

# The Educational Attainment of Black Americans and Gender, 2012 and 2022: Resilience, Factors, Implications and Recommendations

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Received: September 1, 2024

Accepted: October 3, 2024

Online Published: October 4, 2024

doi:10.5539/hes.v14n4p115

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v14n4p115>

## Abstract

Utilizing the concept of resilience, this paper examines the attainment of bachelor's degrees or higher by Black Americans in 2012 and 2022. In 2012, 3.668 million Black Americans aged 18 and over had at least a bachelor's degree, with women accounting for 58.5% and men accounting for 41.5 percent. In 2022, that figure increased to 5.547 million (57.3% for women and 42.7% for men). Among the factors presented for this achievement are: paying for their own education, grants and loans, and athletic scholarships. Among the factors presented for more Black women with bachelor's degrees or higher are: 2.811 million more of them aged 18 and over than their male counterparts, more Black males in the United States military where they enlist as teenagers, and more Black males drop out of school. Some of the implications presented because of the 5.547 million Black Americans aged 18 and over with at least a bachelor's degree are: an increase in the net worth of the Black population from \$2.58 trillion on December 31, 2000 to \$5.05 trillion on December 31, 2023; an increase in the number of Black millionaires and billionaires, with 1.79 million Black millionaires in 2022; and an increase in the overall number of Blacks in the United States Congress, the election of Barack Obama as president, and Kamala Harris as vice president of the United States. A major recommendation presented in the paper is that the Black American population must establish a \$500 billion Black World Development Initiative – a Belt and Road initiative for the Black World.

**Keywords:** Black Americans, educational attainment, college/university degrees, resilience, gender gap, wealth, net worth, Black World Development Initiative, Belt and Road Initiative

## 1. Introduction

One can present numerous examples to illustrate the resilience of the people of the United States as a whole, or the various racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups that make up the nation (Katsiroumpa et al., 2023). One such group is the Black American population. No other group in the history of the United States has faced more difficult challenges than the Black American population. This is especially the case for Black women and girls. Even to this day, more Black Americans are in poverty than other racial groups. In addition, more Black females (women and girls) are in poverty than their male counterparts and their female counterparts from other racial or cultural groups. In 1959, 55.1% of Black Americans were in poverty, and 31.4% in 1973. The poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites in 1973 was 7.5%. In 2022, the figures were 17.1% for Blacks; 8.6% each for non-Hispanic Whites and Asians; 16.9% for Hispanics (of any race); and 14.9% for children under the age of 18 (“Poverty in the United States: 2022,” 2023: 36 & 47). In 1974, the poverty rate for non-Hispanic White children under the age of 18 was 9.5%, and 9.7% in 2022; and 39.8% and 22.3%, respectively, for Blacks (Shrider and Creamer, 2023: 25-32; Kaba, 2012a). Lower marriage rates contribute to these poverty rates (Kaba, 2011a, 2012b; Sutherland et al., 2023). Sutherland et al. (2023) point out that in 2021, 36.8% of Black men in the United States were married; 32.4% of Black women; 54.7% of White men; and 52.6% of White women (p.143).

However, despite these challenges throughout the history of the United States, including massive deaths and the economic devastation caused by COVID-19, the Black American population, now at 50.1 million as of 2022 (Kaba, 2024a: 69) has shown remarkable progress in its educational attainment, especially bachelor's degrees and higher. In 2020, the number of COVID-19 related deaths for non-Hispanic Whites was 232,935; 61,583 for non-Hispanic Blacks (16%, even though Blacks were 12.4% of the population in 2020); and 13,599 for non-Hispanic Asians (“Health Disparities: Provisional Death Counts for COVID-19,” 2023). By 2022, Black Americans have gone from potentially being killed if they were caught reading a book, including the Holy Bible or other religious books, to having 5.547 million of their members with at least a bachelor's degree (Kaba, 2024a: 69, 2014). By 2024, as a

nation or an entity, the Black American population is one of the most educated and wealthiest groups in the entire world. For example, as of December 31, 2022, the net worth of the Black American population was \$6.21 trillion (Kaba, 2024a; 69). Higher education attainment (bachelor's degrees and higher) is responsible for these remarkable achievements.

This paper examines the educational attainment (bachelor's degrees and higher) of the Black American population in 2012 and 2022. The paper begins by conceptualizing the term resilience. Next the paper presents an explanation of the United States government entities from where most of the data are collected. Next the paper presents data on the numbers and percentages of Black Americans with bachelor's degrees and higher in 2012 and 2022. Next the paper presents the factors responsible for the attainment of bachelor's degrees or more by Black Americans, and the observed gender differences. Next the paper presents the implications of this phenomenon. Finally, the paper presents some recommendations to improve the lives of Black people in the United States, Africa, and across the world.

### *1.1 Conceptualizing Resilience*

There are many interrelated definitions or explanations of the term resilience utilized by scholars from various disciplines. According to Herrman (2011): "Resilience is studied by researchers from diverse disciplines, including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and more recently, biological disciplines, including genetics, epigenetics, endocrinology, and neuroscience" (p.299). Andersson et al. (2021) point out that the idea of resilience was developed in the discipline of psychology to explain the ability of individuals to cope with setbacks and rebound from them quickly. Other disciplines that have utilized the term include system safety, medicine, and human organization (p.560). According to Earvolino-Ramirez (2007): "The origins of the concept of resilience stem from the early psychiatric literature that examined children who appeared to be invulnerable to adverse life situations. Over time, the term "invulnerable" was replaced by the term "resilience," and a new area of theory and research was born (p.73; also see Southwick et al., 2014: 2).

The definitions of resilience "... have evolved as scientific knowledge has increased" (Herrman, 2011: 299). According to Earvolino-Ramirez (2007), "Originally, resilience was referred to as a personality trait whereas over the past decade or two resilience has been redefined as a dynamic, modifiable process" (p.73). Herrman (2011) adds that "The first differences in definitions centre on conceptualizing resilience as a personal trait, compared with a dynamic process" (p.299). Herrman (2011) points out that: "Early research on resilience focused on the selective strengths or assets, such as intellectual functioning that helped people survive adversity. Pioneering research focused on childhood adversities. Over time the types of adversity were broadened to include negative life events across the lifespan statistically associated with adjustment difficulties or subsequent mental disorders" (p.299).

Southwick et al. (2014) claim that the term: "... resilience refers to the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, the function, or the development of that system" (p4). According to Herrman (2011): "Fundamentally, resilience refers to positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity (p.299-300; also see Kalisch et al., 2015: 2). Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) claims that resilience is having: "the ability to bounce back or cope successfully despite substantial adversity" (p.73). Southwick et al. (2014) point out that: "Most of us think of resilience as the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and perhaps even grow in the face of adverse life experiences" (p.2). According to Earvolino-Ramirez (2007) resilience is having: "'an ability to recover from or adjust easily to change or misfortune'... the occurrence of rebounding or springing back" (p.74). Another definition of resilience is: "the ability to recover quickly from illness, depression, change, or misfortune; buoyancy; the property of a material that enables it to resume its original shape or position after being bent, stretched, or compressed; elasticity" (Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007:74). A final definition of the term resilience is "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress (Southwick et al., 2014: 2).

