

materially aid fleeing Nationalist Chinese on the continent. A period of isolation and strained relations with the United States began once again under Mao.

In 1949, China began to arm Communists in French Indochina. The U.S. became embroiled in a deadly struggle with North Korea and countered her assault in the south with an attack that pushed them all the way north to the Yalu River on the Chinese border.

Alarmed, China struck back. For the first time since 1900, Americans and Chinese were fighting each other. By 1953, an uneasy line had settled on the Korean Peninsula.

Chinese relations remained cool with the West, but were not always promising with the Soviet Russia. When the U.S. fought in Vietnam, China continued to arm and send troops to the Communist government of Ho Chi Minh.

Then a series of odd events from 1969 to 1971 brought Americans and Chinese back to warmer relations in the most unlikely way. When Soviet Russia attacked outposts on the northern border of China, Mao Zedong reassessed relationships with the United States.

He reasoned that China could not be isolated by both world powers. Overtures from President Nixon in his inaugural address and a series of ping-pong matches created dialogue for the first time in decades.

In 1971, Henry Kissinger went on a secret mission to China, opening the way for Nixon's visit with Mao. Who would have thought that the man that shunned the United States in favor of communism and the President that built his reputation on fighting communism would both come to realize that our nations, despite their differences, needed each other.

Mainland China was now officially recognized by the United Nations. The U.S. set up diplomatic offices. Trade agreements opened. Relations warmed by the 1980s, with state visits from both countries. As the horizon brightened and the Chinese people hoped, the Chinese Government cracked down on dissidents in Tiananmen Square. The U.S., alarmed, imposed sanctions and restrictions.

Tensions loomed through the 1990s, culminating with the U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1999, during the Kosovo campaign.

Calmer heads prevailed and tensions eased. By 2001, trade restrictions were loosened once again. China pledged a deep commitment to fight the war on terror and committed material aid in great amounts for the effort.

By 2006, China-U.S. relations deepened under the strategic economic dialogue. Business in both countries increased as commerce offered great economic opportunity for both countries.

On the verge of a bright future, we now see today with timidity and fear, where we should see opportunity and favor with regard to China.

China needs us, and we need China; yet we see, in the last week, Madam

Speaker, a week of a barrage of negative press on China, covering everything from hedging them on trade, to condemning them and their development of island outposts in the China Sea, to framing them up as the new military threat that must be checked by the United States.

Dialogue and diplomacy are cheaper than tanks and tomahawks. Does the United States really wish to believe that we can leave a capabilities-based military to create some new threat-based military and it would be in our favor?

While China is not our enemy, we could certainly set the conditions to make them one in the future. It would be a tragic mistake. It would devour our diplomacy, drain our defense, and diminish our domestic priorities.

Worse, it could set the course for some future horrific conflict between dozens of friendly nations that we currently trade with, including China—including China. Where is the dialogue on including China in the Trans-Pacific Partnership?

I have not heard it from this Chamber or the White House. Sure, we claim they can join if they meet the standard, only after we use every anti-Chinese statement in trying to make the case for the trade promotion authority. That is not very reassuring.

Some say we must not include China at all in the Trans-Pacific Partnership because of their human rights record. Others object because they are a Communist nation. Others cite the fact that China has been our former enemy.

Well, here are some thoughts to ponder. If we can forgive Germany and Japan for horrific human rights violations in World War II, can we not reach out to China? If we can embrace former enemies who reformed their existing Communist governments, such as Vietnam, can we not reach out to China?

If we can turn former enemies, such as Great Britain, Canada, Mexico, Spain, the Philippines, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Japan, and Vietnam, into our top trading partners, can we not also reach out to China?

China needs petroleum and natural gas, and we have plenty of it. We have both ready to export. China wants to lay thousands of miles of road in ambitious projects for her commerce. We have the raw materials for asphalt, industry to make their road-paving machines, and colleges to educate their engineers.

Madam Speaker, we need China; 3.8 million Chinese nationals live and work in the United States. That is more than the population of my home State of Oklahoma. China constitutes our greatest trading partner, working with thousands of businesses that bolster our economy and better our quality of life. Our peoples are historically and deeply intertwined. We must proceed with wisdom and caution.

While we love trade and while we love economy, we can work out differences, rather than magnify them

and deepen suspicion and concern. Instead, we can dialogue.

The same standards that people often cite with regard to China and how she is stealing technologies or making shoddy goods were the same charges that we leveled against Japan in the 1960s and South Korea in the 1980s; yet we no longer have those concerns about those allies today with their incredible effort, economy, and technology.

Our peoples are historically and deeply entwined, the United States and China, and we must work hard to maintain that.

Madam Speaker, I would hope that our colleagues and our President would temper the rhetoric with regard to discussions on trade and using it as some new effort to hedge or contain China, rather than to embrace and trade with that nation.

Whatever differences we may have can be worked out in the spirit and good will of Lincoln.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTERMAN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege to once again have the opportunity to stand on the House floor and to anchor the Congressional Black Caucus' Special Order hour with the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey.

