

THE HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF BLACK CITIZENSHIP¹
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INTRODUCTION

The history of African Americans and citizenship is a fraught and tense one wherein “freedom” and “equal rights” – as applied to black people – are relatively new and recent concepts. Since first arriving on American soil as enslaved laborers, African Americans have existed either at the margins of citizenship (and the rights and privileges that are conferred by said citizenship), or have been excluded entirely, with stark consequences.

African Americans have resisted and challenged this exclusion and marginalization since their arrival, helping to usher in significant reforms at watershed moments in time – the Reconstruction era, for example, or the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement. The latter period, stretching from the 1950s through the 1960s revealed a particularly potent combination of black resistance, legal shifts, and legislative reforms that dramatically reshaped American democracy for African Americans and expanded the boundaries of citizenship to better include black people. And by all objective measures, African Americans have experienced considerable progress in the last sixty years, as well (desegregating exclusive sites of power across industries, for instance, most notably, the White House in 2008).

But progressive notion about the momentum of history is a surface-level observation, obscuring the fragility of black progress and citizenship since the 1960s. As African Americans have progressed, they have continued to face marginalization and consequent denial of their citizenship. The great tragedy is that the nation mistakenly points to these superficial markers of progress and the absence of explicit racial violence as proof that African Americans have full equality; this in turn ignores the significance of historical and institutional discrimination and reinforces the erroneous belief that black people, and black people alone, are responsible for their inequality.

In 1968, when the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders released its bombshell “Kerner Commission” report, detailing the near-universal ways in which African Americans had been systematically and structurally excluded from true citizenship, it was as if, for a fragile moment, the United States was on the cusp of a transformative revolution. That moment would be gone all too soon as the president and Congress ignored nearly all of the commission’s recommendations. That and other similar decisions, as well as the political shift away from a structural-solution approach to equality, was consequential, with long-lasting effects on the status of black citizenship in the United States. This paper examines some of those transformations and effects, exploring the shifts in black life that have transpired since the classical phase of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Two critical aspects of black citizenship – economic status and political participation – will be the focus of

¹Please do not cite or disseminate without author’s permission. This is a rough draft.

²I am indebted to my research assistant Anna Beshlian for her help on this project.

this discussion, although the interplay with property, criminal justice/mass incarceration, and education will be brought in, as well.

Importantly, progress around black citizenship in the United States has not been linear, nor all-encompassing. While this discussion is by no means comprehensive, it is worth noting that any overall trends that have been observed are far from consistent. While some areas have improved (like educational achievement, high school/college completion, and unemployment), these changes do not tell the complete story and should not serve as an indication of comprehensive nor total improvement.

ECONOMICS AND THE WEALTH GAP

In the United States, property ownership has long been linked to notions of citizenship and wealth. In this respect, African Americans have been “left behind” since the dismantling of Reconstruction in 1877, and the subsequent and systemic exclusion of black citizens from the same economic institutions that their enslaved labor had helped create. In some cases, federal policies and laws enacted during the 1960s were designed to address these inequalities (i.e. the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the launch of the War on Poverty, the Fair Housing Act in 1968 and the Philadelphia Plan and Affirmative Action in 1969). However, those solutions have provided mixed results.³ In 1967, a third of black families lived below the poverty line. By 2000, that number had dropped to 19 percent. African Americans living under the poverty line correlates directly with the whims of the economy; in short, when a recession hits, black people are the first to feel it. Thus by 2010, that figure had risen again to 24 percent. It has steadily declined since then and now sits at 18 percent, a number that nonetheless is double the number of white families living under poverty.⁴

Moreover, since the 1970s, the racial wealth gap between black and white families has only grown *worse*, compounding historical problems of inequality. In 2016, for instance, the Institute on Assets and Social Policy (IASP) published a 25-year study on black families’ access to wealth; the institution found that homeownership, income and employment, inheritance, and college education, among other factors, all contributed to widening the black-white wealth gap. Though none of these variables are *causal* in nature, IASP nonetheless noted that the largest factor in the disparity of wealth is the number of years of homeownership (making up 27 percent of the gap).⁵ Indeed, the long-standing effects of residential segregation “underpins many of the challenges African-American families face in buying homes and increasing equity.”⁶ In short, the “ghosts” and consequences of historical discriminatory practices such as redlining continue to live on in the present, despite state and federal governments best attempts to use public policy to address inequality. The present-day situation also represents a terrible paradox of sorts: even though the acquisition of homes and property has been held aloft as a hallmark economic progress for African Americans, property accumulation is also the mechanism through which the black-white wealth gap increases.⁷ Black homeowners, for

³ See: Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican: Pragmatic Politics and the Pursuit of Power*, Chapters 3 & 4.

