

Review of *Black Economics: A Primer*

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Brooks Robinson has provided the lay reader and student-initiate a great service by publishing “Black Economics: A Primer”. Modern Economics, as offered-up in textbooks, and discussed/debated by the press/pundits can leave the impression that “race does not matter” in the affairs of the market. Moreover, given the abstract methodological approaches to doing actual “Economic Science” it seems rather odd that race would be relevant.

Of course, facts are stubborn things, and when it comes down to race, we can measure and observe black-white disparities across a wide variety of outcomes that are important for well-being. This is the value of “Black Economics”. It provides a nice walk-through of several black-white disparities that in my view deserve attention from economists and policymakers alike.

Given the underrepresentation of black Americans among the ranks of Ph.D economists, both in and outside academia, “Black Economics” may very well motivate the study of economics, and induce the formation of a future supply of black economists. Lay readers can potentially find it useful as an input into their understanding of public policy and voting strategies.

I do see several shortcomings. First, the preface comes across as being “polemical”. Market-based societies are either good or bad based upon some measurable criteria. I don’t see a need per se to “bash” capitalism, as this could prejudice some readers to the “facts” that should inform honest discussions about black-white disparities. Second, the inclusion of data on preachers, celebrities, coaches, athletes, etc., seems disjoint. Unless some facts about the economic importance of these individuals is provided, or some facts about black-white disparities in these professions is made available, these sections are best suited for a “Who’s Who In Black America” Primer. Perhaps in revisions of “Black Economics” the author will revise accordingly.

Overall, I give a high rating to “Black Economics” and plan to use it as a supplement in my introductory economics courses. I will also recommend it to colleagues in Black Studies departments who teach/lecture introductory sections on Political Economy.