Today, we will discuss the many economic challenges facing so many everyday Americans; and, specifically, tonight, we want to examine some of the economic barriers, some of the policy possibilities, and the outlook on job prospects for African Americans in districts that we represent across the country.

It is worth beginning with the fact that we are now about 6 years removed from the end of what historians and economists deem the Great Recession. America's economy has rallied. We have inched our way closer and closer to full recovery. In fact, the beginning of 2015 saw the most sustained period of job creation in this century.

The fact remains that, in spite of the steady stream of progress and even in the midst of our positive job numbers, there are still too many people being left behind. Many of these people live in communities like the ones I represent in Cook County and Kankakee.

Many of these people can be found in urban, central, or rural America.

I guarantee that we all know someone out there who is still in the midst of their own personal economic recovery. The fact remains that many communities of color are struggling mightily in their recovery. In many Black and Brown neighborhoods, unemployment remains at a crisis level—this, even as our economy continues to rebound.

I am reminded of a quote by a former National Urban League president and civil rights hero that the hardest work in the world is being out of work. That is something that I personally believe.

So often, I will hear folks say that America's unemployed have made a choice to not work, that vulnerable Americans looking for work are doing so because they have made poor decisions. We hear this time and time again, especially in this Chamber, about folks need to go pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

I can tell you that I have seen people tug in vain on their bootstraps to no avail. Many families still need help in their recovery. As Representatives, we need to hear their cry and do more.

Marc Morial, who has followed in the footsteps of Whitney Young and taken the helm of the National Urban League, was recently quoted as saying: "It is clear that for too many Blacks and Latinos, our Nation's economic recovery is only something they read or hear about."

America's comeback is bypassing large swaths of people in Black and Brown neighborhoods, and that is dangerous not only to those communities, but to our Nation. A recovery that leaves millions of its citizens behind will ultimately threaten America's sustained growth.

Even before the Great Recession, Black unemployment has consistently been twice as high as White unemployment. I think Congressman PAYNE and my colleagues gathered here this evening would agree that we have to address this problem now.

To again quote Mr. Morial, of the National Urban League, "For Blacks and Latinos in America, the economic devastation of the Great Recession is as real today as it was when it began in 2007."

Consider these statistics on the economic reality of many Africans Americans, according to a Brandeis University study. A typical Black household has accumulated less than one-tenth of the wealth of a typical White one, and that number is getting worse.

Over the past 25 years, the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites has nearly tripled. Now, this is largely because homeownership among Blacks is so much lower. Housing is often America's greatest asset and a major component of their overall wealth.

African Americans typically have lower incomes than Whites, which also makes it harder for them to save and build wealth. The median income for

Black households is less than 60 percent of that of White ones. Finally, the jobless rate for Black Americans is twice that of Whites.

Mr. Speaker, the time to act is now. The necessity in responding to this economic crisis should be an American imperative. We cannot be limited by narrowly focusing on a pre-Recession economy.

The Members of this House should be strategizing to support a bold and inclusive economy that propels us into a sustainable future. More can be done by us, and this administration has proven to have been willing to take the positive steps necessary to put us on a more prosperous path.

Regardless of where some of our colleagues are when it comes to the President, I think we are all in agreement that more Americans in the workforce and more economic stimulation benefits all of us.

□ 2045

The question is still relevant: How do we create a stronger economy and a more perfect union? Where do we go from here?

I am very pleased again to be joined tonight by my distinguished colleague from the Congressional Black Caucus as we discuss this important analysis of the economy and job opportunity in our communities.

The insight and policy prescriptions are critical and valuable in our continuing march toward a more perfect union. Let me first yield to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE), my dynamic coanchor.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I first want to start by thanking my colleague from Illinois, Congresswoman KELLY, for coanchoring this Special Order with me.

Thanks also to the members of the Congressional Black Caucus that will be joining us, and a special thanks to everyone watching at home.

It is wonderful to be here to talk about our shared priorities. Tonight, as stated by my colleague, we are going to address two of the most pressing issues for African American communities, jobs and economic development.

Since the Recession ended, much of the United States has experienced economic recovery. However, African American communities continue to face significant challenges to securing jobs, escaping poverty, and accumulating wealth.

It is a disturbing and unacceptable reality and a reminder that Congress has a moral responsibility to create avenues of economic prosperity for African American communities. Our focus must be on the economic issues that matter most to African American communities, including employment, income, and wealth.

According to an April report by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, at 10.1 percent, the unemployment rate for African Americans is double the rate for White Americans.

African Americans are 2.5 times more likely than White Americans to face long-term unemployment, and over 20 percent of African Americans in their early twenties are still unemployed. This hurts earning prospects and long-term employment.

Given the higher rates of unemployment in African American communities, it is no surprise that African American communities also have lower incomes and less wealth, and African Americans are more likely to live and stay in poverty.