⁴ US Census Data

⁵ Thomas Shapiro, Tatjana Meschede, and Sam Osoro. “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap: Explaining the Black-White Economic Divide.” *Research and Policy Brief* 8, (February 2013): 2.

⁶ Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap,” 2.

⁷ Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap,” 2.

example, are more likely to be financially vulnerable to the volatilities of the housing market and foreclosures because they are more likely to have “high-risk mortgages.” The financial crisis of 2008 epitomizes this vulnerability: white household wealth declined 12 percent, while declining 21 percent for black families.⁸

Income disparities also play a large role in the economic stagnation of African Americans, accounting for 20 percent of the difference in the black-white wealth gap.⁹ Like property, present-day income inequalities are rooted in the legacies and continuing practices of racial discrimination. African Americans are more likely to experience discrimination in hiring practices, wages and salary, promotions, and job benefits; they are also more likely to work in industries that lack comprehensive retirement plans, health benefits, and administrative organization and support, all of which impact the ability of African Americans to acquire savings and assets.¹⁰ African Americans also have higher unemployment rates compared to that of whites and face increased job insecurity. Since the 1960s, black unemployment has consistently been *double* that of white employment; African Americans are also more likely than whites to be among the first laid off during internal job eliminations and in nationwide recessions. The unemployment rate also reveals nothing about African Americans difficulties with underemployment, low wages, lack of social mobility, and career trajectory.^{11,12,13} Many studies also note that African Americans cannot rely on an inheritance to add to their household wealth. When the IASP study looked at the generational patterns of inheritance across 25 years, white people were five times more likely to inherit wealth than black people. Of the pool of people who inherited money at all, whites received approximately 10 times more than African Americans.¹⁴

College, long thought of as the “great equalizer,” further highlights racial discrepancies when it comes to the black-white wealth gap – this in spite of the fact that African American college attendance has steadily increased since 1976.¹⁵ But while a correlation exists between a household’s economic level(s) and educational access, African Americans still disproportionately experience significant disparities. Part of the issue is that attending college is *expensive* – black college attendees are facing institutions wherein costs have risen by more than 60 percent in the past two decades.¹⁶ Given that black students have less wealth, they take on student loans at a higher rate, accumulate significantly higher rates of student loan debt, and drop out of college for financial reasons at a higher rate.^{17,18} And though college completion rates have increased for all Americans, attaining a college

⁸ Ibid., 4. Foreclosures also have an impact that extends further into the community beyond the piece of property that is being foreclosed – there is a collateral effect, as the property value of surrounding homes declines, the connected housing market becomes more volatile, and nearby areas are affected by high-risk loans.

⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰ Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap,” 4.

¹¹ Drew DeSilver. “Black Unemployment Rate Is Consistently Twice That of Whites.” *Pew Research Center*, August 21, 2013.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ DeSilver. “Black Unemployment Rate Is Consistently Twice That of Whites.”

¹⁴ Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap,” 5.

¹⁵ https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015/indicator6_24.asp

¹⁶ Shapiro. 5

¹⁷ Darity, et. al. 7, 28 - https://socialequity.duke.edu/sites/socialequity.duke.edu/files/site-images/FINAL%20COMPLETE%20REPORT_.pdf

¹⁸ Shapiro, “The Roots of the Widening Racial Wealth Gap,” 5

degree appears to have done little to improve the economic citizenship of African Americans. As recent data illustrates, white household heads with a college degree, on average, had \$268,000 in wealth; black households with a comparably educated head had only \$70,000. Likewise, “white households with heads who reported having completed some college but did not finish their degrees, still possessed substantially more wealth (net worth) than the typical black household with a head who finished a college degree.” Equally distressing is “the fact that black households with a head with a college degree were substantially more ‘wealth poor’ than whites who never finished their high school diplomas.”¹⁹

These various factors, when taken together, showcase an alarming story of an economically marginalized and “second-class” community that appears to be *regressing* despite superficial outward markers of progress.