The examples presented in this paper are connected to these definitions of the term resilience because they show that as an entity or a nation, Black Americans have managed to become one of the most influential entities in the world despite experiencing the most severe difficulties any group of people have experienced in the history of the New World. In a study that examines 326 Black American students enrolled in a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the southeastern region of the United States, Jin et al. (2019) defined resilience "... as the ability to cope with negative experiences, such as acute stress, trauma, or more chronic forms of adversity, permits a person to maintain psychological well-being" (p.116). In an article on resilience and third-year Black American students enrolled in an HBCU, Debb et al. (2018) point out that scholars have always showed interest in the concept of "resilience as an academically related construct...". They add that: "Engagement, secure attachments, personal

and collective goals, self-efficacy, coping skills, past successes, realistic sense of self-control, sense of humor, action-oriented approaches to problem solving, and the adaptability to change are some of the many aspects of resilience found in an educational context.” The authors also add that: “When student preparedness is questionable, resilience may be what separates an underprepared undergraduate student who perseveres four (or more) years to degree completion, from one who drops out when faced with situational or environmental adversity” (p.75).

## 2. Data Collection

Most of the data utilized in this paper are compiled from four entities of the United States government. The educational attainment data (Tables 1 and 2 in appendix) for bachelor’s, master’s, professional, and doctoral degrees are compiled and computed from the United States Census Bureau, covering the years from 1940 to 2024 (<https://www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment/data/tables.html>). The college enrollment (undergraduate and graduate) data are compiled and computed from the United States Census Bureau, covering the years from 1946 to 2024 (<https://www.census.gov/topics/education/school-enrollment/data/tables.html>). The data for doctorate degrees earned in 2022 from colleges and universities in the United States are compiled from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in its annual report entitled Survey of Earned Doctorates (<https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf24300/data-tables>). Finally, the net worth data are compiled from the United States Federal Reserve System, covering the years from 1989 to June 30, 2024, entitled: “Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989” (<https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/dataviz/dfa/distribute/chart/#quarter:138;series:Net%20worth;demographic:race;population:all;units:levels>).

### 2.1 Data on the Numbers and Percentages of Black Americans with College Degrees in 2012 and 2022

Table 1 (in appendix) presents the numbers and percentages of people in the United States aged 18 and older with bachelor’s, master’s, professional (such as JD and MD), and doctoral (such as Ph.D. and Ed.D.) degrees in 2012 and 2022. According to Table 1, in 2012, of the 234,719,000 people (121,440,000 women and 113,279,000 men) in the United States aged 18 and older, 43,277,000 (18.4%) had bachelor’s degrees; 16,625,000 (7%) had master’s degrees; 3,099,000 (1.3%) had professional degrees; and 3,191,000 (1.4%) had doctoral degrees. Of the 43,277,000 people with bachelor’s degrees, 22,748,000 (52.6%) are women; and 20,529,000 (47.4%) are men. Of the 121,440,000 women, 22,748,000 (18.7%) had a bachelor’s degree; and 20,529,000 (18.1%) of 113,279,000 men had a bachelor’s degree. Of the 234,719,000 people aged 18 and over, 22,748,000 (9.7%) women had bachelor’s degrees; and 20,529,000 (8.7%) men had bachelor’s degrees

Of the 16,625,000 with master’s degrees, 9,147,000 (55%) are women, and 7,478,000 (45%) are men. Of the 121,440,000 women, 9,147,000 (7.5%) had master’s degrees; and 7,478,000 (6.6%) of 113,279,000 men had master’s degrees. Of the 234,719,000 people, 9,147,000 (3.9%) women had master’s degrees; and 7,478,000 (3.2%) men had master’s degrees. Of the 3,099,000 with professional degrees, 1,939,000 (62.6%) are men, and 1,160,000 (37.4%) are women. Of the 121,440,000 women, 1,160,000 (0.96%) had professional degrees; and 1,939,000 (1.7%) of 113,279,000 men had professional degrees. Of the 234,719,000 people, 1,160,000 (0.49%) women had professional degrees; and 1,939,000 (0.83%) men had professional degrees. Of the 3,191,000 with doctoral degrees, 2,018,000 (63.2%) are men, and 1,173,000 (36.8%) are women. Of the 121,440,000 women, 1,173,000 (0.97%) had doctoral degrees; and 2,018,000 (1.8%) of 113,279,000 men had doctoral degrees. Of the 234,719,000 people, 2,018,000 (0.86%) men had doctoral degrees; and 1,173,000 (0.5%) women had doctoral degrees.

In 2022, of the 255,255,000 people (130,709,000 women and 124,546,000 men) in the United States aged 18 and older, 56,350,000 (22.1%) had bachelor’s degrees; 24,160,000 (9.5%) had master’s degrees; 3,478,000 (1.36%) had professional degrees; and 4,859,000 (1.9%) had doctoral degrees. Of the 56,350,000 people with bachelor’s degrees, 29,782,000 (52.9%) are women; and 26,568,000 (47.1%) are men. Of the 130,709,000 women, 29,782,000 (22.8%) had a bachelor’s degree; and 26,568,000 (21.3%) of 124,546,000 men had bachelor’s degrees. Of the 255,255,000 people, 29,782,000 (11.7%) women had bachelor’s degrees; and 24,160,000 (10.4%) men had bachelor’s degrees.

Of the 24,160,000 people with master’s degrees, 13,896,000 (57.5%) are women, and 10,264,000 (42.5%) are men. Of the 130,709,000 women, 13,896,000 (10.63%) had master’s degrees; and 10,264,000 (8.2%) of 124,546,000 men had master’s degrees. Of the 255,255,000 people, 13,896,000 (5.44%) women had master’s degrees; and 10,264,000 (4%) men had master’s degrees. Of the 3,478,000 with professional degrees, 1,873,000 (53.9%) are men, and 1,604,000 (46.1%) are women. Of the 130,709,000 women, 1,604,000 (1.23%) had professional degrees; and 1,873,000 (1.5%) of 124,546,000 men had professional degrees. Of the 255,255,000 people, 1,604,000 (0.63%) women had professional degrees; and 1,873,000 (0.73%) men had professional degrees. Of the 4,859,000 with doctoral degrees, 2,649,000 (54.5%) are men, and 2,209,000 (45.5%) are women. Of the 130,709,000 women,

2,209,000 (1.7%) had doctoral degrees; and 2,649,000 (2.13%) of 124,546,000 men had doctoral degrees. Of the 255,255,000 people, 2,649,000 (1%) men had doctoral degrees; and 2,209,000 (0.87%) women had professional degrees.