According to the April Joint Economic Committee report, the median income of an African American household is only \$34,600, almost \$24,000 less than White households in this country. African Americans are almost three times more likely to live in poverty than White Americans. African American households have 13 times less wealth than White households.

In my State of New Jersey, the statistics are equally as grim. In New Jersey, the poverty rate for African Americans hovers at 22 percent and is three times that of White Americans, at 6.6 percent. The unemployment rate for African Americans is 11.1 percent, and that is twice that of White Americans, at 5.5 percent.

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, in New Jersey, in the 10th Congressional District, the unemployment rate for African Americans is 19.1 percent, which was 2.5 times that of White Americans, at 7.5 percent. These glaring disparities betray the American promise, that working hard leads to economic stability.

African American women's unemployment today—more women are the primary breadwinners for their families than ever. In fact, 30 percent of women earn more than their husbands. Women make up nearly half of our Nation's workforce.

However, on average, full-time working women earn just 77 cents for every dollar a man earns, and African American women earn just 64 cents for every dollar a man earns.

African American women have been hit particularly hard by unemployment. According to the National Women's Law Center, in April, African American women's unemployment was at 8.8 percent, higher than the peak of total women's unemployment during the Recession. Compare that to the 4.2 percent unemployment rate for White women and to the national unemployment rate of 5.4 percent.

We need a more widely shared recovery. We cannot strengthen our households or our economy when such large disparities exist.

The Congressional Black Caucus is committed to tackling this challenge. The CBC has fought for much-needed investment in job training, in education, and in employment opportunities to equip people of color and people from low-income communities with the skills needed to compete in today's economy.

Education is definitely key to this prosperity. It is best when we invest in it and make it possible for all youngsters—all Americans—to get a good education.

Education is the path to success, but many people simply can't afford it. African Americans lag sharply behind White Americans in educational attainment as well. It is a consistent theme that we hear—whether it is poverty, education, wealth, job opportunities—that these communities lag behind.

We need a strong nation, irrespective of what community you live in. Here in Congress and at this CBC, we fight every day to make sure that all Americans have an equal opportunity to prosper in this Nation.

I see we have been very fortunate to be joined by several of our colleagues.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. It is my pleasure and delight to yield to the gentlewoman from Oakland, California (Ms. LEE), who always has great things to share with us.

Ms. LEE. First, let me thank you, Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE, for hosting this Special Order. Your leadership is so important for these critical discussions.

We are trying in many ways under your leadership to really tell the truth and let the entire country know exactly what the economic status is, what the job opportunities and educational opportunities are in the African American community, and how those disparities continue to grow and, really, how we need to really do everything we can here to begin to close those gaps and disparities, so thank you very much once again.

We stand here tonight to discuss economic opportunity—of course, I have to say the lack of opportunity in the Black community. In recent months, we have seen communities across this country—including Baltimore and my hometown of Oakland, California, in my congressional district—demand an end to the systemic and institutional racial biases that plague our society.

People, especially young people, are calling for an end to centuries of oppression. They are fighting for equality of opportunity, the opportunity for every American to live the American Dream.

Too many places in our Nation are tales of two cities. One city is bright, shiny, and new. It is home to new condominiums and fancy restaurants. The other city is left with boarded up stores, abandoned homes, and too many people without a job and without hope.

I know Congresswoman KELLY, Congressman PAYNE, Congressman JEFFRIES, myself, all of us represent these cities, these two cities within one context, one environment, one framework, one boundary.

We all know that the inequality of opportunity really is not a new phenomenon. We have lived with these structural injustices for centuries, but

it wasn't until the race riots erupted in Watts, Chicago, and Detroit in 1968 that our government began to take some notice.

After the riots, President Johnson convened the Kerner Commission to investigate the root causes of the unrest. The Kerner report clearly showed a nation moving towards two societies: one Black, one White—separate and unequal. While the Kerner report identified the problem, our Nation failed to truly address it. There still is not liberty and justice for all.

The Kerner report also called for better training for police, new investments in jobs and in housing, and the end of de facto segregation. Now, this report really could have been written last month.

Sadly, nearly 50 years later, we still live in a country where the color of your skin and the ZIP Code in which you were born determines your future, but I am proud to be working with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to continue to address these persistent inequalities in our Nation by working on policies and programs to create economic growth, educational opportunities, and job opportunities.

For example, we know that Black children are disadvantaged from day one. More than one in three Black children are born in poverty. That is one in three. In the world's richest and most powerful Nation, a third of all African American children are forced to grow up with the harsh reality of poverty, day in and day out. This is outrageous. It is unacceptable.

The cycle of poverty continues in the school systems that institutionalize this discrimination. While Black students represent just 18 percent of preschool enrollment, they account for 42 percent of preschool student expulsions.

Can you believe that? Preschool student expulsions—that is really a disgrace. We are talking about kids ages 2 to 5 years old. These kids don't even get a start, let alone a Head Start. What in the world are children that young doing being expelled from preschool?

