

# The Moguldom Nation

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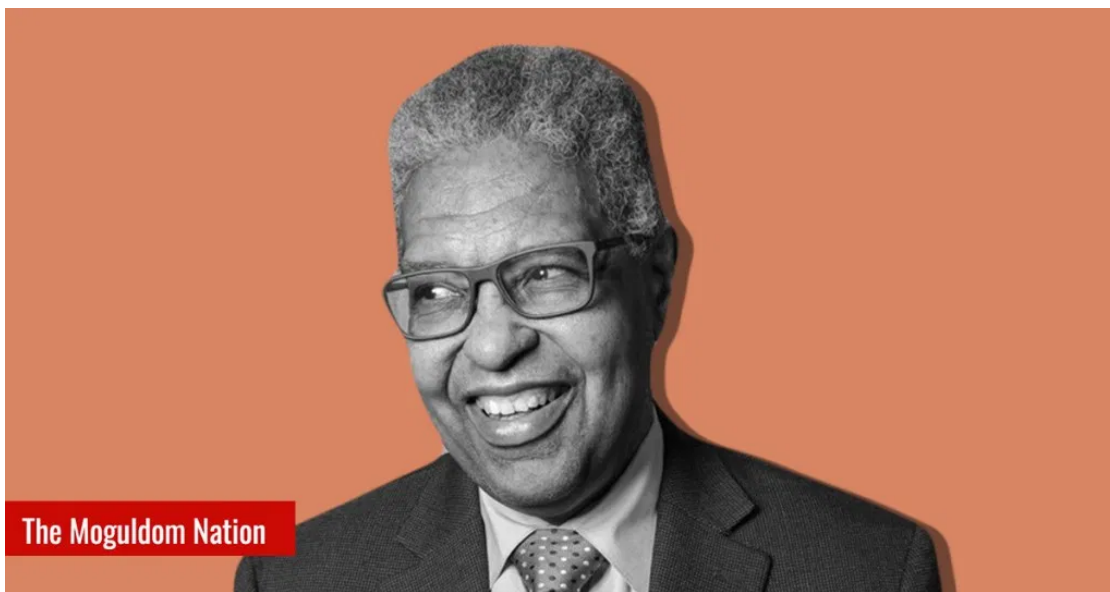
## 10 Takeaways From Dr. Sandy Darity's New Research: Middle Class Not a Level Playing Field for Black People



Written by Isheka N. Harrison

May 18, 2020

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*Duke professor Dr. Sandy Darity's new study focuses on the inequities which exist between those in the Black middle class and their white counterparts. Photo By Justin Cook/Minneapolis Fed*

Duke professor and economist Dr. Sandy Darity's research on wealth inequalities between racial groups has earned him respect as an expert on the subject. As leader of the university's Samuel

DuBois Cook Center for Social Equity, Darity's new study focuses on the inequities which exist between those in the Black middle class and their white counterparts.

An outspoken advocate for reparations for Black Americans, Darity and his team conducted a study which highlighted a variety of distinctions between the Black and white middle classes in the U.S. It is titled "A Subaltern Middle Class: The Case of the Missing 'Black Bourgeoisie' in America."

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Fenaba Addo of the University of Wisconsin and Imari Smith, a doctoral student at Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy, served as Darity's co-authors, according to Duke.

Here are 10 takeaways from Dr. Sandy Darity's latest research.

## The Black middle class is smaller than the white middle class.

Darity and his team of researchers found that when using wealth as a "defining criteria to demarcate class status," the amount of Black Americans who are actually in the middle class is smaller than the amount of white Americans with the status.

## ✖ Middle class Black Americans are worse off than their white peers.

"Even before the current pandemic exacerbated racial inequities, Black Americans in the proverbial 'middle class' were far worse off than their nominal white peers," Darity said.

**The covid-19 coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated pre-existing economic inequalities between the Black and white middle classes.**

Darity added, "And the comparative fragility of Black middle class status is aggravated intensely by the COVID-19 crisis because of the lack of the cushion of wealth to weather job loss."

**The Black middle class does not have a firm foundation of wealth.**

"For Black Americans, the issue may not be restoring its middle class," the authors wrote, "but constructing a robust middle class in the first place."

**There are more white families with a million-dollar net worth than Black families.**

According to Darity and his team's research, over 25 percent of white families have a net worth of over \$1 million dollars compared to 4 percent of Black families.

**Black people in the middle class have a financial situation that more closely mirrors that of poor white families.**

"There is an unfortunate tendency to confuse income and wealth, and the confusion masks the core issues," Darity said. "Wealth, in and of itself, is a far stronger gauge of economic well-being than income. And the financial precarity of middle income Black families comes into glaring view when the focus is placed on wealth."



