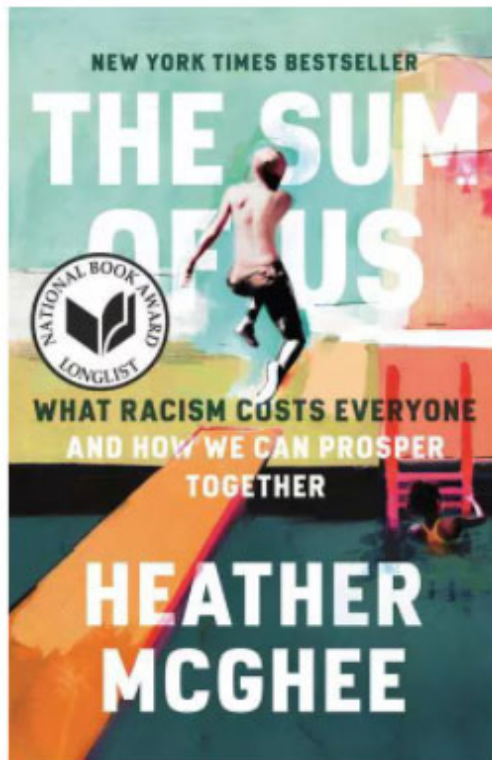


The Sum of Us: What racism costs everyone and how we can prosper together

Presentation and Interactive Discussion



Produced by Unity of Houston's Healing the Heart of America Book Club

Mary Bearden * Zelda Benson * Pam Bregenzer
Alyce Coffey * Jean Latting * Linda Patterson

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Full video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0hsfvLzKpg>

HHA website: <https://unityhouston.org/spiritual-teaching/healing-the-heart-of-america/>

What Is A Zero Sum?

The Zero Sum = Fixed Pie Fallacy = Scarcity mindset

The invalid assumption that there is only a FIXED amount of wealth...
...goods, jobs, prestige, opportunity, etc.

