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“Homogeneity, Heterogeneity, Discrimination, and Reparations”

“Homogeneity” means having one or a common genus, while “heterogeneity” means having two or more genera. These two words are very interesting in a US context and are relatable to discrimination and to prospects for Reparations.

One side of US History is marked by a process through which heterogeneous peoples, who had their origins mainly in Europe, were transformed into homogeneous “White” citizens. Another side of US History reflects continuous explicit and overt efforts to exclude Black people from this process. Whether looking from within or without, the US is now very heterogeneous reflecting a mix of “White” and “non-White” peoples.¹

No doubt, the rationale for homogenizing heterogeneous White peoples has changed over time. However, one constant throughout US history is that Black people have been excluded from the homogenization process. Despite the adjuration that “a nation divided against itself cannot stand,” those in control of the levers of power have never sought in earnest to consolidate/unify all peoples in the country. Accordingly, the nation has now passed the point where it is possible to correct this grave error and injustice.

It is now time for Black Americans to grasp the magnitude and cost of this error and injustice. Many Black and White scholars have put a price on it when discussing discrimination and deriving values for a Reparations payment. But none of those scholars, to our knowledge, have viewed the harm done to Black Americans by considering what it has meant for Black Americans to be excluded from the US homogenization process using the method that we describe below.

First, we need to go back to at least 1868 when Black Americans were extended the Constitutional Right to citizenship. From that point forward, we need to determine on an annual basis the Black proportion of the US population. Second, we need to concur on a counterfactual; i.e., if Black Americans had been brought into the US homogenization process, then we would have at least produced and gleaned a proportionate share of the nation’s economic output and income, respectively. Third and finally, we need to compare the just determined amounts (what we would have obtained) with the actual incomes earned by Black Americans due to racial discrimination. The difference represents a *post bellum* value for a

¹ It is interesting to note that, while we are continuously informed concerning gaps (income, wealth, educational achievement, etc.) between White and non-White groups in the US, we are

almost never informed about such gaps between various White groups (e.g., descendants of Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Norwegian countries, etc.).

Reparations payment. We leave it to scholars to decide how to compute a Reparations payment for the *ante bellum* period.

To give you an idea concerning how much the Reparations payment would be under this estimation method, consider the following back-of-the-envelope calculations for just the past 10 years. During the 2011 to 2020 period, US gross domestic income was valued at about \$187.0 trillion.² Given that Black Americans have comprised about 12 percent of the US population during this period, we would have accounted for about \$22 trillion in productive income if we had been integrated fully into, and made completely homogeneous with, the remainder of the US population.³ However, Black America's actual income during this period has totaled about \$10 trillion.⁴ Therefore, racial discrimination (i.e., the exclusion of Black Americans from full participation in the US economy) has resulted in Black Americans earning about \$12 trillion less than we would have had we been part of a nondiscriminatory homogenized

American population and economy. Realize that this would be a Reparations amount for just the past 10 years. Now consider what the Reparations amount would be if the method we describe was applied back to 1868. Again, this says absolutely nothing about a Reparations payment for the *ante bellum* period.

It is crystal clear that the US Government and its citizenry would and could never agree to pay Black Americans all that is due in the form of Reparations as computed under the method that we have described. Hence, Black Americans should realize that Reparatory Justice will never be done. The saying goes: "No Justice, No Peace." Therefore, there is not now, nor will there ever be, peace for Black Americans in the US as we know it. Fortunately, we have choices.

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² This is the sum of 2011-2020 gross domestic income from the US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis; www.bea.gov (Retrieved on 082221).

³ We use 12 percent as a lower bound for the Black population as a percentage of the total US population. The US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census can be consulted for more accurate estimates; www.census.gov.

⁴ This \$10 trillion estimate is based on Census Bureau Table H-5 data on the number of Black households and their mean income for 2011-2019 and a **BlackEconomics.org** estimate for 2020. Table H-5 data are available at; <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-households.html> (Retrieved on 082321).