Table 2 (in appendix) presents the numbers and percentages of Black Americans in the United States aged 18 and older with bachelor's, master's, professional (such as JD and MD), and doctoral (such as Ph.D. and Ed.D.) degrees in 2012 and 2022. According to Table 2, in 2012, of the 29,680,000 Blacks (16,327,000 women and 13,353,000 men) in the United States aged 18 and older, 3,668,000 (12.4%) had bachelor's degrees; 1,416,000 (4.8%) had master's degrees; 226,000 (0.76) had professional degrees; and 229,000 (0.77%) had doctoral degrees. Of the 3,668,000 Black Americans with bachelor's degrees in 2012, 2,146,000 (58.5%) are women; and 1,522,000 (41.5%) are men. Of the 16,327,000 Black women, 2,146,000 (13.1%) had bachelor's degrees; and 1,522,000 (11.4%) of 13,353,000 Black men had bachelor's degrees. Of the 29,680,000 Black Americans, 2,146,000 (7.2%) women had bachelor's degrees; and 1,522,000 (5.1%) men had bachelor's degrees. Of the 1,416,000 Black Americans with master's degrees, 946,000 (66.8%) are women, and 470,000 (33.2%) are men. Of the 16,327,000 Black women, 946,000 (5.8%) had master's degrees; and 470,000 (3.5%) of 13,353,000 Black men had bachelor's degrees.

Of the 29,680,000 Black Americans, 946,000 (3.2%) women had master's degrees; and 470,000 (1.6%) men had master's degrees. Of the 226,000 Black Americans with professional degrees, 121,000 (53.5%) are women, and 105,000 (46.5%) are men. Of the 16,327,000 Black women, 121,000 (0.74%) had professional degrees; and 105,000 (0.8%) of 13,353,000 Black men had professional degrees. Of the 29,680,000 Black Americans, 121,000 (0.41%) women had professional degrees; and 105,000 (0.35%) men had professional degrees. Of the 229,000 Black Americans with doctoral degrees, 124,000 (54.1%) are men, and 105,000 (45.9%) are women. Of the 16,327,000 Black women, 105,000 (0.64%) had doctoral degrees; and 124,000 (0.93%) of 13,353,000 Black men had doctoral degrees. Of the 29,680,000 Black Americans, 124,000 (0.42%) men had doctoral degrees; and 105,000 (0.35%) women had doctoral degrees (Table 2).

In 2022, of the 34,785,000 Black Americans (18,798,000 women and 15,987,000 men) in the United States aged 18 and older, 5,547,000 (15.9%) had bachelor's degrees; 2,453,000 (7.1%) had master's degrees; 286,000 (0.82%) had professional degrees; and 442,000 (1.3%) had doctoral degrees. Of the 5,547,000 Black Americans with bachelor's degrees, 3,180,000 (57.3%) are women; and 2,367,000 (42.7%) are men. Of the 18,798,000 Black American women, 3,180,000 (16.9%) had bachelor's degrees; and 2,367,000 (14.8%) of 124,546,000 men had bachelor's degrees. Of the 34,785,000 Black Americans, 3,180,000 (9.1%) women had bachelor's degrees; and 2,367,000 (6.8%) men had bachelor's degrees (Table 2).

Of the 2,453,000 Black Americans with master's degrees, 1,591,000 (64.9%) are women, and 862,000 (35.1%) are men. Of the 18,798,000 Black American women, 1,591,000 (8.5%) had master's degrees; and 862,000 (5.4%) of 15,987,000 men had master's degrees. Of the 34,785,000 Black Americans, 1,591,000 (4.6%) women had master's degrees; and 862,000 (2.5%) men had master's degrees. Of the 286,000 Black Americans with professional degrees, 158,000 (55.2%) are women, and 128,000 (44.8%) are men. Of the 18,798,000 Black American women, 158,000 (0.84%) had professional degrees; and 128,000 (0.8%) of 15,987,000 men had professional degrees. Of the 34,785,000 Black Americans, 158,000 (0.45%) women had professional degrees; and 128,000 (0.37%) men had professional degrees. Of the 442,000 Black Americans with doctoral degrees, 281,000 (63.6%) are women, and 161,000 (36.4%) are men. Of the 18,798,000 Black American women, 281,000 (1.5%) had doctoral degrees; and 161,000 (1%) of 15,987,000 Black American men had doctoral degrees. Of the 34,785,000 Black Americans, 281,000 (0.81%) women had doctoral degrees; and 161,000 (0.46%) men had doctoral degrees (Table 2; also see Kaba, 2014a; Price, 1998; Price and Viceisza, 2023).

## *2.2 Factors Responsible for this Phenomenon*

There are many interrelated factors that have contributed to the substantial increase in the number of Black people aged 18 and over in the United States with at least a bachelor's degree from 2012 to 2022. One factor as illustrated in Table 2 is that the overall number of Blacks aged 18 and over has increased by 5.105 million, from 29.68 million in 2012 to 34.79 million in 2022. This is the source of Black people who enroll in higher education institutions in the United States. For example, of the 317.7 million people aged 3 years and over in the United States in 2022, 17.26 (5.4%) million were enrolled in college (undergraduate and graduate): 9.959 (6.2%) million out of 161.6 million females; and 7.298 (4.7%) out of 156.1 million males. Of the 46.5 million Black Americans aged 3 years and over, 2.897 (6.2%) million were enrolled in college: 1.712 (7%) million out of 24.58 million Black females; and 1.185 (5.4%) million out of 21.91 million Black males ("Table 1. Enrollment Status of the Population 3 Years Old and Over, by Sex, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Foreign Born, and Foreign-Born Parentage: October 2022,"

2023, October 23; also see Kaba, 2014a).

Another factor that has contributed to the substantial increase in the number of Black Americans aged 18 and over with a bachelor's degree is that they spend their own funds to pay for their education. By the 2000s the higher education system in the United States switched from providing 60% to 70% grants and 30% to 40% loans to students to 30% to 40% grants to 60% to 70% loans (Kaba, 2013a:77 & 80, 2017a; Gross et al., 2019; Patel and Rudd, 2012; Toby, 2010). For example, Toby (2010) points out that: "The second form of federal aid is loans. Most federal financial aid— over 70 percent in 2007–2008—consists of loans rather than grants. Unlike Pell Grants, federal student loans are expected to be repaid with interest" (p.304). Kaba (2017a) points out that: "in 1970-1971, 70% of all financial aid given to students were grants, and loans made up the remaining 30 percent. However, by the 2003-2004 academic year, grants made up 38%, while loans accounted for 60 percent" (p.182).