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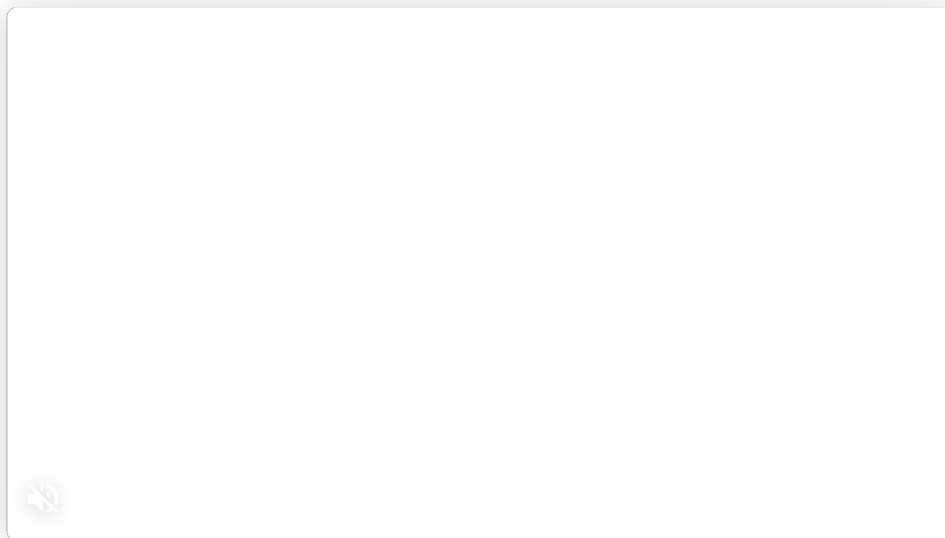
*Jamarlin Martin discusses how J. Edgar Hoover's goal to water down and neutralize strong Black politics involved informants and agents trading money and status for the water-down.*

## If the dire wealth inequities are to change, bold policies are necessary.

Darity, Addo and Smith tout proposed policies like Sen. Kamala Harris' LIFT (Livable Incomes for Families Today) the Middle Class Act and Andrew Yang's The Freedom Dividend, a Universal Basic Income (UBI) initiative.

The LIFT act proposed to give families up to \$6,000 per year in tax credits, which could be paid monthly or annually. The Freedom Dividend would provide Americans with a basic UBI of \$1,000 per month or \$12,000 per year to adults over age 18. Both were designed to shore up financial stability in the country.





However, Darity and team believe the policies are just a start, not full answers to the wealth inequality that exists between the Black and white middle classes.

## **Reparations are necessary to help undo the systemic wealth inequalities between Black and white Americans.**

As a wealth inequality expert, Darity has long touted the need for comprehensive reparations to recompense for the various horrors inflicted among Black slaves and their descendants. This study further underscores his point.

## **The “Black Bourgeoise” has never actually flourished.**

Despite appearances, Darity and team assert that even Black people who appear to have “made it” do not have the wealth of their white counterparts.

Based on Darity and team's research, “Blacks at the top of their strata are still far below whites at the top of theirs.”

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# Lack of income is not the only barrier that keeps the Black middle class on an uneven playing field with their white counterparts.

"Black-white wealth inequality is not a matter of income poverty," the authors wrote. In addition to reparations for Black Americans, they suggest implementing Baby Bonds, trust accounts for newborns and other radical economic policies.



**Duke University**  
@DukeU

A new paper from [@DukeSocialEQ](#) found that when using wealth as the defining criteria to demarcate class status, the middle class of black Americans is proportionately much smaller than the white middle class [today.duke.edu/2020/05/middle...](https://today.duke.edu/2020/05/middle...)

## Middle Class Not a Level Playing Field for Blacks, New Duke Res...

The "middle class" can be hard to define. A new report from Duke University suggests that for African Americans it's simply hard to find — [today.duke.edu](https://today.duke.edu)

24 7:30 AM - May 13, 2020

[See Duke University's other Tweets](#)



**Duke Social Equity** @DukeSocialEQ · May 13, 2020

## MIDDLE CLASS NOT A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR BLACKS, NEW DUKE RESEARCH FINDS

Read the article here: [today.duke.edu/2020/05/middle...](https://today.duke.edu/2020/05/middle...)

Written by The Cook Center's very own [@Lucas\\_A\\_Hubbard](#)



**Heather Hogrobrooks**

@esoterically60

This is something I look forward to reading as it touches a question I've held for a long time. My own community was one of individuals of great achievement academic and other, ingenuity, small businesses but not wealth to pass down.

10:09 AM - May 13, 2020

[See Heather Hogrobrooks's other Tweets](#)



**ADOS, Chapter at Large** @LittleW99300122 · May 13, 2020

Replying to @DukeSocialEQ and 2 others

How about a book that tells people how to re-build the Foundational Black Family that levels the playing field and builds the wealth that allows them to compete with White families. #ADOS



**Robert F. Trilliams** 🇺🇸

@FTrilliams

"Rebuilding the family" doesn't level the playing field 🧑. Redistribution of the wealth does.

3 9:54 AM - May 13, 2020

[See Robert F. Trilliams 🇺🇸's other Tweets](#)