Then in high school, the graduation rate for Black students is 16 points lower than the rate for their White peers. Black students are far less likely than their White counterparts to obtain a 4-year college degree, and the crisis and inequality extends from education to the economy itself.

Over the past four decades, the unemployment rate for Blacks has remained nearly double the rate for Whites. Today, the unemployment rate in the Black community stands at 10.1 percent; that is reported. Now, to put that into context, the current African American unemployment rate is higher than the national average was at the height of the Great Recession.

In addition to higher unemployment rates, African Americans are also nearly completely locked out of some key economic sectors, especially the tech sector.

Only 1 in 14 technical workers in Silicon Valley is African American or Latino. That is 1 in 14. That is why the CBC has launched the TECH 2020 initiative to work with the tech sector to increase workforce diversity and investments in STEM education and to expand market opportunities for businesses to ensure that the jobs of today and tomorrow are open to all.

For African Americans in the workforce, our Nation's inequalities are also evident in their paychecks. Congressman PAYNE just laid out the statistics for women. While women earn 77 cents on the dollar that a man earns, it is just 64 cents for African American women. The median income for Blacks is a mere \$34,000. That is nearly \$24,000 less than the median income for Whites.

Most Black families hold their wealth in home equity, so the Great Recession hit the Black community particularly hard. Too many families lost everything, and many more Black families are struggling as home prices fail to keep pace with the stock market. Of course, the net worth now of African American families is now 6 cents to the dollar for White families.

The time for action is now. These communities, our communities, cannot wait any longer. We must come together like never before to address the inequalities in our Nation that leave Black families behind.

In my role as co-chair of the CBC's Task Force on Poverty and the Economy and chair of the Democratic whip's Task Force on Poverty, Income Inequality, and Opportunity, we are working very hard to give Black families a fair shot. We are talking about all families, not leaving any family behind.

I am proud to be working with more than 100 of my colleagues to advance policies that build pathways out of poverty into the middle class for everyone, for all Americans.

□ 2100

Yes, Black lives, like all lives, do count.

We have introduced the Half in Ten Act to develop a national strategy to cut poverty in half in the next decade. This bill would lift more than 22 million Americans out of poverty into the middle class in just the next 10 years by doubling down and coordinating proven antipoverty programs.

The Congressional Black Caucus also took a stand on poverty in its alternative budget proposal. We called for robust investments in education, infrastructure, and affordable housing programs that would ensure opportunities for all. We must keep up this fight until Congress makes these long overdue investments.

We need to strengthen the social safety net and invest in proven antipoverty programs such as the earned income tax credit and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. These were initiatives begun 50

years ago under President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program, and they are working.

We also need to raise the minimum wage and fight for a living wage. That is why we are cosponsors, and we are very proud to be cosponsors, of H.R. 122, the Original Living Wage Act, sponsored by Congressman AL GREEN, which starts by raising the minimum wage for Federal workers and building up to a living wage. And Congressman BOBBY SCOTT's Raise the Wage Act, H.R. 2150, would increase the minimum wage to \$12 by 2020. Thirty-five million Americans would benefit from this.

Also we wrote a letter signed by 72 colleagues urging the President to adopt a fair chance hiring policy at the Federal level for individuals who have been previously incarcerated. A fair chance hiring policy would level the playing field and help stop the cycle of recidivism that is plaguing our communities. This is simply the right thing to do. The Federal Government should not put up barriers to work for those trying to rebuild their lives after making a mistake and having paid their dues to society.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am saying tonight, and I think all of us are saying, that we need to give families the opportunity to build wealth and live the American Dream. We can end poverty not just in the African American community, but in the entire United States as a whole. So we have got to keep calling for action.

As Dr. King said in his "Two Americas" speech that he gave on April 14, 1968, at Stanford University, 1968, he said: "We must come to see that social progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals."

Mr. Speaker, we must be those dedicated individuals working for the social progress that is so desperately needed. When you look at the analysis of the economy, job opportunities and educational opportunities in the African American community, we must win this fight because the gaps and the disparities are too great. Only then will America be strong, because we have to remember that we are a country where everyone is equal under the law. In fact, when you have communities with such horrible statistics as we are laying out tonight, such horrible economic and educational gaps, our country is not as strong as it could be. And so we are saying that we want liberty and justice for everyone, that all lives matter, including Black lives.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, Congresswoman LEE. Thank you for your hard work, your dedication, and all of your insight. You are so right about ZIP Codes that determine so much, unfortunately. And we have to give every young child, every family, a fair chance, and hopefully we will see the day when some of the bills that we have put forward actually are brought to the floor and voted on in a positive way. So thank you so very much.

It is now my pleasure and honor to call to the floor and introduce Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES, from the great State of New York and the borough of Brooklyn. Thank you HAKEEM.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank my good friend, the distinguished gentlewoman from Illinois, ROBIN KELLY, for yielding, for her very generous introduction, and certainly to my good friend and classmate, DONALD PAYNE, for co-anchoring this Special Order. And as well, I want to acknowledge the presence of distinguished Congresswoman BARBARA LEE from California for her continued eloquence and contribution on such a significant issue.