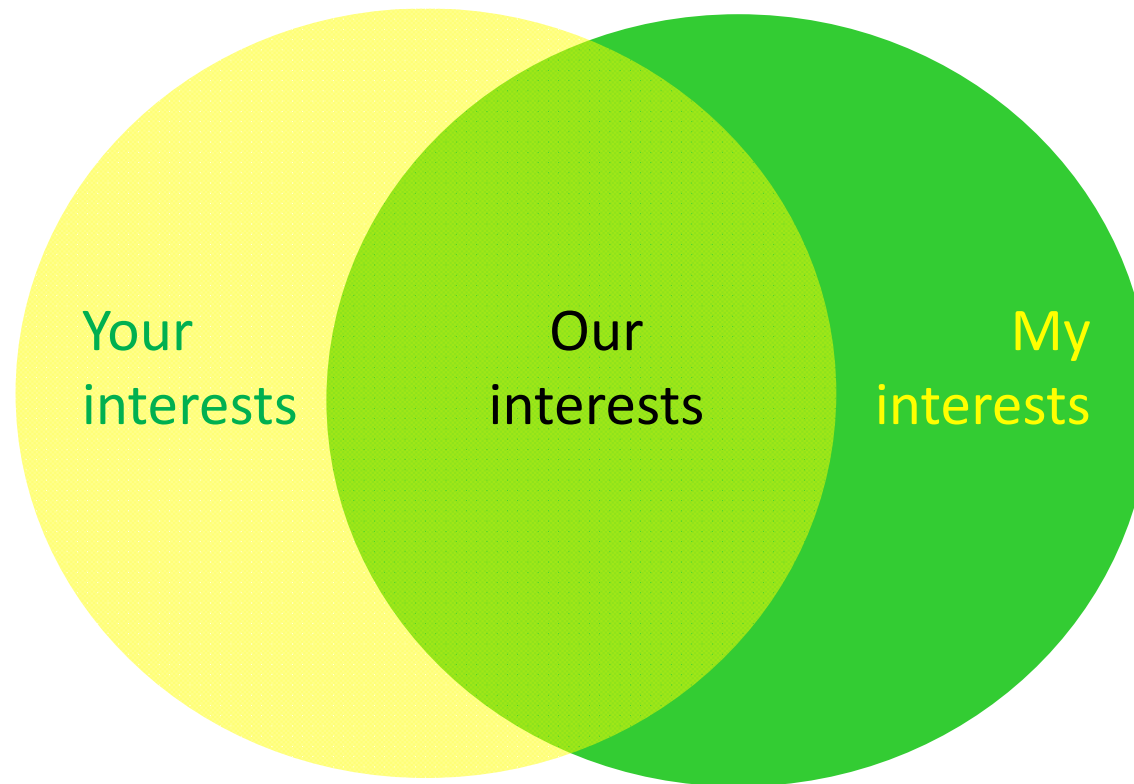




"It's not enough that we succeed. Cats must also fail."

Solidarity dividend

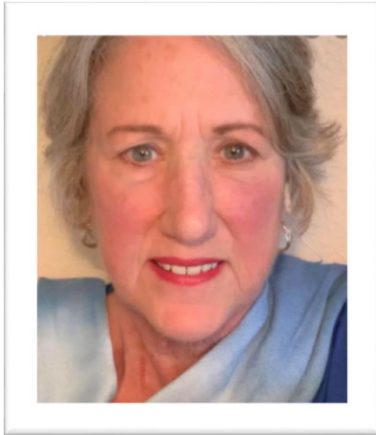
“More for all of us!” 😊 😊 😊



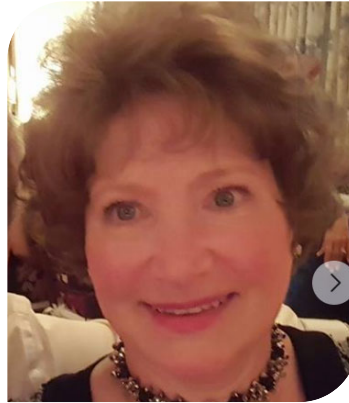
“I learned that although we knew about white people even if we didn’t live with them—they were co-workers, school administrators, and of course, every image onscreen—segregation meant that white people didn’t know much about us at all. For all the ways that segregation is aimed at limiting the choices of people of color, it’s white people who are ultimately isolated.”

— Heather McGhee

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together



Mary Bearden



Pamela Bregenzer



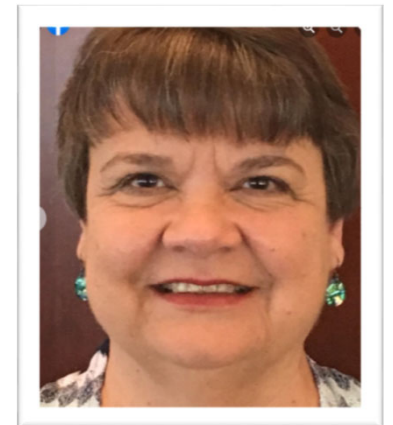
Alyce Coffey



Jean Latting



Zelda Benson



Linda Patterson

**Zero sum paradigm:
Racial resentment–
At what price?**

Zero Sum Story of Racial Hierarchy

- Zero sum story born along with this country
- Invented by powerful people who used exploitation with a divide and conquer strategy to maintain control
- Benefits the few – Limiting the rest, and damaging the whole

Zero Sum Story of Racial Hierarchy

- Citizenship became aligned with freedom and whiteness
- People of color - Shut out and dehumanized
 - “Ferocious animals”
 - “savages and wolves”
 - “brings disease”
 - “long, dirty toenails”

Generational Wealth

Black (Loss)
White (Gain)

