Introduction:
Over the past 30 years, African Americans have made great progress in bringing down barriers that did not allow them to fully participate in the U.S. economy; yet barriers remain. Although African Americans comprise 12% of the U.S. population, they face much higher unemployment rates and poverty rates than whites.

Unemployment
- In 2003, the unemployment rate for African American men was 10.3% as compared to White men at 5.0%. Similarly, the unemployment rate of African American women was 9.2% as compared to White women at 4.4%
- For the past 20 years, consistently, African Americans have had an unemployment rate of 6 percentage points higher than Whites. And today, one in nine African Americans cannot find a job.
- Working age African American males under 35 face the greatest underemployment. Overall, more than 22% are unemployed.

Poverty Rate
- The poverty rate of the African American family is nearly three times that of white families.

An estimated 36 million people lived below the poverty level in 2003, including 8.8 million Blacks.
- The poverty rate, which was 12.5% for the total population, was 24% for Blacks and 22% for non-Hispanic Whites.
- Poverty greatly affects African American female headed households. Over 38% of these households live below the poverty line.
- Among all children under age 18, the poverty rate for African Americans was 33% as compared to 9.8% for white children.
- Even African Americans over the age of 65 are disproportionately impoverished. Slightly over 8% of Whites as compared to 24% of Blacks over the age of 65 live below the poverty line.
African American Household Expenditure

- According to the report, “The Buying Power of Black America” black households had $631 billion in earned income in 2002, an increase of 4.8% over the $602 billion earned in 2001.

- According to the Consumer Expenditure Survey 2002, the annual average expenditure for African Americans is $30,136, an increase of over $1,200 from 2001.

- The annual average expenditure for Whites was $42,135, an increase of over $1,100 from 2001.

- African Americans expend a larger portion of their income on Telephone services, electricity, natural gas, children’s apparel and footwear categories.

Homeownership

- Despite African Americans achieving a hard fought 6% increase in homeownership, the African American-White homeownership gap has barely changed. In 2003, almost three-quarters of white Americans owned their own home, compared with fewer than half of African Americans.

- According to the document, *The State of the Dream 2004– Enduring Disparities in Black and White* by the United for a Fair Economy, if the homeownership gap continues to close at this rate, it would take 1,664 years, or approximately 55 generations, before the gap is closed.

### Contact Information

Contact: Gerald T. Ford  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Gford@cbcfinc.org  
202-263-2800