In 2022, there were 57,596 individuals who earned doctoral degrees from colleges and universities in the United States: 30,522 (53%) males; 27,069 (47%) females; 35,311 (61.3%) U.S. citizens and permanent residents; and 19,633 (34.1%) temporary visa holders. Of the 35,311 U.S. citizens and permanent residents 23,320 (66%) are White; 3,586 (10.2%) are Asian; 3,354 (9.5%) are Hispanic; and 2,647 are Black (7.5%). Of the 57,596 graduates, 51,170 (88.8%) reported their primary source of funding; 27,154 males; 24,011 females; 22,095 Whites; 3,328 Asians; 3,124 Hispanics; and 2,429 Blacks. Of those who reported their primary source of funding, 21.7% of all graduates, 22.1% of males, 21.2% of females, 21% of Whites, 19.3% of Asians, 19% of Hispanics, and 10.5% of Blacks reported having teaching assistantships. For research assistantships or traineeships, the figures were 35% of all graduates, 40.3% of males, 29% of females, 29.6% of Whites, 33.9% of Asians, 21.4% of Hispanics, and 14.2% of Blacks. For fellowships, scholarships, or dissertation grants, the figures were 24.6% of all graduates, 22.9% of males, 26.6% of females, 25.5% of Whites, 36.3% of Hispanics, 31.1% of Asians, and 27.8% of Blacks. For those who used their own resources, the figures were 14.6% of all graduates, 10.6% of males, 19.2% of females, 19.2% of Whites, 19.9% of Hispanics, 13.3% of Asians, and 41.7% of Blacks ("Table 4-1 Research doctorate recipients' primary source of financial support, by broad field of doctorate, sex, citizenship status, ethnicity, and race: 2022," 2024).

Of the 27,743 males who earned their doctorates in 2022 in colleges and universities in the United States, their cumulative (undergraduate and graduate) median debt was \$35,000; \$50,000 for 24,399 females; \$45,000 each for 22,523 Whites and 3,196 Hispanics; \$25,000 for 3,415 Asians; and \$100,000 for 2,511 Blacks. In addition, 64.9% or 18,011 males had no debt; 58.9% or 14,370 females; 53.5% or 12,061 Whites; 40.9% or 1,308 Hispanics; 70.6% or 2,410 Asians; and 20.9% or 526 Blacks ("Table 4-5 Education-related debt of research doctorate recipients, by sex, citizenship status, ethnicity, and race: 2022," 2024; also see Addo et al., 2016; Deckard et al., 2022).

Another factor is athletic scholarships. Thousands of Black Americans earn college athletic scholarships annually such as basketball, American football, softball, track and field, and soccer. For example, according to a report by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), of the 526,084 student-athletes in the United States in 2023, White males accounted for 173,071 (33%); 58,783 or 11% Black males; 63,851 or 12% "male other"; 153,847 or 29% White females; 24,038 or 5% Black females; and 51,692 or 10% "female other" ("Demographics by Gender & Race/Ethnicity, 2023" 2024).

As Tables 1 and 2 illustrate, the 15,987,000 Black men aged 18 and over accounted for 6.3% of the 255,255,000 people aged 18 and older in the United States in 2022; and the 18,798,000 Black women aged 18 and older accounted for 7.4 percent. This shows that compared with Black females, Black males are overrepresented among student athletes in 2023. It is useful to note that Black student athletes do not participate in significant numbers in some NCAA sports, such as golf, fencing, water polo, ice hockey, rifle, swimming and diving, skiing, rowing, and bowling. However, in basketball, Black females accounted for a substantial proportion among females. For examples, Kaba (2012c) finds that in the 2003-2004 academic year, non-Hispanic Black females accounted for 3,947 (27%) of all female basketball players and non-Hispanic White players accounted for 9,373 (64.2%) players in Divisions I, II & III combined. In the 2003-2004 academic year, among female Division 1 basketball players, there were 1,987 (41.6%) non-Hispanic Black players, and there were 2,235 (46.8%) non-Hispanic White players (p.104). For Black male college basketball players, Kaba (2011b) finds that in the 2003-2004 academic year, among male basketball players in Division I, II & III combined, non-Hispanic Black players accounted for 6,739 (42%) and non-Hispanic White players accounted for 7,952 (49.6%). It is useful to note that the 6,739 figure for Black male players did not include non-resident alien Black male basketball players, who comprised 480 in those three basketball divisions during that same 2003-2004 academic year (p.18; also see Cooper, 2012; Darda, 2023).

Apart from athletic scholarships, wealthy citizens in the United States also provide college scholarships to minority groups or students from low-income families, including Black Americans. Maton et al. (2000) write of the success

of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). On its website, it is reported that: “The Meyerhoff Scholars Program is at the forefront of efforts to increase diversity among future leaders in science, technology, engineering and related fields. The UMBC Meyerhoff family is now more than 1600 strong, with over 1400 alumni across the nation and 245 students enrolled at UMBC. Over 300 graduates are currently pursuing graduate and professional degrees in STEM fields” (“About the Meyerhoff Scholars Program,” 2024). Davis et al. (2013) claim that a scholarship program established in 1999 by Bill and Melinda Gates called Gates Millennium Scholars (GMS) Program, provides college scholarships to Black students and that the program is mostly administered by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). The \$1.6 billion scholarship program pays for the full cost of the education of “... 1000 high-achieving, low-income students of color each year to enroll in their college of choice and earn their undergraduate and graduate degrees” (p.227; also see Kaba, 2017a:191). Morehouse and Dawkins (2006) point out that the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program, established in 1984, provides scholarships to Black students enrolled in doctoral programs. From 1984 to 2006, the program awarded 559 scholarships, with 226 (40.4%) already earning their doctoral degrees (p.567; also see Kaba, 2017a:191).

Another factor is that Black Americans and women in the United States tend to earn their bachelor’s degrees at a late stage in life. The reason is that they were once denied the opportunity to earn a college degree in the American society. The study by Bárány et al. (2024) find that the proportion: “... of late bloomers among college graduates is not constant, but changes non-monotonically across birth cohorts. The share of late bloomers and its evolution differs by gender and by race. Specifically, the share of late graduates is higher among women than among men and is higher among the Black and the Hispanic population than among Whites” (p.2). In 1997, the share of late graduates among college graduates in the United States was 22.4% for Blacks, 12% for all, 12.3% for men, 11.8% for women, 20.1% for Hispanics, and 9.8% for “others” (Bárány et al., 2024:10). The median age of Blacks who earned doctorate degrees in 2022 in the United States was 36 years; 31.3 years for Whites; 31.2 years for Asians; and 31.8 years for Hispanics (“Table 3-7 Median age and age distribution of research doctorate recipients, by broad field of doctorate, sex, citizenship status, ethnicity, and race: 2022,” 2024).

