

Journal Sample

In the essay Doubly Divided: The Racial Wealth Gap, Lui writes about how historic laws, policies, and court decisions were discriminatory towards people of color, which in turn created modern day economic inequality. Lui explains how racial groups like Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos were the victims of unjust U.S. government policies that intended to make individuals of color hand over their wealth to whites. For example, the Native Americans who were first on American soil had to hand over their last large territory, the Great Plains, to whites after the 1862 Homestead Act. This land confiscation gave white families 160 acres of land for free, while many Indians lost their lives defending it. This violent, forced transfer of land has dragged many Indians today into poverty because their wealth was primarily in land and natural resources.

African Americans also were kept from attaining wealth by violent acts from whites. For example, in June of 1921, white rioters destroyed 600 black-owned businesses. The reason why whites resorted to violence against blacks was to prevent blacks from creating wealth for themselves because from the beginning African American slaves and their unpaid labor created a substantial amount of wealth only for white plantation owners. Today, there is still a wealth gap between blacks and whites because the historic fear of African Americans gaining wealth has influenced the general public in the work place to keep the black person excluded from well paying jobs.

Latinos and Asians both came to the U.S. for economic opportunity. In the beginning they both were welcome by the U.S. because they provided cheap labor. But once they were no longer needed or they wanted to settle in the U.S. to acquire wealth, they were kicked out of the country. For example, in 1924 the first U.S.-Mexico border patrol was set up to deport Mexicans and keep them from coming back. One way to keep Asians from gaining wealth was the 1924, Alien Land

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Act, which didn't allow noncitizens such as, Japanese immigrants, to own land. A successful attempt to transfer wealth to whites occurred in 1942 when the Roosevelt administration made Japanese Americans move to internment camps and sell all their assets, such as homes and businesses to whites for cheap. Today, Latinos and Asians who come here to work still are considered as a "guest" even though they work subminimum wage jobs that Americans don't want. I think there still is a wealth gap between Latinos, Asians, and whites because Latinos and Asians who come here for work aren't allowed to become U.S. citizens. If they were to become U.S. citizens they would have the right to higher pay just like whites.

After reading this essay by Lui, I was shocked how historic government policy and law was the reason why there is a current racial wealth gap. Before I read this essay, I wasn't aware of how policies like the Alien Land Act (1924), the overturn of the Civil Rights Act (1875), and the Homestead Act (1862) all continued to prolong the oppression of people of color. Even though I already knew that whites were the racial group that are the wealthiest, I didn't know that in 2001, the median white family was almost ten times wealthier than a median black family. This essay connects to women of color because it describes how discriminatory, historic, U.S. policies have perpetuated a current wealth gap between all people of color including women. This topic discussed by Lui has affected the lives of women of color by making it extremely difficult to attain wealth because of their race. If federal policies and barriers weren't put up to keep people of color from gaining wealth then there would have been a better chance for women of color to acquire wealth from things like inheritance of land, businesses, and property. As a woman of color I understand there will be obstacles for me to attain wealth, but I plan on fighting them.