- **The Homestead Exemption Act of 1862 & 1866**
1.6 million landowners gained deeds – Only 6,000 were Black
- **Redlining**
Red “DO NOT LEND” lines were drawn around Black neighborhoods
- **The New Deal (1933)**
Minimum wage and overtime laws excluded jobs held by most Black people
- **GI Bill of 1944**
White veterans – Received college tuition and living expenses
Black veterans – Funneled to vocational schools

Generational Wealth

Black (Loss)
White (Gain)

- **Creation of Suburbs**
Feds subsidized private developers and built highways
White only clauses – Prevented Black buyers
- **Social Security**
Many job categories performed by POC were excluded
- **Labor Unions**
Closed to non-white workers until the 1960's

How Racism LITERALLY Drained The Pool and the cost to us ALL

- **By WW II, 2000 public pools had been built**
- **Faced with integration – many pools were drained/closed**

Examples

St. Louis, MO: Fairground Park Pool – 10,000 swimmer capacity

Montgomery, AL: Oak Park Pool – Filled in and paved over – Zoo closed - animals sold – playground equipment removed

- **A once public resource became a luxury amenity**

Backyard pools became a trend at great cost to the homeowner and contributing to ozone pollution

Going Without - Education

- **Remnants of the slave economy**

9 out of 10 of the poorest states

7 out of 10 states – least educational attainment

 **Southern
States**

- **Cost of college**

Public education was once considered a benefit for the common good

When enrollment for people of color grew to 40%, anti government sentiment railed against it as “handouts”

- **Tuition has nearly tripled since 1991**

Both students of color and whites have taken on crippling debt

Going Without – Health Care

The Affordable Care Act:

Many states, like Texas, have needlessly crippled rural hospitals by their refusal to adopt accompanying reforms of the ACA

Over the past 7 years 120 rural hospitals have closed (26 in Texas), eliminating 1 of 7 jobs in those communities, and making access to medical treatment difficult for all races. One quarter of those remaining are at risk of closure in the near term

Going Without – Health Care

Medicaid Expansion:

- In states that expanded, hundreds of thousands of working-class citizens went from being uninsured to being able to afford doctor care
- Stable Medicaid funding has allowed rural medical clinics, in expansion states, to thrive

(Texas has the "worst in the nation" healthcare coverage. Over one million White non-Hispanic Texans are left without any health care coverage. An income of \$4,000 makes you ineligible for Medicaid.

Texas is only 41% white, but the legislature is 67% white and 75% male)

Breakout Questions

1. What surprised you?
2. What did you already know about and how did the presentation expand your knowledge?

More costs to
us all

The Great Recession

Subprime mortgage crisis of 2008

- 5.6 million foreclosures
- \$19.2 trillion in lost household wealth
- 8 million lost jobs

Millennials today have 34% less wealth than previous generations

“Although homeowners of color were represented out of proportion to their numbers in society, the majority of these foreclosed homes belonged to white people.”

–Heather

McGhee

What brought it on

- **90s – early 2000s: targeting of subprime loans to black and brown families**
- **Deregulation of mortgage brokers and holding companies**
- **Unchecked growth of predatory loans and financial products**

How it happened

- **Public policy justification: American Dream**
- **Refinancing: 1998-2006 less than 10% of subprime loans were for first-time homebuyers**
- **2005 study: most sub-prime loans went to people who actually could have qualified for less expensive prime loans**

Ignoring the Canary

“The earliest victims of these practices, disproportionately Black, were the canaries in the coal mine; but their warnings went unheeded.”

—Heather McGhee

- **Bank regulators and federal policy makers were aware**
- **Practices allowed to continue**

“The systems set up to exploit one part of society rarely stay contained.”

—Heather McGhee

“...our democracy is even less equal than our economy - and the two inequalities are mutually reinforcing.”