I really count it an honor and a privilege to once again have the opportunity to come to the House floor to participate in this Special Order hour, this CBC hour of power, co-anchored by the dynamic duo of D. PAYNE and R. KELLY. We really appreciate their continued involvement, eloquence, and leadership in helping to articulate for the American people, as part of this conversation that we are able to have periodically, the issues of great importance to the African American community, but issues that I believe are also of great importance to the broader American community.

Poverty is an issue that certainly impacts the city of Newark that Congressman PAYNE represents, the city of Oakland that BARBARA LEE represents, the city of Chicago that Congresswoman KELLY represents, and part of the city of New York that I represent in part. Even though the ZIP Codes for those four particular municipalities may be different, the issues of lack of economic community opportunity, of course, are largely the same. Far too many people do not robustly have an opportunity to pursue the American Dream in a manner that is consistent with what America is supposed to be, a place where, if you just work hard and stay on the right path, you have an opportunity to lift yourself up out of the station that you may have been born into in life. But we know, unfortunately, that race seems to play a role in that capacity to pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

In fact, while one in three Whites who find themselves in poverty have the ability, it appears, to elevate themselves out of it—and those numbers may even be a little higher—only one in five African Americans appear to have the capacity to lift themselves out of an impoverished condition that they find themselves in.

Why that is the case is something that I think we need to be able to explore, because regardless of race, it should be a matter of fact here in America that everyone has got a chance to be able to provide for their families to live a middle class lifestyle.

Now, the interesting thing that I found upon my arrival here at the Congress is that issues related to poverty really shouldn't be a Black issue or a White issue, a Democratic issue or a

Republican issue. It shouldn't be an urban issue or a rural issue. It is an American issue. In fact, when you look at what has often been defined as persistently poor counties, counties where 20 percent of the population have been below the Federal poverty line for 30 or more years, more of those persistently poor counties are actually represented in this wonderful body by Republicans than by Democrats. So for the life of me, I haven't been able to figure out why we have not been able to come together and find common ground to deal with the problem of poverty in America, because this is not some narrow constituent issue that those of us in the Congressional Black Caucus happen to have and our friends on the other side of the aisle aren't experiencing in terms of the people that they represent. This is actually an issue that needs to be addressed by everybody.

So I am hopeful that as we stand on this House floor, as we extend our hands out in partnership to the other side of the aisle, that we can begin to deal with some of these issues, like, for instance, giving America a raise. For the life of me, I haven't been able to figure out why we would essentially endorse a policy, a minimum wage standard that means you can work full-time, 52 weeks a year, 40 hours a week, and still, when raising a family of three or four, live below the Federal poverty line. Why aren't we making work pay in America?

Now, we are seeing that places like Los Angeles that recently raised the minimum wage to \$15 an hour are leading the way at the local level, and I guess that makes sense. Brandeis once said that State government, local governments, are laboratories of democracy, and here I found that the House is probably more like the lion's den of democracy. But it seems to me that we should be able to figure out a pathway toward dealing with some common-sense solutions to dealing with the economic problems that face everyday Americans, like investing in research and development, investing in education and job training, investing in technology and innovation, investing in transportation and infrastructure, and investing in the American worker in a way that makes sense because the deck has been stacked against him, the African American worker or the individual within the African American community that is desperately trying to seek work.

We are suffering from double-digit unemployment in this recovery. When other communities seem to have been able to get back on track and our unemployment numbers are still higher than the collective number during the Great Recession, that is a scandal. We should all have a problem with that.

But the deck generally is stacked against the American worker. Since the early 1970s, the productivity of the American worker has increased in excess of 275 percent. American workers have been more productive over the

last 40-plus years, yet during that same time period, wages have increased less than 10 percent. They have remained stagnant. The deck is stacked.

The increase in productivity of the American worker has gone to the privileged few, and we have seen that that has continued during this recovery where corporate profits are way up, the stockmarket is way up, and CEO compensation is way up, but people in the African American community and others are still struggling to be able to recover from the devastating impact that the collapse of the economy had on our community and on many communities throughout America.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my good friends for raising the issue, for once again standing before the American people to address this great issue of significance.

We were all in recess over the last few days back at home, spread across the country, but now we have come back. We are here for 4 conservative weeks to do the people's business, and I am hopeful we can figure out a way to deal with a laser-like focus the problems confronting the persistently poor and those who are in the middle class or trying to become part of the great American middle class.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you very much, Congressman JEFFRIES. You always have great words, well thought out and so meaningful. I really appreciate your comments.

With that, I would like to turn it over to the woman from the great State of Ohio, my colleague, my freshman colleague and now sophomore colleague, Congressman JOYCE BEATTY.

Mrs. BEATTY. Thank you to my colleague, the gentlewoman from Illinois, and to my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus this evening for holding this Special Order hour focusing on the economy and job opportunities in our community. I know tonight that we will speak to America and to the folks in this Chamber talking about the issues that revolve around the economy and jobs and how it affects African Americans.

