs that an infrastructure program will create and, where reigniting the construction industry is a goal, pre-apprenticeship programs must be funded in that sector;
4. Fund infrastructure development for public building construction and renovations of schools, community centers, libraries, recreation centers, parks, etc., that will rebuild and revitalize urban communities;
5. Re-establish a temporary Public Service Employment (PSE) program aimed at creating 150,000 – 200,000 jobs in urban areas to forestall a reduction in public services and an increase in job losses;



OPPORTUNITY TO OWN

Pass a "Homebuyers' Bill of Rights" that:

1. Funds homeownership education and counseling, financial literacy workshops, credit counseling, fair housing advocacy and foreclosure prevention assistance that uses national minority housing intermediaries

with a track record of providing effective counseling assistance in underserved minority urban communities;
2. Provides for Individual Development Accounts for homeownership administered by employers as matched savings plans for the future purchase of a home and offer housing tax credits for people below a certain income level;
3. Strengthens the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) as it is applied to banks and expands its reach to non-bank financial institutions in to encourage banks to respond to a variety of needs in low- and moderate-income communities and enforce stricter standards that eliminate incentives for predatory loans and provides greater transparency;
4. Creates a HUD Task Force to vigorously investigate and prosecute violations of fair-housing laws and authorize congressional oversight hearings to hold HUD accountable;
5. Demystifies the credit reporting system through creation of a public education and awareness campaign about credit scoring and its impact on wealth creation, and establishment of a penalty structure for credit reporting bureaus that maintain inaccurate client files;
6. Reauthorizes and improves HOPE VI

OPPORTUNITY TO PROSPER

1. Restore and Make Permanent the Small Business Administration's Community Express Loan Program;
2. Continue Funding for the New Market Tax Credit Program Beyond 2009;
3. Strengthen and Enforce Federal Minority Business Opportunity Goals in Government Contracting;
4. Expand the Number of Small Minority Businesses Involved in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math);
5. Develop an Affordable National Health Insurance Option.