—Heather McGhee

Never a Real Democracy

- **Original design: minority rule**
- **Constitution: no right to vote for all**
- **Power struggle - representative electorate**

Electoral College: a Holdover from Slavery

- **The electoral college was instituted to give southern slaveholding states more power in electing the President**
- **Electoral college distortions today benefit whiter, less-populated states**

Voter Suppression

- **A form of racial oppression**
- **Also useful against many white voters**
- **Thwarts working-class coalitions**

“A genuine, truly representative democracy is still an aspiration in America.”

– Heather McGhee

Moral, psychological, spiritual costs

- **Religious confusion**
- **Moral conflict**
- **Self-delusion**
examples:
**myth of meritocracy and
colorblindness**

Living Apart

While people of all races in America share an economy and a democracy, however unequally, we mostly do not share our neighborhoods and schools.

Though no longer overtly enforced by law, segregation is still a defining feature of our landscape.

Segregation: a Very Brief History

- **Not just a Southern thing**
- **White power structure reaction to the threat of class solidarity**
- **Government enforcement**
- **US segregation a model for others**
- **Segregated housing market - generational wealth gap**

Today's Segregation

- **Driven by exclusionary zoning laws**
- **Affects everyone**
- **Bans working class – 75%**
- **Isolates white people most of all**

Majority: regularly come into contact with only “a few” African Americans

75%: social network is entirely white

21%: “seldom or never” interact with any people of color at all

Some Costs of Segregation in Cities

- **Lost income to workers and to the area's gross domestic product**
- **Higher homicide rates and higher costs for public safety**
- **Increased pollution**

Gains Due to Integration in Schools

- **Cross-cultural competency**
- **Critical thinking and problem solving**
- **Civic engagement**
- **Higher academic achievement**

Breaking the Cycle

Segregation of
neighborhoods

Unequal funding
of public schools



Public policy created the problem of segregation, and only public policy can solve it.

Brown v. Board of Education: a Missed Opportunity

“The 1954 Supreme Court decision that could have changed everything...”

“But there was another path from Brown, one not taken, with profound consequences for our understanding of segregation’s harms...”

“White children ‘who learn the prejudices of our society’ were ‘...being taught to gain personal status in an unrealistic and non-adaptive way.’ They were ‘not required to evaluate themselves in terms of the more basic standards of actual personal ability and achievement.’

“...they ‘often develop patterns of guilt feelings (and) rationalizations ...to protect themselves from recognizing the essential injustice of their unrealistic fears and hatreds of minority groups.’

...’confusion, conflict, moral cynicism, and disrespect for authority may arise in [white] children as a consequence of being taught...principles of justice and fair play by the same persons and institutions who seem to be acting in a prejudiced and discriminatory manner.’”

“The now-lost rationale for why segregation must fall – the rationale that included the costs to us all – might have actually uprooted segregation in America...”

Brown v Board of Education

- **Affirmed: separation itself harms “minority children”**
- **Ignored: separation harms “white” children**
- **Unintended consequence: affirmation of white supremacy**

Breakout Questions

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2. What did you already know about and how did the presentation expand your knowledge?

"We Found the Enemy
and It's
NOT Each Other"

George Goehl

Summing Up

- The current rules of the game allow a small minority of participants to capture most of the gains. This allows fewer people to play at all.
- An example is how currently the entire middle class owns less than the wealthiest 1% of Americans.
- American inequality is rampant in the United States. It is hard for anybody – especially Blacks – to climb the hierarchy to success.

***“We’re all at the bottom of the
drained swimming pool”***

-- Heather McGhee

Consider where we are today. We have crises of:

- Climate change causing wildfires, rising sea levels, drought
- Inequality in housing, education, health care, employment

Health Inequalities

- Pandemic relief was unevenly distributed nationally and internationally
- Poor neighborhoods lacked early vaccine access, experienced unsafe working conditions in their “necessary services” jobs and experienced a higher level of job loss during the pandemic
- Blacks and Latinos suffered from COVID deaths at a higher rate than their white counterparts during the early days of the pandemic
- Two results: we were all exposed to unvaccinated people and many people couldn’t get needed surgeries or medical treatment.

