

Systemic Racism or the Collapse of the Family?

Those on the left and right have very different “what’s wrong with America” narratives—especially on the subject of race. The left presumes the pervasiveness of white racism; the right does not.

For those on the left, America has always been—and remains—a racist society. Those on the right concede that there are individual racists, white and black, but they do not concede that ours is a racist society.

To be sure, those on the left are generally politic enough not to put the word “white” directly before the word “racism.” Instead they refer to “white privilege” or “systemic racism.”

While the terms are similar, the campaigns against them are not. One is somewhat subtle; the other is not. The first is grounded in shame and combated with propaganda; the second calls upon more direct powers of government. The first seeks to make white people aware of their “privilege”—and hence ashamed of and certainly embarrassed by their unwarranted and unearned status.

Systemic racism is another matter entirely. Since racism is built into the structure of society, it must be rooted out by governmental action. This requires keeping the left in power. Remove them from control of government and racism, white racism that is, will come roaring back in full force. Or so those on the left believe and want everyone else to believe. This mistaken belief is especially powerful in the age of Trump.

For the left, examples of systemic racism abound. Generally, they fall under the heading of “disparate impact.” If the percentage of black arrests or prisoners, or of black student

suspensions, is disproportionate to the black percentages of the general population, or of the school, systemic racism must be the reason. But is it? Wouldn't it be more meaningful, not to mention more honest, to base these percentages on the number of offenses, rather than the number of people of a certain race relative to the total population?

Curiously, one disparate impact is ignored by the left. It's the percentage of black babies who are aborted. Since blacks are roughly 13% of the population, one would think that the left would be up in arms over the fact that [more than 30% of all black babies are aborted](#).

Why the silence? Might it be that, for the left, feminism trumps race? Or perhaps the silence is actually evidence of a brand of "systemic racism" that the left doesn't want to talk about—or maybe even think about.

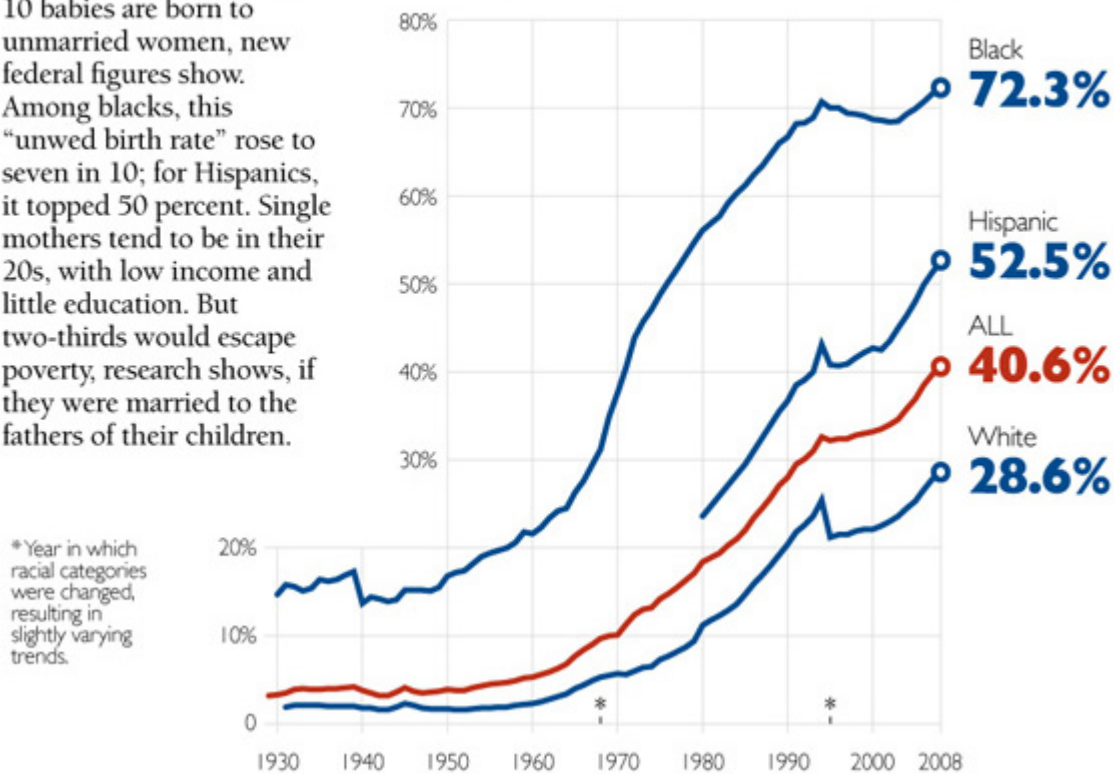
Of course, most black women choose to keep their babies. Unfortunately, statistics show that too many of those babies do not have fathers on any ongoing basis. Actually, too many children period do not have in-the-home fathers these days.