EDUCATION

Education is an area that has long reflected the tensions and inequalities inherent to American citizenship and race. Perhaps no other case better illuminates this than the 1954’s landmark Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education*. And yet, more than 60 years later, education in the United States is still distinctly “separate and unequal” for students based on race and class. On its own, (fair and equal) education is an important facet of black citizenship; it’s even more critical when we acknowledge the way in which it is linked to so many other aspects of black life and citizenship – for instance, African Americans face “enormously dim prospects when they fail to complete high school,” including poor job prospects and dramatically increased odds of incarceration.²⁰

In the immediate aftermath of *Brown*, it took states *years* to implement desegregation orders. White resistance to *Brown* often manifested in violent backlash and protest; additionally, cities and locales that complied often did so reluctantly, with many creating new ways to avoid integrating school systems (i.e. the explosion of private, charter, and parochial schools across the South).²¹ By the time southern schools finally desegregated in the 1970s, schools across the rest of the country faced their own violent crises of segregation (like the Boston Busing Crisis of the 1970s), much of which continues to this day. The American desegregation process has been slow, complicated, and incomplete – so much so that the American school system remains racially segregated to this day and is among one of the most unequal among developed nations.²²

Currently, two-thirds of students of color attend predominately minority-population schools. These schools tend to be located in cities, receive less funding than suburban schools, and have far less money to spend on their students.²³ Black students, by and large, do not have the same educational experiences as their white peers.²⁴ For example, predominately black and Latino schools often lack

¹⁹ Darity, et. al. 40

²⁰ Bruce Western & Becky Pettit, “Collateral Costs: Incarceration’s Effects on Economic Mobility,” *Pew Trusts*

²¹ Kevin Kruse, *White Flight*; Lily Geismer, *Don’t Blame Us*

²² Linda Darling-Hammond. “Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education.” *Brookings Institute*, November 30, 2001.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Hannah Nikole-Jones citation

modern textbooks, curriculums, lab materials, and technologies. Student-to-faculty ratios are large. Individualized attention is near-impossible. Specialized and experienced teachers are scarce. In some extreme instances, such schools do not offer the necessary pre-requisite math and science courses, necessary for college.²⁵

Consequently, the racial achievement gap (based on standardized test scores) reflects this imbalance, with considerable academic distance existing between black and white students. According to data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the black-white achievement gap narrowed considerably during the 1970s and into the 1980s but became stagnant (and in some cases widened) during the 1990s. Since then, the gap has declined, but considerable distance still exists.^{26,27,28,29}

It is important to note that in response to their educational second-class citizenship, African Americans sometimes have pursued educational avenues outside the traditional desegregation solutions. In other words, at various points in time, some black families have pushed for school voucher programs, charter schools, private schools, home-schooling, and more. They have done so since at least the 1960s and 1970s (southern and northern Freedom Schools) and well into the 1980s and 1990s (Marva Collins and the charter school movement) – and not without larger controversy. Legislators and politicians consistently have tried to adopt (and in some cases, co-op) these movements for various reasons or to partisan ends; it’s worth stating, however, that these creations and developments are often last resort grassroots reactions by black families, marginalized from educational systems – and they often come with mixed results, at best.

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The criminal justice system, policing, and the carceral state have inflicted severe consequences on black lives and black citizenship, in large part due to the way in which these interrelated systems target and remove African Americans from full participation in life, society, and all of the rights of citizenship. Most notably (at least for the purposes of this paper), mass incarceration expanded rapidly

²⁵ Darling-Hammond. “Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education.”

²⁶ “The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project: Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps.” *Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis*. 2014.

<http://cepa.stanford.edu/educational-opportunity-monitoring-project/achievement-gaps/race/>

²⁷ “Achievement Gaps by Standard Deviation.” The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project: Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps. *Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis*. 2014.

²⁸ “Average NAEP score.” The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project: Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps. *Stanford Center for Education Policy Analysis*. 2014.

²⁹ “The Educational Opportunity Monitoring Project: Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps.”