Education - Brain Drain

- A brain drain on people choosing to work in the public sector or education due to low wages.
- This deprives all communities from benefiting from some of our brightest minds and our children from being exposed to some of our most creative thinkers.

Education – Student Loans

- 2019 Federal Reserve report – As Pam shared earlier, high student loans cause many young people to delay marriage, buy homes, and have families
- Student debt robs too many people of the means to start businesses, invest in their families or invent new ideas and solutions
- Lack of opportunity robs the entire economy

Lack of education → Crime

- Statistics indicate that crime and education are inversely correlated
- Research shows that people in our prisons are disproportionately black. Among other crimes, a large number of them have committed robbery
- This has created a fear of “Blacks” and resulted in a high level of spending to secure homes with dead bolt locks, alarms, and neighborhood security patrols
- Better, more equitable funding for school instruction, equipment and support services would help prevent these crimes
- Crime hurts everyone

Inequalities -- Air Pollution

Air pollution is a problem in Houston. It affects everyone.

Neighborhoods near the ship channel and in Baytown suffer the emissions from the ships and oil refineries. These neighborhoods are treated as sacrifice zones.

This has prompted wealthier neighborhoods on the opposite side of Houston to install air monitoring stations.

Not many monitors have been installed in the impacted low income communities.

Anti-Government Sentiment

Growing anti-government sentiment and push back on government proposals and programs

leave many neighborhoods without adequate police protection, school building improvements, and timely trash collection.

Whites frequently just move to more secure neighborhoods where their tax dollars support better schools and services.

Results

Anti-government sentiment results in falling support for taxes to support failing infrastructure, mass transit, improved drainage

In Houston that looks like bridges in need of repair, potholes on major streets and streets that flood when it rains.

Black and White residents feel the impact of driving on these streets.

“We cannot fight an idea with threats, investigations and scares.

“We can fight an idea only with a greater idea, to which, in all phases of our life, we are dedicated with high purpose and deep resolve.”

- Howard Thurman, *Deep is the Hunger*

Solidarity Dividend:

“I’m Not Black But I’ll Fight For You”
(Slogan on the T-shirt of a politician in Maine)

- **‘High purpose and deep resolve’ takes courage.**
- **Learn about your community history**
For example, Texans should look at their home-owners deed to see if it has a covenant restricting homes from being sold or rented to people of color
- **Ask and answer the hard questions**
Who is an American?
Who are the “haves” and “have nots”?
Who are we to each other – only competitors?

We Need to Support Each Other

- Recognize that we need each other, and that diversity is our biggest asset - in education, law, business, and the economy
- Work to change the rules and laws to disrupt the disproportionate power of the rich that exists in our city, our state, and in the whole USA
- Challenge ourselves to live our lives in solidarity(unity) across color, origin, age, religion and class

When White Eyes Open, What Often Happens?

- White people see that the belief “anyone can succeed if they just try hard enough” is not true
- They understand that Blacks and Whites are not starting out with the same wealth, education nor employment opportunities
- They also learn that despite affirmative action policies, the share of Black and Brown students at selective colleges has declined over the last 35 years

“Start a Good Fight”

John Lewis

Recognize that we need each other

- Are we willing to live our Unity principles?
- Do we believe that Blacks deserve to live with less?
- What are we blind to?
- What inconvenience are we willing to undertake to bridge the racial divide?
- What have we done that's contributing to the problem?
- Are we strong enough to work on this problem?

Can I “Start a Good Fight”?

YES we need each other

- Am I willing to live the Unity principles?
- Do I believe that Blacks deserve to live with less?
- What am I blind to?
- What inconvenience am I willing to undertake to bridge the racial divide?
- What have I done that's contributing to the problem?
- Am I strong enough to work on this problem?

Let diversity be our
"superpower"

Breakout questions

1. What have I been blind to?
2. What have I done that is contributing to the problem?
3. What could I do differently moving forward?