School districts across the country are dealing with the consequences of absent fathers every day. The picture is not a pretty one—especially in large urban school districts, where violent and otherwise troubling incidents all too often do have a racial component.

Warning: Married fathers an endangered species

A record four of every 10 babies are born to unmarried women, new federal figures show. Among blacks, this “unwed birth rate” rose to seven in 10; for Hispanics, it topped 50 percent. Single mothers tend to be in their 20s, with low income and little education. But two-thirds would escape poverty, research shows, if they were married to the fathers of their children.

Percentage Of Children Born To Unwed Women, 1929–2008



[Source: Heritage Foundation]

When it comes to solutions to such incidents, as well as to low test scores, the left often thinks the answer is more money, accompanied by a steady drum beat against systemic racism. The right, on the other hand, calls for greater accountability on the part of both teachers and students, as well as genuine school choice. Actually, the most fundamental problem facing schools has little to do with money or systemic racism and less to do with accountability and choice. That fundamental problem is the collapse of the family and all that accompanies it, including the collapse of discipline in both the home and the school.

Let's be honest. Family collapse is a problem that no amount of money can fix. Let's be honest again. Blaming teachers, teachers' unions, and educational bureaucracies for low test scores can miss a larger point.

In my hometown of Minneapolis, the school board recently hired

its next interim superintendent. Interim? They all are just that to one degree or another, because they all face what has become an impossible task.

Of course, every candidate for school superintendent in every large urban district promises to close the “racial achievement gap.” And of course every successful candidate for such a position will fail as miserably as his or her predecessor did. They all fail for one of two reasons. They fail because they inevitably focus on trying to eliminate the systemic racism that doesn’t exist. Or they fail because they can do nothing of real consequence about the terrible state of the family that does exist.

This isn’t to say that there is no such thing as a racial achievement gap. There is in Minneapolis, as well as many other large urban districts. No one denies that. But why does it exist—and persist? My guess is that this gap is best explained by the collapse of the black family, a collapse so severe and so profoundly serious that it is already seriously beyond any reasonable crisis point.

Of course, my guess is just that, a guess. But it needn’t be. The numbers have to be there. So let’s get them, and then let’s use them to answer this question: How does the overall academic performance of students living in single parent families stack up against students from two-parent families? Let’s compare students on this basis alone. And while we’re at it, let’s ignore all references to race.

Then what? If my guess is confirmed by the evidence, what’s next? We could resort to public shaming. After all, campaigns against “white privilege” are essentially based on this. Looking a little further back, didn’t seventeenth century Puritans think that public shaming was a good idea? Hey, a New Englander of more recent vintage, John Kerry by name, [suggested as much](#) when asked how anti-global warming edicts might be enforced. Our then-secretary of state proposed this

with his best, stern-faced, puritanical look firmly in place—and without so much as a hint that he might have been kidding.

Shaming of any sort aside, let's get the numbers and publish them. If my guess turns out to have merit, let's then do what we can to make it very clear that two-parent families are crucial to student success. We might even inaugurate a non-shame-based campaign to encourage what should be obvious.

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