

# Moving Toward Justice and Equity:

Supporting Parents and Children in  
Wisconsin



# The Current Situation

- A parent does not pay child support.
- The important distinction between **cannot pay** and **will not pay** is blurred and most often ignored by the child support system and the legal system.
- Enforcement policy practice is brought to bear on the parent.
- We fund and conduct research on ways to increase payment
- System and stakeholders ignore (and shut out) evidence that black brown and indigenous parents are disproportionately accumulating debt and contending with enforcement mechanism that threatens their personal security and liberty

# DEBT

- The child support system and the legal system order poor, low-income or unemployed parents to share nonexistent resources with their children's households
- As a result, is that those parents now owe a great deal of the \$113 billion national child support debt and the \$2.3 billion by parents in Wisconsin.

# The System Describes the Problem:

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Personal responsibility

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There are plenty of jobs in the newspaper.

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I would work at McDonalds if I had to.

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Your kids need the money

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Culturally, you need help and support to be better parents

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Culturally, you need to education and support to develop your work ethic.



# Colorblindness

“[a suggestion that] discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting minorities’ life chances... (“It is better now than in the past,” or “There is discrimination, but there are plenty of jobs out there.”)

*Bonilla Silva – “Racism Without Racists”*

# The “Colorblind” Child Support System

*disproportionately* includes a group of people who live at the intersection of two demographic characteristics:

- (1) Adults who are chronically unemployed for months and years at a time, and
- (2) Adults whose race or gender can reliably predict a higher likelihood of unemployment or underemployment, poverty, and/or economic inequity.

# Racial Wealth Gap between blacks and whites in the U.S.

Black American own one-tenth of the wealth of white Americans.

The black-white wealth gap has not fully recovered from the Great Recession

Black household have fewer and are in greater need of personal savings than their white counterparts

The gap persists regardless of education, marital status, age, or income.

--Center for American Progress, "Systematic Inequality, 2018.

# Economic Inequity and Disparity

--Is rooted in historic injustices and carried forward by practices and policies that fail to reverse inequitable trends.





This is  
Us

### [New Report Ranks Wisconsin #1 In U.S. For Racial Inequality ...](#)

<https://madison365.com> › [News](#) › [Local News](#) ▼

Aug 23, 2017 - A new report lists **Wisconsin** as the worst state in America for **racial** ... the median household **income** for African Americans is \$29,223 less than ...

### [Wisconsin's 'extreme' racial disparities highlighted in ... - Madison.com](#)

[https://madison.com/.../wisconsin...racial-disparities...wisconsin/article\\_a5054247-011d-...](https://madison.com/.../wisconsin...racial-disparities...wisconsin/article_a5054247-011d-...)

Jan 13, 2017 - Educational **racial disparities** in **Wisconsin** are dramatic and are important indicators of the results of **economic disparity** and a predictor for ...

### [Race to Equity – A project to reduce racial disparities in Dane County](#)

<https://racetoequity.net/> ▼

WCCF's **Race** for Results: WI's Need to Reduce **Racial Disparities** ... justice, employment, and **income** are common across the United States and in **Wisconsin**.

### [\[PDF\] wisconsin's extreme racial disparity - Center on Wisconsin Strategy](#)

[https://www.cows.org/\\_data/documents/1816.pdf](https://www.cows.org/_data/documents/1816.pdf) ▼

data from public sources to make the **racial disparities** in the state ... UW-Madison, 2016. Page 2. 2 **WISCONSIN'S RACIAL DISPARITY** 2017. Table 1. **RACIAL DISPARITY IN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY** 2015: **WISCONSIN** VS OTHER STATES.

### [Coming to grips with racial disparities in Madison - Isthmus | Madison ...](#)

<https://isthmus.com/opinion/.../coming-to-grips-with-racial-disparities-in-madison/> ▼

Jan 8, 2015 - Coming to grips with **racial disparities** in **Madison** ... survey of wellbeing, African American children in **Wisconsin** were the worst off in the ... the report warned, and the **economic** and cultural life of our state will suffer as a result.

