



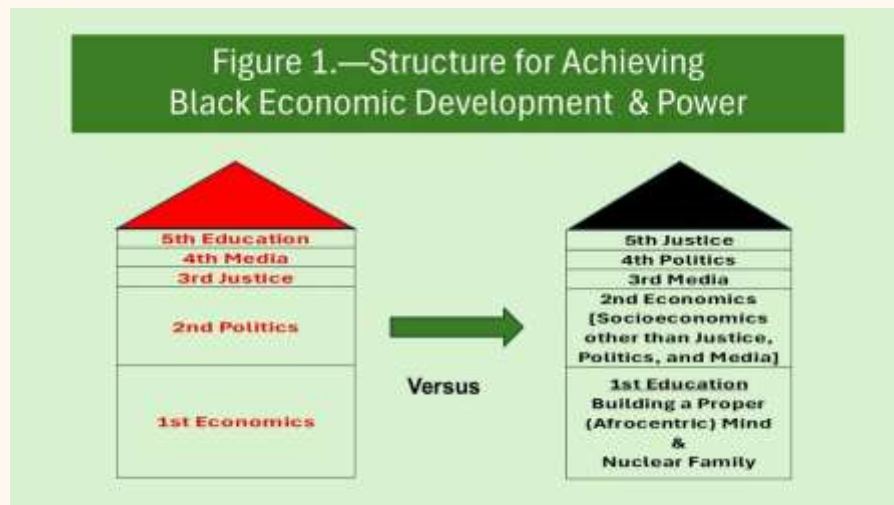
BlackEconomics.org®

“Revisiting Economics Before Education?”

Purpose: To further refine Dr. Claud Anderson’s excellent conceptualization and visualization of a framework for Black American (Afrodescendant) socioeconomic development.

In April 2023, BlackEconomics.org released an Analysis Brief entitled, “Economics Before Education?”ⁱ It featured discussion of the venerable Dr. Claud Anderson’s characterization of Black Americans’ (Afrodescendants’) prospective future economic and social development as hierarchical floors in a building. He placed “economics” on the ground floor and established it as the base from which all other aspects of our socioeconomic development could or should occur (see the left-side structure in Figure 1 below).

In the Analysis Brief, we suggested a modification to the hierarchy that Dr. Anderson established because we believed that there are at least three important considerations when undertaking most tasks: (1) Knowledge is the most important “thing” in the universe; (2) the mind is the most important and powerful human tool; and (3) for problem solving purposes, the most important question is often “Why?” With those thoughts in mind, we proposed a new characterization of Black American socioeconomic development (see the right-side structure in Figure 1).



Sources: Dr. Claud Anderson concept; and BlackEconomics.org concept and visualization.

Our proposal, which is elaborated in the 2023 Analysis Brief explains why Education, not economics, should serve as the foundation for Black America’s socioeconomic development.

However, in this revisiting of the Analysis Brief, we refine our proposal and expand and clarify what we believe are two broad and fundamental components of education that should be separately identified as critical components of that foundation.

The right-side structure in Figure 1 mandates a two-part Education foundation. For the first part, we believe that it is critical and essential from an historical and epigenetic standpoint that we reestablish a solid link to our Afrocentric nature. We come to this conclusion recognizing that it is not possible to return to our former selves on the Afrikan Continent. We are a new and special People, who have a unique and very important role to fulfill in Earth's evolving future. Moreover, the recapture of our Afrocentric selves will enable us to countervail a life-consuming preoccupation with materialism and wealth. Rather, our lives will reflect the duality and balance that is evident in nature. Accordingly, because of our affinity with nature, in our Afrocentric skin we are a kinder and gentler people than our opposers, and we are less prone to conflict and confusion. We are barometers that predict and spirits that can calm human and material storms before they arise fully. Most importantly, the development of an Afrocentric mind will enable increased "*kun-faya-kun*" creative powers that permit us to speak our desires into existence.ⁱⁱ

For the second part, we focus on an anachronism that seems to escape economists in particular—especially theoretically. Until very recently, economists had failed to zoom in sufficiently on the importance of families and the requirement that they be "nuclear." Here, "nuclear" is intended to mean an "explosive power." In other words, each family or household should teach and train its members, develop strategic plans to achieve desired goals, and execute those plans successfully to produce their desires. These families/households should have within them the (nuclear) power to bring into existence whatever is required to fulfill their individual and collective needs and to contribute to the development of their neighborhoods, communities, or areas of influence.ⁱⁱⁱ

Families are widely recognized as the fundamental "building block" of society. Being assigned that label, the implication is that without properly developed or configured families, society malfunctions. Without doubt, too many Black American families operate as malfunctioning and often harmful units with poisonous environments.^{iv} Of course, those who study this unnatural condition comprehend that it is by design. Many social scientists—especially Black economists—have identified government to be an important culprit in producing this outcome.^v Of late, BlackEconomics.org has pointed to poor quality Black (elite) leadership as cause of the degradation of Black American families/households and our areas of influence.^{vi}

However, an introspective and unbiased examination of the treatment of households by economists from the very outset of the "dismal science," we conclude that the economic social science is not blameless in producing the outcome described above. That is, for much of the nearly 150-year history of the economics social science, households (as opposed to individuals/consumers) were at the periphery of theoretical, conceptual, and statistical analysis. The theoretical study of microeconomics focuses primarily on the firm and consumers. The study of households in theoretical **microeconomics** is a relatively recent phenomenon with the study of households mainly being left to sociologists and psychologists. While consumers/individuals/persons constitute families or households, these small collectives were not explored sufficiently. As for **macroeconomics**, the sectors within the framework that features aggregate income and consumption/demand of households and nonprofit institutions serving households, the corporate sector, the government sector, and the external sector stand in parallel.^{vii} However, this aggregate

analytical approach largely excludes detailed consideration of individual households—and logically so. It is instructive that descriptions of the economics subfields within the American Economic Association’s “JEL Codes” reflect the term “household” only 11 times, while reflecting the terms “firm,” “business,” “enterprise,” and “corporate” 54 times in its 56 pages.^{viii}

