Call for Papers
45th Annual Meeting of the Association of Black Sociologists
RACE AND INEQUALITY IN THE OBAMA ERA AND BEYOND
Chicago, Illinois
August 20-22, 2015

Over the past 30 years, income and wealth inequality rose significantly in the United States. These gaps have intensified since the Great Recession, which began in 2008 and continues today. Census bureau data that indicate that the share of national income going to the top 20 percent of the population has increased from 35 percent to 50 percent since the late 1970s. By 2011, the bottom 40 percent of persons in the income distribution received only 20 percent of the national income. Further, data from the Federal Reserve’s Survey of Consumer Finance (SCF) paints the more disturbing picture of the trajectory of wealth inequality. It estimates that in 1989, the top 10 percent of households held about two-thirds of the nation’s private wealth. Yet, by 2013, this disparity had grown dramatically. The top 10 percent of households now hold about three-quarters of the nation’s private wealth; the bottom half of households possess a mere one percent of such wealth.

African Americans are disproportionately harmed by the significant racial inequality in income and wealth. When income by racial groups is considered, 2010 census figures show that blacks are experiencing a poverty rate of 27.4% as compared to 9.9%, 12.1%, and 26.6% rates for non-Hispanic whites, Asians, and Hispanics, respectively. Furthermore, their median household income of $32,068 stands in stark contrast to the $54,620, $64,308, and $37,759 for non-Hispanic whites, Asians, and Hispanics, respectively. Similarly, while earnings, income, and wealth rise with educational attainment, the racial wealth gap does not close significantly with more years of schooling and/or more credentials.

For some, the current inequities facing black communities, and especially the growth of these inequities, are particularly ironic against the historical backdrop of the election of the first African American President. This growing racialized inequality has significant implications for the quality of life, life chances, and daily experiences of subaltern groups in the U.S., in general, and blacks, in particular. Questions continue to remain regarding the causes of these challenges. A candid discourse is in order around the systemic and individual-level dynamics that help explain contemporary racial inequality and related disparities in the U.S. and beyond.

The 2015 Association of Black Sociologists’ meeting is devoted to filling this lacuna. The theme focuses both on how racial inequality has evolved during the course of the Obama administration and its anticipated arc beyond the Obama years. We will explore the consequences of the level and direction of racial inequality through several major axes of sociological research: education, employment, wealth, culture and the arts, health, and political participation. Individual papers and full panels are solicited in all six of these arenas. Submissions that explore how racial inequality has evolved over the course of the Obama presidency, as well as the relationship between current conditions of racial inequality and the policies and practices of this administration, are also welcome.

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