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“Tools for Fighting Inequalities”

BlackEconomics.org released an Analysis Brief, [“Government Revenue and Expenditure Inequality”](#) on February 16, 2024. It discussed a widely known inequality that receives almost no public attention. However, that submission fell short because it did not elaborate on relevant tools for fighting inequality. This submission attempts to remedy that shortcoming. It takes the State of Hawaii and the City/County of Honolulu as case studies. Please keep in mind that this Analysis Brief is not exhaustive, but it may serve as an example of how Black Americans interested in fighting inequalities can use a fundamental tool to identify existing inequalities and fight the battle. To clarify, inequality is defined/measured here using a population representativeness principle. That is, Black Americans’ proportional appearance in, and access to, all aspects of life should be no less than our representation in the population.¹

Economists are social scientists known for formulating hypotheses, and then gathering and analyzing data using econometric and other analytical tools to test their hypotheses to substantiate their policy positions.

¹ Arguably, if no racial/ethnic discrimination existed and there was perfect equality, then Black Americans would be randomly distributed/represented in all aspects of life in proportion to our population.

² Certain data gaps are associated with statistics that are currently required by the US EEOC (Equal

Clearly the starting point for such analyses is data; either existing or newly produced. Consequently, we attempted to gather what should be readily available data to identify selected inequalities in Hawaii and the City/County of Honolulu. Table 1 (page 3) presents a summary of our results. A more comprehensive view of these data is presented [here](#).

Table 1 is transparent, and you are invited to draw your own conclusions. It is important to note that there are substantial data gaps in the data, which may never be satisfied.²

As for inequalities in Hawaii and the City/County of Honolulu, one might reach the following conclusions:

- Black Americans in Hawaii are underrepresented significantly on the population and entrepreneurship fronts.
- Black Americans in Hawaii are favorably positioned relative to our counterparts in certain other parts of the US for household income and educational attainment; but we remain far below national averages. (When considering

Employment Opportunity Commission). However, the EEOC has limited resources with which to enforce reporting compliance. This says nothing about the increasing likelihood that EEOC reporting requirements may be diminished or eliminated in the future.

these outcomes, it is important to account for cost-of-living differences between Hawaii and other parts of the US).

- Most state agencies fail to make available detailed statistics on employment with which to assess our representativeness even though the US Government requires such reporting (see footnote 2).
- Black Americans fail to capture a representative share of employment opportunities in the State's public school system; we are overrepresented as students in the system.
- For the City/County of Honolulu, Black Americans are underrepresented in government employment; we are overrepresented by a wide margin in police arrests.

The following four reminders are ancillary, but germane, to this analysis: (i) At the national level, Black Americans are overrepresented in public sector employment; (ii) representativeness measures (percentages) fail to identify inequalities in hierarchical employment arrangements; (iii) this analysis is silent on Black American access to government contracting opportunities (the two governments examined do not capture data required for such analysis); and (iv) during the data collection process, we came to view certain data that were provided as seemingly purposely configured to obscure egregious underrepresentation (one example was the use of more than one type of "Other" classification).

³ We queried the Hawaiian Tourism Authority (HAT) directly and enquired about the availability of this information at other state agencies. We were informed that these data are not collected. Also, we queried an important think tank, the University of Hawaii Economic Research Organization (UHERO), and received an identical response.

With data in hand, how can this easily assembled tool be used to fight inequality? Our view is that, when egregious inequalities are identified, then a strategic response is to identify related economic entry points through which inequalities can be addressed.

In the case of Hawaii, it is common knowledge that the hospitality sector is a very important economic sector. While no institutional unit in the state collects statistics on visitors (tourists) by race/ethnicity, casual observance over the past 18 years motivates the belief that Black (American, African, etc.) visitors have increased substantially over the period.³ Also, it is possible that Blacks may punch well above our weight as visitors to "Paradise." Consequently, if national or local Black leadership organizations find certain Hawaiian inequalities to be injurious, then a logical strategic response is to invite Blacks to consider spending our tourism dollars elsewhere to incentivize relief.⁴

We can never forget that we are in a war and our survival is in the balance. It is always and everywhere an economic war.⁵ Accordingly, we are well advised to engage the war using economic strategies. Our humble submission is that Black Americans nationwide should begin to gather relevant economic data, identify inequalities, and develop and implement economic strategies to fight inequalities. Now that we have tools, our failure to use them as weapons would be an open unvoiced statement that we are willing

⁴ This is not a novel remedy. Black American leadership organizations have called for the redirection of Black spending periodically in response to injurious actions by various state and local governments.

⁵ We believe that an important underlying motive for racial/ethnic discrimination is to preserve discriminators' economic positions.

to accept inequalities and, thereby, welcome our own demise.⁶

Table 1.—Selected Statistics for the State of Hawaii and the City/County of Honolulu

Line No.	Selected Statistics	(A) Black (African) American - Hawaii Statistics	(B) Black (African) American - US Statistics	Differences (A-B)
1	State of Hawaii			
2	Population (2023) (% of Total)	2.2%	13.6%	-11.4%
3	Employer Firms (2020) (% of Total)	0.3%	2.4%	-2.1%
4	Nonemployer Firms (2020) (% of Total)	1.6%	11.9%	-10.3%
5	Employment (2023) (in 000;s)	NA	20,613	
6	Unemployment Rate (2023)	NA	5.5%	
7	Median Household Income (2022)	\$76,108	\$53,500	\$22,608
8	Educational Attainment High School (2021) (% for those 25 and older)	96.7%	88.1%	8.6%
9	Educational Attainment Bachelor's Degree (2021) (% for those 25 and older)	41.6%	24.9%	16.7%
10	Employment by State Executive Branch (2023) (% of Total)	NA		
11	Employment by State Judicial Branch (2023) (% of Total)	NA		
12	Employment by State Legislative Branch (% of Total)	NA		
13	Employment by State Department of Education (2022) (% of Total)	1.1%		
14	Student Enrollment in Public Schools (2022) (% of Total)	2.7%		
15	Employment as Faculty of State University System (2022) (% of Total)	NA		
16	Enrollment of Students in State University System (2023) (% of Total)	NA		
17	Employment of Physicians in the State	NA		
18	City/County of Honolulu			
19	Population (2023) (% of Total)	2.8%	13.6%	-10.8%
20	Employment by City/County of Honolulu (2023) (% of Total)	0.9%		
21	Arrests by Honolulu Police Department (2022) (% of Total)	7.8%		

Sources: See data sources in this EXCEL [workbook](#); BlackEconomics.org performed the analyses and produced visualizations.

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⁶ This is a somewhat narrow and short-terms strategy. Broader and longer-term strategies are identified in the [Long-Term Strategic Plan for Black America](#).