I want to join my colleagues tonight and talk about those things that get in the way when we talk about our education system, when we talk about the young African Americans going to prison, and when we talk about the cost of higher education, Mr. Speaker. But I also want to say thank you, thank you to the HBC universities for educating African Americans. I want to say thank you to those African Americans who are in positions to help spur the economy, and having an African American in the White House. That is because along the way there has been hope and opportunity.

□ 2115

So before I talk about those things that get in the way, I want to make sure that we send the message to a 12-

year-old boy in my district, to a freshman in college, to individuals like my young nephew and my nieces and my grandchildren, that there will be hope and opportunity because there are Members in this Chamber and members in the Congressional Black Caucus who will come and stand up and build that hope and opportunity to make a difference because we will come with resolve.

But tonight, I want to share that, while much has changed for African Americans since the 1963 March on Washington, one thing has not changed. The unemployment rate among Blacks is about double that among Whites, as it has been for almost the past six decades.

Mr. Speaker, the current unemployment rate for African Americans is 9.6 percent. This is nearly twice the 4.7 percent unemployment rate for White Americans.

Although the national unemployment rate has continued to decline since 2008, a significant race gap still remains. African Americans are almost three times more likely to live in poverty than White Americans.

African Americans, like all Americans, want economic mobility, access to high wages, the ability to support themselves and their families in a middle class lifestyle, while earning wages to allow for the accumulation of wealth.

To move forward in creating economic opportunities in the African American community, we must remain focused, focused as the members of the Congressional Black Caucus are, on how we can bridge the divides in our society, and how we can bring our Nation closer together.

It is well established in the fact that students of color face harsher punishments in schools than their White peers, leading to a higher number of youth of color in detention, suspension, and even being expelled.

African American students are arrested far more often than their White classmates. Black and Hispanic students, Mr. Speaker, represent more than 70 percent of those in school-related arrests or referrals to law enforcement. African Americans make up two-fifths and Hispanics one-fifth of confined youth today.

Disparities are found not only in how we punish behavior in our schools, but also how we fund education. This is true in K-12, and it is also true with higher education.

While we know that a college degree is a path to a middle class life, African Americans are less likely to obtain education beyond high school than White students, and they are less likely to earn a degree.

And for those African American college students who are able to make it to graduation, after graduating they graduate with more student debt than White students. Continued Federal and State cuts to tuition assistance, grant programs, and work study opportuni-

ties continue to threaten African American access to a better education.

We must confront these injustices head on. We have an obligation to find real solutions to these problems that have plagued our communities for generations. We must promote policies that increase the pace of job creation, expand opportunities for the long-term unemployed to reenter the workforce. We must provide incentives for businesses to hire and make investments in revitalizing schools, infrastructures, and our neighborhoods.

Like we did 50 years ago as we were in Selma, we must continue to do that again today. We must continue to stand arm in arm so we can bring an end to the disparities that hold our hard-working families back from achieving the middle class dream and the dreams of all Americans that we all should be equal, Mr. Speaker.

And again, to my colleagues, thank you for holding this Special Order hour. Thank you for working with the members of the Congressional Black Caucus and all of our colleagues so we could move forward and not have the disparities that you have heard about tonight.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you Congresswoman BEATTY, and thank you for your words, and also thank you for your insight, as well as our other colleagues that have shared this evening with us tonight. We really, really appreciate it. And we hope that when we come back next year this time that we can see some improvements and not have to talk about the same things over and over and over. We have heard back from 1968 some of the same statistics, and here we are so many years later still having to talk about the same thing. So we hope to see progress toward this economic stability for the African American family.

We have heard from my colleagues some staggering statistics. The story is even more disconcerting for our Nation's youth. Workers 19 years old and younger are finding it more difficult than ever to find quality afterschool and summer employment. The unemployment rate for White youth age 16 to 19 stands at 14.5 percent—again, roughly half that of their Black teenage counterparts, who have an unemployment rate of 27.5 percent.

Over one in four Black teenagers who are looking for work are unable to find it. Over one in four. This is simply unacceptable. As a Nation, we must do more to invest in underserved communities and provide opportunities for self-empowerment and growth for our Nation's youth.

Denying African American teens a summer job could cause them to miss out on a lifetime of opportunities and experiences. Many high school students use the summer months to work and put money aside for college. But if there are no jobs to be found, Mr. Speaker, many students will be denied the opportunity to attend college and will forever be shut out from many opportunities and will forever be shut out

also from the many jobs that require a college degree.

With college graduates earning an average of \$45,000 per year, compared to those only with a high school diploma earning an average of \$28,000 per year, lacking a college degree can set non-college graduates up for a lifetime of economic difficulties and frustrations. That is almost \$1 million in lost wages over the course of a lifetime.

I have been working in my district to connect employers with eager young employees. In April, I hosted my second annual Youth Employment Summit, where local youth aged 15 to 24 could connect with area companies. Many were hired on the spot, and even more were scheduled interviews for jobs and internships this summer.

