



Investing in Fairness

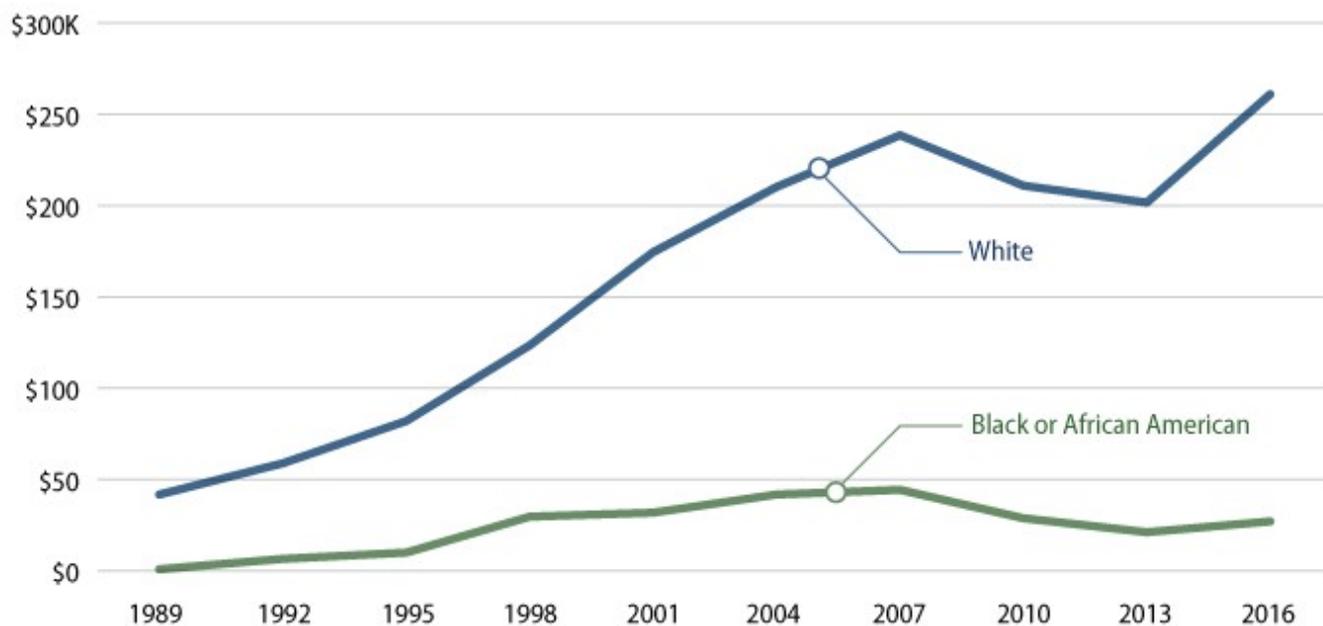
We're all invested in fairness. Every single one of us, especially here in America, wants to be treated fairly. For most people, the very idea of injustice or blatantly unfair treatment creates righteous indignation. If someone cuts us in line at the grocery store, it's a big deal! Most of us believe that we deserve to be treated fairly.

At the same time, for some reason, we often fail to recognize that implicit bias violates this very quintessential American principle. Being treated unfairly is upsetting for most people and usually triggers a strong sense of personal indignation. But "systemic racism?" Can it really be that bad?

It's that bad. Structural racism hurts Black people. As an example, an economist at the Ohio State University, Darrick Hamilton, found that a Black family where the head of the household has a college degree still has less overall wealth than a white family where the head of the family doesn't even have a high school diploma. Even when Blacks hold the same credentials as whites, they still end up with less. Why is that? A better example of unfairness in economic opportunity can't be found. Here's more evidence:

Black or African American households have increasingly faced systematic obstacles to building wealth

Median wealth for households as they aged, by race and year



Note: All dollar figures are in 2016 dollars. Nominal dollars are deflated by Consumer Price Index for Urban Consumers Research Series. Sample includes a cohort of nonretired households as they aged from between 23 to 38 years in 1989 to between 50 and 65 years in 2016.

Source: Authors' calculations based on data in survey years from 1989 to 2016 from Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, "Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF)," available at <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm> (last accessed October 2017).



Data Visualization: Black Americans face enormous obstacles to building wealth. [The Center for American Progress. Systematic Inequality: How America's Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap.](#)

Connecting the Dots

Public policy experts report that population growth in the U.S. is slowing while demographic diversity is growing. Diversity has been the norm in America for a long time now. Even in predominantly white homogenous areas, we can't ignore the trend

toward diversity. Many of us remember when America fostered and celebrated its identity as a “melting pot” of cultures and skin colors. Maybe the happy American melting pot never really existed any more than the mythical Pepsi generation did. But it sure was a happy, hopeful, aspirational time.

George Floyd’s murder in broad daylight by men so brutal and shameless — and so sure of their immunity from consequence that they weren’t the least concerned about being filmed — was a jarring and terrifying reminder of how far systemically condoned hatred can take us. Embedded in a larger culture that told them it was OK to publicly and openly dehumanize certain kinds of people, it’s not terribly surprising they took that culture at its word.

We must connect the dots between a society that tacitly approves of systemic racial inequities and the logical consequence that some people will take that approval as far as they can — and act with overt racism and even violence if they think they can get away with it. In recognition of this fact, many prominent organizations and leaders around the world — and in neighboring towns — have stepped up to support new programs that undermine racism and foster diversity.

Some recent examples: Fairfield formed an [Equality and Justice Task Force](#), Trumbull created an [Inclusion Task Force](#), Westport has [TEAM](#) (Together Effectively Achieving Multiculturalism), and George Soros donated \$220 million dollars to support [racial equity groups](#).

Justice for All

Life is inherently unfair. Injustice happens every day in myriad small ways that every human being is familiar with. But that doesn't absolve us of the responsibility to strive for fairness. The more elusive fairness is, the more we must aspire to it. We will never live in a perfectly fair and just society. Our only option is to keep walking toward our shared hopeful vision of one.

Easton is a very good place to live for most residents, most of the time. We are all so incredibly fortunate to live here. I believe that the fortunate have an obligation to lead. To actively call out and correct inequities when they see them. In response to this call to action, an Easton Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (EDIT) has been proposed to our Board of Selectman. If this body is approved, it will explore ways to help Easton invest in fairness and equity and embrace a future of diversity and resilience — where everyone without exception can trust in the American promise of liberty and justice for all.