

Centering Black women in policy is key to future families' prosperity

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From leading marches for racial justice, to developing the COVID-19 vaccine, to reaching the second-highest office in the United States, Black women's excellence is more evident than ever.

This year, we showed up for ourselves, our families, and our communities; and we also showed up for other women, families, and communities, too, as we have for generations. Now, it is time to honor Black women with bold policies that value our contributions, so that we and future generations can truly thrive.

For even as we achieve historic successes, racist and sexist systems, structures, and narratives persist and prevent our equity and dignity. With time, we've begun to see more clearly the ways that the pandemic has exacerbated these inequities, with devastating consequences for our physical, mental and economic well-being. These disparities also reinforce cultural mindsets that marginalize and vilify Black women.



This plays out in institutional policies that punish Black families who access social benefits, or business practices that prevent us from building wealth. Rooted in racism and sexism and codified over time, these practices don't just harm Black women. For example, agricultural and domestic workers were deliberately excluded from New Deal worker protections at a time when 90% of Black women held such roles. The U.S. economy lost out on more than \$507 billion in economic productivity as the attainment gap between Black and white women has widened since 1960, according to just released analysis by S&P Global Diversity Research Lab.

Decades later, these racist exclusions that were (and continue to be) presented as "race-neutral" spread to affect other sectors and non-Black workers. McKinsey has estimated that the racial wealth gap will cost between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion between 2019 and 2028.

We can change this story. By dismantling longstanding barriers and centering Black women and their families, we can lift up our whole society. Black Women Best, an economic framework created by Janelle Jones, illuminates this: if we make the economy work for those most excluded and exploited by societal structures, it will finally work for everyone. Centering Black women creates more equitable futures and expands family prosperity.

And expanding family prosperity is a real policy opportunity. In Jackson, Mississippi, Springboard to Opportunities' Magnolia Mothers Trust was created in partnership with Black mothers to give them no-strings-attached, guaranteed income to work, care for their families, and seek joy.

In the COVID-19 era, the Trust is seeing results: moms in the program are 27% more likely to seek medical help for illness, their children are 20% more likely to perform at or above grade level, and families have reduced food insecurity – just some of the program's intergenerational benefits. Because Black women are more likely to be both caregivers and breadwinners, focusing on family-supportive policies like paid leave and child care has profound benefits for their children and family members, building prosperity for future generations.

Goldman Sachs just announced \$10 billion of direct investment in Black women – a clear example of how a leading financial institution is scaling this concept. It's worth noting that this commitment is the result of Black women in decision-making positions at the company, and crucially, the investment “will be grounded in the stories, voices and experiences of Black women.” This strategic business decision will have unprecedented returns for our economy: closing the racial wealth gap can grow our GDP by 4 to 6%.

Meanwhile, legislative proposals like the Family Act, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, and the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act can ensure more Black women can access work and health protections and benefits. These measures echo the work of women throughout history who broke barriers and made the world better for all of us, like Dorothy Bolden, who in 1968 founded the first domestic workers union to call for political inclusion and better pay and working conditions for Black workers.

This moment is complex for Black women – it encompasses pain, joy and hope. Let's make this the moment we build a new future where Black women, their families, and communities can rise; where all our children can grow and thrive. This is the history we can make together.

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