But job fairs alone are not the answer, Mr. Speaker. As a Nation, we need increased investment in job training, infrastructure investment, and community development. In the long run, any economic growth that doesn't allow for full participation of all Americans, including those traditionally marginalized like minorities and young people, will not be sustainable. Our economy must work for everyone, not just a select few.

Continuing to leave underserved communities behind will only perpetuate and expand the great disparities in wealth between American citizens and continue to breed a cycle of poverty, violence, and a sense of helplessness in those communities.

Reinvesting in our Nation's youth and our Nation's minority communities is not only vital to our country's economic health but to its public health as well.

Lack of economic opportunity leads to violence, and violence only perpetuates a lack of economic opportunity. The two go hand-in-hand, and, if not addressed, it will create a downward spiral, preventing any positive growth for our Nation's youth and disadvantaged communities.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we will recognize the first annual National Gun Violence Awareness Day. Like many of my colleagues, I will wear orange. Orange is the color hunters wear to alert their companions of their presence, to avoid being shot. It is a warning color. Orange screams: "Don't shoot."

Too many of my constituents often feel like they have to wear orange while walking down their block on Chicago's South Side. In fact, tomorrow is Hadiya Pendleton's birthday. As we all know, she was shot while playing in a park or running away.

Mr. Speaker, I often say that nothing stops a bullet like a job. The surest way to decrease violence and increase economic prosperity in underserved communities is to expand access to jobs and education.

Mr. PAYNE. I thank the gentlewoman from Illinois and also the gentlewoman from Ohio for joining us this evening. Her thoughts and comments are always salient and to the point,

and we appreciate her supporting us in this effort. We sophomores have to stick together. It is just always a delight for me to be able to hear what Mrs. BEATTY has to say in terms of the topics that we discuss. She has demonstrated true leadership in the CBC since her arrival.

Mr. Speaker, this is the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth, and there are many issues, many mottos, many sayings that go along with this Nation. And one of them is that all men are created equal. But why do we continue to find such gaps in all people being created equal and the circumstances some communities find themselves in?

Like anyone, young African Americans would like to grow up, educated well, raise their families, and eke out an income that sustains them and creates a quality of life that all people deserve. But that doesn't happen. We have the haves and the have-nots, the 99 percent and the 1 percent. And too often it seems like that is what our Nation is built on. Sure, we talk about equality, we talk about equal rights, but for some reason, in many instances, it just doesn't seem to fit the circumstance.

Wages for working people have stagnated, as my colleague from New York said, over 15 years, but we have watched the top 1 percent make more and more money. Their quality of life is something people would dream about, hear about in fairy tales. But, no, some people are living that well while others struggle every single day.

And what would it be in a Nation if we were held to these different virtues, to these different mottos, to these different sayings? Well, it would mean, Mr. Speaker, that people needing food stamps wouldn't be going up. That is not something people look forward to. That is a last-ditch effort to feed your family. That is desperation. That is not a goal to aspire to.

Too many times we feel that people in this country that have not made it or have found it difficult to be successful, well, they are just not doing what they need to do. There are systemic structural circumstances in this Nation that keep people from attaining success. And until we deal with those issues, we will continue to see what we see.

And let me just say that why wouldn't we want more people to have prosperity? Why wouldn't we want more people to be doing well? That means they are paying into the system, that they don't have to rely on the system and take out of the system. The more people paying in, the more it reduces the burden of the rest of us. I don't see why that is not clear.

I made the same example during our talks about the Affordable Care Act. The more people you have paying into the system, the less we have to pay because, guess what. When there is someone who is not paying into the system, guess who picks up the burden—the rest of us.

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If you disburse that cost over more people—it is basic economics—guess what happens? It reduces it for everyone.

Here we are in the greatest nation in the world—no question about it—and at times, we are talking around the world about how other countries should treat their people. You have to look inside, and people are able to point back at us and say: Wait a minute. Why do you have communities such as that? Why is there such disparity? How can you tell us when we see what is happening in your nation?

Mr. Speaker, we can't talk out of both sides of our mouths. If we are going to be the greatest nation, then we have to act like it and stand up and do the things that make it a great nation.

There is no reason we cannot find a way out of this problem. We are able to create jobs as we have smart businesspeople throughout this Nation if there were an incentive for them to do it, but the status quo is all right with them because their value continues to go up, that of the 1 percent, so why should they change?

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That is their motto. They are doing better and better while, for the rest of us, our quality of life goes down or remains stagnant.

Mr. Speaker, this has had an adverse impact on African American businesses, and in an increasingly connected economy, it is also detrimental to the broader economic growth in this country in that all people are not able to have a living wage or to take care of their families.

I want to thank my colleague, Congresswoman KELLY, for her leadership and for leading tonight's Congressional Black Caucus' Special Order hour.

In closing, as we welcome the continued recovery and growth of our economy, we must keep in mind that work remains to build an equal society and to expand opportunities for African Americans across the country. African American communities are not sharing in the economic recovery.