The gap between black and white students varies greatly from state to state, with Connecticut, Nebraska, and Washington, D.C. possessing the widest gaps, whereas states with smaller populations of black people (Hawaii, Idaho, Wyoming, Vermont, New Hampshire, etc.) tend to have the smallest gaps. The South and Rust Belt states tend to have the largest achievement gaps. These scores correlate with each state’s racial and socioeconomic disparities.

and at an unprecedented rate in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1980, the prison population numbered more than 300,000; by 1992, it was close to 800,000. In 2016, 2.2 million people were confined to prisons and jails.^{30, 31}

Coupled with the rise of mass incarceration is a prison reform agenda that is punitive, rather than rehabilitative. Conditions inside prisons have worsened throughout the era with overcrowding, and there have been significant cuts in mental and physical health services within prisons.³² Upon release from prison, people face significant barriers to employment, housing, public assistance programs, and food stamps. There are also several additional high costs that formerly incarcerated people face, such as child support obligations, drug testing fees, parole supervision fees, and drug treatment fees.³³ The carceral state extends far beyond the physical locations of prison cells – probation and parole are sustained methods of surveillance and control that dictate the lives of people who have recently been released. More people are experiencing this type of social isolation and struggle than ever before – the population under probation and parole essentially tripled between 1980 and 2016. In 2016, 4.65 million people were under probation or parole, and this rate of community corrections supervision had increased as the rate of incarceration grew.³⁴ A criminal record essentially removes a formerly incarcerated person from society, limiting their opportunities to participate and engage, effectively diminishing their citizenship status. This loss of citizenship appears to have the gravest impact in the lives of black men, who are targeted disproportionately by the criminal justice system: 1 in 3 Black men born since 2001 have a lifetime likelihood of imprisonment.³⁵

The first point of contact that many African Americans have with the criminal justice system is with law enforcement. Arrest rates are highest in high-poverty minority neighborhoods, and incarceration rates are intimately connected to arrest rates.³⁶ Numerically, 2,415 per 100,000 Black men are incarcerated.³⁷ This disparity in incarcerations rates extends to black youth. Youth incarceration rates peaked in 1999 and have been declining overall, however, Black youth continue to be disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system compared to their white counterparts.³⁸ Once African American teenagers enter the criminal justice system, many are tried as adults and sentenced accordingly. The rate of juvenile detention placement for Black youth is 433 per 100,000, whereas it is 86 per 100,000 for white youth.³⁹

³⁰ “Mass Incarceration.”

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2016/04/11/bill-clinton-black-lives-and-the-myths-of-the-1994-crime-bill#.yDVVHsyGa>

and <https://www.aaihs.org/mass-incarceration-and-its-mystification-a-review-of-the-13th/>

³¹ Michele Alexander, “About: The New Jim Crow.”

³² “Mass Incarceration.” *Equal Justice Initiative*. 2017.

³³ “Mass Incarceration.”

³⁴ Bruce Western. “The Challenge of Criminal Justice Reform.” *Executive Session on the Future of Justice Policy*. The Square One Project. September 20, 2018.

³⁵ “Lifetime Likelihood of U.S. Residents born in 2001,” “Trends in U.S. Corrections.” *The Sentencing Project*. June 2018.

³⁶ Western. “The Challenge of Criminal Justice Reform,” 6.

³⁷ “Racial Disparities.” Trends in U.S. Corrections. *The Sentencing Project*.

³⁸ “Youth.” “Trends in U.S. Corrections.” *The Sentencing Project*. June 2018.

³⁹ “Youth.”

The disenfranchisement of incarcerated populations, who are predominantly African Americans and people of color, is a form of citizenship status removal. In 48 states, felony conviction results in the termination of voting rights, and a total of 6.1 million people are currently bound by this restriction.⁴⁰ Disenfranchisement based on the extent of one's position in the criminal justice system varies from state to state. In 12 states, disenfranchisement applies to people at every level: whether they are in prison, on parole, on probation, or post-sentence they are not allowed to vote.⁴¹ These laws affect African Americans most drastically – 7.44% percent of the Black population is disenfranchised, compared to 2.57% of non-African-American people.⁴²