Finally, an important factor that has contributed to the increase in the number of Black Americans with bachelor’s degrees or higher is that they like women, tend to first earn a two-year degree or an associate degree. An associate degree is also known as a two-year community college degree. Then they find a job that would promise to pay for their remaining two to three years of education to earn their bachelor’s degree. For example, in 2022, of the 34,785,000 Blacks aged 18 and over, 2,109,000 (6.1%) had associate degrees (academic) and 1,475,000 (4.2%) had associate degrees (occupational): 827,000 (5.2%) and 623,000 (3.9%) respectively, out of 15,987,000 for males; and 1,282,000 (6.8%) and 852,000 (4.5%) respectively, out of 18,798,000 females (“Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2022,” 2023, February 16). For 255,255,000 people aged 18 and over in the United States, 14,726,000 (5.8%) had associate degrees (academic) and 10,662,000 (4.2%) had associate degrees (occupational): 6,141,000 (4.9%) and 5,207,000 (4.2%) respectively, out of 124,546,000 males; and 8,584,000 (6.6%) and 5,455,000 (4.2%) respectively, out of 130,709 females (“Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2022,” 2023, February 16; also see Lee et al., 2024). In 2022, for the individuals who earned their doctoral degrees in the United States, Black graduates had the highest proportion of those whose employers paid for their education. For example, for those whose source of funding came from their employer or other sources, the figures were 4.1% each of all graduates, males, and females, 4.6% of Whites, 3.4% of Hispanics, 2.5% of Asians, and 5.8% of Blacks (“Table 4-1 Research doctorate recipients’ primary source of financial support, by broad field of doctorate, sex, citizenship status, ethnicity, and race: 2022,” 2024).

### *2.3 Factors Responsible for More Black Women than Black Men with Bachelor’s Degrees or Higher*

There are several interrelated factors that have contributed to more Black women earning college degrees than their male counterparts. One factor is that as illustrated in Table 2, there are more college-aged Black women (aged 18 and over) than their male counterparts: 18.798 million versus 15.987 million, a difference of 2.811 million. A second example is that more Black males than their female counterparts tend to join the military mostly as teenagers, where there are more of them than their female counterparts. Of the 1,304,720 active-duty members of the United States military in 2022, Blacks accounted for 226,293 (17.3%) (“2022 Demographics Profile of the Military Community,” 2023: 24). In addition, “Men (1,075,753) represent 82.5 percent of the DOD active-duty force, while women (228,966) represent 17.5 percent of the DOD active-duty” (“2022 Demographics Profile of the Military Community,” 2023: iii). “In 2020, the Black or African American alone population (41.1 million) accounted for 12.4% of all people living in the United States,” (Jones et al., 2021, August 12). Wilcox et al. (2018) point out that there are three important institutions in the United States: “... military service, marriage, and churchgoing — [that] seem to play in lifting the odds that African American men reach the middleclass or higher-

income levels” (p.16). According to Reeves and Nzau (2020, August 27), from 2015 to 2017, 2.3% of Black men, 0.7% of Black women, 0.2% of White women, and 1.4% of White men, were serving in the United States military. According to Patten and Parker (2011), of the 166,729 active-duty enlisted women in the United States military in 2010, Black women accounted for 31% and White women accounted for 53 percent. For active-duty enlisted men, Black men accounted for 16% and White men accounted for 71% (pp. 4-5; also see Melin, 2016: 2). Wilcox et al. (2018) point out that: “The overrepresentation of black men and women in the military can be seen as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the military has served as an important means of economic mobility for many black men.”

Another factor is that more Black males drop out of school than their female counterparts. For example, in 2016, the status dropout rates of 16- to 24-year-olds was 8.7% for Black males and 5.2% for Black females (“Indicator 17: High School Status Dropout Rates,” 2019). Another factor is that more Black females pay for their education than Black males. The example above of the mean cumulative high college debt for Blacks is because more Black women earn doctorate degrees than their male counterparts. In 2022, of the 30,522 males who earned their doctoral degrees, Blacks accounted for 1,422 (4.7%) (“Table 1-9 Male research doctorate recipients, by ethnicity, race, and citizenship status: 2012–22,” 2024). In 2022, of the 27,069 females who earned their doctoral degrees, Blacks accounted for 1,967 (7.3%) (“Table 1-10 Female research doctorate recipients, by ethnicity, race, and citizenship status: 2012–22,” 2024; also see Kaba, 2011b). This means that of the 3,389 doctorates earned by Black Americans in 2022, women accounted for 58% and men accounted for 42 percent.

In a study examining the role of the Black Male Initiative (BMI) program on the college experiences of Black males on three college campuses across the United States, Brooms (2018) points out that: “Higher education research on Black males continues to revolve around issues of preparation, access, retention, and persistence” (p.60). Brooms (2018) quoted a Black male second year student discussing the importance of a program called Black Men Achieved: “It really helped me last semester because I know if I need help with work I go ask somebody now. My first semester I didn’t go ask anybody for help and now I can ask my professor if we can go over this or go over that; I’m trying to be in their ear and let them know that I didn’t understand it” (p.65). A third-year student is quoted as saying that he benefited from a transition program hosted by a group called Brothers & Scholars:

“College Transition Program kicked off before school started. It let me know what dorms would be like. It helped me get to know the campus better. And then it kinda gave me some contacts on campus that I wouldn’t have known if I hadn’t done the program. So, I got to know them [staff and faculty] a bit on a personal level before all the rush of students came. It helped me learn about the resources on campus; the library, books, and how to find stuff on campus—which all come into handy at some point or another” (p.64).

Other interrelated factors that have been cited for the gender gap between Black females and their male counterparts are parental influence, mentoring, and emotional and behavioral disorders (Gordon et al., 2009; Joe and Davis, 2009; Serpell et al., 2009; Thomas and Jackson, 2007). Gordon et al. (2009) point to evidence that “supports the positive role of mentoring on academic achievement” (p.277), and their study find that: “From a sample of sixty-one middle school Black males, results revealed that students in the [Benjamin E. Mays Institute] BEMI program had significantly greater academic attachment scores and academic success than their non-mentored peers” (Gordon et al. 2018: 277). Joe and Davis (2009) find in their study on parental influence on Black boys: “... that the parental factors, academic beliefs, and behaviors examined do influence African American boys’ performance” (p.265). Serpell et al., (2009) point out that: “African American adolescent males are disproportionally represented among students in special education identified as having emotional and behavioral disorders.... Students identified as having EBD demonstrate the poorest educational, behavioral, and social outcomes of any disability group, with no documented improvements over the past several decades (p.321).

