

Is Black America Dying from Lack of Investment?

The actions of every African American have both singular and collective implications: The first Black president paves the way for another Black president. A high performing Black student, when considered singularly, is just a high-performing student. Yet a critical mass of high-performing Black students helps create the perception that African Americans are well educated. Every action of every African American either wittingly or unwittingly hinders or aids Black advancement. So it is self-enlightened interest for every African American—young and old, rich and poor, successful and struggling—to take an active role in helping to ensure the success of a national Black agenda.

The success of Black America's uplift strategy depends largely upon Black leaders' ability to align resources—human and financial—with the strategic and tactical demands of a short- and long-term uplift plan. Success will hinge also upon Black leaders' ability to spur an unprecedented level of volunteerism that enlists help from African Americans of all ages. So in addition to developing plans and identifying resource requirements, Black leaders must ensure the existence of a framework that marshals the financial and human resources needed to roll out the plan. To instill confidence on the part of all contributors, the framework must provide for transparency in both funds acquisition and usage of those funds.

When it comes to charitable giving, African Americans are among the nation's most liberal givers. A study released by Northern Trust, titled *Wealth in Black America: 2010 Study of Financial Attitudes and Preferences of Affluent Blacks*, reports that a great majority of African Americans contribute financially to churches and to colleges. The report claims also that affluent African Americans outpace other races in their giving, adding that Blacks (47%) are more likely than non-Blacks (38%) to make charitable donations to human services organizations. The report likewise notes that Blacks (48%) outpace non-Blacks (44%) in support for religious groups.

Although there is substantial giving occurring in Black America, are African Americans giving enough? And are existing charitable gifts being effectively leveraged to achieve the magnitude and types of changes needed to alter the trajectory of a critical mass of African Americans? Clearly, there exists a need for more strategic deployment of the dollars contributed by African Americans and an influx of new contributions to fund a vastly expanded uplift plan. Such a mass effort requires a national foundation that meticulously manages funds and marries charitable giving with the resource demands of the national Black agenda to ensure the effort is sufficiently funded. Contributions would then be available to fund new paradigms that include community-based approaches to educating African-American students, aptly constructed and timed legal challenges to prevent further erosion of affirmative action, a vigorous media engine to reshape

perceptions of and about African Americans, and other undertakings that spur wealth-building and promote systemic equality and individual and community empowerment.

To succeed in raising needed funds, Black leadership must help dissolve obstacles that have hindered African Americans. One such obstacle is the schism that seemingly separates extremely rich and accomplished Blacks from the poor and downtrodden. Too often African Americans who succeed distance themselves from their community and adopt the same stance as those hostile to African-American interests. Many blame their own people for failing to do what they have done—overcome the effects of generations of deprivation and racism. So they sever their affiliations with the Black race as they move to increasingly higher financial, political and social heights—leaving behind an intellectual and financial vacuum.

Members of a racial group have shared interests and challenges, so it is “unnatural” to separate from one’s own. That is why members of the same racial or ethnic group align when competing for financial resources: Asians help Asians, Hispanics help Hispanics, Arabs help Arabs and so on. That does not mean, however, that, embracing one’s own race should preclude African Americans or members of other racial groups from reaching across racial lines to form meaningful relationships and alliances. It does emphasize, however, the need for committed participation and support from all segments of the African-American community, including business moguls, media personalities, sports figures and others with substantial resources. Furthermore, the top echelon of Black America exerts tremendous influence on the behavior and morés of the masses. They can model the importance of giving by taking the lead publicly.

African Americans must also look to Black churches for financial support. The revenue-generating capacity of Black churches is unmatched by any other sector of the Black community. LiveSteez research reports that Black churches have collected more than \$420 billion in tithes and donations since 1980. Tyler Media Services estimates Black church revenue at \$17 billion in 2006. The Bible—the basis of Judeo-Christian tenets and therefore the guidebook to the Christian faith—has more than 100 passages that speak of Christians’ responsibility to provide service to the poor, homeless, orphans and widows. The goal of a national Black uplift strategy is consistent with the Church’s mission to provide such service.

Every year during Black History Month, African Americans look back to celebrate a past of endurance, tenacity and accomplishment. This Black History Month, African Americans are looking forward to funneling the enormous generosity of African Americans into a national effort to achieve systemic change and financial prosperity for all African Americans.

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“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph.” Haile Selassie

Blacks & The Republican Party; The Telephone Call That Changed History

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