In addition to explicit voter disenfranchisement that overwhelmingly burdens African Americans, policies have institutionalized ideas surrounding innate black criminality and social deviance which contributes to the repression of black citizenship. The “War on Drugs,” “Broken Windows,” “Stop-and-Frisk,” and increasingly punitive sentencing laws are part of a broader sweep of policies that have emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.⁴³ People charged with lower-level drug offenses also faced increased incarceration as a result of these sentencing reforms in the 1980.⁴⁴ Rather than addressing the systemic roots of such crimes, various institutions at the local, state, and federal level continue to scapegoat, target, and punish black communities in a manner that limits their citizenship rights.⁴⁵

While such racialized policies may have increased in the 1970s and beyond, they are not new; indeed, both the Kerner Commission report (1968) and the report on the 1992 Los Angeles Riots (1993) argued that such policies were part of a broader and longer history of abuse that defined the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color.⁴⁶ With the explosion of new technological advances (i.e. cell phones, social media, etc.), the visibility of this unbalanced interaction has only increased. Consequently, it offers additional evidence that within the context of protection of their rights and privileges, African Americans continue to exist as “second-class citizens” in the United States.

VOTING, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Voting, civic engagement, and political representation arguably are the concepts most explicitly linked to notions of citizenship and democracy. For generations, African Americans – like most citizens – have placed a tremendous amount of faith in the political process as a means of achieving full and equal rights in the United States. Indeed, in the years immediately following the 1960s, African

⁴⁰ “Felony Disenfranchisement.” Trends in U.S. Corrections.” *The Sentencing Project*. June 2018.

⁴¹ “Felony Disenfranchisement, by State, 2016.” Trends in U.S. Corrections.” *The Sentencing Project*. June 2018.

⁴² “Rate of Disenfranchisement, by race, 2016.” Trends in U.S. Corrections.” *The Sentencing Project*. June 2018.

⁴³ James P. Lynch and William J. Sabol, “Did Getting Tough on Crime Pay?” Crime Sentencing Report 1, (August 1 1997): 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See Ferguson Report (Department of Justice); Baltimore Report (Department of Justice)

⁴⁶ “Policies and Practices contributing to High Rates of Incarceration.” e.d. Jeremy Travis, Bruce Western, and Stephanie Redburns. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States: Exploring Causes and Consequences*. National Academies Press, Washington D.C., 2014. National Research Council.

Americans increasingly turned their protests into political action – seeing the ballot box and politicians as *another* potential form of power. And yet, the process has been uneven. As of 2018, African Americans are still vastly underrepresented in political office (at every level) and political staffing positions. From the 1870s through 2016, only eight Black senators and four Black governors have served.⁴⁷ The nature of these positions is important to consider when analyzing how politicians prioritize the needs and interests of black communities.

Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and the enfranchisement of black people across the country, African American voter turnout has steadily increased.⁴⁸ After an immediate boost in the mid-1960s, voter turnout declined, fluctuated precipitously in the 1980s, and has risen steadily through the present day. It was highest in the South in 2008 when Barack Obama announced his first presidential bid (likewise, Jesse Jackson’s presidential announcements in the 1980s had a similar effect, throughout the South, during the Democratic primaries). In 2012, the overall black voter turnout rate surpassed that of any other racial group, including white people. As of 2016, black women, in particular, are the “backbone” of the modern Democratic Party, representing the demographic group most consistently loyal.⁴⁹ With this in mind, however, black voter turnout in midterm and off-year elections remains low and stagnant. And in the 2016 Presidential Election, black voter turnout declined for the first time in 20-years (from 66.6 percent in 2012 to 59.6 percent in 2016; most of the drop-off came from black men). Likewise, the black millennial turnout decreased from 55 percent to 49.4 percent.⁵⁰ There are a number of reasons for this decline – concentrated increase in voter suppression and depression efforts; first election without the full protection of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; lack of enthusiasm for the political process and the candidates, etc.⁵¹

Importantly, the drop-off in black political participation may, in fact, be tied to African Americans’ increasing frustration with their second-class citizenship, and a belief (particularly among millennials) that the political process is corrupted and ineffective. With that said, however, while some within political movements like Black Lives Matter initially shunned the electoral process, increasingly these organizations have been encouraging followers and affiliates to run for politics, as disruptors and political outsiders (in ways that echo the civil rights and black power activists shift to electoral politics in the 1970s). Indeed, the majority of African Americans surveyed as of 2016 believe that interest groups and political organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League (NUL), and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) have been effective in helping African Americans achieve full citizenship and equality; nearly half of those surveyed also insisted that working to get more black people elected to political positions was an effective tactic to achieve racial equality.⁵²

⁴⁷ Anna Brown and Sara Atske. “Blacks Have Made Gains in U.S. Political Leadership, but Gaps Remain.” *Pew Research Center*, June 28th, 2016.

