



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

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## Breaking the Chains

Generational wealth isn't just being rich or well off. When you have a great amount of money, assets, investments, and resources, you are considered to be "rich" or have wealth. However, Generational wealth is being able to have the financial stability and security to consistently pass that wealth from one generation to the next. Since this wealth has been securely accumulated and has the stability to be passed down; it provides the younger generations a solid foundation to build upon. This enables them to build up, without having to worry about the fall. This basis of financial security provides them easier and more frequent opportunities to pursue things such as higher education or entrepreneurships that they can use to keep on building wealth for their successors. Just as their predecessors were able to do for them.

I'm currently the only one, out of the three kids that my parents had, to be able to go to college. On my mother's side, no one has ever finished high school, and she doesn't work. She spent her whole life raising and taking care of us. My father is from Ghana, and he is the youngest and only of his six siblings to be able to come to America for a better life. Since he is foreign he had to take out heavy loans to pay for his education and life here. Almost 40 years later and my dad still isn't close to paying them off. I'm blessed in that I have never lived in complete poverty. My dad has always made sure my siblings, mom, and I have gotten what we needed, even if he had to sacrifice in return. Sometimes we're okay, and sometimes we are living paycheck to paycheck. We've never had that stability. My dad just turned 65 and is still working 2-3 jobs to be able to push me through college. My elder brother has a newborn of his own and is trying his best to provide a life for his son and wife.

My mom has picked up a job as well to be able to provide for my sister and me. I'm blessed and so thankful to have been given this life and opportunity, but it kills me to see what my parents have to go through because they have never had a foundation to build off of.

The answer to why we, as POC, especially African Americans have less generational wealth is integrated in our history as a society. It's no secret that we have been discriminated against, segregation was only two generations ago. Most of our grandparents can describe what it was like to be African American back then and the struggles they had to face. They couldn't build generation wealth when the world was actively pulling the rug from underneath them. There's only been two generations to be given a "fair" chance and enough time to build upon, that being Gen X and Millennials. Gen Z and Gen Alpha are still blooming. On paper the odds are "fair" but in reality we still have to face racism, police brutality, injustice, systematic oppression, lack of influence, stereotypes, and societal pressure. One example of a problem I and fellow African American peers and friends of mine face is that we are not considered "Black" enough, as we don't act like gangsters. I've had coaches call majority African American schools such as Sexton, Haslett and Everett, "Ghetto" or "violent" by nature. When in reality that is due to the environment the students are raised in. Their schools lack funding or the area they live in is dangerous/poverty stricken. That's how they learn to survive. They don't have the foundation of resources to focus on the future without worrying about the present. This stigma around African American culture is so deteriorating that when we try to express our efforts to move forward we are shot back down again. Not to mention that most of our families have started at rock bottom compared to the others around us. It's not that we're not trying. It's not that we're not capable. It's that we started farther behind the finish line and had to go through obstacles to catch up. It's difficult to stay steady when you have winds blowing you off from all directions. It's hard to be consistent when you have to move mountains in your way. It's hard to build for the future when you're fighting to survive in the present..