

## Executive Summary

### National Urban League's *THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA 2004*

The National Urban League's 2004 edition of *The State of Black America: The Complexity of Black Progress* will explore and examine the progress of Black America since the civil rights era and challenges and disparities that still exist through new research and thought provoking essays.

Noting the importance of 2004 as a pinnacle year in the civil rights movement with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, this edition employs three methods to measure the progress, status and opinions of African Americans today:

1) **The Equality Index** is a statistical measurement of the disparities that exist between blacks and whites in economics, housing, education, health, social justice and civic engagement.

Equality Index authors noted "Over 216 years ago, the authors of the U.S. Constitution counted for tax purposes enslaved African Americans as 3/5 or 60% of a white person. **According to the total of the 2004 Equality Index, the status of African Americans is .73 or 73% when compared to the conditions of their white counterparts.**"

2) The NUL Survey: A new national poll which surveyed comparative attitudes of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans about major issues including the quality of life in their communities, politics, employment, financial status, discrimination and pertinent social issues. **52% of respondents believe the country is headed in the wrong direction.**

3) Essay and Commentary: Today's leading scholars and thinkers give their perspectives on some of the reasons why the equality gaps exist between blacks and whites and offer solutions to the issues facing African Americans. Highlights include:

- ***African American Economic Well-Being during the Boom and Bust* by economist Samuel Myers, Jr. discusses why increases in Black income in the 90's not only didn't increase Black wealth, but the wealth gap actually widened. Other essays and commentaries include:**
- *Brown at 50: Considering the Continuing Legal Struggle for Racial Justice* by Charles J. Olgetree, Jr.
- *State of Education in Black America* by Edmund W. Gordon
- *Health and Quality of Life Among African Americans* by David R. Williams

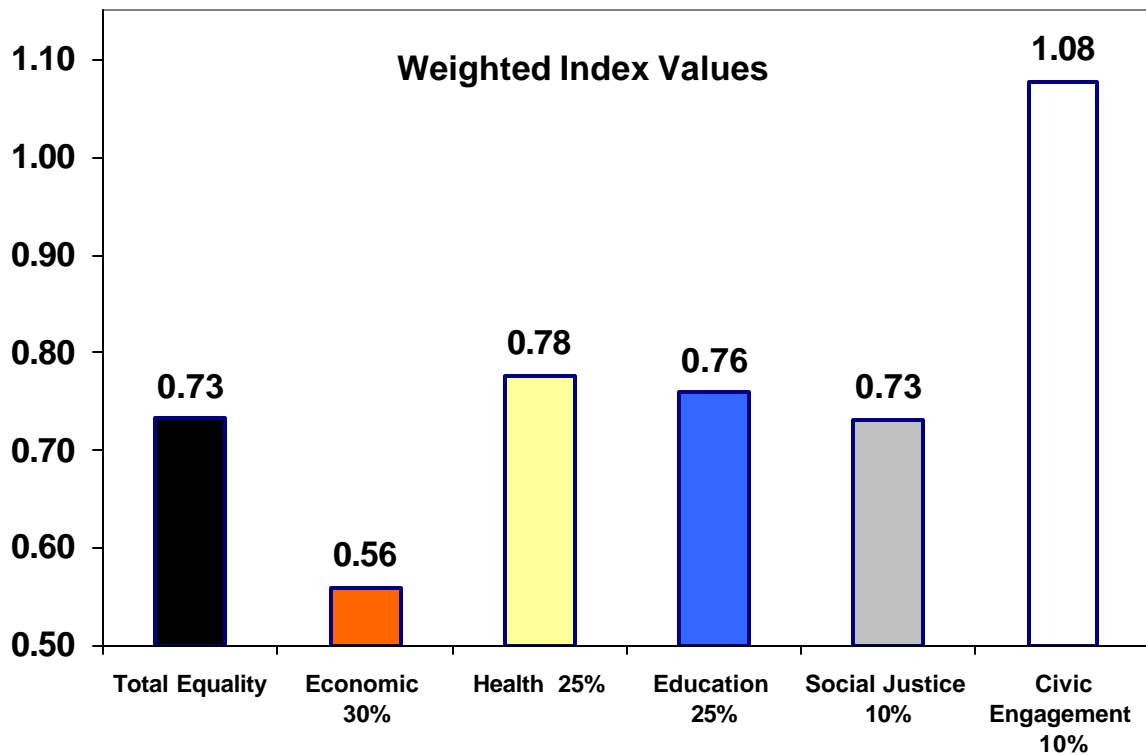
- “Security Must Never Trump Liberty” by Dennis Archer
- *The Empowerment and the Black Male* by James Lanier, PhD
- *The Transformation of the Welfare Caseload* by Kenya L Covington
- *Gaps, Traps and Lies: African America Students and Test Scores* by Ronald O. Ross
- *Five Things You Must have to Run a Business* by Melinda F. Emerson