⁴⁸ “Black Turnout in 1964, and Beyond.” *The New York Times*, October 17th, 2014.

⁴⁹ William H. Frey, “Minority Turnout Determined the 2012 Election,” *Brookings*, May 10, 2013.

⁵⁰ Krogstad, Jens Manuel and Mark Hugo Lopez. “Black Voter Turnout Fell in 2016 US Election.” *Pew Research Center*, May 12th, 2017.

⁵¹ GenForward Surveys, 2016-2018

⁵² “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart.” *Pew Research Center*, June 27, 2016.

This notion – that more black elected officials is an effective pathway to full equality – is an old one; in fact, it was one of the founding principles of the CBC (1969 and 1971). Years earlier, a group of prominent black civil rights leaders (including A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, Dorothy Height, and Andrew Young) issued a statement that argued that the “major tool for correcting the evils” of racism and inequality, lay “in maximum application of political power... political action should be the major point of emphasis of the civil rights movement during 1965.”⁵³ By the 1970s, other black leaders including Eddie Williams and Benjamin Hooks continued to advocate for a modern political focus on the electoral process and economics.

But while this is a thread that has carried through to the present, and really underlies the contemporary push to see voting (and public policy) as the most effective path toward equality, we should also consider the criticism of that approach (that has continuously co-existed at the margins of the mainstream black political approach). In 1973, Dr. Charles Hurst pushed back on the near-exclusive focus on electoral politics, arguing that it was unwise to believe that the answer to change lay in electing black people to office. “Simply changing the political label or the identity of a man in office or holding an important position,” he wrote in an opinion piece for the *Chicago Defender*, “does little to change the status of oppressed black America.”⁵⁴

It’s a controversial position, but it’s one worth exploring given that increased black political representation hasn’t always translated into increased equality or equal citizenship; in some cases, it’s had the *opposite effect*. In short, “black faces in high places” aren’t a guarantee of advocacy, equality, or progress. The most obvious example of this is the Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. A less obvious but arguably equally discomfiting example can be seen in the case of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland in 2015, where black officials – at every level – were involved in making regressive and harmful decisions.⁵⁵

BRIEF CONCLUSION

As in 1968, we are at a *critical* juncture in the fight for black equality and citizenship. African American progress is stagnant at best, and regressive at worst. We are also dealing with a broader American public that appears to be growing increasingly *resistant* (echoing shades of the 1970s) not only to this idea, but also the notion that dramatic solutions are needed to realize genuine citizenship and rights for African Americans.

- The issues undermining black citizenship are interlinked; it’s impossible to individualize them or separate them out. If you want to solve for mass incarceration, you have to solve for

⁵³ “Negroes to Focus on Political Action.” *New York Amsterdam News*. February 6, 1965. ProQuest.

⁵⁴ Dr. Charles Hurst Jr. “Time to Twist The Knife.” *Daily Defender*. October 23, 1973. The Black Studies Center Archive.

⁵⁵ Taylor, *From Black Lives Matter to Black Power*; Cathy Cohen has also written about this at length through the concept of “secondary marginalization.” As members of a minority group get closer to institutions of power, they often in turn, replicate the same inequalities and hierarchies that they have been fighting against.

education; if you want to solve for political participation, you have to address economics and mass incarceration; and so on, and so on.

- So where does that leave us? Perhaps one of the most significant lessons of the last 60 years is that the policies and approaches we've tried – at nearly every level – *haven't worked*. We don't simply need a radical rethinking of justice, but also of public policy and the framing of public policies and institutions. The challenge isn't simply in reforming the system, but in changing the entire way of doing things and the way that we – and the broader public – think about structural inequalities and solutions (as opposed to emphasizing an “individualism” approach).