



**National  
Urban League**

**To Be Equal #13**

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**2014 State of Black America® Spotlights the Nation's Great Divide – and Points to Even Greater Solutions**

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*"A house divided against itself cannot stand."* Abraham Lincoln

Our Constitution, Declaration of Independence and Emancipation Proclamation all speak of equality and unity as bedrock principles of American Democracy. But the truth is we have always been battling a Great Divide of race and class that has kept the American Dream out of reach for millions and that now threatens the very future of our nation. That fact is the central finding of the 38<sup>th</sup> edition of the **State of Black America® – One Nation Underemployed: Jobs Rebuild America**. This year's report underscores the urgency of the jobs crisis – both unemployment and underemployment – and offers ideas from the National Urban League and leading voices across the corporate, academic, political, civil rights and arts arenas about how African American and other communities of color can forge a path to economic stability and upward mobility.

Our 2014 Equality Index™, one of the most critical and respected tools for tracking racial equality in America, finds that the state of Black America stands at 71.2 percent of the state of white America in the areas of economics, social justice, civic engagement, health, and education. With an equality index of 75.8 percent, a similar divide exists between Latinos and whites, with Latinos experiencing only three-quarters of the full benefits America has to offer.

For the first time, the Equality Index also includes rankings of U.S. cities in a new metropolitan section, ranking cities from most-to-least equal via the Black-White Index (77 cities) and Hispanic-White Index (83 cities) – providing a revealing look at the local dynamics beneath the national trends. While each state and city has its own story to tell, the consistent refrain is that there is an urgent and growing disparity between the few who are reaping the rewards of economic recovery and the majority who are still reeling from the aftershocks of the Great Recession.

This year's report again sheds light on the racial dimensions of economic inequality in America. Our Economics index, which compares such factors as income, poverty, employment and wealth, finds that the economic status of African Americans is only 55.5% of

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that of whites, meaning that Blacks are still missing almost half of the economic pie. Hispanics are at 60.6%. The growing racial and ethnic divides in employment, homeownership and mortgage and home improvement loan denials drove losses in the economics index for both groups.

Our Economics Index also shows that unemployment inequality between Blacks and whites has widened, with the white unemployment rate dropping below 7 percent and the Black unemployment rate hovering above 13 percent for much of the past year. Further, with a Black-white income equality of only 60% and with Black households having just \$6 in wealth for every \$100 in wealth of white households – or a median wealth of \$6,314 vs. \$110,500, respectively, what we see emerging from the rubble of the Great Recession is a state of Black America in severe economic crisis.

But the 2014 State of Black America report also points to solutions. The National Urban League continues to move forward with our Jobs Rebuild America initiative – a \$100 million, five-year effort bringing together resources from the federal government, business and non-profits to reduce unemployment, create jobs and expand economic opportunity in 50 communities throughout the nation. We also continue to press Congress to pass the Urban Jobs Act, the Project Ready STEM Act, a transportation infrastructure bill and the Harkin-Miller Fair Minimum Wage Act, which would raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 for all workers with an index to inflation thereafter.

This year's publication also includes thought-provoking, solutions-focused essays from jazz great Wynton Marsalis, Xerox Chairman and CEO Ursula Burns, author and scholar Dr. Thomas Shapiro, HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, actor and philanthropist Hill Harper and many others. The Metropolitan Index section also features commentaries from the mayors of four of the featured cities – Baltimore, Denver, Jacksonville, and Memphis – focused on scalable initiatives they are implementing to drive job creation and help narrow the divide between the haves and have-nots.

Half a century after President Johnson declared the War on Poverty, the 2014 edition of the State of Black America calls us to take immediate steps to address the income and wealth divides that threaten our nation's economic recovery and our ability to compete in the global marketplace. We must act now. As America was reminded during another great crisis, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

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