### Key Findings

The status of African Americans has improved since the Civil Rights era with significant increase in overall income, home ownership, business development, voter participation and educational achievement. However, there are still notable gaps between African Americans and whites, especially in the area of economics in that reveal major challenges in the pursuit of an equality and opportunity.

**EQUALITY INDEX:** Assigning whites a weighted index value of 1, the **Equality Index** measures the disparities between blacks and whites in the five key areas. An index value of less than 1 means blacks are doing worse than whites in a particular category, while a value of 1 or above, means they are doing equal or better.

**Total Equality Index states that Black status is 73% of their white counterparts**



## **Notable Highlights**

- **Economics:** Fewer than 50% of black families own their own homes, versus over 70% of whites.
- **Homes:** Blacks are denied mortgages and home improvement loans at twice the rate of whites (.45 index)
- **Health** On average blacks are twice as likely to die from disease, accident, behavior and homicide at every stage of life than whites, life expectancy for Blacks 72 years vs. 78 years for whites
- **Education:** Teachers with less than 3 years experience teach in minority schools at twice the rate that they teach in white schools
- **Social Justice:** A black person's average jail sentence is six months longer than a white's for the same crime is 39 months versus 33 months
- **Civic Engagement:** Military volunteerism is 1.45, indicating that a substantially higher percentage of blacks volunteer in the military

## **NUL SURVEY POLL**

National Urban League's 2004 is new poll that develops a benchmark for measuring the comparative attitudes of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans about the quality of life in their communities, and pertinent social, economic and political issues. Between January 28th and February 10th, 700 African American and 200 Hispanic American and 200 Asian American adult respondents, respectively, were interviewed. The poll has a Margin of Error of + or - 4 percent

## **NUL Survey Key Findings**

- **52% Disagree with direction of the Country:** 52% of the total respondents believe the country is headed in the wrong direction ; (62%) of African Americans; 40% of Hispanic Americans and 25% of Asian Americans
- **Respondents on education:** 56% of African Americans rate public education as fair to poor.
- **36% observe see job discrimination as accepted:** 36% of respondents believe race and gender discrimination is widely accepted at their workplace, with African American 39%, Hispanic Americans 31%, Asian Americans 32%
- **55% want voting for ex-felons** - 55% of all respondents believe that the ban to prevent ex-felons from voting should be lifted. 80% believe that there should be alternatives to imprisonment for non-violent offenders.