We now turn to final comments about the role of families and households. As you might expect from the three considerations given at the outset of this essay, it is important to ask: “Why are households and families in their current state?” We have already highlighted three prospective “causes:” Government, Black American leadership, and economists. However, we have not discussed the contributing role of enterprises. Individuals often purchase goods and services that are intended for their family from enterprises. However, individuals appear as lone transactors to enterprises. Therefore, over time, enterprises realized that it was easier to influence or shape the behavior of individuals rather than groups/families/households. From that realization point, enterprises have worked to fragment families and to individualize consumers, to leverage their rent-seeking power with government, and to bring material or financial pressure to bear on other noncorporate sectors (excluding the household sector) of the economy to affect adversely human relationships and to multiply opportunities to differentiate between individuals—family members and otherwise.^{ix} History reflects the power and success of “divide and conquer” strategies.

Extending the “why of it,” we should not miss what is in plain view. Wealthy enterprises have made every effort to reconfigure our economic world to be as heavily in their favor as possible. At every turn, they have minimized families/households and individuals within them to impose a perception of maximum smallness and inconsequentialness. **The reality is that consumers and their families wield considerable economic power—with personal consumption expenditures (individuals and families) accounting for about two-thirds of the nation’s total gross domestic product (GDP).** Nevertheless, to the extent that individuals and households conceive, perceive, and believe themselves to be powerless against corporations and government is the extent to which they succumb to maximum manipulation by enterprises; i.e., they feel incapable of changing or too inept to change the *status quo*. They succumb to a form of “slavery.” There is no better operating position for enterprises than to have free (slave) labor. Today, non-human technology is rapidly replacing humans in the economy; otherwise, piece work is becoming the order of the day. Unfortunately, the reality of a world without work is a worst-case scenario for Black Americans (Afrodescendants) because it means little-to-no wherewithal (resources) to initiate efforts to produce nuclear households/families.

But we should not lose hope! Hope is no strategy, but it can serve as an excellent motivator. When People only have hope, the level of dissatisfaction is high. Massive dissatisfaction is the ideal condition for high-quality Black leadership to enter and ignite a transformation of our minds that enables us to comprehend our Afrocentric nature and its high value. Such a transformation could/can motivate Black Americans to unify under and to execute a long-term strategic plan that can produce radically different and more favorable outcomes than we are experiencing today.

If the probability of the just-described chain of events is sufficiently elevated, then our proposed modification to Dr. Anderson’s structure that enables Black American (Afrodescendant) socioeconomic development will prove to be worthwhile. There is no better combination than a “mind rich with the correct knowledge that can produce nuclear families/households” for recreating high levels of all around wellbeing that we enjoyed in great Afrikan Civilizations. We

know that we cannot replicate the past, but if we can recreate something akin to the very highly valued ancient Afrikan civilizations, then our proposed restructuring of Dr. Anderson’s framework for Black American socioeconomic development should be beneficial.

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End Notes

ⁱ See Brooks Robinson (2023). “Economics Before Education?” BlackEconomics.org.

<https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/ebeforee.pdf>. (Ret. 110725)

ⁱⁱ "Kun faya kun" (كُنْ فَيَكُونُ) is an Arabic phrase from the Holy Qur’an that is translated into English as “say be and it is.” See <https://www.wikihow.com/Kun-Faya-Kun-Meaning> (Ret. 110825).²

ⁱⁱⁱ “Areas of influence” is a term used to countervail a potentially subliminal notion that Black American “communities” are small and inconsequential.

^{iv} A cursory comparison of traditional “household” statistics (income, wealth, educational attainment, educational achievement, marital status, heads of household, and in-or-out-of-wedlock births) for Black Americans versus other racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. substantiate this statement.

^v Without citations, we offer selected names of Black American economists who have published on this topic: Dorothy Brown, Darrick Hamilton, Glenn Loury, and Walter Williams have highlighted governments’ “causal” roles in income and wealth inequality and in the degradation of Black American families and areas of influence.

^{vi} See Brooks Robinson (2021 and 2025, respectively as follows). “Revisiting Black American Leadership” (<https://blackeconomics.org/BELit/rbal022825.pdf>); and “A Historical Critique of Black American Leadership” (<https://www.blackeconomics.org/BELit/leadership.pdf>). These two submissions are available on the BlackEconomics.org website.

^{vii} In macroeconomics, households are often presented in “circular flow diagrams” where the economic sectors mentioned in this paragraph appear, and lines are drawn to indicate how domestic and external incomes and factors of production flow within an economy.

^{viii} See the American Economic Association (2025). “JEL Classification System / EconLit Subject Descriptors.” <https://www.aeaweb.org/econlit/jelCodes.php?view=jel>. (Ret. 110725) JEL (Journal of Economic Literature) codes are used to identify recognized subfields of the economics of social science.

^{ix} Expansive research on “consumer (not consumers) behavior,” a focus on personalization of products and related customer experience, and the differentiation of products, *inter alia*, all point to enterprises’ deep interest in superimposing individualism on our economic and social system.