Finally, the college enrollment data presented above illustrate that there are more Black females than their male counterparts earning college degrees. The cumulative college debt data above shows that Blacks and women tend to pay more for their education, which shows that Black females pay more for their college education. The athletic scholarship data also illustrate that Black males earned 11% of all scholarships versus 5% for their female counterparts.

#### *2.4 Implications of this Phenomenon*

There are many positive interrelated economic, social, and political implications because of the attainment of bachelor’s degree or higher by Black Americans. In the United States, there is an association between college degree attainment and income, and the higher the level of an individual’s degree, the higher their annual income. For example, the median annual earnings of full-time, year-round workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment in 2022 was \$35,500 for those with less than a high school diploma; \$41,800 for those with a high school diploma;

\$49,500 for those with an associate degree; \$66,600 for those with a bachelor's degree; and \$80,200 for those with a master's degree or higher (Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment, 2024).

The American football players and basketball players who are drafted from college tend to make millions of dollars annually. The college basketball players who are drafted in the WNBA also earn substantial amounts of money, including from advertisements. Many of them tend to graduate from college or they tend to go back to complete their bachelor's degrees. The study by Kaba (2012c) of the 2006 Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) season in the United States finds that: "WNBA players may be among the top (if not the top) of professional teams in the United States with an extremely high proportion of their players with at least a bachelor's degree. These degrees are earned from many of the most highly ranked academic institutions in the country (such as Harvard University, Duke University, Stanford University, etcetera)..." (p.101). The study finds that 156 WNBA players attended colleges and universities in the United States. Of that total, 155 (99.4%) graduated with at least a bachelor's degree (Kaba, 2012c:101). Kaba (2011c) finds that the average salary for Black NBA players during the 2005-2006 professional basketball season was \$4.04 million (p.11).

According to the United States Federal Reserve System, on December 31, 2010, the net worth of all Black households in the United States was \$2.58 trillion; \$3.88 trillion on December 31, 2015; \$4.97 trillion on December 31, 2020; and \$5.05 trillion on December 31, 2023 ("Distribution of Household Wealth in the U.S. since 1989," 2024; also see Price, 1994). In 2020, the purchasing power of the Black American population was \$1.6 trillion (Kaba, 2024a: 84).

Of the 140.516 million people aged 25 and over in the civilian labor force in the United States in 2021, 60.827 million (43.3%) had at least a bachelor's degree: 29.965 million (40%) out of 74.939 million for men; 30.863 million (47.1%) out of 65.577 million for women; 2.510 million (29.74%) out of 8.440 million for Black men; and 3.532 million (38.1%) out of 9.283 for Black women. In addition, of 152.581 million people aged 16 and over in the civilian labor force in the United States in 2021, 42.4% were in management, professional, and related occupations, the top job category in the United States; 38.5% out of 80.829 million males; 46.9% out of 71.752 million females; 47.7% out of 54.476 million White females; 39.6% out of 9.851 million Black females; 38.7% of 63.814 million White males; and 27.6% out of 8.875 million Black males (Kaba, 2024a: 76).

In an article that examines the 2011 *Root Magazine's* (a Black American magazine) 100 most influential young Black Americans aged 25 to 45 from various professions, Kaba (2017b) finds that in 2016, 46 of them had "... a combined net worth of \$3.29 billion, with men accounting for \$2.354 billion, and women accounting for \$937 million" (p.139). Asante-Muhammad and Gray (2023, November 8) reported that the 2021 *Forbes Magazine's* billionaire list had 9 United States born Black billionaires with a total net worth of \$25.4 billion in 2023: Robert Smith, \$8 billion, David Steward, \$6 billion, Shawn Carter (Jay Z), \$2.5 billion, Oprah Winfrey, \$2.5 billion, Michael Jordan, \$2 billion, Alex Karp, \$1.3 billion, Tiger Woods, \$1.1 billion, LeBron James, \$1 billion, and Tyler Perry, \$1 billion. It is useful to note that three of the U.S.-born Blacks on this *Forbes* billionaire list were in the 100 young most influential Black Americans study mentioned above: Shawn Carter (Jay Z), LeBron James, and Tyler Perry. In that study their net worth in 2016 are as follows: Shawn Carter (Jay Z), \$700 million, Tyler Perry, 450 million, and LeBron James, \$340 million (Kaba, 2017b: 155-156), for a total of \$1.49 billion. However, the 2021 combined net worth of these three Black American billionaires is \$4.5 billion, which is \$1.21 billion more than the combined \$3.2 billion net worth of the 46 honorees in the study by Kaba (2017b:139). It is noted that in 2009, there were 35,000 Black millionaires, with a net worth of \$1 million or more (Kaba, 2017b:152-153). Hale (2022, October 25) reported for *Forbes Magazine* that "There are about 1.79 million African American millionaires in the country... [United States]." Sullivan et al., (2024, April 24) reported for the United States Census Bureau that, in 2021, 5.3% of Black households and 20.4% of White households had a net worth of \$1million or more.

In politics, Barack Obama became the first Black president of the United States. Kamala Harris became the first Black person to become vice president of the United States. On August 22, 2024, Kamala Harris became the Democratic Party candidate for the United States presidential election on November 5, 2024. According to the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), the 188 th United States Congress which took office in January 2023, comprised 60 (11.2%) Black members out of 535 total members. These 60 Black members of the United States Congress represent: "more than 120 million Americans, 25.3 percent of the total U.S. population, and more than 20 million African-Americans, 41 percent of the total U.S. African-American population. In addition, the CBC represents almost a fourth of the House Democratic Caucus." In addition, according to the CBC, its members hold leadership positions in Congress, including the leader of the Democratic Party in the House of Representatives, Hakeem Jeffries from the state of New York. Representative James E. Clyburn from South Carolina serves as Assistant Democratic Leader. Representative Barbara Lee from California serves as co-chair of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee. Finally, there are 5 members of the CBC who serve as chairs on major

committees in the House of Representatives, and 25 of them serve as chair of subcommittees in the House of Representatives (About the CBC, 2024; also see Kaba, 2010ab, 2011de).

Earning a bachelor's degree or higher is responsible for these Black individuals to be elected to the United States Congress. The reason is that to become a member of the U.S. Congress, one stands a good chance if they have a bachelor's degree or higher. For example, in the 108th U.S. Congress that took office on January 3, 2003, 92% of the 435 members in the House of Representatives, had a bachelor's degree: 176 had Juris Doctor (JD) degrees; 12 had Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees; 18 had doctoral degrees (such as Ph.D. or Ed.D.); and 123 had master's degrees. Of the 100 members of the Senate, 97% had a bachelor's degree: 59 had Juris Doctor degrees; 3 had Doctor of Medicine degrees; and 19 had master's degrees (Kaba, 2017c:100).