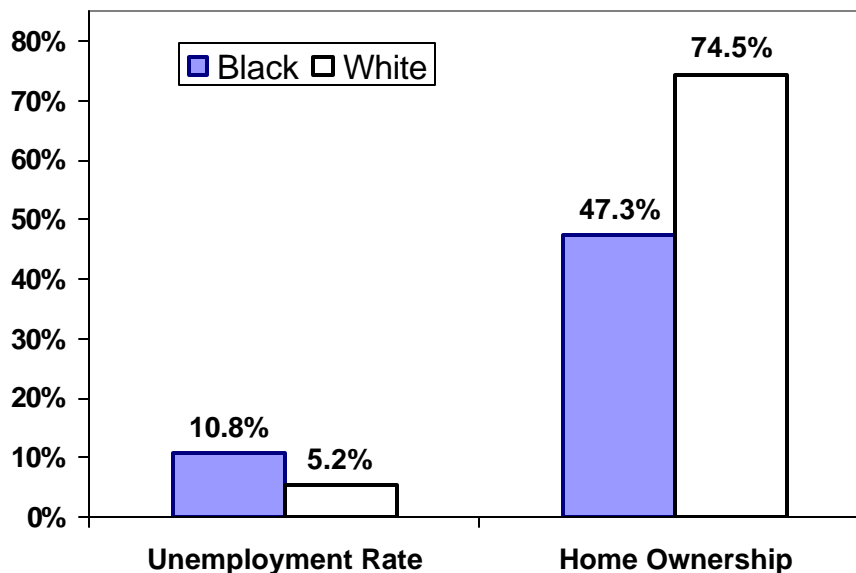
- **54% believe future getting worse** - Unfortunately, a combined majority of the African Americans at 54% feel that things will “remain the same” or “get worse” for them as a race in the issue areas identified.
- **40% of Blacks believe little progress since 1964** - Forty years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, 40% or more of the African American respondents feel “very little/no improvement” has been achieved in the essential indicators for economic and social mobility

**EQUALITY INDEX SUB CATGORIES IN THE STATE OF BLACK AMERICA**  
**2004**

The Equality Index finds that in 2004, black status is 73% of status of a white person based on economics, health, education, social justice, and civic engagement. Economics was broken down into five sub categories.

**1. ECONOMICS = .56**

*The Economic issues sub-index measures how blacks are doing in five categories as compared to whites: Mean Income, Employment, Housing, Wealth Formation, and Digital Divide. Mean Income, Employment and Housing are weighted most heavily given their impact on black lives. Overall findings show that blacks continue to be unemployed at 2x the rate of whites despite near equal labor force participation, and continue to experience lower incomes*



**Employment:** Black unemployment rate is more than 2 times the rate of whites: 10.8% v. 5.2%, to close the employment gap would require that 751,000 more blacks be employed than currently exists.

- Black male earnings are .70 that of white males AND would have to increase by \$16,876 to equal income levels of white men.
- 3 times as many blacks as whites live in poverty; an index value of 33

**Housing: The homeownership index was .63.**

- Fewer than 50% of black families own their own homes, versus over 70% of whites.
- Blacks are denied mortgages and home improvement loans at twice the rate of whites (.45 index)
- Black homes are valued at .65 that of whites, a gap of \$42,800.

**Wealth Formation:**

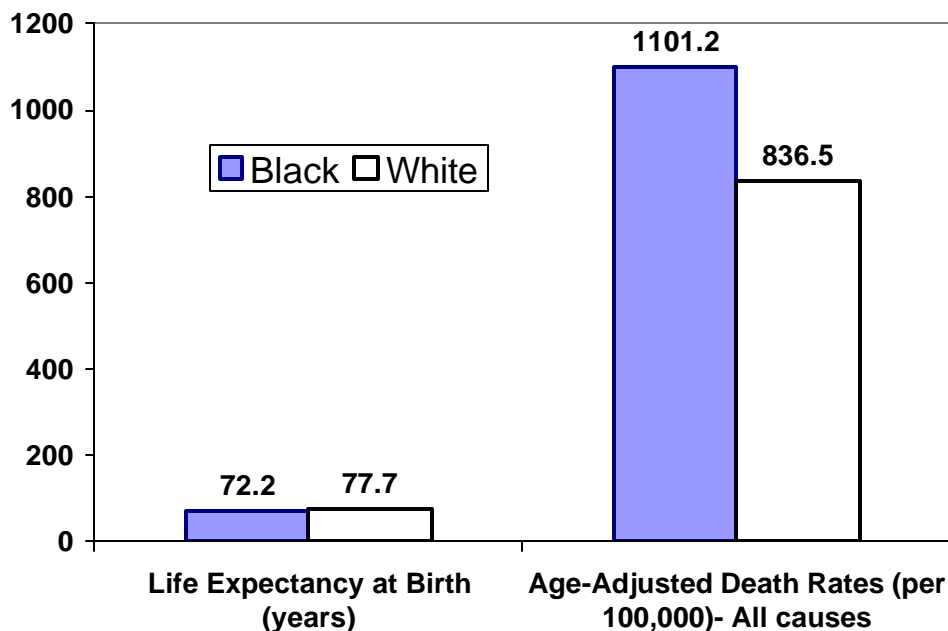
- There are nearly 3 times as many white businesses as black.
- Possible reasons: The fact that blacks are rejected for home loans at twice the rate of whites and that black homes are worth less.

