



BlackEconomics.org®

“Initial release of an “Insights:” A new class of BlackEconomics.org products”

“Economics: A Rich, Relevant, and Revelatory Resource”

This “Insights” release marks the onset of a new class of products among our already existing wide-ranging set. “Insights” differ from other BlackEconomics.org submissions because, while they, too, are designed to provide useful analysis concerning Black economic concepts, issues, policies, and plans, they offer a minimum of supporting citations to reduce reader burden. “Insights” serve as re-examinations/re-interpretations of what we believe we already know, amplify and reinforce the knowledge already possessed, and enable an opening up of new pathways for conceiving and perceiving our ever-changing world.

This first “Insights” ventures into the structure of economics studies, with consideration of economic vernacular and nomenclature. It is not a high-minded academic exercise, but reveals the importance of words, how they are used, and how they are often used against us. An important purpose of this “Insights” is to shake Black America awake from the slumber associated with our native language, which we learn and speak nearly unconsciously. However, because “words make people” and help produce outcomes, this “Insights” is a very necessary exercise. Also, at the conclusion of this “Insights,” we examine the word “narrative” and comment on its integral role in producing Black Americans’ (Afrodescendants’) *status quo* condition(s).

There are 20 major economics fields of study (from “General Economics and Teaching” to “Other Special Topics”) that are underpinned by a varying number of related subfields.ⁱ Moreover, economics fields are noted for their morphing shape as they expand to accommodate newly arising economic thought/production/activities.

As part of organizing research, analyzing, and reporting on existing and new economic fields and subfields, economists exhibit an uncanny knack for creating or inventing new vernacular or nomenclature, respectively, to account for new economic concepts or activities or to replace old terms formerly associated with newly revised economic concepts or activities. As selected examples of such vernacular and nomenclature, please consider the following “terms,” which are already decades old: Autocorrelation, Bayesian priors, heteroskedasticity, and hysteresis.

Relatedly, given our fast-paced and ever-changing world, economists often research etymologies to unpack existing compound words. Among the first to popularize the clarification of topics using etymologies among Black Americans (Afrodescendants) was the founding leader of the National of Islam (NOI), Elijah Muhammad, who taught Malcolm X (aka El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), who

taught Min. Louis Farrakhan. In the 1960s, the NOI assigned the moniker “word science” to the process of unpacking the meaning of words, terms, or phrases using etymologies. Today, etymologies now used by other Black American Islamic and other religious personalities during their presentations.

An excellent cross-cultural example of clarifying etymological unpacking is our examination of the venerable Prof. John Henrick Clarke’s claim that pre-Colonial Afrikan People had no word for jail.ⁱⁱ He often cited this fact as evidence of the advanced nature of Afrikan over European socioeconomic systems.

A contemporary example of “word science” to highlight its potential benefits, we recently identified the word “pit” in both “pulpit” and “hospital.” After considering both words, we concluded that “pit” is an appropriate and effective subcomponent of both words. Definitionally, a “pit” is an entrapping hole. Hence, certain economists or economically minded persons generally may interpret the word “pulpit” to identify a location from which religious adherents are trapped into donation peonage in exchange for expiation of their “sins” and a ticket to paradise.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, the word “hospital” may be interpreted to mean, *inter alia*, the destination of the sick or infirmed to meet their demise.^{iv}

Finally, in consideration of a word that is only tangentially related to this “Insights,” we recently reread a 2021 contribution to the economics literature that was co-authored by Prof. William Darity, Jr. entitled, “Still Running up the Down Escalator” (https://insightcced.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/INSIGHT_Still-Running-Up-Down-Escalators_vF.pdf, 6.6 MB, (Ret. 091125). The report highlights the importance of “**narratives**” in describing or characterizing situations or conditions and in establishing insights concerning methods for changing such situations or conditions. After rereading the report, it came to mind that Black Americans’ (Afrodescendants’) fragmented state means that we **do not share** a common **narrative** that can serve as our vision, our direction, our rallying thought, or our battle shout that binds us together, and that can motivate a laser-like focus on a common goal or goal set. Without such a guiding compass or motive force, it is foolhardy to imagine that sustained and considerable progress will ever carry us on a forceful upward trajectory from, or near, our bottom most ranking for many U.S. socioeconomic categories.

On the other hand, consider that **due in no small measure to a narrative** that seemingly evolves from their religious literature (without regard to its factual, mythological, or allegorical nature), the Israeli or Jewish People have risen from nonexistence and through reported sufferings; to a “chosen” People status; to formation of a formidable kingdom under wise leadership; to kingdom collapse, exile, and partial restoration; to a very extended diaspora and more suffering; to the 20th century formation of an independent nation; and an early 21st century position as—*inter alia*—the most powerful military force resident in the Middle East and with expanding global influence.

A very important question for Black Americans (Afrodescendants) is: What should be the foundation of our narrative and how do we evolve it so that it produces a favorable future? One source that is intended to help address the foregoing question is the *Long-Term Strategic Plan for Black America (LTSPFBA)*; https://www.ltspfba.org/LTSP/fin_ltspfba_071223.pdf, 1.5 MB, Ret. 091025). The *LTSPFBA* volume awaits those seriously interested in creating a **narrative** with

measurable, favorable, and achievable outcomes that Black Americans (Afrodescendants) say that we desire.

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End Notes

ⁱ See the standard for classification of the economic fields in the American Economic Association's (2024), *JEL (Journal of Economic Literature) Classification System*. <https://www.aeaweb.org/econlit/jelCodes.php> (Ret. 091225)

ⁱⁱ Prisons and jails were alien to ancient Afrikan societies. As evidence of this fact, consider that the word for jail/prison is “*gereza*” in today’s Swahili language. “*Gereza*” was derived from the Portuguese word “*igreja*,” which means church. The historical linkage between these words is that the Portuguese constructed churches inside fortresses during their colonization of East Afrika. They used churches as jails/prisons to constrain their opposers during the colonial period; thereby, generating the linkage that remains evident today when Swahili speakers use the word “*gereza*” to mean jail/prison.

ⁱⁱⁱ See the “sixth ugly” aspect of the Black Church as described on pages 39-40 of Brooks Robinson (2010), *Change: Black America's Religion*. BlackEconomics.org: Honolulu, Hawaii: <https://www.blackeconomics.org/BEAP/CHANGE.pdf>, 489 KB. (Ret. 091325)

^{iv} It is well known that a disproportionate amount of lifetime healthcare costs is incurred at the very “end-of-life.” The research cited here reports that about 35 percent of end-of-life healthcare costs are incurred for “secondary care;” i.e., hospitals. See Yvonne Michel, *et al.* (2024). “Healthcare use and costs in the last six months of life by level of care and cause of death,” *BMC Health Services Research*. Vol. 30: No. 24; pp. 688. doi: 10.1186/s12913-024-10877-5. (Ret. 091325). Also, for statistics about, and discussion of, hospitals’ roles in preventable death, see Benjamin Rodwin, *et al.* (2020), “Rate of Preventable Mortality in Hospitalized Patients: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis.” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*. Vol. 35: No. 7; pp. 2099-2106. doi: 10.1007/s11606-019-05592-5. (Ret. 091325).