We have a moral obligation to tackle the economic challenges facing Black communities and to create avenues of economic prosperity for all Americans. The CBC will be at that fight for as long as necessary. It is our agenda that works for all Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, White Americans.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, Congressman PAYNE.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to thank my colleagues for giving the Congressional Black Caucus and this Congress the opportunity to put the important economic concerns of this Nation's in the spotlight this evening. Millions of Americans are living on the brink.

These aren't merely concerns for these individuals and their families;

they are national concerns. I have always believed that what makes our Nation great is our recognition that everyone should have the ability to live and rise to their full potential. Economic parity is one of the most fundamental issues facing us as a nation right now.

I hope, in this hour, we have appropriately shed some light on some of the concerns of the Congressional Black Caucus when it comes to the economy and to job opportunities in our communities—or the lack of them.

Again, I want to thank my coanchor, the Honorable Donald Payne, Jr., who himself is a strong defender of the economic possibilities of Newark, of Orange, and of communities across New Jersey's 10th Congressional District.

I will close as I began this evening in saying that the time to act is now. The necessity in responding to the economic crises of Black employment and underemployment should be an American imperative. The time is now to support a bold and inclusive economy that propels us into a sustainable future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus in opposition to income inequality in the United States. As millions of Americans remain without work, while others are underpaid or underemployed, it is imperative that we address the growing threat to our country that is income inequality.

Since the 1970s, we have witnessed a dangerous trend develop where wage growth for middle and lower income households has become stagnant while incomes at the very top continue to rise sharply. From 1973 to 2005, real hourly wages for the top 10 percent rose by 30 percent or more, whereas the bottom 50 percent of all Americans experienced only marginal real wage increases of a little more than 5 percent.

The income gap is further amplified when comparing races. Overall, Caucasian males earn a median income of more than \$40,000 per year while African American males average roughly \$30,000 during the same time period. Hispanic Americans average just over \$26,000 each year. These discrepancies by race are particularly alarming, considering that these figures are even lower for women.

The percentage of wealth controlled by the richest Americans is another disturbing fact that is often overlooked. The top 1 percent of Americans own 40 percent of our entire nation's wealth, while the bottom 80 percent of Americans share only 7 percent of the nation's wealth. In historical terms, the last time our nation faced such a wide income gap was during the 1920s leading up to the Great Depression.

Mr. Speaker, while Congress struggles with raising the minimum wage, millions of working individuals and families across the country continue to struggle with stagnant pay and rising inflation. Until we take a serious look at comprehensive reform to curb income inequality, the consequences will continue harming our communities of color, and prove catastrophic for our nation's economy.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. JOLLY (at the request of Mr. MCCARTHY) for today on account of a flight delay.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Ms. CASTOR of Florida (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of her daughter's high school graduation.

Mr. CLYBURN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and June 2.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a delayed flight.

Ms. JACKSON LEE (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of official business.

Mrs. NAPOLITANO (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. TAKAI (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of attending daughter's graduation.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 246. An act to establish the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported that on May 22, 2015, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 2496. To extend the authorization for the replacement of the existing Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Denver, Colorado, to make certain improvements in the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, and for other purposes.

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, further reported that on May 26, 2015, she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill:

H.R. 2353. To provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1690. To designate the United States courthouse located at 700 Grant Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as the "Joseph F. Weis, Jr. United States Courthouse".

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 35 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, June 2, 2015, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

1660. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Personnel and Readiness, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of Lieutenant General James M. Kowalski, United States Air Force, and his advancement to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list; to the Committee on Armed Services.

1661. A letter from the Director, Regulations Policy and Management Staff, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting the Department's final rule — Requirements for Blood and Blood Components Intended for Transfusion or for Further Manufacturing Use [Docket No.: FDA-2006-N-0040 (formerly Docket No.: 2006N-0221)] (RIN: 0910-AG87) received May 29, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

1662. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the "Iran-Related Multilateral Sanctions Regime Efforts" report, pursuant to Sec. 10(a) of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996, as amended (50 U.S.C. 1701 note); to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

1663. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-67, "Prohibition of Pre-Employment Marijuana Testing Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1664. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-68, "Events DC Technical Clarification Amendment Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1665. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-69, "Workforce Job Development Grant-Making Reauthorization Temporary Amendment Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1666. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-70, "Soccer Stadium Development Technical Clarification Temporary Amendment Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1667. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-71, "Medical Marijuana Supply Shortage Temporary Amendment Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1668. A letter from the Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia, transmitting D.C. Act 21-72, "Jubilee Maycroft TOPA Notice Exemption Temporary Act of 2015", pursuant to Public Law 93-198, Sec. 602(c)(1); to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

1669. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Purchase Price Safe Harbors for sections 143 and 25 (Rev. Proc. 2015-31) received June 1, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

1670. A letter from the Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's IRB only rule — Applicable Federal Rates — June 2015 (Rev. Rul. 2015-14) received June 1, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.