**Digital Divide**

- There is a equality gap in technology with Blacks status at .59 compared to whites have home computers and Blacks status .51 as compared to whites in terms of home internet access.

**2) HEALTH Index = .78**

*Health issues were divided into three major categories: death rates and life expectancy, lifetime health issues, chronic disease and neonatal care.*



- Black life expectancy is 72 years versus 78 years for whites
- On average blacks are twice as likely to die from disease, accident, behavior and homicide at every stage of life as whites.

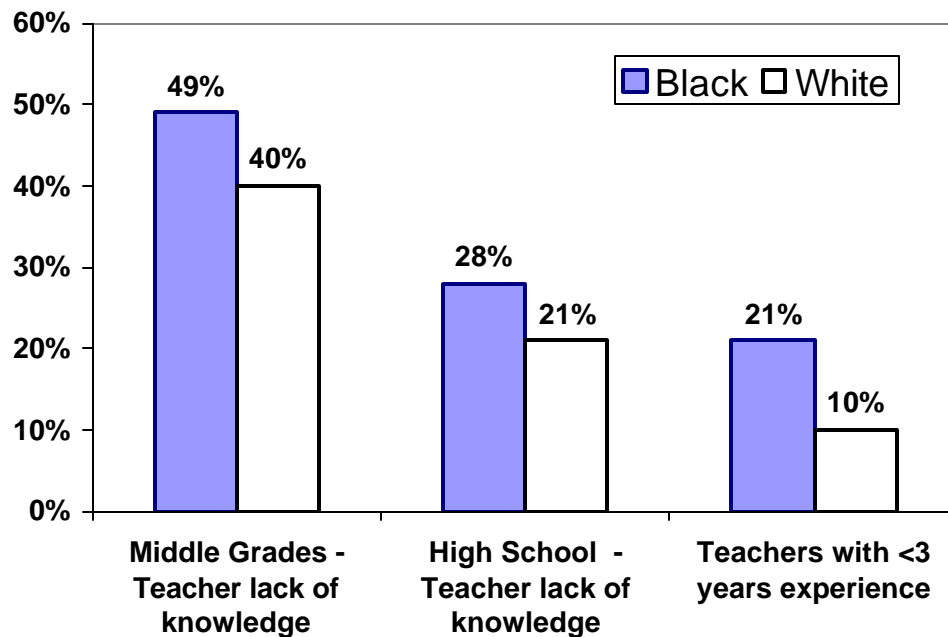
- On the positive side, blacks experience lower rates of chronic lower respiratory diseases
- Blacks experience diabetes at twice the rate of whites.
- Blacks are 5 times more likely to die as victims of homicide.
- Blacks are 10 times as likely to be HIV+ as whites
- White suicide rate is twice that of blacks.

**Lifetime Health:** Black health is impacted by higher rates of obesity, substance abuse and AIDS, plus less access to health insurance.