### [Wisconsin Considered One Of The Worst States For Racial Disparities ...](#)

<https://www.wpr.org/wisconsin-considered-one-worst-states-racial-disparities> ▼

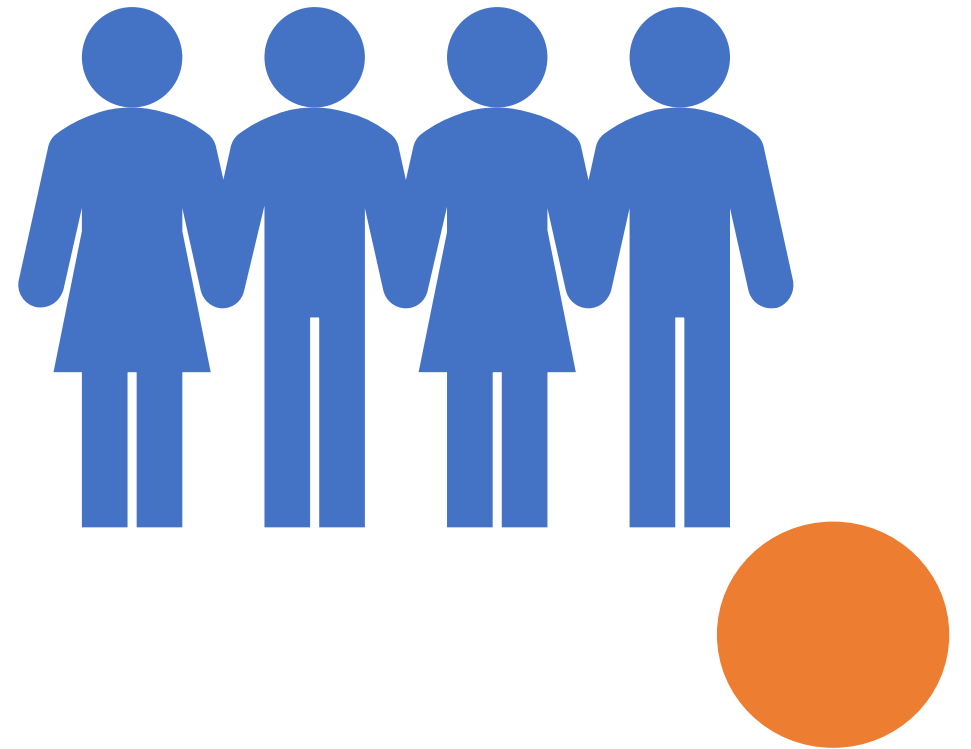
Jan 19, 2017 - **Wisconsin** Considered One Of The Worst States For **Racial Disparities** ... In terms of **economic disparities** between the black and white ...

### [Report: Wisconsin's Black-White Disparity Remains Extreme | WUWM](#)

# Income

White workers (with and without college degrees out earn Black and Latino workers because of:

- the persistence of job discrimination (overt bigotry and implicit bias)
- White people benefit more from social networking advantages
- networks reproduce racial wealth inequalities (only public policy will change this)





## [Extensive Data Shows Punishing Reach of Racism for Black Boys](#)

“Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective” by Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones and Sonya R. Porter; the [Equality of Opportunity Project](#).

