



# Justice League of Greater Lansing Michigan Reparations Scholarship Recipient — 2024

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## What is your understanding of the *Racial Wealth Gap* in America?

According to The Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances, "between 2019 and 2022, median wealth increased by \$51,800 but the racial wealth gap increased by \$49,950 adding up to a total difference of \$240,120 in wealth between the median white household and median Black household". Historically speaking, there have always been disparities between white and Black Americans. For example: access to education, job opportunities, and housing. All of which prohibited access to greater resources. Past discrimination directly affects the lives of Black Americans today.

I have had the unique opportunity to learn this from both sides. As a Black transracial adoptee, I was exposed to the generational differences that changed the amount of income in my white parents' household and my biological family's household. Racial disparities passed down, including the environment where a family begins, plays a big role in the amount of income a family can make in the future. According to my grandmother, my adoptive parents' families started in Virginia and other southern states and moved to Detroit for factory jobs more specifically working for Henry Ford car factories. My biological family mainly lived in Detroit their entire lives; my great grandfather wasn't able to get a job in factories at the time because employers didn't want jobs to be taken from white people. Because of this, he mostly worked as a cook when he could. Since it was difficult for my biological family to get jobs to have enough food on the table, many children in my family had to start working as young as ten years old instead of going to school, and this cycle continued throughout the years.

My adoptive family had the privilege of going to high school, and few had the opportunity to attend college. Today, both my adoptive parents went to college paid for by their parents and received bachelor's degrees. Neither of my biological parents nor siblings have had the opportunity to attend college, and most were barely able to finish high school because they had other responsibilities like working or providing childcare for my younger siblings. Today my adoptive family owns their homes and no one in my biological family owns their homes. Even when applying for jobs a study done by Bowdoin University found that employers just looking at resumes are 30% more likely to hire applicants they believe are white based off their name than Black. Narrowing the wealth gap could potentially be very simple if the government can change its institutional racist ways. We can eliminate redlining and housing discrimination causing Black Americans to not have access to certain houses and to pay more property taxes despite receiving fewer benefits than white-dominated areas this originated all the way back to the civil war period to try to force Black Americans to move back to plantations. We also need to increase access and expand equity for higher education for low-income families and minimum wage should be raised to match the cost of living.