- Blacks are more likely to be obese than whites.
- Black females are 20 times more likely to have AIDS than white females.
- Blacks are less likely to have health insurance and likewise experience lower care throughout their lifetimes.
- However, poor blacks are more likely to have health insurance than poor whites.

### 3) EDUCATION Index =.76

*The Education sub-index measures five categories: Education quality, attainment, scores, enrollment, and student status. Quality of education was affected most by teacher quality and course quality which linked to student performance in testing.*



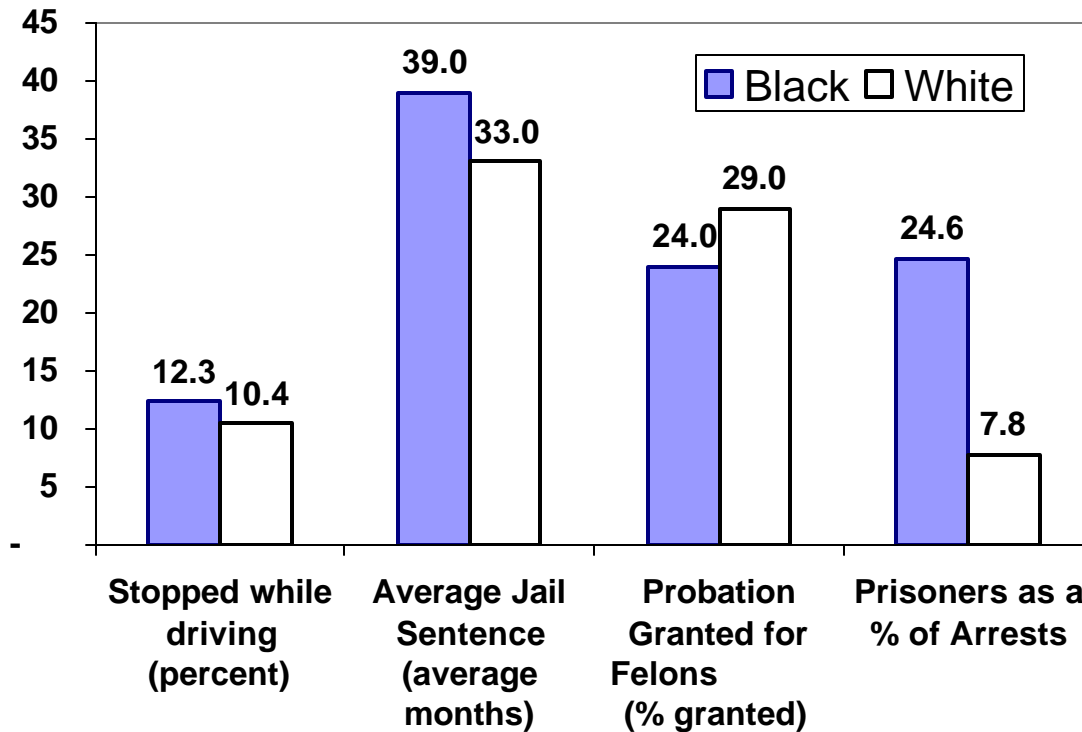
- Teacher quality was consistently linked to student performance, that is the poor teacher quality corresponded to lower test scores
- Middle schools showed the greatest disparity: 49% of middle school teachers of black students did not even have a college minor in their subjects as compared to 40% for white students.

- Teachers with less than 3 years experience teach in minority schools at twice the rate that they teach in white schools.
- Test scores across nine areas showed little difference between black and white students ages 9 and 17.

#### Attainment of college education

- For every ten whites that graduate with a college degree, only 6.3 blacks do., 6,697 more black students would have to earn associates degrees every year; an increase of 28%.
- Parity at four-year schools would require a 50% increase in graduation rates for blacks, that is 23,698 students would have to earn bachelors degrees to close the education gap.