An important implication of the attainment of bachelor's degree or higher by Black Americans is that it has resulted in tens of thousands of Black faculty teaching and conducting research at colleges and universities across the United States. These instructors and scholars are among the most productive and prolific individuals in institutions in the United States higher education system (Kaba, 2009a, 2013ab, 2015, 2016a; Mixon and Upadhyaya, 2024;). In fall 2022, of the 842,400 full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States, Blacks accounted for 7% or 58,968; 4% or 33,696 for Black women; and 3% or 25,272 for Black men. This means that of the 58,968 full-time Black faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States in 2022, Black women accounted for 57.1%, and Black men accounted for 42.9 percent (Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty, 2024: 1 & 3).

Finally, the educational attainment of Black Americans has resulted in them being very influential not just in the United States but the entire world. In the United States, it is very common for Black movie stars, prominent musicians, or athletes, to be college graduates (Kaba, 2017b). By 2024, these Black entertainers, movie stars, professional athletes, and others on social media are among the most influential people on social media networks in the world with tens of thousands and millions of followers or subscribers (Chapa and Khan, 2024; Kaba, 2017b; Molina-Rogers, 2021).

### 3. Recommendations

Despite the difficult challenges that people of Black African descent have experienced in the United States in the past 400 years, the data in this paper have illustrated that by 2022, there were 5.547 million of them aged 18 and over with at least a bachelor's degree. As a result of this remarkable achievement, as an entity, the 50 million Black population in the United States is one of the wealthiest and most educated groups in the world, with highly educated professionals in hundreds of professions.

The main recommendation in this paper is for the Black American population to establish what I would call the Black World Development Initiative, with a fund of no less than \$500 billion. The "Black World" refers to people of Black African descent spread across the world, including in Africa (Kaba, 2007a). This development initiative would be similar to China's Belt and Road Initiative (Bhart, 2023; Li et al., 2024), only that this will focus on people of Black African descent all over the world, including in the United States. McBride et al. (2023) note that "In total, China has already spent an estimated \$1 trillion on..." its Belt and Road Initiative.

One of the first projects of the Black World Development Initiative must be to reduce the high death rates of young Black children and maternal mortality rates in United States. For example, in 2007, "there were 618 deaths per every 100,000 of baby girls in the US under the age of one; 517 deaths for Whites; 1132 deaths for Blacks; and 398 deaths for Asian or Pacific Islanders" (Kaba, 2012a: 137). Ely and Driscoll (2022) point out that in 2020, the infant mortality rate for Blacks in the United States was 10.38 deaths per 1,000; and 4.4 deaths per 1,000 for Whites (p.4). Osterman et al. (2022) claim that, among mothers who gave birth in the United States in 2020, 9.1% of non-Hispanic Blacks, and 4.5% of non-Hispanic Whites, received late or no prenatal care (p.6). According to Gunja et al. (2024, June 4), in 2022, there were 22.3 maternal deaths for every 100,000 live births in the United States; 19 maternal deaths for Whites; and 49.5 maternal deaths for Blacks.

In United States politics, the Black World Development Initiative should establish a \$1 billion annual political lobby fund to play by the rules set by the federal government and use the funds to lobby national and state politicians to advocate for issues important to the Black World, including the Black American population. Such a political lobby fund will help to reduce poverty in the Black population in the United States, increase college enrollments, improve schools in Black communities, and also improve the health of Black communities.

Outside of the United States, the Black World Development Initiative should buy the debt that Black African and Caribbean nations owe to the World Bank, the IMF, foreign governments, and banks. The experts responsible for this branch of the initiative will be in the position to negotiate favorable conditions during the negotiations. Black

Caribbean nations and nations in Western and Middle Africa have been impacted enormously not only from slavery, but also from the emigration of skilled workers from their regions to the West (for example, North America, Europe, and Australia). For example, Kaba (2011f) finds that there were 15.68 million people captured in Africa and enslaved between the 1400s and 1900s through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade, the India Ocean Slave Trade and the Red Sea Slave Trade (p.93). Of the 6,634,714 Africans transported in all four slave trades from Western Africa, 5,221,415 (78.7%) were through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Of the 5,093,203 Africans transported in all four slave trades from Middle Africa, 4,558,117 (90.2%) were through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (p.95; also see Kaba, 2007b; Price and Whatley, 2021).

African immigrants have become an important part of the Black American population, making very important contributions to both the Black community and the United States as a whole. Just as people of West African descent account for a very high majority of the native-born Black American population, so also West African immigrants account for a substantial proportion of the African immigrant population in the United States. Kaba (2024a) points out that immigrants from West Africa accounted for 926,000 (44.2%) of the 2,094,000 African immigrants in the United States in 2019. These African immigrants in the United States, especially those from West Africa, are among the most educated people in the United States. For example, from 2008 to 2012, while 27.5% of the foreign-born population aged 25 and over in the United States had at least a bachelor's degree, the figure was 41.5% for African immigrants: Ghana, 34.9%; and Nigeria, 60.9 percent. African immigrants are very useful to the economy of the United States, with up to 3 out of every 4 of them (73.4% or almost 1.3 million) in prime working ages of 25 to 64 years, compared to less than half of the general United States-born population (pp.77-78).

African immigrants account for a substantial proportion of the 719,000 Black immigrants working in healthcare and social assistance industry in 2021. That figure accounts for 3.3% of that industry's total workforce, with 130,000 employed as registered nurses, 16,000 physicians, and 152,000 employed as home health and personal care aides. In 2015, 30% (339,491) of African immigrants in the United States were employed in the healthcare and social services industry, compared with 13% of the general population. In 2015, 73,000 African immigrants in the United States held STEM jobs, accounting for 6.5% of African immigrant workers. In 2015, African immigrant nurses accounted for 46,663; 15,720 physicians; and 13,240 teachers in postsecondary education. In 2019, 23% of African immigrant households had income of \$100,000 or more; 12% had income of \$75,000 to \$99,999; and 19% had income of \$50,000 to \$74,999 (Kaba, 2024a:77-78; Mazrui and Kaba, 2016).

In 2021, Black immigrant households in the United States earned \$153 billion, and paid \$39 billion in taxes: \$24 billion in federal taxes and \$15 billion in state and local taxes. African immigrant households in the United States earned \$55.1 billion in 2015 and paid \$10.1 billion in federal taxes and \$4.7 billion in state and local taxes. They also paid \$5.8 billion in taxes to the Medicare system and \$1.6 billion in taxes to the Social Security system. In politics, in 2021, there were 2.4 million Black immigrants eligible to vote in the United States. In the United States, politicians running for office (from local office to national office, including the presidency) take every single vote or voter very seriously because election results tend to be very close. In 2021, 53.2% of African immigrants in the United States were naturalized, and they "... are one of the most politically engaged immigrant groups in the United States" (Kaba, 2024a:79-80). West African immigrants also contribute substantially to the total amount of remittances sent to Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, of the \$53,137,322 sent to Sub-Saharan Africa in 2022, Western African countries accounted for \$33,015,357,923 (62.13%) (Kaba, 2024a:79-80).