*\*Research based on 20 million children born between 1978 and 1983.*

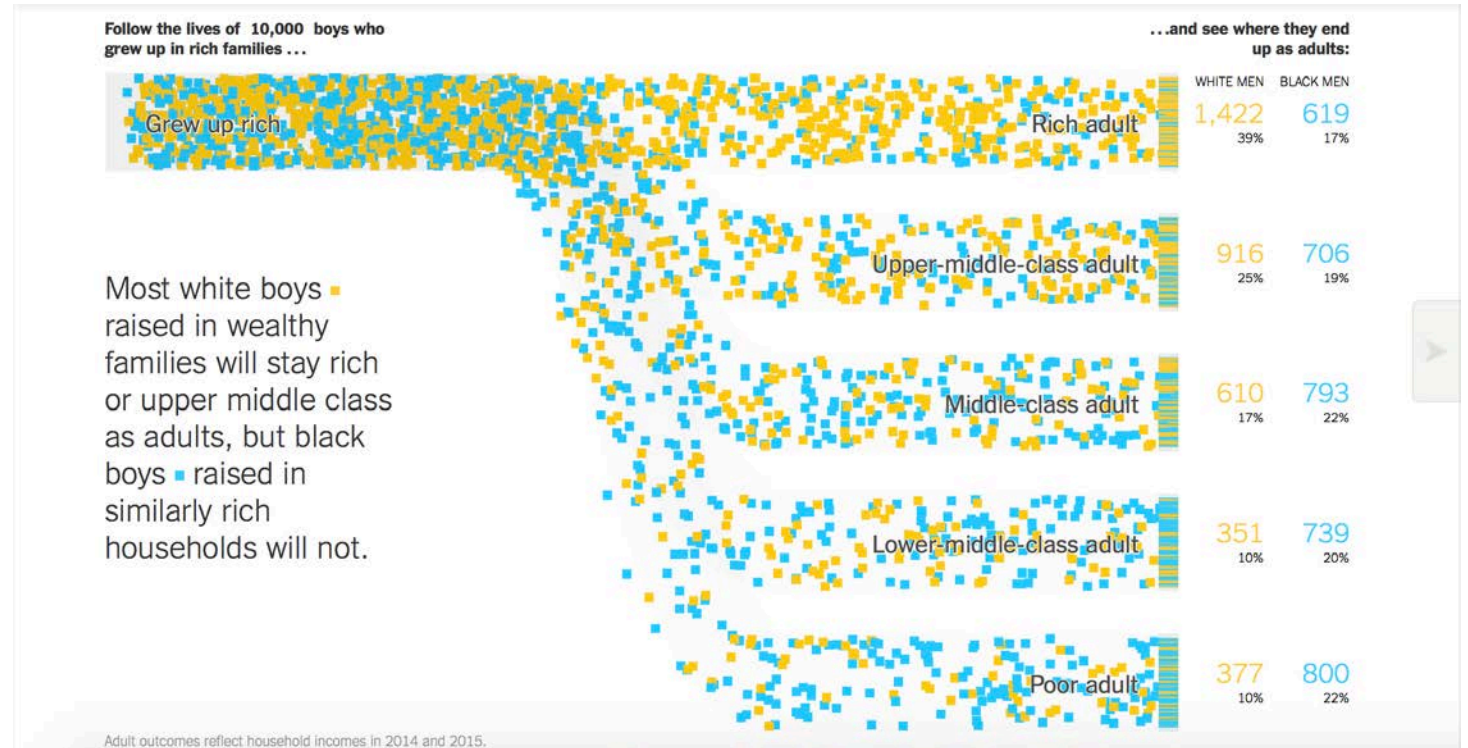


## Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States:

“An absolutely devastating new study about race and black males. Sons of wealthy black parents no better off than sons of working class whites ones. And, the worst places for poor white kids better than best places for poor black ones.” from Twitter: Ida Bae Wells



# Race and Economic Opportunity in the U.S.: An Intergenerational Perspective and NYT



# The Child Support System at the Intersection of Poverty and Racial Inequity

- Black Indigenous and other people of color (BIPOC) are generally at disproportionate risk of unemployment, poverty and punishment for nonpayment.
- Parents with a chronic inability to pay have little chance of avoiding a contempt of court ruling
- Parents face the possibility of mounting debt and possibility of incarceration – how does that pressure impact their children?

# Color- blindness Supports:

- The idea that a race analysis is an old way of understanding the world
- The belief that our social structure is open and fair, there must be something wrong with “people who don’t fulfill their responsibilities.”

# White Colorblindness


Also:

- Negates the reality of racial hierarchy
- Defines race as simply cultural
- Hides white privilege behind a mask of assumed meritocracy





# Thinking About Research

- How do we do it?
  - What is the question?
  - What have we learned?
  - How have we made children's lives better—specifically through research?
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# Hard Questions

- Is current child support policy and practice detrimental to the economic security and well-being of low-income individuals and families?
- Does the structure of the US child support system conflict with the goals of security and stability for children and families?
- How does the child support system create and support structural racism.
- Racial inequity and disparities in poverty and unemployment in the US suggest a thorough inquiry into the impact of child support policy and practice on families of color.

# Welfare Policy and Practice