#### 4) SOCIAL JUSTICE Index = .73

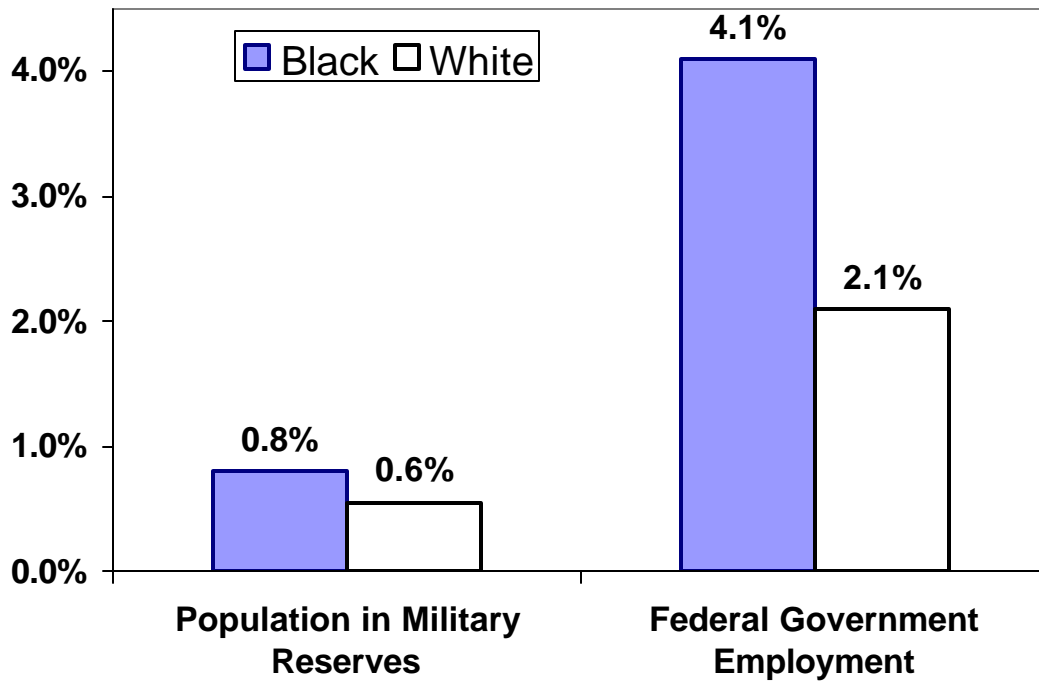


- **Social Justice: Equality before the law** measured the percentage of blacks versus whites stopped while driving, average jail sentence, length of probation, and individuals imprisoned as a percentage of arrests
- Index for average jail sentence shows that blacks receive, on average, a longer felony sentence than whites.
- A black person's average jail sentence is six months longer than a white's for the same crime; an index of 85; 39 months versus 33 months.

- White felons are more likely to get probation than blacks; a probation grant index of 83, and they serve shorter probation terms: 36 months versus 37 months.
- Blacks who are arrested are 3 times more likely to be imprisoned than whites who are arrested.

## 5) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT = 1.08

**Measured four categories** - (.50), volunteerism (.30), collective bargaining (.10 and government employment (.10). The Civic Engagement Index was computed at 1.08 meaning that blacks in America are more civically engaged than whites.



### Democratic Process

- The registered voter index of .97 shows a slightly higher percentage of whites registered to vote than blacks.

**Volunteerism:** (Volunteerism both community volunteerism and military volunteerism)

- Military volunteerism is 1.45, indicating that a substantially higher percentage of blacks volunteer in the military.
- Unionism index of 1.3 shows a higher percentage of blacks in unions than whites. Union Representation index of 1.3 shows that blacks are more concentrated in union jobs than whites.

### **Government Employment**

- Federal Government Employment index is 1.95, showing a greater percentage of blacks employed by federal government than whites, almost twice the rate. State and Local Government index was 1.35, again showing significantly more blacks concentrated in State and Local Government jobs than whites.