The examples presented in this section and in the entire paper illustrate that the Black American population is in the position to launch a successful Black World Development Initiative because it has the funding and other important resources such as highly skilled experts that would manage the various branches of the initiative. Although Africans are currently not as wealthy as their fellow compatriots in the United States, the continent is endowed with massive amounts of fertile lands for agriculture and it is also endowed with massive amounts of natural mineral resources, and a young and talented workforce (Kaba, 2006a, 2014b, 2016b, 2020, 2024a:71-73, 2024b; Kaba and Kaba, 2020:134-135; Sackeyfio and Kaba, 2020: 216-217). Kaba (2024b) points out that Africa's total population accounted for 1.448 billion in 2023, which was 18.14% of the world's total population of 7.979 billion. In 2023, the landmass of Africa was 30.32 million sq km, which was 20% of the world total of 148.94 million sq km. In 2023, Africa's total coastline was 40,188 km, which was 11.3% of the world total of 356,000 km (p.57). The Black population is already showing increased interests in Africa, with regular visits to Africa by increasing numbers of Black Americans. This is especially the case as Christians become the majority in Africa (Kaba, 2022:18; 2009c; Sutherland et al., 2023). In addition, since Black Americans are a key part of the American population and Africa-United States relations have improved substantially compared to a quarter century ago (Kaba, 2004, 2005, 2006b, 2009a, 2019, 2024bc; M'Cormack-Hale and Kaba, 2015), there is a real possibility of future Black World Development Initiative projects across Africa.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper began by discussing the resilience of the United States as a whole, and the various ethnic and racial groups in the country, including Black Americans. In the case of Black Americans, there is no group in the United States that has experienced difficult challenges than them. Yet they have been very resilient and today over 5.5 million of them have at least a bachelor's degree, with a substantial number of those degrees earned from the most selective colleges and universities in the United States, including Ivy League universities (Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University), and other top 100 universities in the country. Some of the factors presented for millions of Black Americans earning bachelor's degrees or more include paying for their own education, grants and loans from state governments and the federal government, and athletic scholarships. Some of the factors presented for more Black women earning bachelor's degrees or higher than their male counterparts include: 2.811 million more of them aged 18 and over than their male counterparts, more Black males in the United States military, where they enlist as teenagers, and more Black males drop out of school than their female counterparts.

Some of the implications presented because of the over 5.5 million Black Americans aged 18 and over with at least a bachelor's degree include an increase in the net worth of the Black population from \$2.58 trillion on December 31, 2000 to \$5.05 trillion on December 31, 2023; an increase in the number of Black millionaires and billionaires; and an increase in their numbers in the United States Congress, Barack Obama being elected president and Kamala Harris being elected vice president of the United States; Kamala Harris being the Democratic Party candidate for the November 5, 2024 United States presidential election; and influence of Black celebrities on social media platforms. A major recommendation presented in the paper is that the Black American population must establish a \$500 billion Black World Development Initiative – a Belt and Road initiative for the Black World. This initiative will create projects to improve the lives of Black people in the United States, Africa, the Caribbean, and other Black societies across the world.

#### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

#### Informed consent

Obtained.

#### Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

#### Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

#### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

#### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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### Appendix

Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over in the United States, by Sex: 2012 and 2022

All Races		Bachelor's	%	% Between	% Within	Master's	%	% Between	% Within	Professional	%	% Between	% Within	Doctoral	%	% Between	% Within
	Number	degree	of All	Sexes	Sex	degree	All	Sexes	Sex	degree	All	Sexes	Sex	degree	All	Sexes	Sex
<b>Both Sexes</b>	234,719,000	43,277,000	18.4	..	..	16,625,000	7	..	..	3,099,000	1.3	..	..	3,191,000	1.4	..	..
<b>Male</b>	113,279,000	20,529,000	8.7	47.4	18.1	7,478,000	3.2	45	6.6	1,939,000	0.83	62.6	1.7	2,018,000	0.86	63.2	1.8
<b>Female</b>	121,440,000	22,748,000	9.7	52.6	18.7	9,147,000	3.9	55	7.5	1,160,000	0.49	37.4	0.96	1,173,000	0.5	36.8	0.97
<b>2022</b>																	
<b>Both Sexes</b>	255,255,000	56,350,000	22.1	..	..	24,160,000	9.5	..	..	3,478,000	1.4	..	..	4,859,000	1.9	..	..
<b>Male</b>	124,546,000	26,568,000	10.4	47.1	21.3	10,264,000	4	42.5	8.2	1,873,000	1.5	53.9	1.5	2,649,000	1	54.5	2.13
<b>Female</b>	130,709,000	29,782,000	11.7	52.9	22.8	13,896,000	5.44	57.5	10.63	1,604,000	1.23	46.1	1.23	2,209,000	0.87	45.5	1.7

Source: Compiled and computed from "Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2022," 2023, February 16. Educational Attainment in the United States: 2022. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/educational-attainment/eps-detailed-tables.html>.

Table 2. Educational Attainment of the Black American Population 18 Years and Over in the United States, by Sex: 2012 and 2022

		Bachelor's	%	%	%	Master's		%	%	Professional		%	%	Doctoral		%	%
2012	Number	degree	of	Between	With	degree	% of	Sexes	Sex	degree	% of	Sexes	Sex	degree	% of	Sexes	Sex
Both Sexes	29,680,000	3,668,000	12.4	..	..	1,416,000	4.8	..	..	226,000	0.76	..	..	229,000	0.77	..	..
Male	13,353,000	1,522,000	5.1	41.5	11.4	470,000	1.6	33.2	3.5	105,000	0.35	46.5	0.8	124,000	0.42	54.1	0.93
Female	16,327,000	2,146,000	7.2	58.5	13.1	946,000	3.2	66.8	5.8	121,000	0.41	53.5	0.74	105,000	0.35	45.9	0.64
2022																	
Both Sexes	34,785,000	5,547,000	15.9	..	..	2,453,000	7.1	..	..	286,000	0.82	..	..	442,000	1.3	..	..
Male	15,987,000	2,367,000	6.8	42.7	14.8	862,000	2.5	35.1	5.4	128,000	0.37	44.8	0.8	161,000	0.46	36.4	1
Female	18,798,000	3,180,000	9.1	9.1	16.9	1,591,000	4.6	64.9	8.5	158,000	0.45	55.2	0.84	281,000	0.81	63.6	1.5

Source: Compiled and computed from "Table 1. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2022," 2023, February 16. Educational Attainment in the United States: 2022. United States Census Bureau. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/educational-attainment/eps-detailed-tables.html>.